

Olympic (amateur) Boxing – quick guide to tournament rules

This is a brief guide to the major rules for amateur competition.

The fundamental rules governing amateur boxing are the same throughout the world, and are used from local tournaments all the way up to the Olympic Games.

Grooming, clothing and equipment for tournaments

Always bring your competition record book to the weigh-in. You must bring a red and a blue singlet so you can wear a singlet with the colour of the corner you are allocated. It is recommended that you wear headgear of the correct colour. If you are not clearly and quickly identifiable as “red” or “blue” then a judge may make an error and award your punch to the wrong corner. This is a risk during a busy bout with lots of fast action, especially with computer scoring.

- Males must be clean-shaven at the weigh-in each day.
- Your hands must be wrapped only in stretchable bandage or wraps 2.5 to 4.5 meters long and no wider than 5.7 cm, fastened with a small strip of tape.
- Your shorts may not exceed knee length
- If shorts and singlet are same colour, there must be a 10cm waistband in a contrasting colour
- You may provide your own headguard provided it carries an AIBA approval patch
- Gloves are always provided by the gloving stewards; you may NOT use your own gloves
- Males must always wear a groin protector, properly fastened in place
- Females may wear a breast protector

Definition of a scoring punch

Judges award points to a boxer for each scoring punch s/he lands. A scoring punch is one that:

- without being blocked, lands directly with knuckle closed glove on any part front sides of head or body (excluding arms) above the belt; and
- does not infringe the rules (i.e. is not a foul); and;
- connects with the weight of the body or shoulder.

A non-scoring punch is one which infringes the rules; or which lands on the arms; or is struck with any part other than the knuckle part of the closed glove; or which merely connects, without the weight of the body or shoulder. Non-scoring punches are (obviously) not scored by the judges.

Fouls

Rule infringements are called "fouls" and the referee will issue a caution, a warning or even a disqualification.

- Cautions may be given without stopping the contest. This is a quick gesture from the referee to let you know that you have done wrong, so that you can avoid repeating it.
- Warnings require the contest to be stopped, the infringement to be demonstrated, and the offender to be identified to the judges. The judges impose scoring penalties as a result.
- If a boxer receives three warnings in a bout, he/she must be disqualified.
- The referee may warn or disqualify without any prior caution or warning, if the foul is serious.

These actions are fouls:

- Hitting below belt, tripping, kicking, or using foot or knee
- Wrestling, lying on or throwing
- Hitting or pushing with head, shoulder, forearm or elbow
- Locking opponent's arm or head
- Blows to back, especially back of head, neck or kidney area
- Holding

- Hitting an opponent who is down or in the act of rising
- Spitting out the mouthguard
- Hitting whilst holding or pulling opponent
- Offensive or useless utterances
- Hitting with open glove, wrist or side of glove
- Pushing
- Holding arm straight out to obscure opponent's vision
- Making unfair use of the ropes
- Verbal or gestural coaching from the corner during a bout
- Aggressive behaviour to referee
- Not stepping back when ordered to 'break'
- Pivot blows
- Ducking below opponent's beltline in a dangerous manner
- Passive defence
- Attempting to strike your opponent after referee calls "break", without first stepping back
- If your mouthguard comes out three times in a bout for whatever reason

Age divisions (for both genders)

[The minimum age for boxer registration in Australia is 10, but may be higher in some states]

Master: aged 35 and over

Elite: aged 17-34

Youth: aged 17-18 (but may box as senior)

Junior: aged 15-16

Under-15: aged 13-14

Under-13: aged 11-12

Under 11: aged 10

Age division crossovers

Youth boxers (ie aged 17 or 18) can compete in their own age division or may elect to compete in the Elite (17+) division. Boxers under 17 may box a person more than 2 years older only with the approval of the senior judge/referee officials.

Weight divisions for selections and titles

For male boxers 17 and over, the upper limit of each weight category is: 48, 51, 54, 57, 60, 64, 69, 75, 81, 91kg, and 91+ kg.

For female boxers 17 and over, the divisions are 46, 48, 51, 54, 57, 60, 64, 69, 75, 81 and 81+kg. In Australia (but not internationally) we use 81, 91 and 91+kg.

Boxers aged less than 17 have these weight divisions: 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 57, 60, 63, 66, 70, 75, 80, & 80+kg. In Australia (but not internationally) we use 80, 86, 92 and 92+kg.

(For boxers under 15 years of age weighing below the 46kg division, 2kg increments from 22kg up are used).

In selections and titles, these weight divisions are mandatory. In other bouts, matching across weight divisions is acceptable provided the weight difference between the boxers is minimal.

Duration and number of rounds

Bouts vary in duration and number of rounds, depending on age and gender. Elite males box 3 rounds of 3 minutes, elite females 4 rounds of 2 minutes. In bouts that are not titles or selections, males and females over 17 may box 3x2 instead. Youth males do 4x2, youth females 3x2. Juniors and Masters box 3x2. There are special rules for Novices, refer to BAI's competition rules for details.

Touching gloves and shaking hands

When you are about to start your bout, the referee will call you to the centre of the ring to “touch gloves” as a sign of sportsmanship, then send you back to your corner ready for the bell. You must NOT touch gloves in this way during the actual bout. You can (and should) shake hands after the decision is announced. Do not leave the ring till any prizes or trophies have been presented.

The referee uses three commands – Box, Stop, and Break. You must stop immediately you hear the referee call STOP, and may not continue till you are told to BOX. The command BREAK is used when two boxers get entangled, and it requires you each to take a full step back then continue boxing. BREAK does not mean take a rest, nor drop your guard!

Types of decision

You can win a bout by one of the following methods:

- Points – at the end of the contest you have scored more hits than your opponent
- Retirement – your opponent fails to start a round, or retires or is retired by his corner during a round
- Disqualification – Referee disqualifies your opponent for a serious infringement
- Knockout – Your opponent is down for ten seconds and is counted out
- Outclassed (RSCO) - Referee stopped contest because your opponent is outclassed or unfit to continue
- Injury (RSCI) - Referee stopped contest because of injury to your opponent
- Head injury (RSCH) - Referee stopped contest because your opponent is unfit to continue after head blows
- Compulsory Count Limit (RSC CCL) , your opponent has reached the maximum number of 8-counts
- Walkover – You are in the corner ready to box but your opponent fails to enter the ring

The eight-count and compulsory count limit

Where a boxer is temporarily unable to defend him/herself (eg after receiving a hard blow), the referee stops the contest and counts to eight. Immediately the count begins, the other boxer must go to a neutral (white) corner and stand with hands at his/her side facing the centre of the ring.

If at the end of the count of eight, the injured boxer cannot safely continue (in the referee’s opinion), the contest is terminated and the injured boxer loses the bout (RSC). The contest is also terminated if a boxer receives too many eight-counts. For elite divisions, the compulsory count limit is invoked at 3 counts in a round or 4 in a bout. For all other divisions it is 2 counts in a round or 3 in a bout. This is also recorded as RSC.

Your safety - mandatory exclusion periods

If you lose a contest by Knockout or RSC (Head), you are prohibited from sparring or competing for 28 days, to ensure you are recovered. If you receive another exclusion within 3 months of the first, the second exclusion is for 3 months. If concussed, exclusion is 3-6 months.

Exhibition bouts

If you cannot be matched with a suitable opponent, the matchmaker may agree to an exhibition bout with a boxer who is not in your age or weight category. In exhibitions the boxers are required to focus on skill and to reduce the intensity of their punches. There is no winner.

Disclaimer

This is a quick reference for boxers and coaches. It is not an official document, does not cover all circumstances, and does not replace the AIBA Rules nor any competition rules of Boxing Australia or its affiliated state bodies.