



This information is extracted from the Special Olympics Official General Rules and Special Olympics Sport Rules.

Fundamental principles

1. Athletes of all ability levels have an equal opportunity to advance to the next higher-level competition.
2. Each competition reflects all aspects of the previous competition, including but not limited to the age, gender and ability level of athletes and the variety of sports events competed in at the previous competition.

Eligibility for Advancement: An athlete or Unified partner is eligible to advance to the next competition provided they have:

1. Participated in an organized training program for at least eight consecutive weeks with opportunities to compete and practice during that period.
2. Participated in the previous competition with the following exceptions
 - a. When the Games or Tournament is first competition opportunity for the athlete/partner, previous competition experience is not required (e.g. Local Competition).
 - b. A team for which there are no competition opportunity at a Tournament or Games shall be eligible to advance to the next competition (e.g. there is only one Unified basketball team in a community and thus no opponent; or a very low skilled basketball team does not have another team at its level to play against)

Procedure for Athlete and Team Selection for Advancement

1. Determine quota to be filled.
2. Identify the number of athletes or teams eligible for advancement.
3. If the number of eligible athletes or teams does not exceed the quota, all athletes and teams shall advance.
4. If the number of eligible athletes or teams exceeds the quota, athletes or teams that advance shall be selected as follows:
 - a. Priority is given to first place finishers from all divisions of the sports/event. If the number of first place finishers exceeds the quota, select athletes or teams to advance by random draw.
 - b. If there are not enough first place finishers to fill the quota, all first place finishers advance. The remaining quota shall be filled by a random draw of second place finishers from all divisions of the sports/event.
 - c. If the quota is large enough for all second place finishers to advance, the remaining quota shall be filled by a random draw of third place finishers from all divisions of the sports/event.

- d. Repeat this process, adding each place of finish as necessary, until the quota is filled.
5. These procedures apply to both individual and team sports.
6. An athlete/partner shall not be barred from advancement based on prior competition experience (e.g. an athlete shall not automatically advance or be prohibited from advancing to Summer Games solely on the basis that he/she attended Summer Games in the past).
7. The random draw process must be conducted by the head coach either immediately following the results of the local competition, or at the next held practice and in the presence of at least one other witness and/or anyone wishing to observe.

Additional Guidelines

1. The son or daughter of a coach, chaperone, etc. cannot automatically advance to the next higher level of competition. Children of volunteers must go through the same random draw process as all other athletes.
2. Communities may consider the behavior, medical needs, and supervision requirements of athletes in determining which athletes are eligible to advance to the next higher level of competition. Athletes and partners may be deemed ineligible for statewide competitions for the following reasons:
 - a. The athlete or partner violates the Athlete Code of Conduct.
 - i. Each athlete and partner should review and sign the Athlete Code of Conduct at the beginning of each sport season. Coaches should maintain a copy of the signed Code of Conduct for each person on their roster in the event of a behavior issue that may deem them ineligible.
 - b. Behaviors exhibited by the athlete would render the delegation's coaching staff unable to meet the athlete's needs.
 - c. The athlete would be unable to travel overnight without parental/guardian supervision and the parent/guardian is unable to attend the event.
 - d. The parent/guardian wishes to exclude an athlete from being eligible for advancement.

Advancement to Competition: Team Selection Criteria

These criteria were developed to ensure fair and equal opportunity when selecting teams to advance to competition when there are more athletes/partners than what a maximum roster will allow, and not enough athletes/partners to field multiple teams (e.g. max roster of 10 athletes for a basketball team, but there are 12 athletes training).

The coach does not have the authority to choose who makes the final roster based on personal preference. The following steps should be followed if a coach finds themselves needing finalize their team, resulting in any number of athletes or partners not advancing to competition.

1. The first step to ensure fair selection is that coaches must maintain accurate attendance throughout the season.

- a. Coaches should set an attendance policy at the beginning of each season. I.e. to be eligible to compete at local competition, athletes may only miss two practices; athletes must attend 70% of the established practices from the start of the official season up to local competition.
 - b. Coaches should establish the number of official practices prior to the beginning of their season and should distribute those dates, along with the attendance policy to all participating athletes on or before the first practice of the season.
 - c. Those athletes/partners who show commitment to the team by meeting these attendance expectations will be eligible for advancement.
3. The next step in the selection process is to determine if there are any athletes not suitable for advancement to higher competition based on behavior, medical needs, and supervision requirements. Athletes and partners may be deemed ineligible for statewide competitions for the following reasons:
 - a. The athlete or partner violates the Athlete Code of Conduct.
 - i. Each athlete and partner should review and sign the Athlete Code of Conduct at the beginning of each sport season. Coaches should maintain a copy of the signed Code of Conduct for each person on their roster in the event of a behavior issue that may deem them ineligible.
 - b. Behaviors exhibited by the athlete would render the delegation's coaching staff unable to meet the athlete's needs.
 - c. The athlete would be unable to travel overnight without parental/guardian supervision and the parent/guardian is unable to attend the event.
 - d. The parent/guardian wishes to exclude an athlete from being eligible for advancement.
2. If the number of eligible athletes still exceeds the maximum roster size, then the athletes who advance on the team shall be decided by random draw.
 - a. All eligible athletes' names should be placed into a hat.
 - b. Athletes will be drawn out one by one until the maximum roster capacity is reached.
 - c. Once the roster has been established, coaches should then draw out of the hat to establish alternates for the team.
 - i. Note: Alternates do not advance to competition unless they are activated by the Thursday before the Games/Tournament weekend. In team sports, alternates are not listed on final rosters for competition and do not sit on the team bench.
 - d. This random draw practice shall be conducted at a practice with as many athletes in attendance as possible for full transparency.