



The Special Olympics North Carolina Sports Rules for Competitive Cheerleading will govern all Special Olympics North Carolina for the 2023-2024 program year. These rules will be used in conjunction with USA Cheer, National Federation of High School Athletic Associations (NFHS), and Varsity Brand safety rules. Additionally, the [Official Special Olympics \(SOI\) Sports Rules for Cheerleading](#) dated October 2022 will apply to teams competing in Level 1 competition as outlined in the SONC Cheerleading rules. These rules are to be used in conjunction with the [International Cheer Union \(ICU\) Special Abilities Rules and Regulation dated 2020-2022](#) (referred to as ICU Special Abilities). Therefore, those rules are not repeated here but they will be enforced unless in direct conflict to the rules laid out below.

## Appropriate Attire and Equipment

- For proper placement/size/color of SONC and local program logos on uniforms and equipment worn and used by athletes and coaches, please refer to the [SONC Uniform and Logo Guidelines for Cheerleading](#) document.
- The competition surface will be made of two-inch, compressed foam, carpeted flooring measuring 42' x 42' (seven 6'x 42' panels).<sup>1</sup> All official Special Olympics North Carolina competitions will be held on a non-spring floor.
- Use of mini-tramps, springboards, spring-assisted floors or any height-increasing apparatus is illegal for use during performances/competitions.

## Official SONC Cheerleading Events

- Scholastic – Individual and Team<sup>2</sup>
  - Individual Performance<sup>3</sup>
  - Team Roster size: small = 5 – 9 members; large = 10-15 members
  - Team Type: Traditional or Unified Sports
    - Team non-mount & non-tumble: There are no tumbling, stunts or mounts allowed in this level.
    - Team non-mount: tumbling is allowed in this level, but no stunts or pyramids.
    - Team non-tumble: stunts and pyramids are allowed in this level; however tumbling elements are not.
    - Team mount & tumble: Tumbling, stunts, and pyramids are allowed.
- Cheerleading Novice Routine (Level 1)<sup>4</sup>
  - Team roster size: minimum of 10 and maximum of 15 members<sup>5</sup>
  - Type: Traditional or Unified Sports
    - Unified Sports Teams must have an equal number of Special Olympics athletes and Unified partners. In an odd-numbered team total, athletes must make up the majority of the roster. For example, in a roster of 15, there must be eight athletes and seven Unified partners.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> SONC modification of ICU Special Abilities Section IV.A.1 & 2

<sup>2</sup> Scholastic competition is a continuation of SONC previous cheerleading events.

<sup>3</sup> Athletes competing in Individual Performance should use the rubric as a guideline for elements in their performance/routine.

<sup>4</sup> SONC allows one level and type of competition at this time from the SOI and ICU rules, and is stated in this section and rules for this level will run according to ICU rules for introductory level.

<sup>5</sup> SONC modification of SOI Section 3.

<sup>6</sup> SONC modification of ICU Special Abilities II.A where ICU defines a Special Abilities team as having at least one person with a disability.

## Competition Interpretations and Modifications

For all levels of competition/events:

- Athletes may participate in individual performance or team completion but not both. Additionally, athletes and Unified partners may also only participate within one level of one event.
- Individuals and teams may choose their own music and must be suitable for family listening. **Music must be operated by a coach from your program.** Timing of the music will be on the first motion by squad member(s), not when the music starts.
- Unified partners and/or coaches may place the athletes in their proper position on the floor, but the coach may **not** be on the floor once the performance begins.
- Teams competing in the scholastic competition with mounts and/or tumbling: When performing pyramids and partner stunts, either the base(s) or flyer(s) may be in fully extended positions, but not both. For example, a base cannot support a flyer with arms fully extended if the flyer's body is fully extended. Please refer to the definitions for further clarification.
- Coaches are **not** allowed on the floor during the performance of any routine **for any category/level**. Spotters are permitted on the floor, but cannot coach the squad.

### Scholastics/Recreation Team Competition

- The only tumbling allowed for these levels are forward & backward rolls, cartwheels, and round offs. For Unified Sports® teams, the level of tumbling should not exceed that of what Special Olympics athletes can perform.
- **Safety Infractions/Deductions**
  - Below are some examples of infractions that incur penalty points during competition:
  - Fingernails at an inappropriate length
  - Unsecured hair devices for longer hair
  - Walking on or over props
  - Inappropriate or vulgar choreography
  - Failure to meet divisional requirements
  - Exceeding time limit
  - Unsportsmanlike conduct from participant, coach, parent and/or spectator
- Please refer to the SONC rubric and scoresheets for detailed information regarding point values.
- Coach may give **verbal or physical** cues from the sideline if needed (coaches must be out of the judges' view).
- Teams and athletes will have two and one-half minutes to complete their routine. Time begins on the first movement. Maximum of 1 minute 45 seconds for music.

### ICU Special Abilities Level 1 Introductory Team Competition

- All teams registering as Level 1 teams for Special Olympics NC competitions must submit a video prior to registration.
- Coach certification: In addition to SONC coach requirements, coaches for this level must also hold coach credentials from USA Cheer in safety certification and United States All-Star Federation (USASF).

## Cheerleading Music Regulations

All recordings mixed together in cheer and dance routines should be properly licensed and written confirmation of such license should be available upon request. You can use recordings that you purchase from vendors cleared by USA Cheer - who provide written confirmation of proper licensing or original compositions created or commissioned by you (i.e. an original song and recording to which you own or license the rights by written agreement). Under U.S. copyright law, no teams are permitted to create a re-mix, mash-up or medley without proper written authorization from the copyright owners. A link to a list of USA Cheer preferred vendors is located in the [Sports Rules accordion](#) on the [SONC Coach and Sport Resources page](#). **Please note that Special Olympics North Carolina has not negotiated any special rates for Special Olympics teams. This has proved more difficult than in the past due to copyright laws and the cost of licenses for music producers to not be able to provide any savings to Special Olympics NC teams.**