

# 2026 Winter Season

## Cheerleading Statewide Coaches Call

***Special Olympics***  
Washington



# Welcome



## Meeting Goals

- Align on key 2026 Updates for Cheerleading
- Equip coaches with practical training tools and practice plans
- Clarify rules, divisioning, and event-day procedures
- Outline responsibilities and where to get help



# Region Leadership Contacts

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# Registration Updates and Reminders



We sincerely apologize again for the discrepancies around expiration dates found within the reports sent – please disregard and refer to your Coach Zone.

## Official Sports

- **Deadline: November 23, 2025 (11:59 PM) -> cleared in correct roles & on your “My Teams”**

## Non Official Sports

- **Deadline: January 18, 2025 (11:59 PM) -> cleared in correct roles & on your “My Teams”**

Everyone — athletes, Unified partners, coaches, and chaperones — must be cleared through March 2, 2026

# Registration Updates and Reminders



## Team Names

- All team entries must be identified by a team name. A team name shall only be used once.
  - IDENTIFIER (Location) + NAME
  - Example: Goldendale Timberwolves

# 2026 Sports & Competition Updates



## **New Age Category:**

- Addition of 30+ age group to foster more competitive opportunities.
- Age groups may still be combined if participation numbers are too low.

## **Athlete Hospitality Update:**

- As a continuation of Winter 2026 Events, full meals will not be provided at events.
- Athletes should bring their own meals.
- Light snacks such as power bars, chips, fruit, and drinks will be available

## **We will be hosting a Winter Games in 2026!**

### **Sports Offered at Winter Games Include:**

- Basketball, Cheerleading, USA Games Training Camp

# 2026 Sports & Competiton Updates



## GENERAL REMINDERS / UPDATES

### Multi Sport Athlete Policy

#### ✓ Individual + Team Sport: Allowed

Example: Swimming & Soccer

If both qualify for State → Team sport takes priority (impacts a roster).

#### ✓ Two Individual Sports: Allowed

Example: Athletics & Swimming

If both qualify for State → Athlete must choose one to advance in.

Note: Relays count as 'Team' events.

#### ✗ Two Team Sports: Not Allowed

Example: Basketball and Cheer(including Unified & Community teams)

Impacts rosters if both teams qualify; athlete must choose one.

#### ✓ Recreational Sports: No Limits

Athletes may join multiple recreational opportunities.

However, official sports take precedence over recreational events.

**Athletes and Unified Partners should not compete in both Unified Champion Schools teams and Community Teams during the same season.**

# Coaching for Success

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# Program Readiness: Building the Foundation

## Family & Athlete Engagement

### Host a Preseason Team Meeting

- Introduce your coaching staff and program philosophy.
- Review **Code of Conduct**: sportsmanship, respect, communication.
- Outline expectations for **attendance, transportation, and behavior**.
- Provide a “What to Bring” checklist:
  - Proper shoes, water bottle, reversible jersey, mouthguard (if required).
  - Positive attitude, readiness to learn.

### Communication & Transparency

- Establish clear communication channels (GroupMe, TeamSnap, email lists).
- Share your practice and competition calendar early.
- Clarify who to contact for: schedule questions, athlete absences, behavior concerns.

### Inclusion & Belonging

- Encourage families to cheer positively for all athletes.
- Reinforce the *Team* mindset — same standards for respect across all ability levels.
- Create “Family Captains” to help coordinate snacks, travel, or volunteer sign-ups.



# Building an Elite Practice

## Purpose + Preparation + Precision

Competition can be stressful. Your Practices can prepare your athletes to be successful while also reducing anxiety or pre-event jitters.

- **Practice how you perform:** During Competition teams go through stations:
  - Warm up: Stretching / Warm Up: Stunting / Warm Up: Full Out / Performance
- **Consistent Structure:** Elite programs follow a rhythm athletes can trust

Segment	Focus	Duration
Dynamic Warm-up	Mobility, coordination, energy	10 min
Skill Development	Stunting, Tumbling Pyramids	20 min
Team Concepts	Break your routine into pieces (Cheer, Music Portion, Blocking, Transitions)	20 min
Competition	Go Full Out! Put it all Together	15 min
Reflection & Cooldown	Stretching, review, feedback	5–10 min

# Rules & Competition Updates

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# Rules & Competition Updates



Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Cheerleading govern all competitions. Based on *International Cheer Union (ICU)* rules, with Specific adaptations to ensure inclusivity and fair play for athletes with IDD. Governing Body rules apply unless in conflict with Special Olympics rules.

## Special Olympics North America Resources:

Special Olympics Cheerleading Resource Page: [Click Here](#)

ICU Special Ability Rules: [Click Here](#)

Special Olympics Article 1: [Sports Rules Article 1](#)

## Special Olympics Washington Rules & Resources:

- Reference Sheet (One Pager): [Click Here](#)
- Special Olympics Washington Cheer Guide:

# Rules & Competition Updates



## **2026 Regional Competitions**

- January 17, 2026: Olympia
- January 31, 2026: Moses Lake

*Athletes and Teams MUST attend a Regional Event to qualify to go to the 2026 State Games in Wenatchee*



# Rules & Competition Updates

## Events Offered & Competition Overview

### Team Competition: Small Team Division (Traditional & UNIFIED)

- Events: **Team Cheer Routine**
- Levels: **Introductory, Level 0 (beginner), Level 1 (novice), Level 2 (intermediate)**
- Team Size: **Minimum of four (4) and maximum of fifteen (15).**
- Unified Division Ratio: **The ratio of athletes to Unified partners must be 1:1.**
- Coaches Involvement: **Up to three (3) Coaches and or assistants are allowed to signal from the front**
- Competition Format: **Teams competing will compose a 2:30 routine.**
  - Routine: Two Minutes, thirty seconds (2:30).
  - Cheer Portion: Cheer Portion minimum time requirement is (30) seconds.
  - Transition Time: Recommended time between Cheer and Music portion is (20) seconds.

**Individual Skills will not be offered in 2026**

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Music / Proof of Licensing

### Use of Unedited Purchased Single Songs

- This is covered by Public Performance Licenses; therefore a team may bring a legally purchased copy (from Itunes, Amazon, or similar vendors) of a songs recording.
- You may not remix these recordings. This includes sound effects, changing the songs tempo, or mixing the song with other songs.
- You are able to make minor edits for timing purposes, such as removing a chorus or a bridge to fit the competition routine time.

### Use of Authorized Music:

1. Recorded Music (Original Music / Cover Music or Music Licensing Platform) that is provided by an ICU listed Preferred Music Provider  
<http://cheerunion.org/education/musicinfo/>
2. Recorded Music with written approval by your government and/or national sport authority's approval of a local "Preferred Music Provider" with properly licensed local music from your country\*
3. Original Music created or commissioned by you/your team (e.g. an original song and recording to which you/your team own or license the rights by written agreement\*

List of Music Providers: <https://usacheer.org/music-provider-directory-music-providers>



# Rules & Competition Updates

## Levels of Competition

Levels: **Introductory, Level 0 (beginner), Level 1 (novice), Level 2 (intermediate)**

- Resources for understanding what level you are and what you can do:
  - Reference Sheet (One Pager): [Click Here](#)
  - Special Olympics Washington Cheer Guide: [Click Here](#)

## Judging Update

In 2026 we will be moving to a new judging system for Special Olympics Washington Cheer with the goal of providing more prescriptive resources for building your routine.

- New judges sheets will be split into two sections: Mandatory Components & Presentation
- All elements will be scored on a 5.0 scale. Each element will be rated 1-5, 5 being the highest.
  - **Mandatory Elements** are defined skills a routine **MUST** include and will be clearly noted on judging sheets
  - **Presentation** will be comprised of a combined score consisting of:
    - Composition
    - Choreography



# Rules & Competition Updates

## Introductory (Non Stunt / Non Tumble)

- Jumps (at Least 1)
- Formation Change (at least 1)
- Props Utilization (at least 2)
- Sideline Cheer (at least 1)
- Call and Response Cheer (at Least 1)

## Level 0 (Ground Level Stunts / Non Tumble)

- Jumps (at least 2)
- Formation change (at least 1)
- Sideline Cheer (at least 1)
- Call and Response (at least 1)
- Ground level Stunt (at least 1)



- Please review each skill level and the list of Mandatory Components required for each routine.
- Teams will received additional points for Presentation. This will be composed of a score based on their routines Composition and Choreography.
- Unified Competition: Unified teams are also scored based on meaningful involvement of Athletes and Unified Partners

# Rules & Competition Updates

## Level 1 (Beginner Stunts / Tumble)

- Jumps (at least 2 different jumps executed)
- Waist Level Stunt (at least 1)
- Sideline Cheer w/ Call and Response
- Formation change (at least 2)
- Level 1 Tumble (at least 1)

## Level 2 (Advanced Stunt / Tumble)

- Jumps (at least 2 different jumps executed)
- Extended Stunt (at least 1)
- Sideline Cheer w/ Call and Response
- Formation Change (at least 2)
- Level 1 or Level 2 Tumble (at least 1)



- Please review each skill level and the list of Mandatory Components required for each routine.
- Teams will receive additional points for Presentation. This will be composed of a score based on their routines Composition and Choreography.
- Unified Competition: Unified teams are also scored based on meaningful involvement of Athletes and Unified Partners



# Rules & Competition Updates

## Understanding the '20 Second' Transition Timing

- Teams are recommended 20 seconds for transition between Cheer Portion and Music Portion.
- The '20 Seconds' are calculated into your total time of 2 minutes and 30 Seconds

## Jumps

- If you have participants who cannot complete a jump, they will be scored based on equitable use of team members regardless of the skill.
  - Example: Team does a 'jump' and you have an athlete in a wheelchair or with ambulatory difficulties. These athletes would receive a score for doing the motion of the jump, or making an attempt within their ability.

## Sideline Cheer vs 'Call & Response'

- Sideline Cheer: A segment of a cheer that focuses on traditional cheerleading such as chants and cheers.
- Call and Response: Evokes Crowd Participation, such as a crowd leading activity.

## Props & Prop Usage

- The only approved props according to the International Cheer Union are:
  - Flags, Banners, Signs, Poms, Megaphones, and Pieces of Cloth

# Thank you



## Questions?