

Rule 50 Guidelines

Developed by the IOC Athletes' Commission

Introduction to the document by the IOC Athletes' Commission

As athletes, we are passionate about our sports and achieving our sporting performance goals. For each and every one of us, that passion continues into everyday life, where we advocate for change on issues of great importance to us and our world. That desire to drive change can naturally make it very tempting to use the platform of an appearance at the Olympic Games to make our point.

However, all of us are here at the Olympic Games because, one day, we dreamt of being an Olympian, and maybe even an Olympic champion. The unique nature of the Olympic Games enables athletes from all over the world to come together in peace and harmony. We believe that the example we set by competing with the world's best while living in harmony in the Olympic Village is a uniquely positive message to send to an increasingly divided world. This is why it is important, on both a personal and a global level, that we keep the venues, the Olympic Village and the podium neutral and free from any form of political, religious or ethnic demonstrations.

If we do not, the life's work of the athletes around us could be tarnished, and the world would quickly no longer be able to look at us competing and living respectfully together, as conflicts drive a wedge between individuals, groups and nations. That is not to say that you should be silent about the issues you care deeply about, and below you will find a list of places where you can express your views at the Olympic Games.

Preamble

The IOC Athletes' Commission and the IOC are fully supportive of freedom of expression. This is highlighted in the [Athletes' Rights and Responsibilities Declaration](#).

What does the Olympic Charter say on this matter?

The Olympic Charter is the codification of the fundamental principles of Olympism, rules and bye-laws adopted by the IOC. It governs the organisation, action and operation of the Olympic Movement, and sets forth the conditions for the celebration of the Olympic Games.

Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter provides a framework to protect the neutrality of sport and the Olympic Games. It states that, "*No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas.*"

Why does this rule exist and what does it aim to achieve?

The focus at the Olympic Games must remain on athletes' performances, sport and the international unity and harmony that the Olympic Movement seeks to advance.

Athletes at the Olympic Games are part of a global community with many different views, lifestyles and values. The mission of the Olympic Games to bring the entire world together can facilitate the understanding of different views, but this can be accomplished only if everybody respects this diversity.

It is a fundamental principle that sport is neutral and must be separate from political, religious or any other type of interference. Specifically, the focus for the field of play and related ceremonies must be on celebrating athletes' performance, and showcasing sport and its values.

This is true for everybody, not just the athletes. Even the Head of State of the host country is allowed to pronounce only the following words:

- At the opening of the Games of the Olympiad: “I declare open the Games of ... (name of the host) celebrating the ... (number of the Olympiad) ... Olympiad of the modern era.”
- At the opening of the Olympic Winter Games: “I declare open the ... (number of the Olympic Winter Games) Olympic Winter Games of ... (name of the host).”

And they or any other government official are not allowed to make any further comment or speech on any occasion during the Olympic Games. In addition, contrary to many other sports events, no government officials can appear in a medal ceremony.

There is a need to respect other athletes and their moment of glory, and not to draw attention away from that in any way. With demonstrations on the field of play, at the Olympic Village or during the official ceremonies, the dignity of the competition or the ceremony in question is destroyed for all the athletes concerned.

When an individual makes their grievances, however legitimate, more important than the feelings of their competitors and the competition itself, the unity and harmony as well as the celebration of sport and human accomplishment are diminished.

Where are protests and demonstrations not permitted during the Olympic Games?

- At all Olympic venues, including:
 - On the field of play
 - In the Olympic Village
 - During Olympic medal ceremonies
 - During the Opening, Closing and other official Ceremonies
- Any protest or demonstration outside Olympic venues must obviously comply with local legislation wherever local law forbids such actions.

During the Olympic Games, where do athletes have the opportunity to express their views?

While respecting local laws, athletes have the opportunity to express their opinions, including:

- During press conferences and interviews, i.e. in the mixed zones, in the International Broadcasting Centre (IBC) or the Main Media Centre (MMC)
- At team meetings
- On digital or traditional media, or on other platforms.

It should be noted that expressing views is different from protests and demonstrations. It should be noted, too, that these guidelines are also applicable to any other accredited person (trainers, coaches, officials, etc.).

Here are some examples of what would constitute a protest, as opposed to expressing views (non-exhaustive list):

- Displaying any political messaging, including signs or armbands
- Gestures of a political nature, like a hand gesture or kneeling
- Refusal to follow the Ceremonies protocol.

What happens if an athlete or participant fails to respect these policies?

If an athlete or participant is in breach of Rule 50 and the Olympic Charter, each incident will be evaluated by their respective National Olympic Committee, International Federation and the IOC, and disciplinary action will be taken on a case-by-case basis as necessary.

In conclusion, these guidelines have been developed with the aim that each and every one of you can enjoy the experience of the Olympic Games without any divisive disruption.