



# Cheer Sport Rules

*Special Olympics*





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## 1. GOVERNING RULES

- 1.1. The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Competitive Cheer shall govern all Special Olympics competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon the International Cheer Union (ICU) rules for Special Abilities cheerleading found at [www.cheerunion.org](http://www.cheerunion.org). ICU rules shall be employed along with the following added Special Olympics guidelines: Team Size, Unified Sports®, Individual Skills Competition and Divisioning. In all cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules Article 1 shall apply.
- 1.2. Refer to Article 1 <http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/general/Sports-Article-1.pdf> more information pertaining to Codes of Conduct, Training Standards, Medical and Safety Requirements, Divisioning, Awards, Criteria for Advancement to Higher Levels of Competition, and Unified Sports®.
- 1.3. SOI will follow the safety rules, as well as skill levels defined as Introductory, Beginner, Novice and Intermediate, as set forth by ICU. The ICU Rules and regulations have already instated modifications specifically for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics has created additional provisions to compliment the ICU's Special Abilities Rules. Coaches are responsible for following the safety rules and following the skills progression for athletes and Unified partners.

## 2. OFFICIAL EVENTS

- 1.4. **Competitive Cheer:** The range of events is intended to offer competition opportunities of all abilities. Programs may determine the events offered and, if required, guidelines for the management of those events. Coaches are responsible for providing training and event selection appropriate to each athlete's skill and interest. The following is a list of official events available in Special Olympics.
  - 1.4.1. **CHEERLEADING** (Skill Levels: Introductory-Intermediate / Competition Format: Routine, Game Day)
    - 1.4.1.1. Individual Skills Competition
    - 1.4.1.2. Team Competition (Includes Doubles & all Team sizes. See ICU Rules)
    - 1.4.1.3. Unified Sports Team Competition
  - 1.4.2. **PERFORMANCE CHEER** (Genres: Pom, Hip Hop, Jazz, High Kick, Mixed / Competition Format: Routine, Game Day)
    - 1.4.2.1. Individual Skills Competition
    - 1.4.2.2. Team Competition (Includes Doubles & all Team sizes. See ICU Rules)
    - 1.4.2.3. Unified Sports Team Competition
- 1.5. **Non-Competitive Cheer:** A Special Olympics Program may choose to offer a non-competitive cheer option which provides the opportunity for cheering and performing at Special Olympics competitions, special events and community-based events such as walks, races, high school games, etc. Providing non-competitive cheer opportunities can help generate awareness and contribute to the growth of a Competitive Cheer program. The following is a list of official events available in Special Olympics.
  - 1.5.1. **CHEERLEADING** (Skill Levels: Introductory-Intermediate)
  - 1.5.2. **PERFORMANCE CHEER** (Genres: Pom, Hip Hop, Jazz, High Kick, Mixed)

## 3. TEAM SIZE

- 1.6. **Team Size:** Team roster size can be adjusted based on individual program and event organizer preferences. For Cheerleading & Performance Cheer. SOI recommended team sizes are as follows:
  - 1.6.1. Individual: One (1) athlete.
  - 1.6.2. Doubles: Two (2) athletes.
  - 1.6.3. Small: Minimum of four (4) and maximum of fifteen (15)
  - 1.6.4. Large: Minimum of sixteen (16) and maximum of twenty-four (24)



## 4. DIVISIONING

- 1.7. The purpose of Divisioning is grouping Competitive Cheer athletes or teams by age, gender and ability giving everyone a reasonable chance to win. Refer to SOI Divisioning <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/divisioning>.

## 5. UNIFIED SPORTS @ TEAM COMPETITION

- 1.8. Team competing in this category should follow the Unified Sports Competitive Model. The ratio of athletes to Unified partners must be 1:1. In the event of an odd-numbered team, there must be one less Unified partner than total number of athletes. Refer to Section 14 of Article 1 for additional clarification of Unified Sports.

## 6. INDIVIDUAL SKILLS COMPETITION (CHEERLEADING & PERFORMANCE CHEER)

- 1.9. The purpose of the individual skills competition is to allow athletes to train and compete in basic Cheer skills as follows: at the Introductory, Beginner, Novice, or Intermediate category.
  - 1.9.1. Cheerleading Introductory, Beginner, Novice, or Intermediate category
  - 1.9.2. Performance Cheer: Pom, Hip Hop, Jazz, High Kick, Mixed genres
- 1.10. Crowd Leading and/or Crowd Appeal
- 1.11. Skills Incorporation
- 1.12. Scoring will be based on team scoring fundamentals.

## 7. NON-COMPETITIVE CHEER (CHEERLEADING & PERFORMANCE CHEER)

- 1.13. A Special Olympics Program may choose to offer a non-competitive cheer option, for Special Olympics Traditional and/or Unified Teams, which provides the opportunity for cheering and performing at Special Olympics competitions, special events, all sporting events, and community-based events such as walks, races, high school games, etc. Providing non-competitive cheer opportunities can help generate awareness and contribute to the growth of a Competitive Cheer program.
- 1.14. Non-Competitive Cheerleading: All safety rules apply; team size & composition is open to the discretion of the team director within Special Olympics Guidelines. Team skill levels may range from the Introductory -Intermediate within accordance of the ICU Rules.
- 1.15. Non-Competitive Performance Cheer: All safety rules apply; team size & composition is open to the discretion of the team director within Special Olympics Guidelines. Team skill may range within the genres of Pom, Hip Hop, Jazz and/or High Kick within accordance of the ICU Rules.

## 8. APPENDICES:

- Appendix A: ICU Special Abilities Rules & Regulations
- Appendix B: ICU Division, Rules and Regulations
- Appendix C: Special Olympics Article 1 Sports Rules
- Appendix D: Competitive Cheer Scoresheets
- Appendix E: Competitive Cheer Routine Skills Reference Sheet
- Appendix F: Competitive Cheer Skills Reference Sheet
- Appendix G: Game Day Reference Sheet