

REGULATIONS



Primary School Competition

Olympic Handball Regulations 2025/26

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INTRODUCTION

Over 30 million people in 183 countries take part in the game of (Olympic) Handball. Olympic Handball Ireland (OHI) acts as the National Governing Body (NGB) for the sport of Olympic Handball for the whole island of Ireland.

Established in 1975, OHI is recognized by Sport Ireland, the Federation of Irish Sport, the Olympic Federation of Ireland, the European Handball Federation, and the International Handball Federation as the sole governing body for the sport of Olympic handball in Ireland.

Olympic Handball is applicable to all age groups, with adaptations to the rules dependent on physical space conditions (hall sizes, indoor/outdoor), equipment (balls, goals), time restraints, and human resources (referees volunteers, OHI representatives).

1. REGISTRATION

1.1 REGISTRATRATION PROCESS

The process for registration will happen through the "GameDay" platform. Schools will register ONLY the number of teams they wish to enter in the competition and the school will be automatically affiliated with Olympic Handball Ireland, having access to discounts on equipment, education and etc.

1.2 ACTIVE COUNTIES & NEW COUNTIES

Registration will be open for the following ACTIVE counties:

- Carlow, Cork, Dublin, Kerry, Kildare, Limerick, Longford, Meath, Roscommon, Tipperary, Westmeath, Wexford.

The NEW counties, will then fill out a form to gather interest from schools to enter the competition and will require a minimum number of teams (depending on location). See 1.3.

1.3 MINIMUM NUMBER OF TEAMS

In order for the competition to happen in the NEW county, a certain number of registered teams is required and is variable depending on the county. The organisation will be in contact as soon as registrations close to inform the next steps.

1.4 COSTS

The costs are as follows:

- 1 team - €60
- 2 teams - €110
- 3 teams - €145
- 4 teams - €170
- additional teams - €30 each

1.5 OPENING & CLOSING DATES

Early Bird Registrations (with 10% discount) will open on the 12th of May 2025 until the 8th of June 2025. From the 9th of June until the 20th of September, the regular fee will be applied (see 1.4).

A complete table with provisional dates for County Finals, Provincial Finals & All-Ireland finals is in the appendix section of this document.

1.6 REFUNDS

Refunds will not be provided in any circumstance.

2. COMPETITION FORMAT

The Primary School competition format will be divided into 4 phases – local(1), county(2), provincial(3), and national(4).



2.1. LOCAL REGIONAL GROUP PHASES

The local regional group will be the 1st phase of our competition, where teams from each county will be allocated to a group based on their location/proximity and teams entered in the competition. Local Regional Group Phases will happen from October to December 2025.

Each group will be formed by a number of schools that will compete for a place to reach the regional county finals. The number of teams per group and how many teams will go through the next phase of the competition will be determined based on the number of teams registered in the county and the allocation of groups.

This phase of the competition must be done in the format of a blitz day. This phase of the competition will be led by teachers with the assistance of OHI, with the following responsibilities:

By OHI:

- To divide the groups
- Create the Schedule
- Act as mediators in the groups to ensure there's a date and venue to play the group stage.

By Teachers:

- Report to OHI the dates and venues for the group stage of the competition
- Refereeing for the blitz day
- Submit results to OHI after the matches have been played

Regulation will be provided by the Olympic Handball Ireland to all school taking part.

General Meeting and refereeing online training date will be informed on a later stage.

The Local Regional Group Phase deadline is the 12th of December 2025. All results must be submitted to OHI until this date.

2.2. COUNTY FINALS

The 2nd phase of the competition will be organised by Olympic Handball Ireland and will be played throughout January & February (2026). Volunteers (teachers) from schools not involved in the competition at this stage are welcome to join the event in the capacity they were trained in – refereeing, table official, or simply by helping to run the day.

The county finals will be played between the top teams of each group, decided by the ranking at the end of the 1st phase of the competition (Local Regional Group Phase).

The number of teams qualifying for this 2nd phase of the competition will be determined by the number of registered teams.

Adjustments to the finalists, if needed, will be made on a needs basis, and considering the rankings during the 1st phase of the competition.

The County Finals will be held on a blitz day format where teams play a group stage and finals based on their group qualification – winners of each category in each participant county will qualify to the next phase of the competition.

Matches draw will be done prior to the event, by GameDay Platform and schools will receive the schedule in advance.

2.3 PROVINCIAL FINALS

The Provincial phase will be organised by Olympic Handball Ireland and will happen in the month of March 2026.

The 3rd phase of the competition will count with the winners of each category in all the participant counties in the provinces of Ulster, Munster, Leinster & Connacht being represented.

The Provincial Finals will be held on a blitz day format where teams play a group stage and finals based on their group qualification.

Matches draw will be done prior to the event, by GameDay Platform and schools will receive the schedule in advance.

2.4 ALL-IRELAND FINALS

The All-Ireland finals will be organised by Olympic Handball Ireland and will happen in April 2026.

The provincial winners of each category in the provinces of Ulster, Munster, Leinster & Connacht will be qualified for the All-Ireland Finals.

The All-Ireland Finals will be held on a blitz day format where teams play a group stage and finals based on their group qualification.

Matches draw will be done prior to the event, by GameDay Platform and schools will receive the schedule in advance.

3. AGE GROUPS, COURT SIZE, BALL, GAME TIME AND ALTERNATIVES OF THE SPORT

Students participating in the school competitions will be grouped according to the age categories outlined in the table below:

CATEGORY	CLASS/YEAR
MINIS (previously U11)	3rd & 4th classes (ROI) Year 5, Year 6 & Year 7 (NI)
JUVENILES (previously U13)	5th & 6th classes (ROI) Year 7 & Year 8 (Secondary) (NI)

The alternatives for the different competitions and for the different age groups are as follow:

CATEGORY	COURT SIZE (minimum)	BALL SIZE	GOAL SIZE	GAME LENGTH/BREAK	NUMBER OF PLAYERS
MINIS	20m x 18m	0	3mx2m*	Minimum 5 min per half	5 x 5
JUVENILES	20m x 18m	1	3mx2m	Minimum 5 min per half	5 x 5

- a) See technical-pedagogic rules
- b) Length of matches can be adapted depending on agreement between schools and/or the organiser.
- c) See 6.1.8 for goal size.

4.TEAMS

4.1 MINIS & JUVENILES (HANDBALL 5):

4.1.1 Five (5) players minimum and twelve (12) maximum per team. No more than the maximum number of players will be permitted to play the match.

4.1.2 At least 1 teacher being responsible for the Group/Team.

4.1.3 Ideally each match should have 1 Student/Teacher referee and 1 table official.

NOTE:

- Outfield Players must have uniform colours across the team.
- Goalkeepers must be in a separate colour from outfield players.
- Gloves are not allowed.

5. TECHNICAL - PEDAGOGIC REGULATION

5.1 Substitutions are unlimited and can happen at any stage of the game.

5.1.1 Players in the court need to leave the court before the substitute player can go in.

5.1.2 Substitution needs to be made in the designated area – near the table official.

5.2 In the case of disciplinary sanction (1-minute exclusion), the team in question may carry out a PEDAGOGICAL SUBSTITUTION (see 5.2.1).

5.2.1 PEDAGOGIC SUBSTITUTION – in case of a disciplinary sanction to a player (1-minute exclusion), another player from their team can replace them during that period, meaning the team will never be in numerical inferiority.

6. GENERAL RULES

6.1 MINIS & JUVENILES (Handball 5):

6.1.1 On the MINIS & JUVENILES Team/Groups it is accepted that the Team/Groups are constituted by boys and/or girls. The Teams/Groups registered with mixed players will compete in the boys group.

6.1.2 TEAM BUILDING - Per game, each team can have a minimum of 5 players and a maximum of 12 players.

6.1.3 Ball reposition is done by the goalkeeper, inside the goalkeeper's area, after the referee's whistle.

6.1.4 The goalkeeper (GK) must not cross the midfield line, except if GK is going to score a "7 meters" (penalty). In case of infraction of this rule, the team will be sanctioned with a free throw marked at the place where the GK committed the offense.

6.1.5 IT IS MANDATORY to use an individual defence (1x1) for the 1st period of the match and any type of defence can be used in the 2nd period of the match - one-line defence ("wall-type" defences) aren't allowed at any point.

6.1.6 Playing field – the recommended size of the playing field is a minimum of 20mx18m, however, it can go up to 40mx20m.

6.1.7 Matches can either be played in indoor halls or outdoors (concrete or astro). In the case of matches being played outdoors, the minimum measures must be respected.

6.1.8 Goal – The size of the goals to be used are 3mx2m (regular size), nevertheless in MINIS category, the adapted size goal (2.40mx1.60m) can be used. In the County Finals, Provincial Finals & All-Ireland Finals, regular size goals (3x2) will be used for MINIS & JUVENILES categories.

6.1.9 Goal Area – a semicircle of 5m radius with the centre in the middle of the goal line is used for the age categories.

6.1.10 Sanctions:

6.1.10.1 The exclusion time is 1 (one) minute.

6.1.10.2 After the 3rd exclusion (respective red card) – inclusive - from any player in the team, it will not be possible to replace the excluded player, so the team will play in numerical inferiority during the time of exclusion.

7. CLASSIFICATION, SCORING AND TIE DOWN

7.1. The classification of teams in the various phases of the Competitive Framework is determined by the sum of the score obtained in the total of games played, according to the following criteria:

VICTORY ----- 3 POINTS

TIE/DRAW ----- 2 POINTS

DEFEAT -----1 POINT

7.2. Final classification will be established in decreasing order of the points obtained; ranking 1st place the team with the highest number of points.

7.3. In the event of a tie in points in any stage of competition, the tiebreaker will be made as follows:

- a. By the number of points obtained in the games between them.
- b. The team that has the highest goals scored in total games carried out between all teams.
- c. The lowest number of goals conceded in total games carried out between all teams.
- d. Biggest difference between goals scored and conceded in total games carried out between all teams.
- e. In the event that a tie still exists, it is up to the organisation to determine the tiebreaker to be made.

NOTE:

- When a team, for whatever reason, is removed from the competition, all games played by/against them do not count towards the final ranking.

7.4 At all age groups, at the end of the regular time in the knockout games (County Finals, Provincial Finals & All-Ireland Finals), if any game ends in a draw, the following rules will be followed:

- 1 period of three (3) minutes extra time.
- If the draw subsist, "golden goal" rule will be applied (the first team to score a goal wins).

NOTE:

The start of the extra time and golden goal period will be determined by coin toss.

8. REFEREEING

8.1. In the “Local Group Stage” of the competition, teachers should be refereeing. In some counties, OHI referees might be available at an extra cost - please contact the organisation to arrange that. (subject to availability and location)

8.2 Olympic Handball Ireland will provide online training to all schools taking part in the competition (date TBC).

9. OMITTED CASES

9.1. Omissions in this Specific Regulation are analysed by the Olympic Handball Ireland (by the Director of Operations and the Technical Coordinator). In the event of any omissions during an event where immediate action/decision needs to be made, the group coordinator in conjunction with the teachers involved on the day will take a decision based on fairness, fair play, and the well-being of all involved.

Where an OHI representant is present, it will be in the last instances the final deliberate of a decision over the matter in question - not subject to appeal.

APPENDIX


1. TIMEFRAME

COMPETITION PHASE	START DATE	END DATE	ORGANISER	LOCATION
GROUP STAGE	OCTOBER	DECEMBER	OHI/TEACHERS	REGIONAL
COUNTY FINALS	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	OHI	COUNTY
PROVINCIAL FINALS	MARCH	MARCH	OHI	PROVINCES
ALL-IRELAND	APRIL	APRIL	OHI	MEATH

2. DATES AND LOCATION (PROVISIONAL)

COMPETITION PHASE	LOCATION	VENUE	DATE	ORGANISER
COUNTY FINALS	CO. CARLOW	SPELLMAN PARK, KILDAVIN (TBC)	19 th of January 2026	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. CORK	NEPTUNE STADIUM, CORK CITY	15 th of January 2026	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. DUBLIN	NATIONAL INDOOR ARENA	26 th of January 2026	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. GALWAY	KNOCKNACARRA COMMUNITY CENTRE	TBC	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. KERRY	KILLARNEY SPORTS & LEISURE CENTRE	14 th of January 2026	OHI

COMPETITION PHASE	LOCATION	VENUE	DATE	ORGANISER
COUNTY FINALS	CO. KILDARE	NATIONAL INDOOR ARENA	28 th of January 2026	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. LIMERICK	UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK	5 th of February 2026	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. LONGFORD	ST MARY'S COMMUNITY CENTRE	24 th of February 2026	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. MEATH	GORMANSTON COLLEGE	9 th of February 2026	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. ROSCOMMON	THE HUB, CASTLEBAR	25 th of February 2026	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. TIPPERARY	CANON HAYES	4 th of February 2026	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. WESTMEATH	CLONKILL GAA CLUB	30 th of January 2026	OHI
COUNTY FINALS	CO. WEXFORD	NAOMH EANNA (GOREY) GAA CLUB (TBC)	23rd of January 2026	OHI
PROVINCIAL FINALS	LEINSTER	GORMANSTON COLLEGE, CO. MEATH	10 th of March 2026	OHI
PROVINCIAL FINALS	MUNSTER	NEPTUNE STADIUM, CORK CITY	4 th of March 2026	OHI
PROVINCIAL FINALS	CONNACHT (TBC)	TBC	19 th of March 2026	OHI
ALL-IRELAND FINALS	CO. MEATH	GORMANSTON COLLEGE, CO. MEATH	22 nd of April, 2026	OHI



For any NEW counties, a confirmation of dates and locations for the county finals will be informed at a later date, after the registration phase is closed.

NOTE: the dates informed above are not final dates and can be rescheduled by the organiser due to hall availability.