



# Ohio High School Athletic Association

## “Basketball Open Gyms” OHSAA General Sports Regulation 10

### “Open Gyms – Open Fields – Open Facilities” OHSAA Sports Regulation #10

Outside the defined season of play, years ago it became very common to open a school's gym for basketball teams to come inside and play (*remember the days when kids played on outdoor courts wherever they could find one open?*). The term “Open Gym” was born. Eventually, the concept was taken to other sports and it has evolved into “Open Field” and/or “Open Facilities” but the **concept and regulations** remained the same.

“Open Gyms” are defined in General Sports Regulation #10 and define them as “unstructured free play” provided the activity is supervised. The basic premise is that facilities can be made available for athletes to ‘play their sport’ in a manner in which:

- Team play occurs – there is no instruction, no drills conducted, no organized/structured skill work
- Scores are not kept on scoreboards or any posted mechanisms
- Teams are not selected ahead of time and posted,
- The games are not a mechanism to disguise a practice, scrimmage or contest with another school,
- Attendance cannot be mandatory
- Attendance cannot be a prerequisite for team selection

Very commonly asked today is whether students from other schools are permitted at a host school. And ‘yes’, that is permitted. Caution is always urged simply due to how easily this could turn into an ‘off-season scrimmage’ but unless the school limits participation by other school attendees, there is no OHSAA regulation prohibiting it. And...more and more schools ARE prohibiting it due to security issues in locker rooms and other issues.

Another commonly asked question centers around “who” actually is permitted to attend open gyms – are junior high aged individuals able to attend and compete along with 9-12 graders? And though the answer is “yes”, a better way to say it is simply that the OHSAA has no regulations **against** age groups competing together. For safety reasons, we would not encourage it but the OHSAA regulations that prohibit 7-8 graders from participating with 9-12 graders is only relative to IN-season sports.

This leads to many additional questions left to interpretation. However, each and every question (and subsequent answer) can be answered after reverting back to the basic premises above. Below is the most common question:

**Scenario:** *Coach Smith spends one of his 10 permitted summer days teaching/instructing players on shooting and providing them with shooting drills they can do on their own. Coach Smith then designates Tuesday and Thursday's in June/July for players to come in and perform these shooting drills with no instruction by the coach. However, the gym is open and players are going through their shooting drills or routines previously shown them. Is this permissible as an “Open Gym”?*

**Answer:** *Clearly it is NOT permissible as an “Open Gym”, based upon the premise that:*

- *Team play occurs during open gym and there is no team play in this case,*
- *This ‘activity’ is clearly structured and “Open Gyms are defined as “Free and Unstructured Play”.*
- *The ‘activity’ is supervised. School rules REQUIRE activities with schools to be supervised so the coach sitting in the office while this is taking place or simply standing in the corner of the gym would not be an accepted cause to say it was “not structured”.*

**Additional Comment:**

*The “Out of Season Instruction” committee embraced many of these ‘gray area’ activities when formulating the “individual instruction” regulation. One major goal of this committee was to clear up and be consistent in the definition (and enforcement) of many of these ‘gray areas’. As a result, a compromise that HELPED school coaches was to carefully define “open gyms” which could be interpreted as limiting what coaches and players can do in “open gyms”. However, this was met with a regulation that DOES now permit **and encourage** coaches to conduct sessions where they cannot only provide an opportunity to improve skills through a structured environment but actually ENCOURAGES them to do so. Of course there are some limitations. But...it is also what basketball coaches requested through their recognized Coaches’ Association (the OHSBCA). So, Coach Smith can open the gym for ‘unstructured free play’ – a team of 5 playing against another team of 5 – but ANY organized/structured activity could only be permitted either as one of the 10 permissible coaching days in June and July OR as a permitted activity under General Sports Regulation 8.2 that permits coaches to provide individual instruction outside the season of play but with the parameters described in that regulation.*