



Maximum Effort Policy 2025

PURPOSE

Special Olympics New Zealand is committed to ensuring the quality of its sports events that clubs offer are of a high standard.

Due to both the unique divisioning process utilized at Special Olympics competitions to ensure that athletes are competing against other athletes of similar ability and the unique awards process which provides recognition to all competitors: it is necessary to employ the Maximum Effort Rule to ensure that participants are competing with Maximum Effort at all stages of competition.

Therefore, the Maximum Effort Rule is used to:

- a. To provide a fair competitive environment for athletes – Equalization of Competition
- b. To provide a resource for officials/event directors to create a fair competitive environment

Please note that the Maximum effort rule is a rule and not a guideline. This is not to be confused with the Special Olympics percentage guideline used to division athletes for equitable competition.

Sports Rules Article 1 - 11.2.2.1 Percentage Rule - A percentage is established and published for each event in which the rule will be applied. Athletes and teams may not exceed this percentage of improvement from their divisioning score to their final score. If an athlete or team exceeds this performance percentage, disqualification may take place.

The following rules apply in the enforcement of the Maximum Effort Rule here in New Zealand.

1. Percentage Rule - 15% and 25% are the percentages used to enforce the Maximum effort rule.



- Athlete/teams may not exceed this percentage of improvement from their preliminary score to their final score.
- If an athlete exceeds this performance percentage, **disqualification may take place.**
- In **Athletics** and **Swimming**, we have a **25%** for identified developmental/fundamental level events and a **15 %** for all other core events.

Swimming Fundamental Events – 25% Applies

- 15m Walk
- 15m Unassisted Swim
- 15m Flotation
- 25m Flotation
- 15m Kick Board
- 25m Kick Board
- 15m Assisted Swim
- 25m Assisted Swim
- 25m Freestyle
- 4 x 25m Freestyle Relay

All Other Swimming Events – 15% Applies

Athletics Fundamental Events – 25% Applies

- 100m Assisted Wheelchair
- 10m Wheelchair Race
- 25m Motorised Wheelchair
- 25m Motorised Wheelchair Obstacle
- 30m Motorised Wheelchair Slalom
- 50m Motorised Wheelchair
- 50m Motorised Wheelchair Assisted
- 50m Motorised Wheelchair Slalom
- 60m Wheelchair
- 60m Wheelchair Assisted
- 10m Assisted Walk
- 25m Assisted Walk
- 25m Run
- 25m Walk
- 60m Walk



- Softball/Tennis ball throw
- Standing long jump

All other Athletics Events – 15% Applies

Please note that an athlete who have been flagged in GMS as exceeding their Maximum Effort threshold should only be disqualified if their score is more than 5% better than that of the top-performing, non-flagged athlete in their division. This allows any competitor to potentially win their division. See GMS Sporting guides for implementation guidance.

POLICY

In New Zealand, we have identified

- The Maximum Effort Policy (MEP) will only be enforced at ALL **Tier Two/Three** events in **Athletics** and **Swimming**, across all disciplines & divisions, **EXCEPT** in the top division (fastest division) of any event or a straight finals event where no other divisions are available.
- For all other sports, MEP **will not** be enforced, **UNLESS** the Competition Management can clearly identify an athlete/team did not complete their divisioning/Prelim Heats/Events with maximum effort with the clear intent to gain an unfair advantage.
- **MEP will not be enforced in heats/preliminary rounds** as athletes will be appropriately re divisioned for finals if suitable to do so.
- All athletes who are disqualified for Maximum Effort violation reasons will be awarded a Participation Ribbon in recognition of their performance.
- Disqualification through technical foul is not related to MEP. Coaches will follow SONZ rules outlined within that particular sport.
- Head coaches need to ensure that they fully understand the process that will be used within competition. **Coaches and athletes that seek to take advantage of**



the MEP with intent to gain an unfair advantage at any stage of competition may be disqualified.

- Coaches are encouraged to submit a Performance Adjustment Declaration form (PAD) if they would like an athletes slower/shorter heat/preliminary time/score to be used for re divisioning. This should only be submitted if it is of genuine belief that an athletes slower/shorter heat/preliminary time/score is a genuine reflection of the athlete's current ability.
- This will avoid an athlete being automatically placed in a division based off the best time/score between the athletes preliminary time/score and the athletes entry time/score.

It is **crucially important** that all coaches know the Maximum Effort Rule and how the Competition Manager will enforce this during competition. The Maximum Effort rule should always be explained at the first Head Coaches meeting.

This Policy was prepared by the Special Olympics New Zealand Partnership and Sports Manager in consultation with the Special Olympics club working groups and signed off by the Special Olympics New Zealand Sports Committee.

Updated 14/7/25