

Para Canoe Information Sheet

About the sport

Para canoe is a discipline for athletes with physical impairments, featuring two boat types: kayak (K) and va'a (V). Kayaks use a double-bladed paddle, while va'a are outrigger canoes with an ama (support float) and a single-bladed paddle. Each boat type has three classifications for men and women: KL1–KL3 for kayak and VL1–VL3 for va'a. All international races are individual 200m events.

The sport began as an International Canoe Federation (ICF) initiative and debuted as "paddleability" at the 2009 Canoe Sprint World Championships. It gained official status as Para canoe in 2010 and was confirmed for the Paralympic Games the same year. Para canoe made its Paralympic debut at Rio 2016 with six kayak medal events.

Who can compete?

Para canoe is open to athletes with a lower limb physical impairment. Athletes are required to submit medical reports and meet the minimum impairment criteria to compete.

Eligible impairments	Description	Minimum Impairment Criteria
Muscle weakness/Impaired Muscle Power	Muscle weakness or paralysis from conditions such as muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, nerve damage, spinal cord injury or other spinal condition or change in muscle origin/insertion.	Leg: Loss of strength in the hip, knee or ankle that impacts canoeing.
Impaired Passive Range of Movement	Restricted movement or tightness in a joint/s from conditions such as joint fusions and other restricting conditions.	Restriction in hip, knee or ankle range of movement that impacts canoeing.
Limb Loss / Limb length difference	Partial or complete absence of bones or joints due to amputation or deficiency from birth.	Leg: Amputation below the knee, or a shortened leg of the same length.

Para Canoe Sport Classes

Sport Class	Description (Guide Only)
Kayak Classes	
KL2	Athletes paddle and balance using their arms and trunk. They have limited use of their legs.
KL2	Athletes paddle and balance using their arms and trunk. They have limited use of their legs.
KL3	Athletes have an impairment in one leg. They can sit more forward in the kayak and may be able to drive with legs and hips while paddling.
Va'a Classes	
VL1	Athletes paddle and balance the boat using their arms and shoulders only. They may use a quick-release strap around the trunk to help maintain position.
VL2	Athletes have an impairment affecting the trunk and legs. They have decreased balance in the boat and paddle using arms and trunk.
VL3	Athletes have an impairment affecting the legs only and use trunk and arms to drive the paddle.
Not Eligible	
Not Eligible (NE)	Athletes do not meet the minimum criteria for the Para canoe sport classes, but may still be able to compete. Contact Paddle Australia for more information.

Find out more

To get involved or for more information contact: [Paddle Australia](#)

E: info@paddle.org.au

W: www.paddle.org.au

For classification information contact: classification@paddle.org.au



Note: The classification information provided is intended as a guide only. Only authorised classifiers are able to provide a formal classification in accordance with the rules of the sport. Not all classes may have events at the Paralympic Games