Like all athletes, Special Olympics athletes love the thrill of competition and pushing their limits to achieve a new personal best.

Special Olympics uses a unique system called ‘divisioning’ to give athletes of all abilities the chance for exciting competition.

**Stage 1** usually happens ahead of World Games competition

- Coaches **submit a time** or distance for each athlete in individual sports
- For team and judged sports, coaches submit **athlete or team ratings** and/or skills assessments

**Stage 2** usually happens in the opening days of World Games

- **GENDER**
- **AGE**
- **ABILITY LEVEL**

Divisioning races, judged events or short team matches are held to assess the athletes’ or teams’ **ability levels** in competition.

Athletes or teams are grouped into competitive divisions according to three criteria:

**HOW MANY ATHLETES OR TEAMS ARE IN A DIVISION?**

- minimum of 3
- maximum of 8

**HOW ARE DIVISIONS SET?**

There should be no more than a **15%** difference between the most highly skilled athlete or team and the lowest skilled athlete or team in each division

**WHY DIVISIONING?**

Divisioning makes Special Olympics competitions fair, empowering and exciting

An evenly matched competition makes athletes and teams try harder — and push farther. It’s about athletes rising to a challenge – and giving it their all!

**All they need to do … is THEIR very best.**