

# How Do I Start a Boccia Club?

Several things to consider: Leadership– Venues – Recruiting -- Equipment

## **Leadership**

You're reading this, so you are the Leader! For Boccia to grow, it will take more than one person. But it starts with recognizing the possibilities this great sport offers to athletes with disabilities. Start looking for people to help you! USA Boccia is committed to helping you develop as a coach and leader.

## **What kind of facility do I need, and what size court?**

You can play on wood, tile, multipurpose carpet, or even cement. I have played boccia in a dining hall, church fellowship halls, an auditorium lobby, a school lunchroom, tennis courts, Office hallways, and racquetball courts. (almost perfect size if the door is wide enough for wheelchair access, though it can be loud) The best site is a gym floor. If there is a Volleyball or pickleball court already lined out, you are in great shape! See the section on quick ways to set up a court.

## **How we find Boccia Athletes.**

Our doors are open to everyone who wants to play. While formal classification is a part of the sport, it isn't a requirement to join our community. We're here to share the game of Boccia, build a competitive culture, and help every athlete find their own version of a win.

We've built relationships with a local children's hospital and regularly share information about our practices. The same is true with area Parks and Recreation departments. We also reach out to Paralympic clubs in the region—even if they don't offer Boccia, they often know athletes who would love to try it.

Physical therapy and occupational therapy clinics, along with rehab hospitals, are another important connection point. Many potential Boccia athletes attend wheelchair tennis or basketball events. They may not be able to participate in those sports, but Boccia is a perfect fit.

To further expand awareness, hosting a “Paralympic Experience” day or a Boccia-focused clinic is another great way to introduce the sport, as participants can try activities firsthand and learn about Boccia in an inclusive environment. Setting up a booth at disability fairs or inclusive-sports workshops also helps families discover Boccia for the first time and connect with local resources. In the Kansas City area, we stay active in promoting and recruiting.

Beyond events and clinics, we even created a business card with a Boccia court diagram on the back. When we meet a parent or child who might be interested, we hand them a card and explain the sport.

We’ve also presented to Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimist Clubs, and other service organizations, while staying in touch with regional UCP chapters. When it comes to schools, the process can be challenging; however, persistence pays off. **Eventually, you find the right contact who knows a person who would thrive in Boccia.**

### **Equipment: What kind of Boccia sets do I need, and how many?**

Boccia is inexpensive compared to other Paralympic Sports. You do not need a specialized chair or specialized practice facilities. You can play in a power chair or a manual chair.

2 sets of Boccia Balls allow 12 people to play!

There are several sources for Boccia Sets. *Boccia-USA.com* offers Handi Life Sport *Standard Pro* sets for \$230. These are These come

with an Official Paddle. A *Superior Classic* set is best known and used competitive boccia set. Comes in 6 different Densities with a protective case . \$450

Flaghouse, Gopher, Gravity, and Expo Star offer cheaper sets. But the first time you compete, you will see the difference and want a Handi Life Boccia set.

### **What about Ramp Players? Where do you find ramps?**

Ramps can be as simple as a piece of PVC pipe and as complex as a fine watch! There are design plans for wood ramps at [www.usaboccia.org](http://www.usaboccia.org) A US company named *Gravity Boccia* has two options. Other ramps come from the Czech Republic, Great Britain, and Korea.

Look for grants and sponsorship opportunities to help fund the purchase of a ramp.

### **Where do I get a copy of the rules, and how do I learn to officiate?**

A current set of rules can be found at [www.bisfed.com](http://www.bisfed.com). If you have a ping pong paddle with a red and blue side, a tape measure, and some kind of calipers for really close shots, you are ready to go. USA Boccia offers Officials Training at Regional and National Events.

USABOCCIA.ORG

## Volunteers

You need to recruit a group of PBPU's *Professional Ball Picker Uppers* (*I used to have these initials on my business card!*).

These volunteers will have several important roles: assisting by handing balls to athletes, helping athletes adjust to their chairs, and serving as the first officials, coaches, and cheerleaders for your club.

Starting a Boccia club is worth it. You will make space for the most disabled people to meet new friends and play a challenging, fun game. My heart comes alive when I meet a new person who wants to play Boccia!