

CHEER

Special Olympics



About Cheer: The sport of Cheer offers two discipline groups - Cheerleading and Performance Cheer. Athletes of all ages and abilities learn cheers, chants, and routines that develop skills in proper pace, volume, motions, tumbling, stunting, jumps, and choreography. Aids and props such as poms, signs, megaphones, and flags may be used to enhance the cheer performance and engage the crowd.

For more information please contact your local program or Darian Packard, Global Advisor for Cheer - darian@socheer.org.

Established at Special Olympics: 2019

Cheer Opportunities: Special Olympics follows the International Cheer Union's (ICU) Special Abilities Rules for Cheerleading and Performance Cheer with modifications on team size, divisioning, and requirements for Unified teams. At competitions, teams perform in front of judges where they are scored on their tumbling, stunting, dance, and cheer. For non-competitive Game Day/Sideline Cheer, the focus is to engage with the fans and keep the fans and athletes spirit high either during Special Olympics or community events and sports.

By the Numbers:

- 1898 - Cheerleading began in the United States at a University of Minnesota American football game. University student Johnny Campbell became the first-ever cheerleader when he jumped from his seat onto the field to lead the crowd in cheers and chants.
- 1989 - Special Olympics Cheer started in Kansas followed by 16 U.S.A. Programs to adopt the sport.
- 2004 - The International Cheer Union was established as Cheer's international sport federation.
- 2016 - The ICU received provisional recognition from the International Olympic Committee (IOC).
- 2018 - Special Olympics and the ICU signed a Memorandum of Understanding to further develop the sport of Cheer globally.
- 2019 - Special Olympics adopted Cheer as a recognized sport.
- 2020 - Nine countries and 38 Programs offer Cheer.

Associations/Federations/Supporters:

International Cheer Union (ICU), USA Cheer

Events for Competition Cheerleading

- Level of Difficulty
 - Introductory
 - Beginner (Level 0)
 - Novice (Level 1)
 - Intermediate (Level 2)
- Categories
 - Game Day (cheer/chant and short routine with music)
 - Routine (cheer/chant and longer routine with music)

Performance Cheer

- Pom
- Hip Hop
- Jazz
- High Kick

Events for Non-Competitive Game Day/Sideline Cheer:

Cheers and chants; Half-time and/or sideline performances with music to engage fans and athletes during events and sports.

Divisioning at Special Olympics: Athletes/Teams in every sport and event are grouped by gender, age, and ability – giving everyone a reasonable chance to win. Each athlete, is valued and recognized equally for their performance and receives an award, from gold, silver, and bronze medals, to fourth through eighth place ribbons. This idea of divisioning by ability is the foundation for competition in Special Olympics and can be witnessed at all events world-wide. In the sport of Cheer, athletes on different ability levels are given an equal chance to participate, perform, and be recognized for doing their best by their teammates, family, friends, and fans. Divisioning is made based on results in observed/qualified round, then teams compete for medals in ability level groups.

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