



2013-14 Edition

Eligibility Guide for Participation In 7th-8th Grade Athletics

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Ohio High School Athletic Association

7th-8th Philosophy

The purpose of seventh and eighth grade education-based athletics is to provide rich and wholesome activities for as many students as possible. As a result, students will develop to the greatest degree talents and skills such as leadership, teamwork and discipline, which will enable them to become responsible citizens in our society while demonstrating good sporting conduct.

We believe in interscholastic athletics as an integral part of the total school program reflecting the needs of the school, the community and the student.

We believe the potential values to the student and coaches to be very essential. Competition under prescribed regulations and policies provides adolescents with the opportunity to develop ideas and habits of health, fair play, initiative, achievement, emotional control, good sporting conduct, social adaptability and good citizenship. Athletics foster team and school spirit and a sense of community.

We believe each coach should make every effort to provide an opportunity for participation for all students involved in a sport. The students shall be taught the fundamental skills necessary for further growth and improvement in their respective sports. These skills are to be taught by an educated/trained coach. We believe that high quality skill development for students at the seventh and eighth grade level is of utmost importance.

OHSAA 7th-8th Grade

Summary of Facts

- A student that turns 15 before August 1 of the current school year is not eligible to participate in seventh and eighth grade athletics during that upcoming school year.
- The physical examination must be completed and in school files prior to the first day of practice.
- The minimum scholastic requirement for the OHSAA is students must have received passing grades in five of the classes in which they were enrolled the previous grading period. Districts may establish criteria more stringent than the OHSAA.
- In matters of academic eligibility, please refer to your district administrator for more specific school academic policies.

- If a seventh and eighth grade student is ineligible, the district's policy will determine if he/she can practice but not dress during middle school contests. The OHSAA does not stipulate practice regulations.
- There are no size and weight requirements for any seventh and eighth grade sport, with the exception of wrestling.
- Designated dates for the start and end of each 7th-8th grade school athletic season can be found in the General Sports Regulations of the *OHSAA Handbook*, which is posted at OHSAA.org.
- A seventh and eighth grade athlete cannot practice, compete or scrimmage with or against athletes in grades 9-12 during the school sports season.
- Seventh and eighth grade students cannot participate with non-school teams during the same sports season.
- Seventh and eighth grade students can attend seventh and eighth grade or high school summer sports camps. School coaches can have 10 contact days with a team from June 1 to July 31. See the *OHSAA Handbook* for coaching restrictions from August 1 to May 31.
- Recruitment is defined as the use of influence by any person connected or not connected with the school to secure a prospective student-athlete (OHSAA Bylaw 4-9-2) after enrolling in the seventh grade.
- The transfer bylaws apply to all students enrolled in grades 9-12.
- The OHSAA bylaws and sports regulations apply to all participants in interscholastic athletic contests involving students in grades 7-12 and include matters of eligibility, contracts, qualifications, responsibility and behaviors of various personnel (OHSAA Bylaw 1-1-1).
- A complete listing of information regarding interscholastic athletics can be found on-line at OHSAA.org. Parents are also encouraged to talk with their child's coaches, athletic administrators and school administrators with questions regarding specific sports regulations.

7th-8th Grade Regulations Overview

The essential eligibility requirements in this document are only a summary of some of the regulations affecting student eligibility. Most requirements are published in the *OHSAA Handbook*, which can be found in the offices of your principal and athletic administrator and is posted at OHSAA.org. Your school district also has the authority to establish additional academic standards and codes of student or athletic conduct.

OHSAA Regulations On **Scholarship**

In order to maintain eligibility for grades 7 and 8, you must be currently enrolled in a member school and have received passing grades in a minimum of five (5) of the classes in which you were enrolled in the immediately preceding grading period.

- A student becomes a member of an interscholastic squad, and thus establishes eligibility, when he/she participates in a contest (scrimmage, preview or regular season game).
- You may not use summer school grades for failing grades received or lack of courses taken in the final grading period.
- Your semester or yearly grades have no effect on OHSAA eligibility.

OHSAA Regulations On **Semesters**

The semesters bylaw is not applicable for seventh and eighth grade students. However, after completing eighth grade and establishing ninth-grade eligibility, you are permitted only eight (8) semesters of athletic eligibility.

- The semesters are taken in order of attendance once ninth-grade eligibility has been established.
- Semesters are counted toward eligibility whether you participate in interscholastic athletics or not.

OHSAA Regulations On **Age**

Seventh and eighth grade students who turn 15 years of age prior to August 1 of the current school year are ineligible for 7th-8th grade athletics but are eligible to participate in high school athletics.

- There are exceptions to this regulation, so please arrange a meeting with your principal or athletic administrator to review these exceptions.

OHSAA Regulations On **Home Schooling**

If you are home schooled and also enrolled in an OHSAA member school in accordance with the school's board-adopted partial enrollment policy, you may be eligible for interscholastic athletics participation at the school where you are enrolled and attending.

- To be eligible, you must enter the OHSAA member school from home schooling at the beginning of the school year after having been home schooled for at least one calendar year.

- Failure to meet the one-year provision will require you to be enrolled for a minimum of one grading period before eligibility can be granted.

OHSAA Regulations On **Transfers**

The transfer bylaw is not applicable for seventh and eighth grade students. However, after completing eighth grade and establishing ninth-grade eligibility, a transfer to a different high school will mean you will lose eligibility for interscholastic athletics at your new school. For the specifics on the period of ineligibility, visit OHSAA.org.

- There are several exceptions to this regulation. To see if you qualify for an exception, you and your parents should arrange a meeting with your principal or athletic administrator.

OHSAA Regulations On **Awards**

You may receive awards valued at \$200 or less as a result of athletic participation in interscholastic athletics from any source. You may never accept cash awards, however.

OHSAA Regulations On **Amateurism**

You will lose your amateur status and forfeit your eligibility if you:

- Compete for money or other compensation.
- Capitalize on your athletic fame by receiving money, merchandise or services.
- Sign a contract or make a commitment to play professional athletics.
- Receive services, merchandise or any form of financial assistance from a professional sports organization.
- Compete with a professional athletics team even if no pay is received.
- Enter into an agreement with a sports or marketing agent.

Expenses for travel, meals and lodging may be accepted provided they are available to all participants and they are not contingent upon your team's and/or your finish.

OHSAA Regulations On **False Information**

If you compete under a name other than your own or provide a false address, you immediately become ineligible.

OHSAA Regulations On **Open Gyms**

School officials may designate open gyms/facilities, the sport to be played, the grade levels involved and may also limit participants to those from your school. You may participate in open gyms/facilities, but remember:

- No one from the respective school may be excluded from participating;
- No one may be required to attend;
- No school officials may invite selected students or determine the teams;
- No school officials may transport students to or from either school or non-school facilities;
- No timing or written scoring may be kept, and
- No coaching or instruction may be provided.

The OHSAA may impose penalties against you, your school and/or your coach for violating these regulations.

OHSAA Regulations On **Instruction**

There are restrictions on the instruction you can receive from school coaches outside of your season. Some of these regulations are also different for team sports vs. individual sports. Before receiving instruction outside the season from your school coaches, visit OHSAA.org, go to the General Sports Regulations and review the section on Instructional Programs to ensure all regulations are being followed. Some other key notes on these regulations:

- Besides during the season of your sport, school coaches may also provide team instruction for a maximum of 10 days between June 1 and July 31. This would include such activities as volleyball, field hockey, soccer, basketball, ice hockey, baseball or softball teams competing in tournaments or 'shootouts;' football teams participating in 7-on-7 competitions, or coaches conducting or taking teams to instructional camps.
- Individual skill instruction from non-school coaches may be received in any sport by a squad member at any time in individual lessons *provided* that these individual skill instructions do not violate any Board of Education, school administrators' or coaches' policies.
- It is a violation if a coach suggests your participation in instructional programs is mandatory.

OHSAA Regulations On **Non-School Teams**

If you compete on a non-school team in the same sport during your school team's season, you will lose eligibility. There are also certain restrictions

regarding tryouts, practices and competitions with non-school teams before, during and after the school season. Before participating with a non-school team, visit OHSAA.org, go to the General Sports Regulations and review the sections on Non-Interscholastic Programs to ensure all regulations are being followed. Some other key notes on these regulations:

- A member of an interscholastic squad in a team sport (baseball, basketball, field hockey, ice hockey, soccer, softball and volleyball) may not participate in an athletic contest, tryouts or any type of team or group training or practices on or with a non-school squad in the same sport during the school's interscholastic season.
- In the individual sports of bowling, cross country, golf, gymnastics, swimming and diving, tennis, track and field and wrestling, however, you may practice and try out for a non-school team but may not compete in a contest.
- A member of an interscholastic squad in a team sport (baseball, basketball, field hockey, ice hockey, soccer, softball and volleyball) may try out, practice and compete on non-school teams before and after the school season from August 1 to May 31 provided:
The OHSAA's '50 percent limitation' regulation is maintained, meaning the number of students from the same school team on the roster of the non-school team is limited to five (5) students in the sports of soccer, field hockey and ice hockey; four (4) students in the sports of baseball and softball; three (3) students in the sport of volleyball, and two (2) students in the sport of basketball. School football team members are prohibited from competing on non-school teams except from June 1 to July 31.
- There is no limit on the number of students from the same school team that may participate on the same non-school team from June 1 to July 31.

OHSAA Regulations On **Recruiting**

You will be declared ineligible if you are recruited by a person or group of persons to attend a high school or middle school for athletic purposes.

After completing eighth grade, you will be declared ineligible if you are recruited by a person or group of persons to change and enroll in a high school for athletic purposes.

OHSAA Regulations/Guidance On **Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs and Steroids**

The OHSAA does not permit the use of any form of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs at the site of all

interscholastic contests. Besides the health risks involved, use of any of these items will result in you being disqualified from contests and likely facing additional school and legal penalties. There are additional issues related to illicit drugs, such as anabolic steroids and some prescription drugs used with the goal of aiding performance. If you use anabolic steroids or other performance-enhancing drugs, you are ineligible for interscholastic competition until medical evidence indicates that your system is free of these drugs.

Another prominent issue is the use of supplements. The increased availability of these items allows student-athletes access to a wide variety of products aggressively marketed in fitness and strength training magazines and websites. Often their marketing campaigns include promises, endorsed by faulty research claims, of extraordinary weight loss, explosive power or tremendous strength gains. It is important for coaches, athletic administrators and parents to educate themselves about what substances your student-athletes may be using and about the potential risks involved with uneducated supplement use.

OHSAA.org offers a wealth of information for parents, coaches and students about these topics and other healthy lifestyles/sports medicine issues.

OHSAA Regulations On Preparticipation Evaluations and Consent Forms

Before the season's first practice, each student must have had a physical examination within the past year and an examination form signed by a medical examiner must be on file at your school.

- Physical examinations are valid for one year from the date of the exam except for those that take place from May 1-June 1. Those exams are valid for one year plus through the end of the next school year.

In addition, no student will be eligible unless that student and his or her parents have signed the OHSAA Authorization Form and the OHSAA Eligibility & Authorization Statement, both of which must be on file at your school.

OHSAA Regulations and Expectations On Concussion Management

It is everyone's responsibility to take the necessary precautions to reduce the likelihood of brain injuries. This is not just a problem in football . . . concussions can happen in just about any sport!

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal function of the brain. "Dings" and "bell ringers" are serious brain injuries and you do not have to have loss of consciousness for it

to be considered serious. Young athletes are at increased risk for serious problems.

In Ohio, any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion, such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems, shall be immediately removed from the contest or practice and shall not return to play that same day. Thereafter, the student shall not return to practice or competition until cleared with written authorization from a physician or health care provider approved by the local board in accordance with state law.

Each school is required to review its concussion management protocol with students and their parents. In addition, each student and his or her parents must review and sign the Ohio Department of Health's "Concussion Information Sheet" prior to participation and are highly encouraged to review a short presentation on concussions available at no cost at nfhslearn.com.

OHSAA Regulations and Expectations On Sporting Behavior

The OHSAA's vision for positive sporting behavior is built on expectations. It calls on the school community — administrators, teachers, coaches, students, parents and fans — to strive for positive sporting behavior in everything they do by teaching the value of ethics, integrity, equity, fairness and respect.

As a student-athlete, you are expected to accept the responsibility and privilege of representing your school and community while participating in school sports. You are expected to:

- Treat opponents, coaches and officials with respect, and
- Ensure your actions do not incite fans or other participants or attempt to embarrass, ridicule or demean others.

The OHSAA has established a policy for students ejected for unsporting behavior or flagrant fouls. If you are ejected:

- You will be ineligible for all contests for the remainder of that day, and
- You will be ineligible for all contests at all levels in that sport until two regular season contests are played at the same level as the ejection (one contest in football).

If you are ejected a second time in a season, you are subject to additional, stiffer penalties, including a maximum penalty of suspension from play for the remainder of the season in that sport.

As a participant in school sports, you are expected to act with dignity, speak with courtesy and play with pride. In short, Respect The Game!

Why We Play The Games

For many of you, playing on your school teams may be the last time you will participate in competitive athletics. As a participant, you should work hard, have fun and strive to be the best. But just as important, you should also strive to be the best students, teammates and members of your community in preparation for the next phase of your life as a responsible adult and productive citizen.

The purpose of interscholastic athletics is to enrich your school experience; promote citizenship and sportsmanship; instill a sense of pride in community; teach lifelong lessons of teamwork and self-discipline, and help you grow physically and emotionally. In short, interscholastic athletic programs are educational in nature and therefore an extension of the classroom.

Other sporting organizations promote free player movement, are primarily designed to promote athletic development of the individual, and provide a showcase for the athletic talents of those individuals. However, these organizations do not share the primary educational purposes of OHSAA member schools and therefore cannot provide the unique type of competition created by the OHSAA through our member schools.

Statistics show that students who participate in interscholastic athletics programs tend to have higher grade-point averages, better attendance records, lower dropout rates and fewer discipline problems than the general student population. Statistics also show that only one percent of all high school participants will earn a Division I college athletic scholarship and approximately five percent will play collegiately in any division. Unlike major colleges and professional sports teams, interscholastic athletic programs do not exist to entertain spectators.

As your parents can attest, school goes by in a blur, but your memories of participating in school sports will stay with you for a lifetime. The OHSAA wants to make sure your time as an interscholastic athlete is meaningful and memorable.

The privilege of participating in educational athletics is one of the most exciting experiences of your life. Please maintain the proper perspective in this journey and remember why we play the games.

Ohio High School Athletic Association

Participating in your school's interscholastic athletics program is not only a privilege, but it also provides memorable experiences. The role of the OHSAA is to:

- Help ensure students are provided a positive environment for athletic participation;
- Ensure all rules, regulations and decisions are fair and equitable for all schools and participants;
- Ensure athletes play under safe conditions, and
- Ensure school sports programs remain a vital part of your educational experience.

Like the other 825 public and non-public high schools and approximately 800 7th and 8th grade schools, your school has volunteered to become a member of the OHSAA. Ohio is one of the top ranked states in the country with over 350,000 high school students competing in 24 sanctioned sports.

The OHSAA Commissioner and his staff are based in Columbus and their primary responsibilities are to:

- Interpret the rules and regulations for member schools;
- Conduct tournaments for high schools including sectionals, districts, regionals and state tournaments, and
- Serve as educators for officials, coaches, administrators and student-athletes and their parents.

As a member of the OHSAA, administrators and coaches annually affirm they will follow the OHSAA regulations that are approved by the membership. Any changes to those regulations must be approved by a majority of member school principals.

The OHSAA does not charge schools any membership fees or tournament entry fees. Schools are provided rulebooks, educational materials and other printed items along with catastrophe insurance coverage for all participants at a cost of approximately \$600,000 annually. Additionally, high schools are reimbursed for many of their tournament expenses and have the opportunity to keep a portion of receipts from the sale of tournament tickets.

Other key programs and initiatives of the OHSAA include:

- Providing annual scholarships totaling over \$100,000 to high school students who excel in athletics and academics;
- Licensing, registering and training nearly 17,000 contest officials, and
- Ensuring coaches are certified to work with student-athletes through an ongoing coach education program.