

Special Olympics



COACHING STANDARDS

AT INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS



Coaching Standards

Special Olympics International is excited to announce the launch of **Coaching Standards at International Competitions** as part of Sport Impact Standards.

These standards will serve as a means to provide the best possible competition experience for all stakeholders related to Special Olympics.

Coaching Standards will be introduced for the first time for the **2027 Special Olympics World Games** in Santiago, Chile, for 15 sports.



All **Head Coaches** will be required to meet general and **sport-specific coaching standards** in order to be registered as a Head Coach.



What are the Coaching Standards for International Competitions?

Experience:

It is **recommended** that Head Coaches have:

- At least 3 years of sport-specific coaching experience, with 3 years Special Olympics experience preferred
- Experience coaching at a minimum of 2 Special Olympics competition in the sport they are coaching/registering for at the event

Completed Training:

All Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches **MUST** complete:

- Special Olympics World Games Coach Preparation Course
- Sports Rules Article 1 Course
- Special Olympics Unified Sports Coaching Course*

* Required only for coaches of Unified Sports, recommended for all coaches.

All Head Coaches, Coaches and Assistant Coaches are **recommended** to complete:

- Sport: Coaching – Level 1 Sport Assistant
- Sport: Coaching – Level 2 Coaching Assistant
- Sport: Coaching – Level 3 Coach Online Module

New! Sport-Specific Requirements:

All Head Coaches must provide evidence of completion of the established sport specific coaching standard, or approved equivalent, as part of their registration for the event.

Equivalence will be determined by review with Regional Sport Director, Global Registration Team member and/or Special Olympics Sport Regional/Global Sport Advisor, SOI Coach Development Team.

Which sports will introduce sport-specific Coaching Standards?

Artistic Gymnastics	Equestrian	Powerlifting
Badminton	Football (All Disciplines)	Swimming
Basketball 3x3	Futsal	Open Water Swimming
Basketball 5v5	Field Hockey	Tennis
Cycling	MATP	Triathlon

REMEMBER:

These standards **MUST** be met by all Head Coaches for 2027 World Games and all international competitions beyond.

What are the required standards?

SPORT:	REQUIRED STANDARD:
Artistic Gymnastics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 years experience working as a Special Olympics Artistic Gymnastics Coach • Experience of attending at least 2 Special Olympics Artistic Gymnastics competitions as a coach • National Gymnastics Federation coach certification or equivalent <p>* There must be at least 1 coach within the coaching team certified to coach to the technical level of the highest level gymnast within the team. (i.e. if there is a Level 4 gymnast, at least 1 coach (Head Coach or other) MUST be certified and technically competent to coach AND spot the athlete in competition.</p>
Badminton	BWF Coaching Level 1
Basketball 3x3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Federation Coach Certification OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIBA Start Coaching + FIBA/WABC Level 1 (In-person) certificate
Basketball 5v5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Federation Coach Certification OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIBA Start Coaching + FIBA/WABC Level 1 (In-person) certificate
Cycling	UCI Level 1

What are the required standards?

SPORT:	REQUIRED STANDARD:
Equestrian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 years experience working as a Special Olympic Equestrian Coach • Experience of attending at least 2 Special Olympics Equestrian competitions as a coach • National Equestrian Federation coach/riding instructor certification or equivalent <p>*There must be at least 1 coach within the coaching team certified to coach to the technical level of the highest level rider within the team. (i.e. if there is a Level A rider, at least 1 coach (Head Coach or other) MUST be certified and technically competent to coach the athlete in competition.</p> <p>And/Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified riding instructor with National Federation
Football (All Events)	National D License
Futsal	National D License
(Field) Hockey	FIH Level 1/ FIH Hockey ID Level 1

What are the required standards?

SPORT:	REQUIRED STANDARD:
<p>Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Years Experience Working Professional with People with Profound Disabilities • MATP Certified Head Coach (By Region/SOI) • Experience of at least 1 MATP challenge day (outside of setting) • Specialist background in physical development of people with profound and multiple disabilities (and understanding/experience of the extensive complex health needs of MATP athletes) • Recommended experience of residential (overnight) competition experience with athletes who have high support needs
<p>Open Water Swimming (OWS)</p>	<p>National Level Swimming Coach/Teacher Certification (certified to coach/teach independently) OWS Specific or Pool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 years experience working as a Special Olympics open water swimming Coach • Experience of attending at least 2 Special Olympics open water Swimming competitions as a coach • National Swimming Federation or National Swim Teachers Association coach or teacher certification or equivalent
<p>Powerlifting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerlifting e-learning course • Sign-off from HOD/Sports director of confirmation of attendance at an in-person Powerlifting coach education course • Sign-off from HOD/Sports director that they have coached at minimum 2 Special Olympics Powerlifting Meets and/or IPF (affiliate) competition in the previous 2 years as an officially accredited coach • Sign-off from HOD/Sports director that coach has 2+ years of Powerlifting coaching experience <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Federation or IPF Powerlifting coach certification • Minimum 1 SO Meet as an accredited Coach OR 1 year training and meet experience in SO (SO Experience essential)

What are the required standards?

SPORT:	REQUIRED STANDARD:
Swimming	<p>National Level Swimming Coach/Teacher Certification (certified to coach/teach independently)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 years experience working as a Special Olympics open water swimming Coach• Experience of attending at least 2 Special Olympics open water Swimming competitions as a coach• National Swimming Federation or National Swim Teachers Association coach or teacher certification or equivalent
Tennis	ITF Level 1
Triathlon	World Triathlon Level 1



Why are we introducing Coaching Standards?

1. OUR ATHLETES HAVE ASKED FOR IT.

According to the Athlete Satisfaction Survey, the majority of athletes wish that their coaches have more sport specific knowledge.

2. COMPETITION STAFF HAVE ASKED FOR IT.

Officials, Technical Delegates, Competition Managers, Unified Sports Delegates have all requested coaches to have more knowledge of the sport and its rules to ensure competitions run smoothly and provide the best experience for athletes.

3. ENSURE ATHLETE SAFETY.

Athlete safety is a priority. Having sport specific knowledge and experience will enhance the safety of the environment for athletes while they train and compete. This will also mitigate the risks of high-risk sports when coaches are appropriately trained to deal with hazardous situations.

4. BENEFIT OUR COACHING WORKFORCE.

Ensuring the coach is equipped to support, develop and manage athletes/teams team at an international competition.

**BETTER PREPARED COACHES WILL RESULT IN BETTER PREPARED ATHLETES
WHICH WILL RESULT IN A BETTER COMPETITION EXPERIENCE FOR ALL INVOLVED.**

When will Coaching Standards be applied?

Coaches standards will be in place for the 2027 Special Olympics World Games. All Head Coaches attending the 2027 World Games must meet the sport specific standard set for the 15 designated sports.

If coaches currently do not meet the sport specific standard, it is the responsibility of the program and the coach to ensure that they obtain the appropriate standard in advance of registration for the 2027 World Games.

After the 2027 World Games, Coaching Standards will be required for all international sporting events. Including, but not limited to:

- World Summer Games
- World Winter Games
- Unified Cup
- 3x3 Unified Basketball World Cup
- Unified Volleyball World Cup
- And any other single sport international event.



Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: OUR HEAD COACH WON'T BE ABLE TO MEET THE STANDARDS BEFORE WORLD GAMES IN 2027, WHAT DO WE DO?

A: Coaching Standards are being communicated now to ensure that all programs and coaches have sufficient time to meet the required standards. All Head Coaches will be required to meet the standard. Programs that are unsure of the process to get their coaches educated or on an appropriate course should communicate with:

- 1.Their National Sports Federation (relevant to the sport, for example: Badminton Ireland).
- 2.Their Regional Sports Director, they can assist with connecting with the relevant Federation/Association to obtain the appropriate certification.
- 3.coaching@specialolympics.org who will assist with connecting you to the appropriate Federation/Association.

Q: OUR NATIONAL SPORT FEDERATION'S CERTIFICATION IS DIFFERENT TO WHAT IS STATED AS THE REQUIRED STANDARD, WHAT DO YOU DO?

A: The stated Coaching Standards are general terms for the required standard. If your locally available standard is different, it is the responsibility of the SO Programme to provide evidence of equivalence to the global standard. For example, this may require you to provide a course outline or syllabus to demonstrate equivalence. If you have any concerns about the necessary standard for a specific sport, contact your Regional Sports Director for confirmation.

Q: OUR HEAD COACH ALREADY HAS A CERTIFICATION ABOVE THE STATED STANDARD, DO THEY HAVE TO DO A DIFFERENT COURSE TO MEET THE STANDARDS FOR WORLD GAMES?

A: No, if a coach is certified to a level equivalent to or above the stated standards then they do not need to do any further training. However, the coach will need to provide evidence of their highest level of sport specific certification through the registration process for the games,