

Special Olympics Cheerleading Manual



Special Olympics

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Rules & Regulations



*The Cheerleading Competitions
will run according
to the rules in this manual.*

August 2008

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MISSION OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide **year-round** sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children **and** adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

PURPOSE OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Special Olympics is a **worldwide** program of Sports Training and Athletic Competition open to individuals with intellectual disabilities regardless of their abilities. **The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has granted its Official recognition to Special Olympics International, Inc. (SOI).**

SPECIAL OLYMPICS CHEERLEADING PURPOSE

The purpose of Cheerleading is to be a supportive unit to the basketball team and to show leadership, sportsmanship and pride for the team.

The competition is open to all cheerleading squads - even those who do not have a basketball team to support.

SPECTATOR GUIDELINES

As fans (family, friends and supporters) of Special Olympics Athletes, it is expected that you will play a positive role at Special Olympics events by following these guidelines:

1. Please refrain from using abusive or offensive language towards anyone; officials, coaches, opponents and fellow spectators.
2. Keep your emotions under control – Remember that the athletes are amateur athletes and the coaches and officials are all volunteers.
3. It may help if you understand the rules of the sport/event. If you need further information or clarification, ask your home program for a copy of the rules.
4. De-emphasize winning and losing!
5. Let the coaches coach the players – PLEASE refrain from shouting instructions.
6. Spectators and fans are prohibited in the competition areas. Only registered/approved coaches and athletes should be on the official playing field/area.
7. ALL CHEERS should stress the spirit of good sportsmanship. Derogatory comments directed to players, coaches or officials will not be tolerated.

Any spectator who fails to follow the above guidelines will be reprimanded. A reprimand could be one of the following;

- a. You will be escorted from the venue
- b. You will be banned from attending future events for the remainder of a season
- c. You will be banned from attending any Special Olympics event for lifetime

BE A FAN!
BE A GREAT FAN!



SPECIAL OLYMPICS

CHEERLEADING SPORT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Special Olympics would like to recognize the following individuals for serving on the Cheerleading Sport Management Team (SMT). Team members are more than willing to assist States starting Cheerleading, evaluating the Cheerleading program and assisting in the future development of Cheerleading.

Please feel free to call any member of the Team if you should have any questions or comments.

Contact	State	Email	Phone Number
Kim Satterwhite	Special Olympics Kentucky	Ksatterwhite@soky.org	(502) 695-8222
Andrea Stamm	Special Olympics North Carolina	astamm@sonc.net	(919) 719-7662 x105
Jacquie Gallo or Nadine Armstrong	Special Olympics Arizona	Jacquie.Gallo@cityofmesa.org or nadinea@soaz.org	(480) 644-5198 (602) 230-1119
Tim Rehder	Special Olympics Kansas	rehdert@kssso.org	(913) 236-9290



UNIFORM GUIDELINES

UNIFORM

1. Team members must wear outfits alike in style and color. No jeans will be permitted. All team members must have athletic shoes (e.g. tennis shoe) with non-marking sole in like style.
2. Women:
 - a. Bottoms: pants, shorts, skorts or skirts (must be at least mid-thigh in length). No slit allowed in skorts, shorts, or skirts. Briefs or bloomers must be worn under all skirts
 - b. Tops: tank-top, collared shirt or tee shirt (no pockets). No halter tops will be allowed. Straps must be at least 1" in width. Spaghetti straps will not be permitted. When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff

JEWELRY

Jewelry of any kind including but not limited to ear, nose, tongue, belly button and facial rings, clear plastic jewelry, bracelets, necklaces, stickers or glitter and pins on uniform are prohibited. Jewelry must be removed and may not be taped over. (Exception: medical ID tags/bracelets, and uniform rhinestones. Rhinestones are illegal when adhered to the skins as opposed to a uniform. Temporary tattoos are also allowed).

HAIR

For safety reasons, long hair should be out of the face and secured.

EQUIPMENT GUIDELINES

PRACTICE SURFACES

Practice sessions must be held in a location suitable for spirit activities, i.e. appropriate surface/area, reasonably free of obstruction and excessive noise, etc.

PERFORMANCE SURFACES

Performing surfaces must be suitable and free from objects. When discarding props (signs, etc.) that are made of solid material, or have corners or sharp edges, team members must gently toss or place the props.

Use of mini-tramps, springboards, spring-assisted floors or any height-increasing apparatus is illegal for use during performances/competitions.

It is recommended the performance floor be comprised of two-inch, compressed foam, carpeted flooring no smaller than 42' x 42' (seven 6' x 42' panels) and no larger than 54' x 42' (nine 6' x 42' panels).



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OFFICIAL CHEERLEADING EVENTS

Athletes may participate in any **one** of the following events:

- 1) Individual Skills (Levels- Beginner or Advanced)
- 2) Traditional Squad (Levels- Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced or Elite)
- 3) Unified Sports Squad (Levels- Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced)

Athletes may participate in individual skills or team completion but not both. Athletes may also only participate within one level of one event.

DIVISIONING

The fundamental difference, which sets Special Olympics competitions apart from those of other sports organizations, is that athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate and every athlete is recognized for his or her performance.

All Special Olympics Cheerleading competitions adhere to safety guidelines for National Federation of High School Association (NFHF) Spirit Rules and United States Association Sports Federation (USASF).

The following criteria shall determine how Special Olympics athletes or teams are assigned to competition divisions at Special Olympics Cheerleading competitions. Where exceptions to these criteria are necessary, the Competition Manager will review proposed modifications to these criteria and make a final decision based on the goal of providing the most dignified and challenging competition experience for each athlete or team. The Competition Manager has final authority concerning divisions and any variation from these criteria. Protests based on Divisioning are not allowed.

Ability is the primary divisioning factor in Special Olympics. In the sport of cheerleading, the ability of an athlete or team is determined by the event in which they are competing (i.e. Individual Skills).

Special Olympics, Inc. guidelines for gender and age groups will further division athletes or teams. Age group guidelines are as follows: 15 and under; 16-21; and 22 and over. Open age groups may be established to meet the required minimum number of competitors or teams in a division.

Policy for One-Squad Divisions

The squad must score within 20% of the maximum judges points possible to receive first place. If the squad does not score within 20% of the maximum points possible, second place will be awarded.



Individual Skills Level Requirements

Athletes may compete in one of two levels, Beginner or Advanced, but not both.

- General Rules:
- Athlete must begin in a Cheer Stance
 - Athlete may use Pom-Poms, posters, flags etc.
 - No music will be allowed during the performance
 - There will be no time limit in this division
 - Coach may give verbal or physical cues from the sideline if needed (must be out of the judges view)

Beginner Level

Athletes must perform the following motions as well as a chant. Athletes will be prompted by the announcer to perform the motions and judged according to the criteria listed below the element.

1. Front leg kick
 - Arms in high – V,
 - Leg extended directly in front with toe pointed
 - Leg must leave the ground
 - Height of Kick
2. High V/Low V
 - High V -Straight Arms in V position standing upright
 - Low V-Straight Arms with fists down, kneeling on one knee
 - Balance (no motion, body stiff)
3. Chant
 - Clarity/loudness
 - Creativity of Intro or Chant

Advanced Level

Athletes must perform the following motions as well as a chant. Athletes will be prompted by the announcer to perform the motions and judged according to the criteria listed below the element.

1. Cartwheel or splits
 - Straight legs and pointed toes
 - Appropriate Landing
2. Double Leg Tuck
 - Jump with arms extended upward
 - Height
3. Cheer
 - Voice Projection
 - Originality
 - Enthusiasm

Beginner Squad Level Requirements

Traditional Squad & Unified Sports Squad

1. Squads in this division must perform a **non-gymnastic** cheer (refer to definition of non-gymnastics cheer).
 - Required to Spell Cheer – put together by coach/athletes which best suites cheer squad. Teams can spell out team name and use signs or letters.
 - There **must** be a jump in the cheer and there must be at least one athlete performing the jump.
2. There will be no time limit in this division.
3. **NO** music will be allowed during the performance of this cheer.
4. Unified Partner or the Coach may place the athletes in their proper position on the floor, but the Coach may **NOT** be on the floor once the performance begins.
 - Coach may give **verbal** or **physical** cues from the sideline if needed (coaches must be out of the judges' view).
5. There must be a minimum of four and maximum 16 to compete in Cheerleading.
 - At all times, the number of Special Olympics athletes must be equal to or exceed the number of Unified Partners by one.
 - If at any time during competition, the number of Unified Partners exceeds the number of Special Olympic Athletes; the squad will compete for participation ribbons only. There will be **NO** exceptions to this rule! **Registration forms will not be accepted without the proper ratio of athletes and unified partners.**

Intermediate Squad Level Requirements Traditional Squad & Unified Sports Squad

1. Squads in this division must perform one sideline chant and either a Gymnastic cheer or a non-gymnastic cheer (refer to definitions).
 - There **must** be a jump in the cheer and there must be at least one athlete performing the jump.
 - Squads must change formation at least once during the performance.
 - Pom-Poms, posters, flags, etc. may be used.
2. There will be no time limit in this division.
3. **NO** music will be allowed during the performance of the sideline chant or the cheer.
4. Unified Partner or the Coach may place the athletes in their proper positions on the floor but the Coach may **NOT** be on the floor once the performance begins.
 - Coach may give verbal or physical cues from the sideline if needed (coach **must** be out of the judge's view).
5. There must be a minimum of four and maximum 16 to compete in Cheerleading.
 - At all times, the number of Special Olympics athletes must be equal to or exceed the number of Unified Partners by one.
 - If at any time during competition, the number of Unified Partners exceeds the number of Special Olympic Athletes; the squad will compete for participation ribbons only. There will be **NO** exceptions to this rule! **Registration forms will not be accepted without the proper ratio of athletes and unified partners.**

Advanced Squad Level Requirements Traditional Squad & Unified Sports Squad

1. Squads in this division must perform one gymnastic cheer, a sideline chant and a dance routine (for example pom-pom routine) (refer to definitions)).
 - There must be a sideline chant incorporated to make the transition from cheer to dance or vice versa.
 - **NO** mount can be more than one and a half people high (safety purposes).
 - Signs may be used in the cheer only.
 - There **must** be a jump in the cheer and there must be at least one athlete performing the jump.
 - The dance routine **must** be performed to music (pom-poms are optional).
2. Squads may choose their own music and must be suitable for family listening. Music must be operated by a coach from your squad. Timing of the music will be on the first motion by squad member(s) not when the music starts.
3. The entire routine is limited to three minutes. There is a one minute time limit on the cheer and a two minute time limit on the dance routine.
4. Unified Partner or the Coach may place the athletes on the floor but the Coach may **NOT** prompt or cue their squad in any way once the performance begins.
5. There must be a minimum of four and maximum 16 to compete in Cheerleading.
 - At all times, the number of Special Olympics athletes must be equal to or exceed the number of Unified Partners by one.
 - If at any time during competition, the number of Unified Partners exceeds the number of Special Olympic Athletes; the squad will compete for participation ribbons only. There will be **NO** exceptions to this rule! **Registration forms will not be accepted without the proper ratio of athletes and unified partners.**

Elite Squad Level Requirements Traditional Squad

*Note: This level is intended for squads who train year-round and are committed to the additional practice needed to prepare for competition at this level. These squads **MUST** also have sufficient and qualified personnel who understand and practice safety protocol. This level requires state program approval prior to competing in this division.*

1. Squads must perform a maximum two and a half-minute routine which incorporates both music and a cheer.
 - The routine should contain gymnastics, pyramids and a transition sideline.
 - The make-up of the routine is at the coaches discretion, (i.e. whether to start with the dance or cheer).
 - There **must** be a sideline chant incorporated to make the transition from cheer to dance or vice versa.
 - The cheer **must** be a gymnastic cheer and follow the gymnastic cheer guidelines defined in this manual.
 - **AT LEAST TWO** jumps **MUST** be performed in the routine.
 - There will be **NO** flip dismounts.
 - **NO** mount can be more than two people high (safety purposes).
 - Signs can be used in the routine.
2. The music portion of the routine must not exceed the two and a half minutes, but must be at least 45 seconds long. Squads may choose their own music and must be suitable for family listening. Music must be operated by a coach from your squad. Timing of the music will be on the first motion by squad member(s) not when the music starts.
3. Coach may coach from the sideline and must provide at least two spotters on the floor at all times (safety purposes).
4. Squads must be associated with a gym (a facility that focuses on health, wellness, gymnastics, cheerleading, etc.)
5. Squad size is limited to a minimum of 10 up to a maximum of 24.
 - Squad members must be composed of all Special Olympics athletes.

DEFINITIONS

Base	The bottom person of a partner stunt or pyramid who is in contact with the ground.
Cheer	A long phrase that involves motions, pom-poms, stunts, jumps and/or tumbling. Usually somewhat resembles a song that has a beginning, middle, and end.
Flyer	The flyer (top person) of a partner stunt or pyramid.
Front Leg Kick	Step left or right and kick opposite foot to the front with arms extended straight over head.
Gymnastic	Any type of individual or partner stunt performed other than jumps and motions; such as mounts, splits, rolls, walkovers, cartwheels, and handsprings.
Gymnastic Cheer	A cheer performed using any type of gymnastics, mount or partner stunt.
Jump	A spring from one or both feet with a landing on one or both feet.
Motions	Movements using straight and/or diagonal arms; in combination with head/foot movements.
Mount	Any type of stunt that uses two persons supported by one or more persons. (Mounts can only be 2 people high)
Non-gymnastic Cheer	A cheer using only jumps and motions.
Partner Stunts	Any type of stunt that uses two persons and one of those persons is using the other person for support.
Pom-Pon Routine	A routine performed to music using pom-poms. A Pom-Pon Routine is not a cheer, so it will NOT be accepted in the Beginner or Intermediate Division. NO GYMNASTICS will be performed in the Pom-Pon Routine.

DEFINITIONS

- Prop** Any type of hat, flags, hand-held ribbons, etc. Props are NOT allowed in a Pom-Pon Routine or Cheer. Only Pom-Pons are allowed in a Pom-Pon routine. Signs can be used in the cheer for the Unified Division and in the routine for the Elite Division.
- Sideline Chant** Any cheer of a repetitious nature using motions or jumps. (Ex: Go Big Blue, Go Big Blue, etc.)
- Spell Cheer** Spelling out letters by shouting or cry put together by coach/athletes which best suites cheer squad. Teams can spell out team name and use signs or letters.
- Spotter** A person that assists with any tumbling move or who is responsible for assisting or catching the top person. A spotter does not provide primary support to another person. The spotter must spot the climber until the climber returns safely on the ground.
- Thigh Stand** A thigh stand limited to two persons high. “Two high” is defined as the base (bottom person) having at least one foot on the ground and one climber.



JUDGES SCORE SHEET EXPLANATION

I. Personal Appearance & Uniform

Hair	neat. Style and length are optional. For safety reasons it is recommended to secure long hair in some way.
Uniforms	pressed, clean and neat. Length should be proportioned according to height.
Socks, shoes	neat and clean.

II. Cheers

Execution Refers only to the actual performance of motions, stunts or gymnastics that are planned.

Jumps Should be well executed and synchronized.

Originality

Pep and Enthusiasm Both should be continuous and sincere.

Poise and Confidence

Spacing and Motions A variety of motions adds interest to any cheer including motions of the legs, arms, head, etc. Both spacing of the entire squad on the floor and spacing between squad members should be considered. A variety of formations within a cheer is more pleasing than one.

Sportsmanship Each squad will be judged continually throughout the competition. In other words, a squad which is not performing may still have points deducted for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Timing and Voice The speed of a cheer should be fast enough to be peppy, but slow enough to understand the words.

OFFICIAL SPECIAL OLYMPICS AT LARGE JUDGING SHEET



Squad	Division Individual Skills
Judge's Signature	Date
Type of competition: Beginner	

PERSONAL APPEARANCE & UNIFORM

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Hair - neat	5	
B	Uniforms – pressed and clean	5	
C	Socks and shoes – clean	5	
D	Jewelry (none)	5	
SUB TOTAL		20	

CHANT

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Clarity/Loudness	5	
B	Pep and Enthusiasm	5	
C	Poise and Confidence	5	
D	Creativity	5	
SUB TOTAL		20	

HIGH V/ LOW V

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	High V- Straight Arms	5	
B	High V- Position	5	
C	Low V- Straight Arms	5	
D	Low V- Position	5	
E	Balance	5	
SUB TOTAL		25	

FRONT LEG KICK

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Straight Arms Overhead	5	
B	Legs Extension	5	
C	Height of Kick	5	
D	Toe's Pointed	5	
SUB TOTAL		20	

SCORESHEET TOTALS

		Possible Score	Squad Score
TOTAL		85	

TOTAL

Judge's Comments: _____

COACH'S INITIALS _____

OFFICIAL SPECIAL OLYMPICS AT LARGE JUDGING SHEET



Squad	Division Individual Skills
Judge's Signature	Date
Type of competition: Advanced	

PERSONAL APPEARANCE & UNIFORM

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Hair - neat	5	
B	Uniforms – pressed and clean	5	
C	Socks and shoes – clean	5	
D	Jewelry (none)	5	
SUB TOTAL		20	

CHEER

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Execution	5	
B	Spacing and Motions	5	
C	Timing and Voice	5	
E	Pep and Enthusiasm	5	
F	Poise and Confidence	5	
G	Originality	5	
H	Enthusiasm	5	
SUB TOTAL		35	

CART WHEEL OR SPLITS

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Beginning Stance	5	
B	Straight Legs	5	
C	Pointed Toes	5	
E	Appropriate Landing	5	
SUB TOTAL		20	

DOUBLE LEG TUCK

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Beginning Stance	5	
B	Jump	5	
C	Height	5	
D	Arms Straight Above Head	5	
SUB TOTAL		20	

SCORESHEET TOTALS

		Possible Score	Squad Score
TOTAL		95	

TOTAL

Judge's Comments: _____

COACH'S INITIALS _____

OFFICIAL SPECIAL OLYMPICS AT LARGE JUDGING SHEET



Squad	Division Beginner
Judge's Signature	Date
Type of competition (circle): Traditional Unified	

PERSONAL APPEARANCE & UNIFORM

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Hair - neat	5	
B	Uniforms – pressed and clean	5	
C	Socks and shoes – clean	5	
D	Jewelry (none)	5	
SUB TOTAL		20	

CHEER

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Execution	5	
B	Spacing and Motions	5	
C	Timing and Voice	5	
D	Jumps	5	
E	Pep and Enthusiasm	5	
F	Poise and Confidence	5	
G	Originality	5	
H	Sportsmanship	5	
SUB TOTAL		40	

SCORESHEET TOTALS

	Possible Score	Squad Score
TOTAL	60	

TOTAL

Judge's Comments: _____

COACH'S INITIALS _____

OFFICIAL SPECIAL OLYMPICS AT LARGE JUDGING SHEET



Squad	Division Intermediate
Judge's Signature	Date
Type of competition (circle): Traditional Unified	

PERSONAL APPEARANCE & UNIFORM

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Hair - neat	5	
B	Uniforms – pressed and clean	5	
C	Socks and shoes – clean	5	
D	Jewelry (none)	5	
SUB TOTAL		20	

SIDELINE CHANT

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Appropriateness of Chant	5	
B	Voice	5	
C	Execution	5	
D	Timing & Rhythm	5	
E	Overall Quality	5	
SUB TOTAL		25	

CHEER

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Execution	5	
B	Spacing and Motions	5	
C	Timing and Voice	5	
D	Jumps	5	
E	Pep and Enthusiasm	5	
F	Poise and Confidence	5	
G	Originality	5	
H	Sportsmanship	5	
SUB TOTAL		40	

SCORESHEET TOTALS

		Possible Score	Squad Score
TOTAL		85	

TOTAL

Judge's Comments: _____

COACH'S INITIALS _____



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OFFICIAL SPECIAL OLYMPICS AT LARGE JUDGING SHEET

Squad	Division Advanced
Judge's Signature	Date
Type of competition (circle): Traditional Unified	

PERSONAL APPEARANCE & UNIFORM

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Hair - neat	5	
B	Uniforms – pressed and clean	5	
C	Socks and shoes – clean	5	
D	Jewelry (none)	5	
SUB TOTAL		20	

CHEERLEADING SKILLS

A	Execution	10	
B	Variation of Motions	5	
C	Timing and Rhythm	5	
D	Voice	5	
E	Jump(s)	5	
F	Spacing	5	
G	Formation Changes	5	
SUB TOTAL		40	

COMPOSITION & PRESENTATION

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Degree of Difficulty	10	
B	Transition (Sideline Chant)	5	
C	Incorporation of dance and cheer	5	
D	Safety Technique	5	
E	Pep and Enthusiasm	9	
F	Facial Expression	3	
G	Poise and Confidence	3	
SUB TOTAL		40	

PENALTY POINTS (TO BE REMOVED FROM TOTAL)

		Possible Penalty Points	Actual Penalty Points
A	Routine Overtime Limit	15	
B	Music Too Short	15	
C	Coaching from Sideline	25	
D	No Jump	10	
E	No Sideline	10	
F	Coach/parent/helper on the floor after squad is called	10	
Total Penalty Points (To be removed from total)		85	

SCORESHEET TOTALS

	Possible Score	Squad Score
TOTAL SCORE	100	
PENALTY POINTS DEDUCTED	85	-

TOTAL



OFFICIAL SPECIAL OLYMPICS AT LARGE JUDGING SHEET

Squad	Division Elite
Judge's Signature	Date
Type of competition (circle): Traditional	

CHEERLEADING SKILLS

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Execution	15	
B	Variation of Motions	5	
C	Timing and Rhythm	5	
D	Voice	5	
E	Jumps	10	
F	Spacing	5	
G	Formation Changes	5	
SUB TOTAL		50	

COMPOSITION & PRESENTATION

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Degree of Difficulty	15	
B	Transition (Sideline Chant)	5	
C	Incorporation of dance and cheer	5	
D	Safety Technique	10	
E	Pep and Enthusiasm	10	
F	Facial Expression, poise and confidence	5	
SUB TOTAL		50	

PERSONAL APPEARANCE & UNIFORM

		Possible Score	Squad Score
A	Hair	1	
B	Make-up	1	
C	Posture	1	
D	Uniform/Socks/Shoes	1	
E	Jewelry (none)	1	
SUB TOTAL		5	

PENALTY POINTS (TO BE REMOVED FROM TOTAL)

		Possible Penalty Points	Actual Penalty Points
A	Routine Overtime Limit	15	
B	Music Too Short	15	
C	Not having 2 jumps	10	
D	No transition sideline	10	
E	Not having at least two spotters on the floor at all times	25	
Total Penalty Points (To be removed from total)		75	

