



# U.S. OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC TRIALS DEMONSTRATIONS PARTICIPANT RULES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## General Inquiries

### **Q: Why did the USOPC create the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Trials Demonstration Participant Rules?**

The United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) values the expression of Team USA athletes and believes that their right to advocate for racial and social justice, and be a positive force for change, aligns with the fundamental values of equality that define Team USA and the Olympic and Paralympic movements. These rules were developed in response to the [recommendations from the Team USA Council on Racial and Social Justice published in December 2020](#). These rules uphold the USOPC's position to:

- Support athlete expression and their right to advocate for racial and social justice, and be a positive force for change
- Not sanction athletes who respectfully engage in demonstrations in support of racial and social justice at a Trials Event, and
- Protect athletes' participation rights at a U.S. Olympic or Paralympic Trials event.

### **Q: How were these rules developed?**

The USOPC convened a working group comprised of AAC Leadership representation and NGB representatives along with internal staff from key functional areas, such as Athlete Services, DE&I, NGB Services, and Legal. This group was supported by outside counsel with subject matter expertise in drafting similar policies. Throughout the drafting process, the Team USA Council for Race and Social Justice was engaged to review and provide input and edits to the rules. Their thoughtful feedback along with the feedback from the USOPC working group greatly informed the final set of rules.

### **Q: To whom does the USOPC's Trials Demonstration Rules apply?**

Any athlete, staff, support personnel, or other person who has access to athletes or athlete areas during Trials.

### **Q: When and where do these rules apply?**

These rules only apply to the Trials Venue, on the field of play or other restricted area at a competition, during the time of the Trials Event.

### **Q: Do these rules apply to the Olympic or Paralympic Games?**

No. The USOPC will document a separate set of rules for these events to take into consideration rules set by the IOC, IPC and Organizing Committee.

### **Q: What demonstrations are allowed under these new rules?**

The USOPC's Trials Demonstration Rules allow participants to engage in demonstrations that support racial and social justice causes. The Rules define what a Racial and Social Justice Demonstration is and what types of expression are not permitted at a Trials event. Participants who engage in a Racial and Social Justice Demonstration within the parameters set by the Rules will not be sanctioned or face consequences for their expression.



## Terminology and Examples

### **Q: What is a Racial and Social Justice Demonstration (R&S Demonstration)?**

An R&S Demonstration is one that is aimed at advancing racial and social justice or promoting the human dignity of individuals or groups that have historically been underrepresented, minoritized, or marginalized in their respective societal context. An R&S Demonstration does not include any “Impermissible Elements” as defined in the rules. These are the only types of demonstrations allowed at a Trials event.

### **Q: What are some examples of an R&S Demonstration?**

Some examples of an R&S demonstration include, but are not limited to:

- Wearing a hat or face mask with phrases such as “Black Lives Matter” or “Trans Lives Matter” or words such “equality” or “justice”.
- Orally advocating for equity/equal rights for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals, or other historically underrepresented, marginalized or minoritized populations.
- Holding up one’s fist at the start line or on the podium.
- Kneeling on the podium or at the start line during the national anthem.

More examples can be found in the rules document.

### **Q: What are “Impermissible Elements”?**

“Impermissible Elements” are expressions that advocate specifically against other people, their dignity, or their rights, which may include Hate Speech, Racist Propaganda, or threatening, abusive, or Discriminatory Remarks. Additionally, “impermissible elements” are acts that physically impede events of the Trials (competition, medal ceremony, etc.), cause physical harm to others and/or to property, or violate applicable laws.

### **Q: What are examples of “Impermissible Elements”?**

Impermissible Elements include the use of slurs, phrases or gestures that denigrate, ridicule, or mock a person or persons based upon their race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, economic status, nationality, or country of origin. Specific examples include, but are not limited to:

- Wearing a hat or face mask with a hate symbol or hate speech on it.
- Making hand gestures affiliated with hate groups, like white supremacist or terrorist signs.
- Violent protests or acts that damage property at the Trials Venue or physically threaten or harm other people.
- Actions/behaviors physically impeding athletes’ right to compete, such as blocking lanes by laying on a track
- Display of historically discriminatory signs or flags, such as the Confederate flag.
- Defacing, distorting, or causing physical harm to a national flag.
- Protests aimed explicitly against a specific organization, person, or group of people.

### **Q: Am I allowed to demonstrate for something that is not a racial or social justice cause so long as it also does not contain any impermissible elements?**

The only demonstrations allowed under the Rules are those that are in support of racial and social justice causes and do not contain any impermissible elements. These types of demonstrations align with the Movement’s philosophy that sport should be accessible to all and free from discrimination. Demonstrating for other causes is not allowed at a Trials event, even if it does not contain any impermissible element.

### **Q: Are there other ways for me to show my support of a cause?**

Team USA athletes are encouraged to express their support for causes they believe in through other forums such as in the press, social media and areas outside the Trials Venues. These platforms are opportunities for athletes to show support for causes that are outside the scope of these Rules. While these Rules do not apply to platforms outside Trials Venues, the USOPC encourages athletes to use their voice in a positive way and refrain from using “impermissible elements”. Athletes should also be aware



that other rules, such as NGB Codes of Conduct, may govern these non-Trials spaces and carry their own consequences.

## Process and Enforcement

### **Q: What happens if I choose to engage in a demonstration at a Trials Event?**

All demonstrations at Trials Events are subject to review by the USOPC for possible violations. If a USOPC representative observes a demonstration or is made aware of a demonstration, they will immediately give the participant a “Notice of Review” letter to inform them that the demonstration will be reviewed by the USOPC Rules Application Team.

### **Q: What is the Rules Application Team and what is their role?**

The Rules Application Team is comprised of 3 individuals pulled from a pool of USOPC staff across various key functional areas, such as DE&I, Athlete Services, NGB Services, Event Operations, and Legal. This group will be convened as quickly as possible to review a demonstration, determine if there were any violations to the rules, and impose sanctions proportionate to any violation(s).

### **Q: What knowledge does the Rules Application Team have in understanding demonstrations and racial and social justice causes?**

The Rules Application Team, along with other USOPC staff involved in the demonstration process, receive training to understand the rules along with DE&I training focused on challenging personal biases. The team has access to procedural resources and an external DE&I expert is available for the team to call upon as needed.

### **Q: Are athletes allowed to compete while the Rules Application Team is reviewing a demonstration?**

Yes, athletes will be allowed to compete, or continue competing, while the Rules Application Team completes their review of the demonstration; however, the USOPC reserves the right to immediately remove an athlete if a demonstration puts themselves or others in danger, threatens to damage property or is in violation of local laws.

### **Q: What happens if the Rules Application Team determines that my demonstration did not violate the rules?**

If there is no violation, the USOPC on-site representative will follow up with you to share this information. All attempts will be made to follow up in person at the event. If you are no longer at the venue, you may receive this update via phone call and/or email.

### **Q: What happens if the Rules Application Team determines that my demonstration did violate the rules?**

If your demonstration contained “Impermissible Elements” or was an “Other Demonstration”, the Rules Application Team will determine that there was a violation of the rules. Sanctions proportionate to the violation will be imposed. The USOPC on-site representative will follow up and give you a Notice of Violation, which explains why there was a violation, what sanctions are imposed and information regarding your rights to challenge the sanctions. All attempts will be made to follow up in person at the event. If you are no longer at the venue, you may receive this update via phone call and/or email.

### **Q: Are athletes allowed to compete if the Rules Application Team determines there was a violation?**

Yes, athletes will be allowed to compete, or continue competing; however, if the sanctions imposed by the Rules Application Team called for disqualification, all results will be flagged as provisional until a final hearing is complete unless the athlete chooses to not contest the sanction of disqualification. The only exception is in the case of demonstrations that put the participant themselves or others in danger, threaten to damage property or are in violation of local laws, which may result in immediate removal from the competition.



## Violations and Consequences

### **Q: Who can report an “Impermissible Element”?**

Any individual may report an alleged violation of these Rules to a USOPC representative on site at the Trials, or by contacting [trialsconduct@usopc.org](mailto:trialsconduct@usopc.org).

### **Q: What sanctions can the USOPC impose?**

The USOPC may impose a proportionate consequence on a participant who violates these rules, such as (but not limited to):

- A warning
- Performance of a specific task to be completed as a condition of reinstatement
- Limitations on further access to Trials Venues
- Expulsion and/or disqualification from Trials
- Loss of the privilege to participate in future Olympic, Paralympic, Pan American, Parapan American, and Youth Olympic Games, as well as other USOPC-sponsored events

### **Q: How long do I have to decide if I want to request a hearing with the Trials Administrative Board (TAB)?**

You must make your request for a hearing with the TAB in writing and within 90 minutes of the receiving the notification of violation. The only exception is if the Notice of Violation is received less than 90 minutes before a Trials event in which the Participant is competing, in which case the hearing request must be made within 30 minutes of the conclusion of that event. Requests can be submitted via email to [DRU@usopc.org](mailto:DRU@usopc.org).

### **Q: What are my rights if I request a hearing with the TAB?**

Participants have the right to be heard at the TAB hearing and may have counsel present at any point during the hearing at their own expense. The Office of the Athlete Ombuds is available to provide athletes with independent and confidential advice regarding their rights under these rules and to assist in the resolution of athlete concerns, grievances, and disputes. Athletes may contact the Athlete Ombuds at [ombudsman@usathlete.org](mailto:ombudsman@usathlete.org) and 719-866-5000 or visit [usathlete.org](http://usathlete.org) for more information and resources.

### **Q: Who is on the TAB?**

The Trials Administrative Board is comprised of the following individuals:

- USOPC Board Chair
- USOPC CEO
- National Governing Body Council (NGBC) Chair
- Athlete’s Advisory Council (AAC) Chair
- 10 Year+ Athlete

The TAB makeup is reflective of the USOPC bylaws to ensure 33% athlete representation. There is an alternate identified for each of these individuals if someone is unavailable or in the event of a conflict of interest in a particular case.

### **Q: What knowledge does the TAB have in understanding demonstrations and racial and social justice causes**

TAB members receive training to understand the rules along with DE&I training focused on challenging personal biases. The TAB also has an outside DE&I expert available to call upon as needed. This resource will not be the same resource available to the Rules Application Team to mitigate any possible conflict of interest.



**Q: What sanctions can the TAB impose for a violation of the rules?**

The TAB has the authority to impose any sanction, including removal. The sanction will be determined by a majority of the TAB based on the evidence presented. The sanction will be in effect immediately after a decision is made, unless stated otherwise.

**Q: Can I appeal the decision made by the TAB?**

No, decisions made by the TAB are final and binding. There is no further appellate process.

**Q: Are athletes allowed to compete if the TAB determines there was a violation?**

If the TAB determines a violation occurred and imposes sanctions to disqualify the athlete, the athlete will be immediately removed from the competition and all prior results will be disqualified. If the TAB sanctions are something other than disqualification, the athlete may be allowed to proceed with the competition and their results can be used in team selection.

## Resources and Support

**Q: What resources are available to me to better understand the rules?**

Athletes are encouraged to read the entire rules document, watch the educational video, and participate in town hall discussions to better understand the rules. Additionally, athletes may contact [athleteservices@usopc.org](mailto:athleteservices@usopc.org) at the USOPC with specific questions regarding these rules.

**Q: Can I discuss a possible demonstration with someone at the USOPC to make sure it does not violate the rules in advance of my Trials event?**

Yes, Athlete Services is available to discuss possible demonstrations with athletes and offer advice to ensure there are no violations. This is optional and athletes are not required to discuss plans involving demonstrations in advance.

**Q: Can the Office of the Athlete Ombuds answer questions related to these Rules?**

Yes, the Office of the Athlete Ombuds is available to provide athletes with independent and confidential advice regarding these rules. Athletes may contact the Athlete Ombuds at [ombudsman@usathlete.org](mailto:ombudsman@usathlete.org) and 719-866-5000 or visit [www.usathlete.org](http://www.usathlete.org) for more information and resources.

**Q: How will the USOPC support me if I make an R&S Demonstration and receive negative backlash?**

The USOPC will publicly support a participant's right to engage in a racial and social justice demonstration under the rules. Retaliation against a participant for engaging in a racial and social justice demonstration by individuals within the jurisdiction of the USOPC will be subject to the USOPC anti-retaliation rules. Participants should be aware of the possibility that third parties may react to a racial and social justice demonstration and that some of these reactions may be negative. The USOPC will not be able to prevent third parties from making statements or taking actions of their own. Each participant must make their own personal decision about the benefits and risks that may be involved.

**Q: What resources are available to me if I receive negative backlash?**

The USOPC will help connect athletes with available resources to support them in the event they receive negative backlash. Athletes should contact Athlete Services at [athleteservices@usopc.org](mailto:athleteservices@usopc.org) to inquire about these resources.