



Athletics

The Sport

Athletics comprises a number of different events. Track events include running, walking and wheelchair races. Field events include a variety of throwing and jumping competitions.

The Rules

The rules for the sport are set by the *International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF)*. In Special Olympics there are some events offered that are not included by the IAAF. Therefore, Special Olympics competitions operate by the IAAF rules in addition to the Special Olympics Summer Sports Rules for Athletics. Where there is conflict between the two sets of rules, Special Olympics Rules apply.

Competition Venue

Competitions take place on a 400 metre track, with field events taking place in the infield, or immediately outside the track. Tracks are preferably constructed of polyurethane (commonly known as "tartan"). Tracks commonly have six or eight lanes.

Track Events

- Running events include 25 metres to the full marathon distance of 26.2 miles, walking events from 10 metres to 800 metres, and wheelchair events from 10 metres to 400 metres are offered.
- Races up to 400 metres start on the commands of "on your marks", "set", and the firing of the starting pistol.
- Events of over 400 metres have the command "on your marks" and then the firing of the starting pistol.
- For events up to 400 metres athletes are required to stay in their lanes for the entire race. In events over 100 metres where there is a bend in the race, the start points are staggered to allow for the extra distances in the outside lanes.
- In the 800 metres, athletes run in lane for the first bend and then break. A staggered start point is also used for this event.
- In all other races, athletes do not run in lane. A curved starting line (commonly known as a teardrop start) is used in these races. The only exception to this is the 4 x 400 metre relay. In this race the athletes run in lane for the first lap, and also for the first bend of the second lap.
- An athlete finishes the race when their torso crosses the finishing line. In the case of wheelchair races, competitors complete the race when the first two wheels of their wheelchair cross the line.
- In walking events, athletes are required to have one foot in touch with the ground at all times. There is **no** requirement to maintain a straight support leg at all times (this Special Olympics International rule differs from IAAF rules)
- There are some variations for wheelchair events which the Special Olympics Official Summer Rules Book outlines in detail.

Field Events

There are six field events – High Jump, Long Jump, Standing Long Jump, Shot Putt, Softball Throw and Tennis Ball Throw. In all field events an athlete should have three non consecutive attempts and the longest distance recorded is the winning score. In the case of ties, second best scores will determine the winner, and so on.

- High Jump and Long Jump
 - In both the High Jump and Long Jump, an athlete **must** be able to jump a minimum distance before they can compete in either event.

- In the High Jump, the minimum height to be cleared is 90 cm. Competitors are required to take off from one foot in this event. In addition competitors are not permitted to dive forward over the bar. Two footed take offs, and forward dives, will result in the competitor not being allowed to continue in the competition.
 - In the Long Jump, an athlete must be able to jump a minimum distance of 1.00 metres (the minimum distance between the toe board and the sand).
 - There is no minimum distance in the standing long jump. Athletes must start with both feet behind the designated take off line.
- **Shot Putt**
 - In the Shot Putt the athlete must putt the shot from within the circle and it must land within the prescribed sector. The athlete and/or their wheelchair must not touch the top of the toe board, the line of the circle, or any surface outside of the circle. The shot must be putt from the shoulder and crotch of the neck, and must not drop behind the shoulder, or the line emanating vertically from the mid point of the shoulder.
- **Softball/Tennis Ball Throw**
 - The softball and tennis ball can be thrown in any manner of the athletes choosing from the hand(s) as long as the athlete throws from within the throwing zone, and the softball/tennis ball lands within the prescribed sector.

Pentathlon

The Pentathlon consists of the following events:

- 100m
- Long Jump
- Shot Putt
- High Jump
- 400m

Each athlete earns a score for his or her performance for each event and with the final placings as per the scores earned. Details of scoring tables can be found in the Official Special Olympics Athletics Rules.