



2026 District Manual

Optimist Junior Golf Program

OPTIMIST BUILDS CHAMPIONS

www.optimist.org/golf

Optimist International Junior Golf Championship

The Optimist Junior Golf Program is an exciting way for volunteers to promote the sport of golf to the young people of their communities. Each year, more than 5,000 boys and girls compete in **Optimist qualifying tournaments**. The best of these golfers advance to the annual **Optimist International Junior Golf Championship** which offers a week of golf, the opportunity to meet new friends, top competition and a great deal of fun. The tournament is a unique golfing experience where junior golfers and their families enjoy golf, meals, off-course activities and housing all under one roof. Trump National Doral Resort is the current home.

2026 Optimist International Junior Golf Championship

Trump National Doral Resort, Miami, Florida, USA

Phase 1	July 15-20, 2026	Boys 10-11, 12-13 and Girls 10-12
Phase 2	July 20-25, 2026	Boys 14-15 and Girls 13-14
Phase 3	July 25-30, 2026	Boys 16-18 and Girls 15-18

Optimist International Tournament of Champions

This event is for top finishers of the summer Optimist Championship, winners of Optimist District qualifiers, golfers who are included in the Top 100 overall Golfweek and Junior Golf and Scoreboard rankings. This Junior championship tournament is a 36-hole event for golfers ages 11-18.



Optimist Junior Golf Department

maintains direct contact with all Districts and are responsible for the general promotion and planning of the Optimist Junior Golf Program

Administrative Information:

Sharon Parton, Senior Director Optimist Junior Golf
(800) 500-8130 ext. 207 | Direct: (314) 881-1307
golf@optimist.org

Tournament and Rules Information

Skip Small, Tournament Director
Cell: 904-612-9634
skipsmall@aol.com

Why Golfers Attend the Championship

One of the top International Junior Golf Tournaments in the World.

- Ranked by JuniorGolf Scoreboard, Golfweek, Amateur Golf World Ranking and included in the AJGA “Performance Based Entry Process.”
- Approximately 30 College Coaches attend and recruit
- Compete against golfers all over the world.

Value for a Golfer to Attend

- Registration fee includes · tournament entry fee
- Golf (practice rounds additional cost)
- Five nights lodging
- Five breakfasts and four dinners
- and access to all Special Events
- Additional fees apply for guests. Due to the exclusive nature of the event, golfers are required to stay at Trump National Doral Resort.

Optimist Junior Golf District Chair

Optimist Junior Golf District Chairs are the central points of contact, information, and coordination for all the Optimist-sponsored junior golf events that take place in their District. District Chairs coordinate the tournament and the promotion of Club and District events to generate interest in the Optimist Junior Golf Program. They should attend quarterly District board meetings to report and solicit support for their upcoming qualifiers.

They keep the Optimist Junior Golf Department apprised of their District qualifiers. Junior golfers frequently contact the international office seeking information on how to qualify for the Optimist International Junior Golf Championship. Optimist Junior Golf District Chairs should encourage all Clubs in their District to participate in the program by sponsoring local golfers. Clubs should also be encouraged to conduct junior golf fundraisers and provide volunteers on the day of District tournament.



CHAMPIONSHIP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

District Qualifying Tournaments

Participants in the Optimist Championship are determined through Optimist District qualifying tournaments. Golfers must qualify through Optimist District qualifying tournaments unless they are eligible for an exemption or live in a District that does not offer their age division or does not offer a qualifier. If a junior golfer is unable to play in his/her District qualifying tournament, **a golfer may play in any District qualifying tournament.**

Only when Districts do not sponsor qualifying tournaments are participants allowed to submit at-large applications. The deadline for a Junior Golf Chair to submit their qualifier date and location is January 31, but may be extended if chair is actively seeking a date and location and communicating with Optimist Junior Golf staff.

Age Divisions

The age divisions for the Optimist International Junior Golf Championship age are as follows:

Phase 1

Boys 10-11 Age Division* -- does not celebrate his 12th birthday on or before July 19, 2026.
 Boys 12-13 Age Division does not celebrate his 14th birthday on or before July 19, 2026.
 Girls 10-12 Age Division* does not celebrate her 13th birthday on or before July 19, 2026.

Phase 2

Boys 14-15 Age Division does not celebrate his 16th birthday on or before July 24, 2026.
 Girls 13-14 Age Division does not celebrate her 15th birthday on or before July 24, 2026.

Phase 3

Boys 16-18 Age Division** does not celebrate his 19th birthday on or before July 29, 2026.
 Girls 15-18 Age Division** does not celebrate her 19th birthday on or before July 29, 2026.

*Golfers who are 9 years old as of July 19, 2026, may “play up” into the Boys 10-11 or Girls 10-12 division.

**18-year-old golfers may only participate in both a District qualifier and the International Championship if they are currently in high school and a 2026 high school graduate provided he/she has not started college. Advance Placement (AP) credits in high school do not count.

Playing Up

Golfers may “play up” one division, but they must qualify in the higher division unless playing in a tournament prior to December 31, 2025. A golfer playing in an Optimist Qualifier, Tournament of Champions or other Exempt Tournament **prior to December 31** plays in the age division of his current age. If he/she places as a top finisher and qualifies for the Optimist International Junior Golf Championship and ages up, he/she must play in the age division as noted under “Age Divisions”. Requests to play up two or three divisions will require a special request to Optimist Junior Golf.

Age Verification/Birth Certificates

Important: District Chairs are responsible for verifying the ages of players participating in Club and District events. Participants should be required to provide their birth certificate as proof of age. Acceptable forms include a birth certificate, baptismal record, drivers’ license or passport

- Players must qualify in the age division that they will be playing in at the championship.

Caddies, Carts and Push/Pull Carts

- Caddies and electric carts are **NOT** allowed.
- Standard (not remote) push/pull carts are permissible in all Age Divisions boys and girls.

Distance Measuring Devices

In this competition a player may obtain distance information by use of a distance-measuring device. If, during a round, a player uses a distance-measuring device to gauge or measure other conditions that might affect his play (e.g. elevation changes, wind speed, etc.) the player is in breach of Rule 4.3(1). Cell phones may be used to measure distance only.

IMPORTANT 2026 DATES

January 31	Deadline for District Chairs to submit qualifying tournament logistics to Optimist International.
May 1	At large application deadline and Registration opens for Optimist International Junior Golf Championship
June 23	Deadline for submission of all District report forms; player and volunteer registration deadline to include Alternates



QUALIFYING SCORING CRITERIA

All golfers must shoot at or below an established target score in the District qualifier. The target scores by age division are listed below. All scores are in relation to par and are for 18-hole tournaments.

For multiple-round tournaments, increase the amount over par accordingly. Refer to the table below to determine the exact scoring criteria based on the golf course's established par.

	Boys 10-11	Boys 12-13	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18		Girls 10-12	Girls 13-14	Girls 15-18
	<i>24-over-par</i>	<i>18-over-par</i>	<i>11-over-par</i>	<i>6-over-par</i>		<i>25-over-par</i>	<i>21-over-par</i>	<i>13-over-par</i>
Par 70	94	88	81	76		95	91	83
Par 71	95	89	82	77		96	92	84
Par 72	96	90	83	78		97	93	85
Par 73	97	91	84	79		98	94	86

District Qualifying Spots

Each District is granted a set number of qualifying spots in each age division. The number of qualifying spots granted to a District are based on the number of golfers who participated in that District's qualifier the year prior. The outline explains how the qualifying method works:

1. "Target numbers" for each division are established that will maximize participation levels at the international championship.
2. The total number of golfers participating in qualifiers throughout all Optimist Districts was logged for each age division.
3. A District's percentage of overall participation was calculated for each age division.
4. The number of spots granted (in each division) will be calculated using the percent participation figure in #3 above.

Winners Receiving Qualifying Spots – Must meet target scores

All age division winners filling granted District qualifying spots must have shot at or below the established target score (see page 5) to be eligible to attend the international championship.

How to Break Ties

A tiebreaker should be used to determine the District winners, ties for the last qualifying spot, and ties for alternate spots. Weather and time permitting, ties for first place will be broken by a sudden death play-off. All other ties will be broken in accordance with the USGA recommendations in Committee Procedure 5A {6} page 401

The District Chair **MUST announce the tiebreaking method** to be used before the competition starts. Please consult the pro at your host course for assistance.

Out-of-District Golfers

If golfers from other Districts participate in your qualifying tournament, their participation will not eliminate any District residents from qualifying. If an out-of-District golfer qualifies for one of your spots, he/she is eligible to attend the international championship in addition to the next-highest golfer who lives within the District boundaries.

Alternates

Alternates will be admitted to the Championship if a golfer who qualifies for one of a District's designated spots decides not to attend (**The next golfer in line is the alternate whether in or out of District.**). District Chairs should determine alternates based on the tournament results and by using a tiebreaker if necessary (see information on breaking ties above).

District Chairs should keep in close contact with their qualified players in order to offer alternates a spot if necessary. Alternates must register for the international championship by the June 23.

Official District Tournament – Tournament weather delays / Cancellation

A District qualifier will not be considered official unless all golfers in **an age division** complete a minimum of nine holes, in which case the tournament would revert back to the last hole completed by the entire age division. In the case of a District qualifier that is cancelled with no make-up date, golfers in said District will be eligible to submit an "at large" application directly to Optimist Junior Golf. In this situation, the number of accepted "at large" applicants in each division will be equal to the number of qualifying spots granted for the District.

Districts with Multiple Qualifiers

If a District decides to offer multiple qualifiers, it is the District Chair's responsibility to divide the number of allocated qualifying spots to each of the qualifiers held.

Districts with No History of Holding a Qualifier or Age Division(s)

Optimist Districts that have never held a qualifying tournament or have not offered certain age divisions in years past will be permitted to hold a qualifier. Districts in this situation will be limited to two qualifying spot per age division offered during their first year and will be included in the percentage allocation in future years.

Suggested Course Yardages (approximate)

The following are the approximate course yardages that will be used at the Optimist International Junior Golf Championship. It is recommended that similar yardages be used for your qualifying tournaments. Please consult the pro at the course you are using for further recommendation.

Boys Age Divisions	Girls Age Divisions
10-11 5,500 yards	10-12 5,000 yards
12-13 6,000 yards	13-14 5,500 yards
14-15 6,500 yards	15-18 6,000 yards
16-18 6,800 yards	

At-Large Applicants

Optimist Junior Golf accepts direct applications from junior golfers from the US and Canada who live in a District that does not sponsor a qualifier or that does not offer the appropriate age division. If a player has a conflict with his/her own District qualifier, he/she must choose another District qualifier in which to participate and will not be permitted to apply as an at-large participant. The at large application deadline is May 1, 2026. A limited number of golfers in each age division will be accepted through the at-large method. Accepted at-large applicants will be notified in early May.

EXEMPTIONS

Optimist Junior Golf limits the number of golfers who register for the international championship through an exemption.

Golfers who meet the following criteria will be “exempt” into the Optimist International Junior Golf Championship.

1. The top finishers in each age division from the 2025 Optimist International Junior Golf Championship as follows: Boys 10-11 (top 5); Girls 10-12 (top 5), Boys 12-13 (top 5); Girls 3-14 (top 5); Boys 14-15 (top 5); Boys 16-18 (top 8), Girls 15-18 (top 8) plus ties,
2. The top finishers from the 2025 Optimist International Tournament of Champions, specifically: top 8 (Boys 16-18) and top 5 (Boys 14-15, Boys 11-13, Girls 14-18 and Girls 11-13) plus ties.
4. Any previous age division champion of the Optimist Junior Golf Championship.
5. Golfers selected to the 2026 Hugh Cranford All-Scholastic team.



OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL JUNIOR GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Boys 10-11, 12-13 and Girls 10-12

July 15	Arrivals and check-in
July 16	Practice Rounds; Opening Ceremony & Player Orientation
July 17	Tournament Round 1
July 18	Tournament Round 2
July 19	Tournament Round 3
July 20	Departure and Parent Child tournament

Boys 14-15 and Girls 13-14

July 20	Parent/Child Tournament and Arrivals and check-in
July 21	Practice Rounds; Opening Ceremony & Player Orientation
July 22	Tournament Round 1
July 23	Tournament Round 2
July 24	Tournament Round 3
July 25	Departure and Parent Child Tournament

Boys 16-18 and Girls 15-18

July 25	Parent/Child Tournament AND Arrivals and check-in
July 26	Practice Rounds; Opening Ceremony & Player Orientation
July 27	Tournament Round 1
July 28	Tournament Round 2
July 29	Tournament Round 3
July 30	Departures