



**Special Olympics**

**Great Britain**

*Year-round sports training and competition for people with learning disabilities*

## **What is Special Olympics?**

Special Olympics is an global organisation that provides year-round sports training and athletic competition to more than 2.25 million children and adults with learning disabilities in more than 160 countries. Founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister of the late President John F Kennedy, in 1968 Special Olympics provides people with learning disabilities opportunities to realise their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy and friendship.

## **How many people does Special Olympics serve globally/in Great Britain?**

Special Olympics serves more than 2.25 million people with an learning disabilities in more than 160 countries.

In Great Britain the programme currently serves over 7000 annually. There are an estimated 1.2 million people with learning disabilities in Great Britain.

## **How is Special Olympics Great Britain funded?**

Special Olympics Great Britain is a registered charity and is generously supported annually by individual and corporate donations and currently receives no government funding. Our Premier Partners include The Coca-Cola Youth Foundation, ABB, SAS, Dominos Pizza

## **What is the Special Olympics Athlete Oath?**

"Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

## **What is Special Olympics' mission?**

To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with learning 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.



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## **What impact does Special Olympics have on athletes?**

Children and adults with learning disabilities who participate in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills, greater self-confidence and a more positive self-image. They grow mentally, socially and spiritually and, through their activities, exhibit boundless courage and enthusiasm, enjoy the rewards of friendship and ultimately discover not only new abilities and talents but "their voices" as well.

## **Who leads Special Olympics?**

Bruce Pasternack was appointed CEO of Special Olympics International in March 2005. The Chairman of the Board is Timothy Shriver and he leads the global organisation. In Great Britain the Chairman is Lawrie McMenemy MBE.

## **Who is eligible to participate in Special Olympics?**

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, you must be at least 8 years old and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: learning disabilities, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment, or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that require or have required specially designed instruction.

However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioural, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes, but may be eligible to volunteer for Special Olympics as partners in Unified Sports® if they otherwise meet the separate eligibility requirements for participation in Unified Sports set forth in the Sports Rules.

## **Can individuals with profound disabilities participate in Special Olympics?**

Yes, through Special Olympics' Motor Activities Training Program (MATP), developed by physical educators, physical therapists and recreation therapists. MATP emphasizes training and participation rather than competition.



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**Where do I find information about Special Olympics Sports Rules and Coaching Guides?** Please visit our website [www.specialolympicsgb.org/ourcoaches](http://www.specialolympicsgb.org/ourcoaches)

**When are Special Olympics World Games held?**

The Special Olympics World Summer Games are held every four years; the 2003 World Summer Games were held in Dublin, Ireland, on 20-29 June; the 2007 World Summer Games will be held in Shanghai, China October 2-11th. The Special Olympics World Winter Games are also held every four years; the 2005 World Winter Games took place in Nagano, Japan, on 26 February-5 March.

**Is Special Olympics part of the Olympic movement?**

In 1988, Special Olympics was recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as the third member of the Olympic family. It is the only sports organisation authorised by the IOC to use the word 'Olympics' in its title.

**Are there differences between Special Olympics and Paralympics?**

Yes, Special Olympics and the Paralympics are two separate and distinct organisations with specific eligibility requirements. **(see the chart below)**



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SPECIAL OLYMPICS	OLYMPICS	PARALYMPICS
<p>Olympic type sports for persons who are classified as being learning disabled</p> <p>Some athletes may also have a physical disability, but first classification will be learning disabled</p>	<p>Olympic sports for elite sportspeople</p>	<p>Elite sports for persons with a disability – principally a physical or sensory disability</p> <p>Impairment Classifications = Athletes with Cerebral Palsy (CP-ISRA), Athletes with Spinal Cord Lesion, Spina Bifida and Polio (ISMWSF), Athletes with Blindness (IBSA) and Athletes with Les Autres or Amputations (ISOD)</p>
<p>Athletes of all ages are catered for: Minimum age for entering competition = 8 yrs</p> <p>NO upper limit – in 1987 there was a 70+ yr old Swedish Level I artistic gymnast</p>	<p>Age of athletes vary according to sport, but few very young or old athletes</p>	<p>Age of athletes vary according to sport but few young or older athletes</p>
<p>All ability groups are included in the sports competition</p>	<p>Elite athletes only – entry standards</p>	<p>Elite athletes only – entry standards</p>
<p>Year-Round Training and Competition</p>	<p>Year-Round Training and Competition</p>	<p>Centralized training prior to competition</p>
<p>Every athlete receives recognition for all events</p>	<p>Only first three are recognised</p>	<p>Only first three are recognised</p>
<p>Some events have been adapted to meet ability levels of athletes</p>	<p>Regular standardised competition</p>	<p>Some events have been adapted to meet ability levels of athletes</p>
<p>Summer and Winter World Games every 4 years – First International Summer Games in 1968, Chicago, USA; First International Winter Games in 1977, Colorado, USA</p>	<p>Summer and Winter Olympic Games every 4 years – First Modern Olympics held in 1896, in Athens, Greece; Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix, France in 1924</p>	<p>Summer Paralympic Games one month after Olympic Games – begun in 1988 after Seoul Olympic Games</p>
<p>Independent organisation and structure</p>	<p>Government supported</p>	<p>Government supported</p>
<p>Competition Levels: School- Local, Area/District State/Province, National Regional, International</p>	<p>International Only</p>	<p>State, National, Regional and International</p>