

Special Olympics Washington Cheerleading Manual Rules & Regulations



All Special Olympics Washington cheerleading competitions will run according to the rules and guidelines in this manual.

July 2017

Special Olympics Mission

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).

Coaching Guidelines

All practice sessions must be supervised by the coach and held in a location suitable for the activities of cheerleaders (i.e. use of appropriate mats, away from excessive noise and distractions, suitable athlete to coach ratio, etc.)

Coaches should recognize a cheerleader's ability level and focus on providing fundamentals. Athletes should not be pressed to perform activities until everyone has a good safety understanding.

All cheerleading squads should adopt a comprehensive conditioning and strength-building program.

Tumbling, partner stunts, pyramids and jumps should be limited to appropriate surfaces during practice and competition.

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:

- Please refrain from using abusive or offensive language towards anyone; judges, coaches, opponents and fellow spectators.
- Keep your emotions under control – Remember that the athletes are amateur athletes and the coaches and officials are all volunteers.
- It may help if you understand the rules of the sport/event. If you need further information or clarification, check out the SOWA Cheerleading web page for links to their rules.
- De-emphasize winning and losing!
- Let the coach fulfill their volunteer role - and coach the players – please refrain from shouting instructions. This can lead to a penalty incurred by the athlete or team.
- Spectators and fans are prohibited in the competition areas. Only registered/approved coaches and athletes should be on the official playing field/area.
- **All cheers/routines** should stress the spirit of good sportsmanship. Derogatory comments directed to players, coaches or officials will not be tolerated.

BE A FAN!

BE A GREAT FAN!

Appropriate Attire

Uniform Team members must wear outfits alike in style and color. Jeans are not permitted. All team members must have white athletic shoes (e.g. tennis shoe) with non-marking sole in like style.

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, athlete credentials, stickers or glitter and pins on uniform are prohibited. Jewelry must be removed and may not be taped over.

Exceptions: medical ID tags/bracelets, and uniform rhinestones. Rhinestones are illegal when adhered to the skin as opposed to a uniform. Temporary tattoos **are** allowed.

Hair For safety reasons, long hair should be out of the face and secured (if applicable).

Eyeglasses For safety reasons, eyeglasses should be secured with an eyeglass strap.

Appropriate Equipment

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).

Official SOWA Cheerleading Events

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

- Individual Performance¹
- Team non-mount & non-tumble: There are no tumbling, stunts or mounts allowed in this level.
- Team non-mount: tumbling is allowed in this level, but no stunts or pyramids.
- Team non-tumble: stunts and pyramids are allowed in this level; however tumbling elements are not.
- Team mount & tumble: Tumbling, stunts, and pyramids are allowed.

Additionally, teams may be further defined by squad size (small = 5 – 9 members; large = 10-15 members) and Traditional or Unified Sports.

Athletes may participate in individual performance or team completion but not both. Athletes and Unified Partners may also only participate within one level of one event.

Divisioning

Teams will be required to submit a video prior to registration if 1) they are a new team or more than half the team is different from the previous year, or 2) there is any change in level from the previous year.

All Special Olympics Washington 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 athletes or teams are assigned to competition divisions at Special Olympics Washington 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 (e.g. individual skills, non-mount or tumble, etc).

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.

Scoring/Awarding for One-Team/One-Athlete 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.

¹Athletes competing in Individual Performance should use the rubric as a guideline for elements in their performance/routine.

General SOWA Cheerleading Rules

The Special Olympics Washington Cheerleading Competition Guide, and SOWA rules and guidelines will govern all cheerleading competitions sanctioned by SOWA. SOWA has adopted the safety guidelines and competition rules developed by the National Federation of High School Athletic Associations (NFHS), and United States All-Star Federation Level 1 (USASF).

All cheerleaders should receive proper training before attempting any form of cheerleading gymnastics (e.g. tumbling, partner stunts and jumps). The only tumbling allowed for SOWA competitions are forward & backward rolls, cartwheels, and round offs. For Unified Sports® teams, the level of tumbling should not exceed that of what Special Olympics athletes are capable of performing.

Coaches are **not** allowed on the floor during the performance of any routine **for any division**. Spotters are permitted on the floor, but cannot coach the squad.

There will be an overall Deduction Judges' Sheet and a separate judge calculating deductions.

Safety Infractions

Below are some examples of infractions that incur penalty points during competition:

- Fingernails at an inappropriate length
- Unsecured hair devices for longer hair
- Walking on or over props
- Inappropriate or vulgar choreography
- Failure to meet divisional requirements
- Exceeding time limit
- Unsportsmanlike conduct from participant, coach, parent and/or spectator

Cheerleading Music Regulations

Beginning late 2016, under U.S. copyright laws, you cannot mix, edit or use music that you do not have copyright usage for during any kind of public performance. If you choose to use a single song in your routine, you may bring a legally purchased (from iTunes, Amazon, etc.) copy of that recording to be used for your routine. Teams may not re-mix these recordings in any way (such as adding sound effects, changing tempo or mixing with any other recordings), but you may make minor edits for timing purposes only (for example, removing a chorus or bridge to fit the duration of the team's performance). Under U.S. copyright law, your team or Special Olympics Washington can be sued or fined up to \$150,000 per occurrence of using music for which you do not have the appropriate permission.

All recordings mixed together in cheer and dance routines should be properly licensed and written confirmation of such license should be available upon request. You can use recordings that you purchase from vendors cleared by USA Cheer - who provide written confirmation of proper licensing or original compositions created or commissioned by you (i.e. an original song and recording to which you own or license the rights by written agreement). Under U.S. copyright law, no teams are permitted to create a re-mix, mash-up or medley without proper written authorization from the copyright owners. A link to a list of USA Cheer preferred vendors is located on the cheerleading page. **Please note that Special Olympics Washington has not yet negotiated any special rates for Special Olympics teams. This has proved more difficult than in the past due to copyright laws and the cost of licenses for music producers to not be able to provide any savings to Special Olympics NC teams.**

Unified Sports® Cheerleading Competition

Teams wishing to compete as a Unified team must have a coach certified in Unified Sports, as well as current cheerleading certification.

Unified Sports® is a program that combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes with peer athletes without intellectual disabilities on sports teams for training and competition. Furthermore, all players (Athletes and Unified Partners) are of similar age and ability. Athletes in this program need to have the necessary skill level to participate in the sport so they can be appropriately matched with Special Olympics athletes, and vice versa. Unified Sports expands sports opportunities for current Special Olympics athletes seeking new challenges, as well as a valuable sports opportunity to individuals with or without intellectual disabilities who are not presently involved with Special Olympics.

For all Unified Sports® team competition, 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 are no exceptions to this rule. Registration forms will not be accepted without the proper ratio of athletes and Unified Partners.

Rules of Competition

- Please refer to the SOWA Rubric for detailed information regarding point values.
- Unified Partners and/or coaches 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).
- Individuals and teams may choose their own music and must be suitable for family listening. **Music must be operated by a coach from your program.** Timing of the music will be on the first motion by squad member(s), not when the music starts.
- Teams and athletes will have two and one-half minutes to complete their routine. Time begins on the first movement. Maximum of 1 minute 45 seconds for music.
- Levels with mounts and/or tumbling: When performing pyramids and partner stunts, either the base(s) or flyer(s) may be in fully extended positions, but not both. For example, a base cannot support a flyer with arms fully extended if the flyer's body is fully extended. Please refer to the definitions for further clarification.

Definitions²

Base	A person who is in direct weight-bearing contact with the performance surface who provides support for another person. The person(s) that holds, lifts, or tosses a top person into a stunt. (New bases- bases previously not in direct contact with the top person of a stunt)
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.
Dance	A routine performed to music with no verbal chants, cheers, etc. May incorporate props (except signs), pom poms, gymnastics and/or stunts. A dance routine is not a cheer or chant.
Eighteen Inches above Extended Arm Level	The maximum distance allowed between the highest point of a bases extended arm and the lowest point of the top person's body during a release move in <u>Level 5 only</u> . This stunt is not allowed in any Special Olympics Washington Cheerleading level.
Extended Arm Level	The distance from the performing surface to the highest point of the base's arm(s) when standing upright with the arm(s) fully extended over the head. Extended arms do not necessarily define an "extended stunt".

² Most definitions are taken from the USASF/IASF Glossary. For a complete listing of cheerleading terminology, visit www.usasf.net.

Extended Position	A top person supported by a base(s) with fully extended arms. Extended arms do not necessarily define an “extended stunt.”
Extended Stunt	When the entire body of the top person is extended in an upright position over the base(s). (Examples of stunts that are not considered “extended stunts”: Chairs, torches, flat backs, arm-n-arms and straddle lifts. These are stunts where the bases arms are extended overhead, but are NOT considered to be “extended stunts” since the height of the body of the top person is similar to a shoulder/prep level stunt). <i>Clarification: If the primary bases go to their knees and extend their arms, the stunt would be considered extended.</i>
Extension Prep or Prep (or Half)	When the top person is being held at shoulder level by the base(s).
Flyer	See “Top Person.”
Front Leg Kick	Step left or right and kick opposite foot to the front with arms extended straight over head.
Ground Level	To be at the height of or supported by the performing service.
Jump:	An airborne position not involving hip-over-head rotation created by using one’s own feet and lower body power to push off the performance surface.
Motions	Movements using straight and/or diagonal arms; in combination with head/foot movements.
Mount	Any skill in which a top person is supported above the performance surface by one or more persons. (Mounts can only be 1 ½ persons high)
Partner Stunts	Any type of stunt that uses two persons and one of those persons is using the other person for support.
Prop	An object that can be manipulated. Flags, banners, signs, pom poms, megaphones, and pieces of cloth are the only props allowed. Any uniform piece purposefully removed from the body and used for visual effect will be considered a prop.
Second Level	Any person being supported away from the performing surface by one or more bases.
Shoulder Stand Level	A stunt in which the top person’s hips are at the same height they would be if in a shoulder stand. (Clarification: If the primary bases squat, go to their knees or drop the overall height of the stunt and extend their arms, the stunt would NOT be shoulder stand level, but rather extended).
Sideline Chant	Any cheer of a repetitious nature using motions or jumps. (Ex: Go Big Blue, Go Big Blue, etc.)
Single-Based Stunt	A stunt using a single base for support.

Single -Leg Stunt	See "Stunt"
Spotter	<p>A person whose primary responsibility is the protection of the head and shoulders area of a top person during the performance of a stunt/toss. The spotter must be positioned to the side or the back of the stunt/toss. Must be in the direct contact with the performing surface. Must be attentive to the skill being spotted. Spotter is required for each extended stunt. Must be the proper position to prevent injuries and does not have to be in direct contact with the stunt. Cannot stand so that their torso is under the stunt.</p>
Stunt	<p>Any skill in which a top person is supported above the performance surface by one or more persons. Also referred to as a "mount". A stunt is determined to be "Single" or " Double" leg by the number of feet that the top person has being supported by the base(s).</p>
Thigh Stand	<p>A thigh stand limited to 1 ½ persons high. "Two high" is defined as the base (bottom person) having at least one foot on the ground and one climber.</p>
Top Person	<p>The person(s) on top of a stunt or toss. Also referred to as the "flyer" or "partner."</p>
Tumbling	<p>A gymnastic or acrobatic skill that begins and ends on the performing surface.</p>

Cheerleading Rubric

This rubric is meant as a guide for coaches to choreograph and plan routines. The skills listed below are examples only and not meant to be all-inclusive. Placement within a specific rubric range is determined by the difficulty of the skills performed as listed below and overall execution of those skills. Below average or sub-standard technical execution may result in a team being dropped out of a rubric range.

Skill Area	Basic 1 – 2 Points Possible	Intermediate 2 – 4 Points Possible	Advanced 4 – 5 Points Possible
Crowd Leading Crowd Effective Material Use of Motions to Lead Crowd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal to no use of crowd effective cheer Little to no response from crowd Few basic motions with no leg work Basic Motion Examples: High V, Low V, T 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate use of crowd effective cheer Some response from crowd Multiple basic motions & few intermediate motions with little leg work Intermediate motion examples: Punch, Diagonals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superior use of crowd effective cheer Large response from crowd Multiple intermediate motions & few advanced motions with leg work Advanced motion examples: K
Incorporations Proper Use of Skills Use of Props	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No incorporation of jumps, tumbling or stunts Minimal to no use of poms, signs, & megaphones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporation of 1-2 skills (i.e. jumps, tumbling and/or stunts) Moderate use of poms, signs, & megaphones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporation of all three skills (i.e. jumps, tumbling, and stunts) Maximum use of poms, signs, & megaphones
Partner Stunts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal use of team members in stunts (less than 1/2) No single leg stunts present Majority of partner stunts at knee level or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate use of team members in stunts (at least 1/2) 1 single leg stunt present Majority of partner stunts at knee and thigh stand level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum use of team members in stunts (more than 3/4) Multiple single leg skills present Majority of partner stunts at thigh stand or elevator level
Pyramids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 pyramid with no single leg skills and no skills above a thigh stand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 pyramid with a single leg skill and majority of skills at a thigh stand or higher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 complex pyramid with multiple body positions or transitions at a thigh stand or higher
Group Tumbling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 1/2 of team performs skill Skill examples: forward or log rolls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 of team performs skill basic level skill and some perform intermediate skills Skill examples: back rolls, cartwheels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 1/2 of team performs intermediate level skill and some perform advanced level skills Skills examples: round-offs or higher
Jumps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 1/2 of team performs skill Jump examples: T-jump, tuck jump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 of team performs skill basic level skill and some perform intermediate skills Jump examples: Eagle Spread, Herkie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 1/2 of team performs intermediate level skill and some perform advanced level skills Jump examples: Toe Touch, Hurdler, Pike
Dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2- 8 counts with no formation changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-8 counts with 1 formation change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4-8 counts with multiple formation changes

Scoresheet Explanation

Please note that all elements must be present on the applicable score sheet in order to maximize points. For example, partner stunts, pyramids, tumbling, etc. must be present during the music portion of the routine to maximize points. These elements are welcome in the cheer and will be scored under "Incorporations," and potentially "crowd leading."

Crowd Leading	Engaging routine that effectively leads crowd while using motions.
Incorporations	Ability to incorporate a variety of materials or skills within a routine and their execution. 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.
Partner Stunts	Variety of partner stunts and difficulty.
Pyramids	Complexity of pyramid.
Group Tumbling	Should be well-executed and fit within the routine.
Jumps	Should be well executed and synchronized.
Execution	Refers to the accuracy to which a skill or skill set was performed.
Dance	Dance should be well-timed, incorporate formation changes, and be appropriate for competition.
Appearance	Hair neat and pulled back (if necessary). 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. Shoes neat and clean.
Overall Impression	Originality of routine, pep and enthusiasm, poise, confidence, timing, and voice modulation. The speed of a cheer should be fast enough to be peppy, but slow enough to understand the words.
Sportsmanship	It is expected that all athletes/squads/coaches display good sportsmanship. Therefore, points will deducted for poor sportsmanship. Each squad will be judged continually throughout the competition. A squad which is not performing may still have points deducted for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Cheerleading Scoresheet

Cheer

CROWD LEADING	POINTS	SCORE
Crowd Effective Material	5	
COMMENTS:		
Use of Motions to Lead Crowd	5	
COMMENTS:		
INCORPORATIONS	POINTS	SCORE
Proper Use of Skills to Lead Crowd	5	
COMMENTS:		
Use of poms, signs, and megaphones	5	
COMMENTS:		
Execution of Incorporations	5	
COMMENTS:		
OVERALL	POINTS	SCORE
Appearance	5	
Overall Impression	10	
COMMENTS:		
TOTAL	POSSIBLE	SCORE
	40	

Cheerleading Scoresheet

Music

PARTNER STUNTS	POINTS	SCORE
Execution	5	
Difficulty	5	
COMMENTS:		
PYRAMIDS	POINTS	SCORE
Execution	5	
Difficulty	5	
COMMENTS:		
GROUP TUMBLING	POINTS	SCORE
Execution	5	
Difficulty	5	
COMMENTS:		
JUMPS	POINTS	SCORE
Execution	5	
Difficulty	5	
COMMENTS:		
DANCE	POINTS	SCORE
Execution	5	
Difficulty	5	
COMMENTS:		
OVERALL	POINTS	SCORE
Overall Impression	10	
TOTAL	POINTS POSSIBLE	SCORE
	60	



OFFICIAL SPECIAL OLYMPICS WASHINGTON DEDUCTION SHEET

Team	Division
Judge's Signature	Date

SAFETY INFRACTIONS

-2 POINTS PER INFRACTION, PER OCCURANCE

	FREQUENCY	POINTS
FINGERNAILS – must be kept at a length appropriate to minimize risk		
HAIR – secure and worn in a manner to minimize risk. Hair devices secured and appropriate for activity.		
EYEGLASSES – glasses secured with strap appropriate for athletic competition		
JEWELRY – No jewelry of any kind including but not limited to ear, nose, tongue, belly button and facial rings, clear plastic jewelry, bracelets, necklaces, athlete credentials, stickers or glitter and pins on uniform are prohibited. Jewelry must be removed and may not be taped over.		
PROPS – no walking or tumbling on/over signs, poms or other props <i>Except when a prop is mounted from a forward roll; a forward roll may be performed over a prop</i>		
SPOTTER – spotters should not provide primary support of another person		
BRACE – a brace shall not provide primary support by having a top mount lean into the bracer		
FLYER/TOP PERSON – not allowed to drop the head backward out of alignment with the torso		
GLITTER –must adhere to hair, face, body or uniform. Loose glitter is subject to deduction. Glitter may be used on signs, props, etc only if laminated or sealed.		
SUPPORTS/BRACES (e.g. knee brace) – must be covered if hard/unyielding or have rough edges or surfaces		
TOTAL SAFETY DEDUCTIONS (POINTS)	-	

COMPETITION GUIDELINE INFRACTIONS

-10 POINTS PER INFRACTION, PER OCCURANCE

	FREQUENCY	POINTS
CHOREOGRAPHY – inappropriate and/or vulgar moves and/or gestures		
MUSIC – inappropriate and/or vulgar music selections		
LEVEL REQUIREMENTS – failure to meet/adhere to level requirements		
TOTAL COMPETITION GUIDELINE DEDUCTIONS (POINTS)	-	

TOURNAMENT FOUL -25 POINTS MAXIMUM

SPORTSMANSHIP – any participant, coach, parent, and/or spectator displaying unsportsmanlike conduct during any Special Olympics Washington cheerleading event	
EXPLANATION OF TOURNAMENT FOUL OCCURANCE	

TOTAL DEDUCTIONS