

Selections FAQs

1. Are all athletes who participated in Ireland Games eligible for selection?

Athletes are only eligible for selection if the sport and event they participated in is offered at the World Games and Special Olympics Ireland has received a quota for that sport/event.

Athletes may be ineligible if they:

- Do not meet the minimum age requirement (15 years for World Games participation).
 - Were disqualified from their event.
 - Did not finish their event at Ireland Games.
 - Are Grade 4 players in team sports.
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2. What does advancement mean?

In Special Olympics, advancement refers to the process by which athletes progress from one level of competition to the next, for example:

- Regional Games to Ireland Games
 - Ireland Games to World Games
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3. When does advancement happen?

Special Olympics Ireland operates on a four-year sports cycle.

- Summer sports: World Games take place in Year 4 of the cycle.
- Winter sports (Alpine Skiing and Floorball): World Games take place in Year 2 of the cycle.

As a result, World Games occur every two years, alternating between Summer and Winter Games.

4. Is it the fastest or best athlete who advances?

No.

Because Special Olympics competitions are divided into divisions based on ability, all gold medallists are considered equally eligible for advancement regardless of their time, score, or distance achieved.

For example, an athlete who wins gold in 14.98 seconds has the same eligibility for advancement as an athlete who wins gold in 45.52 seconds.

5. How are athletes selected to advance?

In line with Special Olympics rules, eligible athletes are selected through a random draw.

Eligible athletes are those who:

- Participated in and completed their event at the previous highest-level competition.
- Meet all eligibility requirements.
- Compete in a sport and event that is offered at the next level of competition.

Once results have been verified, an open selection forum is held, either in person or online, and selections are made using the medal priority process.

6. What is medal priority?

Medal priority ensures that higher medal winners are considered first during selections.

Example:

- Quota available: 100 places
- Gold medallists available: 60

In this case:

- All 60 gold medallists are automatically selected.
 - The remaining 40 places are filled from silver medallists.
 - If necessary, selections continue through bronze medallists and beyond until the quota is filled.
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7. Do all gold medallists advance?

Not always.

This depends on the quota available and the number of eligible gold medallists.

Example:

- Quota available: 25 places
- Gold medallists available: 42 athletes

Since there are more gold medallists than places available, the 25 athletes will be selected through a random draw from the 42 gold medallists. The remaining gold medallists will be considered as substitutes.

8. If an athlete wins gold in a doubles event, does their partner automatically get selected?

No.

For doubles events, each athlete is entered into the selection process individually.

Exception:

In Golf Level 2 Alternate Shot, partners are considered an essential part of the athlete's performance. In this case, the athlete cannot compete without their partner, so both are selected together.

9. Will athletes' names be announced when they are selected?

No.

Each athlete is assigned an anonymous numerical code for the selection process. This allows all athlete information to be verified before names are announced.

Typically, the final selected team is announced at the conclusion of the selections meeting.

10. What about substitutes?

Substitutes are selected at the same time as the main team.

However, substitute names are not publicly announced. These lists remain confidential and are retained by Special Olympics Ireland until a substitute is required.

This approach helps avoid unnecessary disappointment for athletes, families and clubs.

11. Does an athlete have to accept their selection?

No.

Athletes have the right to either accept or decline a place.

The decision should be made in consultation with the athlete, their family and their club to ensure participation is in the athlete's best interests.

For Ireland Games and International competitions, additional criteria may apply. These are detailed in the Regulations Governing Special Olympics Ireland Sport Handbook available on the Special Olympics Ireland website.

12. If an athlete withdraws, does the place automatically go to the same club or region?

For World Games, substitute athletes are selected from the:

- Same gender; and
- Same region

as the athlete withdrawing.

13. Is there an age restriction for participation in Ireland Games and World Games?

Once an athlete has entered the advancement cycle, there are no additional age restrictions provided all eligibility criteria are met.

For World Games, an athlete must be 15 years of age on or before the designated cut-off date.

14. What is the role of grading in team sports and how are grades selected for World Games?

Grading assesses players against sport-specific criteria such as:

- Tactical awareness
- Ball or stick control

- Fitness
- Technical skills

Players are assigned a grade from 1 to 4, with Grade 1 representing the highest level of skill.

The goal of grading is to create teams of similar overall ability so all players can contribute effectively.

For World Games:

- Players are graded during Ireland Games.
 - Grade 4 players are not eligible for international competition.
 - A random draw determines the team grade selected for World Games participation.
 - Athletes are then selected by position using medal priority.
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15. What happens for sports that are not offered at the 2027 World Summer Games?

The sports programme for each World Games is agreed between Special Olympics International and the Local Organising Committee.

As certain sports may not be feasible due to venue, facility or operational requirements, some sports are not included in every Games programme.

Special Olympics Ireland works with other programmes across the Europe Eurasia region to identify alternative competition opportunities.

Recent examples include:

- A bowling team attending an Invitational Event in Malmö, Sweden.
 - A kayaking team selected to attend an event in Crete.
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16. How are quotas developed?

For World Games, Special Olympics Ireland applies for quotas in all eligible sports and events.

Special Olympics International then allocates quotas based on a range of factors, including programme participation numbers (census information).

While Special Olympics Ireland always seeks the maximum number of places possible, quota allocations are not guaranteed and are dependent on worldwide demand and available capacity.

17. What is meant by automatic selection?

In some cases, a quota may specify a very particular event category and only one athlete may meet those criteria.

Example:

If a quota is allocated for a Level 4 Female Artistic Gymnast, and only one athlete competed in that category at Ireland Games, that athlete would automatically be selected as they are the sole eligible athlete for that quota position.