

Bodyboarding Competition Rule Book by Kaikeha

2026 Edition

The intention of this document is to define and explain the fundamental procedures and rules of a bodyboarding competition, as well as to define the terminology and staff duties. This document may be used in whole or in part by any organization, event or club who may find it useful.

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Introduction: Bodyboarding Competitions are timed events with organized protocol where competitors ride waves while judges apply scoring. The objective is to rank the competitors through a set progression until there is a final ranking.

Definitions: Terms and titles defined.

Beach Marshall: Staff whose duty it is to check-in Competitors with their Competition Jersey assignment and inform them of competition Conditions.
*See Duties Section: Beach Marshall

Check-in: Process by which competitors receive their Competition Jersey

Competitors: Participants in the Bodyboarding Competition.

Competition Area: The water space where Competitors may ride waves to be scored during the event.

Competition Jersey: A specific color jersey used to identify each Competitor during each Heat.

Conditions: The specific parameters for a heat (ie; 15 minutes, top 2 waves). Also used in to describe environmental factors within the Competition Area (ie; onshore winds).

Division: A unique category with limits for participants; defined by age, gender, stance, ect. *See Appendix A (page 10) for a list of Kaikeha's most common Divisions.

Draw: The progression of Heats through Rounds required to reach a Final.

Event: The entirety of a specific Bodyboarding Competition.

Event Site: The land space where the logistics of the Event are staged and carried out.

Final: The last remaining round in any Division, consisting of a single Heat. The winner of this Heat will be crowned the Division's Event champion.

Head Judge: Staff whose duty it is to manage the judging area, the judges (and accompanying staff) and to make final decisions in specific instances.
*See Duties Section: Head Judge

Heat: A block of time allotted to a specific group of Competitors where their performance will directly lead to the Draw's Progression.

Heat time: The length of time granted for a Heat. Uniform throughout each Round, but may vary between Rounds. Typically longer for Finals.

Horn: The audio signal that alerts the start and stop of all Heats.

Jersey: A specialized shirt worn by athletes. *See "Competition Jersey"

Judge: Staff whose duty it is to assign numerical scores to each wave ridden by a Competitor. *See Duties Section: Judge, also Rules Section: Judge

Judging Panel: A group of (typically) 3 Judges working the same Heat. Overseen by the Head Judge.

Line-up: The specific area within the Competition Area that most of the quality waves are accessible from. This must be established for use of the Priority System.

Paddle-out: The process of leaving the shore to enter the Competition Area. Each Event must establish an orderly process for this, with the most critical aspect being the amount of time allotted to do so.

Priority System: A system used to create an order of right-of-way between Competitors within a Heat. *See Rules Section: Priority System

Progression: The process of advancement within each Division during the Event. Usually set by simple parameters, such as “top 2” advance (per heat). This will predictively form the Draw by setting the populations of successive Rounds.

Ride: A wave ridden by a Competitor and scored by the Judges.

Round: A series of Heats in the same stage in the Draw.

Tabulation: The process of calculating the final ranking of each Heat.

Wave-max: The maximum number of waves that each Competitor is permitted to ride during a Heat.

Duties Section: Arranged in a hierarchy to convey authority & responsibility.

The duties described below range in intensity and scope directly correlated to the Event’s size. Some Events may only require a few staff who perform multiple duties, while other Events may require multiple individuals to perform just one of these duties.

Event Organizer: Responsible for all organizing, scheduling, and staffing of Event, including all logistics and execution.

Technical Director: Staff responsible for all technical aspects of the Event, including all technical staff (detailed below) and their performing of specific duties relating to the running of Heats. Scope includes: calling the competition on or off depending on Conditions; processing all Heats and all functions hitherto; ensuring proper Progression of all Competitors; overseeing Judges and all staff who are operating systems such as priority and all visual and audio systems. A subordinate of Event Organizer.

Head Judge: Staff whose duty it is to manage all Judges and Systems Operators. Main role is to maintain order and cohesion within the Judging area. Also to limit the disparity between Judges scores appropriate to the level of Event (ie; at an amateur event for young beginners with inexperienced Judges - the difference between the highest score and the lowest score for the same ride may be permitted up to 2 points. While at a professional level Event, this number should rarely be more than 1 point, and never

more than 1.5). Duties also include: scheduling of breaks for Judges, assessment of Judging performance, and resolution of any disputes. The Head Judge will have the final decision on any split decisions represented within the Judging Panel and in any issues or complaints brought by Competitors. A subordinate of Technical Director.

Judge: Staff whose duty it is to assign numerical scores to each competitors wave rides. (More details in “Rules” section, “Judging”). A subordinate of Head Judge.

Systems Operator: Staff whose duty it is to operate the Horn accurately to start and stop all Heats. Also, to operate the visual systems that reflect the status of the Heat, including the priority system (when applicable). A subordinate of Head Judge.

Beach Marshall: Staff in charge of check-in process. Able to communicate effectively in the predominant language of the majority of Competitors. Main role is to check-in Competitors with their Competition Jersey assignments and inform them of the basic Conditions for their Heat. Will also receive returned Competition Jerseys from Competitors directly after completed Heats. Maintaining a record of who has retrieved and then returned their Competition Jersey is helpful in the event of tardiness or missing Jerseys. Will inform Competitors of the Heat Conditions and answer questions Competitors have, or direct them to someone able to do so. May also have information such as run schedule, Heat results and Progressions, and local beach-use tips. A subordinate of Technical Director, and will kindly perform duties requested by Event Organizer.

Beach Announcer: Staff who can communicate information over a sound system (when available). Tasks include: providing Event information; including Heat format, Heat results, live updates (if consistently offered), calling Competitors to check-in. A subordinate of Technical Director, but will kindly broadcast messaging from any event staff.

Priority Judge: Staff whose duty it is to identify each Competitors order in the priority sequence and to operate the visual / audio system used to alert the Competitors of the order. A subordinate of Head Judge.

Spotter: Staff whose duty it is to alert the Judging staff of 3 specific modes of the Competitors. Using a loud voice (that the entire Judging Panel can hear), the Spotter should announce for each color the following: “[color] paddling”, “[color] up!”, “[color] out”. *See Rules Section: Possession. This role is especially helpful when multiple Competitors are riding at the same time, due to split peaks and/or long rides. Binoculars are required when the Line-up is at a distance. A subordinate of Head Judge.

Water Patrol: Staff whose primary duty it is to keep the Competition Area clear from non-competitors. Water safety duties may also be coupled into this position. A subordinate of Event Organizer, and will kindly perform duties requested by Technical Director.

Process: This section further details the exact steps that accompany each aspect of the Event.

Planning: The Event must be planned in advance. Permission is required by specific governing authorities depending on location. Once permission (water-use and land-use) is granted for a set date at a specific location, the public can be informed. Staffing the Event and obtaining entries is the next necessary step and deadlines should be established for both. Soliciting for sponsorships is optional, but a wise option to offset costs incurred.

Execution: Day-of Event. Set-up is done well ahead of the scheduled start time, and systems are in place to begin running Heats. The Event schedule, should be mostly decided and made public, but if not - the final decision is made on what Division will begin. That Division is notified, via the events sound system and the first Heat is called to check-in.

Competition Area: Prior to event start, the Competition Area must be established. The area must be clearly communicated to and understood by staff and Competitors alike. Use of flags to demarcate the area can be helpful. This area must be free from non-competitors prior to and during the entire Event, which is the responsibility of the Water Patrol. Most events will only use a single Competition Area, but some may choose to use multiple Competition Areas. When there are two or more Competition Areas, it is even more important that Competitors understand the limits of the Competition Areas, and that there is clear communication pertaining to the scheduled Heats occurring at each of the Competition Areas.

Paddle-out: Access to the Competition Area should be highly organized. There should always be a set-time that is communicated to the Competitors regarding how far in advance of their Heat they are allowed to enter the water. Some events use a “beach-start” that allows for the Paddle-out to only begin when the preceding Heat has ended. Most events allow 5 minutes prior to the preceding Heat's completion. In extreme cases, more time may be necessary due to challenging wave Conditions. Competitors who Paddle-out prior to their Heat must always remain out of the way of the Competitors of the preceding Heat. Further organization of an exact location where all Paddle-outs occur, as well as an area in the water that the Competitors may wait until the preceding Heat ends may be helpful. In the event that a Competitor from a succeeding Heat hinders or interferes with a Competitor in an active (in-process) Heat a penalty will be issued equal to [priority/paddling] interference. Judges will determine and record this if it occurs.

Heats: Heat times are pre-set before the start of each Round. Heat times may vary throughout Divisions, but must remain the same within each Round. The most common Heat Time is 15 minutes. Heat Times can be as short as 10 minutes and as long as 30 minutes. The Heat is the foundational unit of the Event. Heats must be commenced and concluded accurately with the consistent use of a loud Horn. Typically a single blast will

commence the Heat and a double blast will conclude it with a short break of 10 - 60 seconds before commencing the next Heat. If no break is necessary, Heats can run "back-to-back" with only a single blast to define both the conclusion of one Heat and the commencement of the next. This timed system accompanied by the audio signals of a loud Horn is fundamental to the entire Event. It is also necessary to provide a visual system to display this information. The visual system must be clearly visible from the Line-up / take-off spot at the outer limits of the Competition Area. The most common and practical system is a board that can be rotated, painted red on one side and green on the other. Green can signal the heat is ON / active / in-process & red can signal that the heat is OFF / not active / not in-process. It is also possible to use flags, or lights depending on the equipment or systems available. Rides will only be scored when ridden within the parameters of the Heat (time and location). Rides before or after the Heat, or outside the Competition Area will not be scored.

Post-heat: It is the explicit responsibility of each Competitor to leave the Competition Area immediately upon the conclusion of their Heat. Riding a wave in the most direct route to shore is permitted, so long as it is done in the prone position and no maneuvers are performed. The immediate return of the Competition Jersey to the Beach Marshall is also mandatory. This expectation must be clearly communicated to the Competitors. Penalties may be applied (at the discretion of the technical director) if a Competitor's behavior outside of this standard is a detriment to other Competitors or the Event itself.

Tabulation: Each Competitor shall have their top scoring rides added together to calculate their Heat result. Most Events will count the 'top 2' scoring rides per Heat, although other arrangements can be made. Each Competitor's total score will be tabulated in relation to the other Competitors in the Heat. The highest total score will be ranked 1st and so on to establish the final Heat placings.

Progression: Progression is the process of advancing Competitors by eliminating others. Advancement is determined by where Competitors rank within their completed Heats. Progression typically applies to 50% of the Heat population. Occasionally, the winner of a Heat may advance directly to Round beyond the succeeding one. Progression needs to be established and communicated prior to the start of the Event, and any changes to the typical progression should be announced prior to the Round.

Breaks: There may be breaks scheduled or un-scheduled during the Event. These should be well communicated and coordinated to remain on-schedule. Breaks for staff are important, especially the Judging staff. A disciplined approach to scheduled staff breaks can greatly increase productivity, accuracy and staff cohesion. The standard arrangement for the Judging staff is: 3 Judges and 1 Head Judge working each Heat, with 1 Judge on break.

Rules: This section explains the rules that apply to the competition.

Judging Criteria:

Overall:

The most radical maneuvers performed in the most critical section of the wave.

Maneuvers:

Controlled and completed maneuvers performed with high degree of difficulty.

Combinations:

Multiple maneuvers of variety performed with speed, power and flow.

Barrels:

Heavy &/or long barrels ridden with speed and exited cleanly.

Assessment:

The above descriptions present the ideal to maximize scoring potential. The Competitor's execution will be analyzed through these criteria and according to the wave Conditions.

Scoring Range / Judging Scale: The scoring range is between 0 and 10. "0.0" is only used to reflect that a wave was ridden, but is ineligible for scoring - possibly due to being outside of a particular stance or due to an interference. "10" is the maximum score possible and should be used by each judge at least once on any given day of competition. This demonstrates a proper use of the complete scoring range, and even used several times throughout a day can still be considered good practice. A helpful way to approach the scale is by assigning 5 words that can portray every ride's position within the scale. *See Appendix B (page 10).

Increments: While whole and half numbers are optimal (especially to begin a heat), judges may use an additional increment on either side of the half point; either .2 & .7 or .3 & .8. These additional increments should not add up to exactly 1 point so they will be more useful for avoiding ties during tabulation.

Stances: All divisions are "Open" unless otherwise specified. "Open" means that all stances on the bodyboard are eligible for scoring. If the division is exclusively "Drop-Knee" or "Stand-up", only the titled stance is eligible for scoring.

Judging Process: The role of a judge follows 3 critical phases: Observation, Record, Recall.

Observation: Careful observation of each ride from start to finish. Paying attention to details such as wave size and shape, positioning of competitor and their maneuvers, as well as the control and completion of each maneuver.

Record: Assigning a number to each ride and noting it. The objective is not to assess the perfect number to each the ride. Rather, it is to accurately represent each rides position within the heat in relation to all other rides.

Recall: The ability to consistently remember previous rides and their scores to help assign consecutive rides appropriately.

Missed Rides: Though unfortunate, the reality is that not every judge may not be able to observe every wave ridden during a Heat. Especially when Competitors go in both directions on the same wave and/or when multiple rides are taking place at the same time. When a judge misses a ride, he will rely on his fellow Judges, the Head Judge and possibly the Spotter to help provide the details of the ride and compare it to previous ride & scores. In this way the Judge can have some confidence in the missed rides position within the scores of the Heat.

Possession: A critical moment to be aware of while Spotting or Judging is the moment when a competitor takes possession of a wave. This is the moment when a competitor is carried by the wave's power without the necessity to paddle. A Spotter may call out "[color] up!" the moment they observe the Competitor cease to paddle.

Priority: The Competitor who achieves possession first and is closest to the power source / wave crest will be deemed to have Priority (when the Priority System is not in use or established) and is deserving of un-impeded right-of-way. Typically, this will be the Competitor who is further out, but occasionally it is the Competitor closest to the breaking section of the wave. How the wave is viewed from the judges perspective factors into how Priority is granted. There are 4 main Conditions that will set the application of "Priority" for any given Competition Area. Dominant Right, Dominant Left, Single Peak, and Multi-Peak. (Directionality is always defined from the perspective of the competitor.)

Dominant Right: Priority is granted to the deepest Competitor who will go right.

Dominant Left: Priority is granted to the deepest Competitor who will go left.

Single Peak: Priority is granted to the Competitor closest to or deepest on the peak.

Multi-Peak: Priority is established through the standard rules on a case-by-case basis.

Priority System: A system can be implemented to order the Priority throughout a Heat. The system's logic is based on taking turns. This provides all Competitors with the fairest conditions in each Heat. The heat will begin with all Competitors sharing first priority in which the normal Priority rules will apply. After a Competitor returns to the Line-up (after either catching a wave or paddling for one), that Competitor will enter into the priority sequence in the lowest position. A Competitor who paddles for a wave (whether he catches it or not) will be removed from the sequence, which will automatically advance the positions below. If two Competitors return to the Line up at the same time, the Competitor who did not ride the most recent wave will be granted the higher priority. If they had finished riding their previous waves at the same time, they will share the same priority placement. One important caveat to the system is that Priority

cannot be lost when a Competitor paddles for a wave and then yields to another Competitor with higher priority. Only the Competitor that was highest in the priority sequence will lose their priority when multiple Competitors paddle for the same wave. This is because the lower priority competitor's paddle has not costed anyone their turn and the system's function remains intact. This system is accompanied by a visual system to reflect the current priority sequence to the Competitors.

Interferences: Competitors may not interfere with each other. Only one Competitor may ride in each direction of the same wave at the same time.

The following are examples of interferences:

Hindrance: the offender hinders a Competitor from catching a wave being paddled for.

Obstruction: the offender obstructs a Competitor's line or causes damage to the wave that directly limits the competitors scoring potential.

Drop-in: the offender catches the wave of another Competitor after possession has already occurred.

Interferences observed by the majority of the Judges will be recorded and result in a penalty. The offender's ride will be scored as "0.0" and denoted with a "triangle". The penalty in such cases will be applied to the offenders score-line (top scores of tabulation). The penalty will be a reduction of half of the second highest wave score. A second interference will result in a 100% reduction of the second highest wave score, and it will be tabulated as a "0.0". A third interference will result in immediate disqualification and the Competitor will be required to leave the Competition Area immediately.

Priority Interference: When the Priority System is in use and a Priority sequence has been established. Any Competitor who interferes with a Competitor who has a higher priority position will be issued a Priority Interference. The penalty will be the 100% reduction of the second highest wave score, and it will be tabulated as a "0.0". A second Priority Interference will result in immediate disqualification and the Competitor will be required to leave the Competition Area immediately.

Multiple Interferences: There are instances where two or more Competitors may be involved in an interference scenario. When it is clear that both Competitors have equally interfered with each other, a double-interference may be called to penalize both Competitors. If there was no clear advantage gained by either Competitor or if the situation was not completely clear, the Judges may decide to not call an interference for either Competitor. One final detail that is considered in certain scenarios is "who is the aggressor", and it may be used to determine "the offender" & "the victim". Optimally, the entire event is executed with order and harmony from all parties including Competitors. Competitors who yield to unnecessary aggressors will typically be safe from being called for an interference.

Interruptions: In the event that a heat is interrupted for logistical or safety reasons, the Technical Director will decide if the fairest solution will be to either 1. resume the Heat from the point of interruption 2. re-surf the entire Heat, or 3. use the results of the Heat from the point of interruption without any further time offered to Competitors.

Code of Conduct: All Event Staff, Competitors and Spectators are expected to follow the following Code of Conduct. Infractions can result in warnings, penalties or immediate removal from Event Site (including the heat draw if applicable). Law Enforcement authorities may be called when the infraction has broken local or national law.

Respect: Respect is to be shown between all parties at the Event Site. Respect is also expected to be shown to the space (land, sea and air) of the Event Site / Competition Area, as well as to each person's equipment.

Language: Swearing and obscene language is prohibited.

Substances: Smoking, vaping, drinking alcohol and the use of any illicit substances is strictly prohibited.

Gambling: Betting on the outcome of any facet of the competition by anyone is prohibited.

Appendix A: Divisions

Super Groms: (9 years old and under, competitors can be assisted by guardian)

Menehune: (10-13 years old)

Juniors: (14-17 years old)

Open Mens: (18 years old and over)

Masters: (35 years old and over)

Girls: (female only, 17 years old and younger)

Open Womens: (female only, 18 years old and over)

Pro Open: (minimum prize purse of \$2,000 distributed to at least the top 4 placings)

Appendix B: Scoring Scale in words

0.0 - 1.9	Poor
2.0 - 3.9	Fair
4.0 - 5.9	Average
6.0 - 7.9	Good
8.0 - 10	Excellent