



About Athletics: The sport of athletics encourages athletes of all abilities and ages to compete at their optimum level. Through the track-and-field-based athletics training program, participants can develop total fitness to compete in any sport. As with all Special Olympics sports, athletics offers athletes the opportunity to learn through skill development and competitive settings and to be involved in large social settings.

Established: Athletics was one of the sports offered by Special Olympics Ireland when it was established in 1978.

Differences of Special Olympics Athletics: A major difference of Special Olympics athletics is that all athletes go to a final. Special Olympics also requires that all athletes give their best effort at all times. An athlete at Special Olympics can adjust their qualifying time to obtain a better grouping in a future running heat. Additionally Special Olympics athletics modifies the heights in the high jump, conduct 10, 25, and 50 meter runs, walks and wheel chair events as well as offering softball, tennis ball throw and mini javelin events. These events don't exist in International Association of Athletics Federations competitions.

By The Numbers:

- In 2014, there were 3,336 Special Olympics Ireland athletes that participating in Athletics
- Athletics is the #1 sport in athlete participation in 6 out of the 7 Special Olympics International regions across the globe
- Athletics were the primary event at the very first Olympic Games in Athens, Greece in 776 B.C.

Associations/Federations/Supporters:

Athletics Ireland <http://www.athleticsireland.ie/>

Events for Competition:

- Special Olympics offers 44 different events
- Track –walking events, assisted walking events, wheelchair events, 25 –10,000 meter runs, hurdle events, and relay events
- Field Events –long jump, ball throws, shot-put and mini-javelin

Divisioning at Special Olympics:

Athletes in every sport and event are grouped by age, gender, and ability giving everyone a reasonable chance to win. At Special Olympics there are no World Records because each athlete, whether in the fastest or the slowest division is valued and recognized equally. In every division, all athletes receive an award, from gold, silver, and bronze medals, to fourth through eighth place ribbons. This idea of equal ability groupings is the foundation for competition in Special Olympics and can be witnessed at all events, whether it's athletics, aquatics, table tennis, football, skiing, or gymnastics. All athletes are given an equal chance to participate, perform, and be recognized for doing their best by their teammates, family, friends, and fans.