

Athletes with a Physical Impairment

Classification Information Sheet

What is classification?

- An assessment process that determines a person's eligibility for Para-sport.
- Aims to minimise the effect that a person's impairment has on the outcome of competition.
- Provides a structure for Para-sport competition

Each sport has different classification systems, based on the international classification systems for the sport. Each class has a range, which is defined by the classification rules. This means that within a class, no two athletes will have exactly the same impairment or functional ability. An athlete may be eligible for one sport and not another depending on the classification criteria for each sport.

Which Paralympic sports may I compete in with a Physical Impairment?

Summer Paralympic Sports		Winter Paralympic Sports
Archery	Athletics	
Badminton	Boccia	
Cycling	Equestrian	Alpine Skiing
Football 5-a-side*	Judo	Ice Sledge Hockey*
Paratriathlon	Paracanoe	Biathlon*
Rowing	Powerlifting	Snowboard
Shooting	Sitting Volleyball*	Wheelchair Curling*
Swimming	Table Tennis	Cross Country Skiing*
Taekwondo	Wheelchair Basketball	
Wheelchair Fencing*	Wheelchair Rugby	
	Wheelchair Tennis	

**Currently limited programs offered in Australia*

Who is eligible as an athlete with a physical impairment?

Athletes must have at least one of the six impairment types as listed below:

Impairment Type	Examples of Common conditions	Minimal Disability Guide
Limb deficiency	Total or partial absence of bones or joints of the arms, legs or pelvic region as a result of condition from birth, trauma or illness.	Generally, through the hand or wrist or the foot or ankle depending on each sports rule.
Impaired muscle power	Spinal cord injury, spina bifida, transverse myelitis, sacral agenesis, spinal tumours, nerve damage, Erbs palsy, foot drop, muscular dystrophies or other conditions causing muscle weakness	The requirements are sport specific, however generally the weakness in the legs, trunk, and / or arms, is tested using a 5-point scale. Athletes generally must lose at least 10- 20 points of power to be eligible for Paralympic Sport.
Hypertonia, Ataxia, Athetosis	Cerebral palsy, acquired brain injury, stroke, brain tumour, multiple sclerosis, cerebellar ataxia, hereditary spastic paraparesis or any other condition where spasticity, ataxia or athetosis are present	The requirements are sport specific, however generally, spasticity, ataxia or athetosis or dystonia must be clinically measurable in at least one joint in one arm or leg
Short Stature	Achondroplasia, or similar conditions that impact on an athlete's adult height.	The height for athletes with short stature is sports specific, with a maximum height of 145cm.
Impaired passive range of motion	Arthrogryposis, Talipes Equinovarus, Joint fusions or similar conditions that impact on joint movement.	The restriction is sports specific, as a guide partial or full fusion of one ankle or wrist.
Leg length difference	A difference leg length a result of a disturbance of limb growth, or trauma.	The length is sports specific, generally greater than 7cm.

When do I need a classification?

If you want to compete in sport as an athlete with an impairment, you must undergo a sports specific classification assessment and hold a particular level of classification. As a general guide, you should undergo a classification assessment prior to state or national level championships. Each sport will define when a classification assessment is required.

Athletes who are selected to represent Australia at an international level competition will be required to attend international classification.

Who conducts a classification for Paralympic Sports?

Classification is conducted by trained & certified classifiers for the sport. These are specialised officials (such as doctors, physiotherapists, coaches, biomechanists) certified by Paralympics Australia to conduct activities in Australia.

Only the Classifiers trained in the specific sport can determine whether an athlete meets the minimum disability criteria and which class the athlete will be allocated to compete in.

How do I get classified?

Each sport has specific processes for athletes to arrange a classification.

National Classification:

For athletes who attend a face to face classification with a certified Australian Classification panel for the sport. You can request a classification to the National Federation for your selected sport.

Remote Provisional Classification:

For athletes who are unable to attend a face to face classification due to geographical location. You can request a classification from the National Federation for your selected sport.

Medical Diagnostic Information

Classifiers require sufficient medical documentation to complete the classification process. Athletes are required to either present medical documentation to be reviewed prior to the classification or will be expected to attend with medical documentation on the day of classification assessment.

Eligible impairment	Examples of medical diagnosis	Example documents to support the diagnosis
Impaired muscle power	<input type="checkbox"/> Spinal Cord Injury <input type="checkbox"/> Muscular Dystrophy <input type="checkbox"/> Spina Bifida	<input type="checkbox"/> Rehabilitation specialist report <input type="checkbox"/> ASIA scale <input type="checkbox"/> Electromyography <input type="checkbox"/> MRI <input type="checkbox"/> X-rays <input type="checkbox"/> Biopsy
Impaired passive range of motion	<input type="checkbox"/> Arthrogyrosis <input type="checkbox"/> Joint Contractures <input type="checkbox"/> Trauma <input type="checkbox"/> Talipes	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Report <input type="checkbox"/> X-rays <input type="checkbox"/> Photographs <input type="checkbox"/> Goniometric measures of joint
Ataxia Athetosis Hypertonia	<input type="checkbox"/> Cerebral Palsy <input type="checkbox"/> Traumatic brain injury <input type="checkbox"/> Brain Tumour <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Sclerosis <input type="checkbox"/> Stroke	<input type="checkbox"/> Neurologist report <input type="checkbox"/> Rehabilitation specialist report <input type="checkbox"/> Modified Ashworth Scale <input type="checkbox"/> Cerebral MRI or TC scan
Leg length difference	<input type="checkbox"/> Trauma <input type="checkbox"/> Dysmelia	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Report <input type="checkbox"/> X-rays <input type="checkbox"/> Photograph
Short stature	<input type="checkbox"/> Achondroplasia <input type="checkbox"/> Osteogenesis Imperfecta <input type="checkbox"/> Growth Hormone Dysfunction	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Report <input type="checkbox"/> X-rays <input type="checkbox"/> Photograph
Limb deficiency	<input type="checkbox"/> Dysmelia <input type="checkbox"/> Traumatic Amputation <input type="checkbox"/> Bone Cancer	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Report <input type="checkbox"/> X-rays <input type="checkbox"/> Photographs

Links and Resources

Organisation	Contact Details
Paralympics Australia	Website: www.paralympic.org.au Phone: + 61 2 9704 0500 Email: classification@paralympic.org.au 
National Sports Organisations	Visit the sports specific pages at www.paralympic.org.au/play-para-sport for links to each National Sports Organisation

The information provided in this document is based on international rules for sports and classification.