



Guidelines on Wearing of Faith-based Items and Spiritual Artifacts in Basketball Games

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Purpose

These guidelines outline the approach for accommodating the wearing of **faith-based items and spiritual artifacts**, including **religious head coverings**, by players during basketball games. It aims to promote and foster inclusivity and respect for religious expression within the sport, while prioritizing the safety of all participants in accordance with the official rules of the game.



Definition

A faith-based item or spiritual artifact is a physical object worn or carried by an individual that holds religious, cultural, or spiritual significance. These items are used to express devotion, identity, protection, or connection to a higher power or spiritual belief system. They may be required by religious practice, serve ritual or symbolic purposes, or reflect personal spiritual meaning. This includes, but is not limited to, items such as religious head coverings, prayer objects, symbolic jewelry, or sacred threads, and may be associated with organized religion or societally recognized spiritual traditions.

Statement

Canada Basketball is committed to fostering an equitable and inclusive environment. These guidelines align with our commitment to uphold religious freedom and prevent discrimination on the basis of creed, culture, or spiritual practice.

FIBA Rule 4.4 – Other Equipment

4.4 Other equipment

4.4.1 All equipment used by players must be appropriate for the game. Any equipment that is designed to increase a player's height or reach or in any other way give an unfair advantage is not permitted.

4.4.2 Players shall not wear equipment (objects) that may cause injury to other players.

- The following are not permitted:
 - Finger, hand, wrist, elbow or forearm guards, helmets, casts or braces made of leather, plastic, pliable (soft) plastic, metal or any other hard substance, even if covered with soft padding.
 - Objects that could cut or cause abrasions (fingernails must be closely cut).
 - Hair accessories and jewellery.
- The following are permitted:
 - Upper arm, thigh or lower leg protective equipment if sufficiently padded.
 - Arm and leg garments, including undershirts and undershorts, made of compression material.



- Headgear - It shall not cover any part of the face entirely or partially (eyes, nose, lips etc.) and shall not be dangerous to the player wearing it and/or to other players. The headgear shall not have opening/closing elements around the face and/or neck and shall not have any parts extruding from its surface.
- Knee, shoulder and ankle braces.
- Protector covering an injured nose, even if made of a hard material.
- Non-coloured transparent mouth guard.
- Spectacles, if they do not pose a danger to other players.
- Wristbands and headbands, maximum of 10 cm wide textile material.
- Taping of arms, shoulders, legs etc.

All players on the team must have all their arm and leg compression garments including undershirts and undershorts, headgear, wristbands, headbands and tapings of the same solid colour.

Policy Statement

Canada Basketball and the Canadian Basketball Officials Commission (CBOC) recognize and respect that some players may wish to wear **religious bracelets, head coverings, or artifacts** as an expression of their faith. While maintaining the safety of all participants as the highest priority, accommodations for such items may be permitted under the following conditions:

- The item is worn for religious or spiritual purposes and is secured in a way that does not pose a safety risk to the player, their teammates, or the opponent.
- This process ensures that accommodations are made in accordance with applicable safety standards and best practices, supporting the well-being of participants and organizers.

Guidelines for Officials

Recognition and Safety:

- If a religious bracelet, head covering, or artifact is clearly identifiable as a religious article of a recognized faith tradition, and it is covered and secured in a way that poses no safety risk, officials shall permit the player to wear it during play.



Uncertainty or Unrecognized Items:

- If the item is not commonly recognized or if officials are uncertain about its religious significance, they should prioritize safety and inclusivity by allowing the player to participate if the wearing of the item is rendered safe.
- Officials are to report the situation to the appropriate local, provincial, or national governing body.

Adjustment for Safety:

- Articles must be covered, padded, protected, and/or secured in a way that minimizes any potential risk to players or others. Acceptable adjustments include:
 - Ensuring any sharp edges are fully padded and protected.
 - Wrapping with soft cloth that pads and protects.
 - Covering with athletic tape.
 - Securing with a sweatband or similar protective material.
 - Ensuring **head coverings** fit securely and do not obstruct vision or present a hazard to others.
- Officials may request these adjustments before allowing participation.
- Any sharp item which may potentially cause injury shall not be worn unless covered, padded, and secured in a manner to reduce all risk.

Game Situations:

- If the item becomes loose or presents a safety concern, officials shall adjudicate as in Article 5 Players: Injury and assistance.

These guidelines aim to balance respect for religious practices with the paramount importance of safety in basketball games.

Summary

This policy supports the inclusive values of Canada Basketball by providing a clear and consistent process for allowing **religious bracelets, head coverings, or artifacts** to be worn during play. It emphasizes proactive communication, safe accommodation, and inclusive participation.

Officials, coaches, and team organizers have a duty to reasonably accommodate faith-based articles, unless doing so would result in undue hardship related to safety or competitive fairness. Accommodations must be individualized, respectful, and documented.



Contact for Questions

Contact: certification@basketball.ca

Consultation:

- CBOC EDI Committee
- David Maxin, Manager of Officials Development, Canada Basketball
- Hakeem Al-Akhras, Specialist Human Resources, Canada Basketball
- Mike Thomson, FIBA Referee Instructor, National Referee Coach
- Nadine Crowley, FIBA Referee Instructor, National Referee Coach
- Tim Heide, CBOC Chair, National Referee Coach
- Ron Yeung, Vice President, Domestic Programs & Strategy, Canada Basketball
- PTSO/PBOA
- USPORTS
- CCAA



Appendix A: Process If the Official Is Unfamiliar with the Religious Article

If an official encounters a religious bracelet, head covering, or spiritual artifact and is unfamiliar with its significance or appropriateness for play, the following steps should be followed:

1. Initial Observation

It is expected that all religious articles are identified prior to the game (see comments on the coach's responsibility later in this document). However, if a religious article is identified for the first time during play; it must be addressed at the next stoppage of play. Officials should approach the situation respectfully and in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document.

2. Determine Immediate Safety

Assess whether the item presents a safety risk to the wearer or others.

If so, request that the item be adjusted or secured using soft materials (e.g., padding, cloth, athletic tape, sweatband).

If the item is unsafe and cannot be made safe, the player shall not participate until the situation is corrected.

3. Respectful Inquiry (If Item Is Unfamiliar)

Coaches are responsible for notifying the officiating crew of any players wearing religious articles no later than 20 minutes prior to the game. This allows for appropriate communication and ensures there are no unnecessary delays or confusion during the game.

Unfamiliar Items

If an item's religious significance is not apparent, it is the coach's responsibility to be aware of and communicate the nature of such items on behalf of their players. Officials must not make assumptions or request documentation. A respectful explanation from the coach should be accepted at face value.

4. Consultation (If Uncertainty Remains)

If the officials are still uncertain:

Attempt to contact a local or provincial interpreter, assignor, or referee coach.

If no timely guidance is available and the item is deemed safe, allow participation and escalate post-game.



5. Allow Participation If Safe

If the item is safe and the player confirms its religious nature, allow them to play.
In the absence of safety concerns, inclusion is prioritized.

6. Monitor During Play

If the item falls on the court, adjudicate as per Article 5 Player: Injury and assistance.

7. Report the Situation

The following should be noted:

Player number and team.

Description of the item (include a picture if possible)

Any conversations or accommodations made.

Any consultations or attempts to contact officials/interpreters/organizers.

8. Post-Game Reporting

The situation should be brought forward to the league, the local, provincial or national body for review and education.

Unfamiliar items or contentious issues should be brought forward to the league, the local, provincial or national body for review and education.



Appendix B: Process If the Official Believes the Article Is Unsafe

If the official determines that a religious bracelet, head covering, or artifact poses a legitimate safety risk, the following steps should be followed:

1. Communicate Clearly and Respectfully

Inform the coach, in a calm and respectful manner, that the article is deemed unsafe in its current state and cannot be worn as-is during the game.

2. Offer Accommodation Options

Allow the player to make the item safe by:

Wrapping, padding, or covering it with soft materials (which may include, padding, cloth, tape, sweatband).

Adjusting how it is worn to minimize exposure or risk.

3. Allow Time to Address

Provide a reasonable opportunity for the player to adjust or secure the item before the game starts or during a stoppage.

If the item cannot be made safe in a timely manner, the player must be substituted in accordance with Article 5.

4. No Penalty Assessed

No technical foul should be assessed for the item itself.

The focus remains on safety and allowing the player a chance to participate once adjustments are made.

5. Report the Situation:

The following should be noted:

Description of the item (include a picture if possible)

Player number and team.

Reason for the safety concern.

Any attempted adjustments or outcome of the discussion.

6. Post-Game Follow-Up

The situation should be brought forward to the league, the local, provincial or national body for review and education.