



ORGANIZER RESOURCE

Event Sanctioning Guide

Requirements, Standards, and What OCA Sanctioning Means

We are extraordinarily open about what people can compete at. We are not casual about how competition is conducted.

Open Competition Alliance sanctions competition across an enormous range of disciplines, formats, traditions, and newly invented ideas. This guide explains the standards an event must meet to carry the OCA-Sanctioned designation.

GAME FOR ANYTHING.

1. What OCA Sanctions

In principle: almost anything that can be meaningfully competitive. OCA welcomes established sports and arts, neighborhood traditions, judged exhibitions, games, performance contests, crafts, novelty competitions, skill demonstrations, head-to-head formats, and competitive activities that may not yet fit neatly into any traditional governing structure.

Unusual is not a disqualifier. A competition may be serious, playful, highly technical, theatrical, physical, traditional, experimental, or gloriously niche.

THE BOUNDARY

OCA welcomes unconventional competition. It does not sanction discrimination, denigration, exploitation, or dehumanization disguised as competition.

OCA will not sanction activities whose competitive premise or operation is built around prejudicial, biased, degrading, exclusionary, or dehumanizing treatment of people or protected groups. This standard does not prohibit legitimate contact activities, combat or collision sports, physical competition, satire, rivalry, theatrical conflict, or other intense formats when they are conducted with appropriate consent, rules, safety controls, and respect for participants.

The question is not, “Is this unusual?” The question is, “Can this be conducted fairly, safely, respectfully, and transparently?”

2. Sanctioning Is Discretionary

All event and competition sanctioning decisions are made at the sole discretion of the Open Competition Alliance. OCA may approve, approve with conditions, request changes or additional information, defer, deny, suspend, or withdraw sanctioning when circumstances warrant.

Reasons may include, but are not limited to:

- Incomplete, contradictory, or materially unclear rules.
- Scoring, advancement, tie, or result procedures that cannot reasonably be applied fairly and consistently.
- Inadequate planning for qualified officials, scorekeeping, safety, or safeguarding.
- Material conflicts of interest that are not appropriately disclosed or managed.
- Discriminatory, degrading, exploitative, or otherwise unacceptable event practices.
- Misleading advertising, material misrepresentation, or inability to verify important information in the sanction application.
- Serious concerns about event integrity, organizer conduct, participant welfare, or legal compliance.
- Previous significant noncompliance with OCA requirements or misuse of OCA branding.
- Circumstances that create unreasonable risk to participants, the public, the event, or OCA.

A SANCTION IS NOT AN IDEOLOGICAL ENDORSEMENT

OCA sanctioning confirms acceptance of the competition within the OCA framework. It does not mean OCA created the discipline, controls its culture, or endorses every artistic, technical, cultural, political, commercial, or stylistic viewpoint expressed at the event.

3. Documented Rules and Scoring Procedures

Every OCA-sanctioned competition must be able to document how the competition works and how results are determined. OCA takes procedural fairness and scoring integrity seriously.

At minimum, the competition should be able to answer:

- Who may enter, and how is eligibility determined?
- What are competitors being asked to do?
- What is being evaluated?
- Against what standard, rubric, opponent, field, or criterion is performance evaluated?
- How is a judge's decision expressed: score, rank, recall, vote, pass/fail, proficiency level, or another method?
- How are multiple judges, rounds, criteria, or audience components combined?
- How do competitors advance from one stage to the next?
- How are ties resolved?
- How are penalties, disqualifications, withdrawals, and DNS situations handled?
- How are final results verified, approved, and published?

OCA does not require one universal competition model or scoring system. Recall ballots, rankings, weighted rubrics, head-to-head decisions, proficiency thresholds, audience scoring, judge/audience hybrids, round-robin or bracket systems, mathematical score aggregation, established discipline-specific systems, and newly designed formats may all be appropriate.

THE STANDARD

The method may be wonderfully unconventional. The procedure must still be clear, fair, consistently applied, and capable of producing defensible results.

4. OCA Can Help Build the Competition

Organizers do not need to arrive with every procedural question solved. OCA is happy to provide guidance and suggestions when an event needs help developing or refining its competitive structure.

OCA may assist with:

- Competition stages and advancement structures.
- Rubric and criterion design.
- Scoring scales and weighting.
- Judge-panel structure.
- Head-to-head, battle, audience, hybrid, proficiency, or experimental formats.
- Tie procedures.
- Penalty and disqualification procedures.
- Score aggregation and result verification.
- Conflict-of-interest procedures.
- Rules clarity and competitor-facing explanations.

You bring the competition. We help make the structure stronger.

5. Required OCA-Certified Event Organizer

Every OCA-sanctioned event must designate at least one OCA-Certified Event Organizer. This person serves as the primary individual responsible for OCA compliance and for ensuring that the event operates in accordance with the approved sanction, documented rules, official assignments, reporting obligations, and applicable OCA policies.

OCA Event Organizer training is provided completely free of charge.

6. Required OCA-Certified Scorekeeper / Scrutineer

Every OCA-sanctioned competition must have at least one OCA-Certified Scorekeeper/Scrutineer. This official is responsible for the integrity of score collection, tabulation, advancement, result verification, and official result records as applicable to the competition format.

The OCA-Certified Event Organizer may also serve as the required Scorekeeper/Scrutineer if that individual holds the applicable certification.

7. Adjudicators and Discipline-Specific Qualification

Judges must be qualified in the disciplines they are assigned to judge. OCA provides comprehensive general adjudicator education, but OCA does not and cannot provide discipline-specific technical training for every competitive activity that may exist.

OCA General Adjudicator Training is available completely free of charge. It addresses fairness, ethics, scoring systems, rubrics, bias, conflicts of interest, panel conduct, ties, penalties, score integrity, audience and hybrid judging, head-to-head formats, proficiency evaluation, feedback, and other principles that apply across competitive disciplines.

Registry Events

OCA Registry events must use OCA-Certified Adjudicators. Any additional registry-specific requirements must also be met.

Non-Registry Sanctioned Events

Non-Registry sanctioned events must still use appropriately qualified adjudicators, but those adjudicators are not necessarily required to hold OCA certification. Organizers remain responsible for demonstrating that the judges' knowledge, experience, training, recognized community standing, or other qualifications are appropriate to the activity being judged.

Path to OCA-Certified Adjudicator

A sanctioned event or its organizer may put forward an adjudicator for consideration as an OCA-Certified Adjudicator when the individual can demonstrate discipline-specific expertise and has completed OCA's General Adjudicator Training. OCA reviews certification requests individually and may request additional information, documentation, references, or evidence of qualification.

TWO KINDS OF COMPETENCE

OCA's general training establishes competency in fair adjudication. The discipline community establishes whether a judge actually knows the craft being judged.

8. Conflicts of Interest

Sanctioned competitions must maintain a reasonable process for identifying, disclosing, and managing conflicts of interest. Potential conflicts may include family, romantic, financial, employment, coaching, sponsorship, ownership, close personal, active dispute, or direct competitive relationships.

Disclosure does not automatically require recusal in every case. Some competitive communities are small, and qualified officials may have unavoidable relationships with participants. The event must nevertheless apply its conflict procedures consistently and use recusal, replacement, panel adjustments, disclosure, or other safeguards when appropriate.

9. Safeguarding Requirements

All OCA-sanctioned events are expected to protect participant welfare and comply with applicable OCA safeguarding standards.

Any sanctioned event that permits participation by minors, defined by OCA for this purpose as anyone under 18 years of age, must designate a Safeguarding Lead. The Safeguarding Lead must have completed the OCA Safeguarding course and assessment.

Youth-inclusive events must comply with the [OCA Safeguarding Policy for Sanctioned Events](#), including any requirements applicable to supervision, communication, reporting, participant access, photography, transportation, changing areas, lodging, and other risk contexts.

SAFEGUARDING IS AN EVENT RESPONSIBILITY

Sanctioning does not transfer an organizer's duty to maintain a safe environment to OCA. Organizers remain responsible for implementing required safeguards on site.

10. Safety and Legal Compliance

OCA sanctioning does not replace any legal, regulatory, venue, insurance, licensing, permitting, medical, professional-certification, safety, or other requirement that may apply to the event or activity. The organizer is responsible for determining and complying with applicable requirements.

OCA's willingness to sanction a type of competition does not mean every proposed version of that activity is appropriate in every venue or jurisdiction.

11. Material Changes After Approval

OCA must be notified of material changes to an approved event. Examples include significant changes to dates or venue, competition format, eligibility, scoring method, advancement structure, official panel, safeguarding arrangements, or other matters that were material to the sanctioning review.

Minor administrative edits that do not alter the substance of the sanctioned competition generally do not require a new approval.

12. Results and Post-Event Reporting

Sanctioned events must submit official results and any required post-event reporting to OCA in the manner and timeframe specified for the event. Result submissions should accurately identify the event, discipline or division, competitors, placements or statuses, and any registry points or participation records where applicable.

Post-event reporting may also include:

- Required incident or safeguarding reports.
- Material score corrections or administrative adjustments.
- Withdrawals, disqualifications, or other result statuses that affect the official record.
- Organizer follow-up requested as a condition of sanctioning.
- Information needed for OCA member histories, registries, achievements, or the Open Circuit.

13. Use of OCA Sanctioning Marks

Approved events may identify themselves as OCA-Sanctioned and may use the official OCA sanctioning seal and Event ID in accordance with OCA branding requirements.

Sanctioning marks may not be used in a way that:

- Suggests OCA owns, operates, or directly manages the event when it does not.
- Extends sanctioning to divisions, dates, competitions, or activities that were not approved.
- Implies OCA endorses a sponsor, product, political viewpoint, commercial claim, or unrelated organization.
- Continues to represent an event as sanctioned after sanctioning has expired, been suspended, or been withdrawn.
- Alters the sanctioning seal in a way that undermines its identity or creates a misleading version.

14. Suspension or Withdrawal of Sanction

OCA may suspend, withdraw, or revoke sanctioning when an event no longer satisfies the standards on which approval was based or when circumstances make continued sanctioning inappropriate.

Examples include:

- Material deviation from approved rules or scoring procedures.
- Removal of required certified officials without appropriate replacement.
- Fraudulent, manipulated, or knowingly inaccurate scoring or results.
- Serious undisclosed conflicts of interest.
- Safeguarding or safety failures.
- Discriminatory, degrading, retaliatory, or exploitative conduct.
- Materially false information provided to OCA.
- Serious legal or regulatory concerns.
- Misuse of OCA branding or misrepresentation of sanction status.
- Other significant integrity or participant-welfare concerns.

Where appropriate and practicable, OCA may work with the organizer to correct deficiencies before sanctioning is withdrawn. OCA retains the authority to take immediate action when participant welfare, competition integrity, or other serious concerns require it.

15. What OCA Sanctioning Means

OCA-SANCTIONED

An OCA-Sanctioned competition has been reviewed and accepted within the Open Competition Alliance framework for fair procedure, accountable administration, qualified oversight, and alignment with OCA values.

OCA sanctioning does not mean OCA invented the discipline, controls its traditions, determines what technical excellence looks like, or requires every competition to look alike. The discipline community retains enormous latitude over its craft, culture, terminology, competitive style, divisions, and methods.

OCA's role is to protect the integrity of the competitive framework: clear rules, qualified oversight, fair and consistent scoring, respectful participation, appropriate safeguarding, transparent results, and accountable administration.

Standardize fairness, not creativity.

READY TO APPLY?

Bring us the competition. Bring us the rules. Bring us the wonderfully specific thing your community cares enough to compete at.

HELL YEAH. LET'S MAKE IT FAIR.

This guide summarizes general OCA sanctioning standards. Additional requirements may apply to particular registries, disciplines, event types, age groups, jurisdictions, venues, or risk contexts.