



Special Olympics and SOBC Terminology

- **Special Olympics:** The preferred name is Special Olympics. Please do not refer to “the” Special Olympics, or a Special Olympic (singular) competition. If possible, avoid the possessive Special Olympics’; never refer to Special Olympics’s.
- Our name: **Special Olympics BC** or **SOBC** – *not* BC Special Olympics, BCSO, Special Olympics B.C., S.O.B.C. or the Special Olympics of BC
 - Special Olympics British Columbia on formal occasions
 - Note: The province, B.C., when written on its own, does need the periods after each letter. It is abbreviating for British Columbia, as we all know, and therefore the periods are required to indicate the abbreviation. But the style of Special Olympics BC is to leave out the periods.
 - For example: Special Olympics BC athlete Lester Pearson has learned so much from his coaches. He is one of the thousands of Special Olympics athletes participating in year-round programs in communities throughout B.C.
- Local program names: **Special Olympics BC – Kamloops** or **SOBC – Kamloops**
 - Please make an effort to be consistent in using this style – particularly the [space] en dash [space] between the two parts of the title. Microsoft Word will help you make the en dash: Just type space, dash key, space and continue typing normally, hitting the spacebar after the following word.
- National name: **Special Olympics Canada**
- The correct style for SOBC sports is below. Individual sports are not capitalized. List in alphabetical order as follows:
 - 5-pin bowling
 - 10-pin bowling
 - alpine skiing
 - athletics (track and field)
 - basketball
 - bocce
 - cross country skiing (*no hyphen in cross country per Special Olympics Canada as of 2016*)
 - curling
 - figure skating
 - floor hockey
 - golf

powerlifting (one word)
rhythmic gymnastics
snowshoeing (one word)
soccer
softball
speed skating (*two words per Special Olympics Canada*)
swimming (*not aquatics per SOI as of 2016*)

- **Special Olympics athletes:** athletes lowercase. NOTE: Special Olympics athletes should not be referred to as Olympians or Special Olympians. And please don't forget the "s" at the end of Special Olympics.

- How to write about **Games**:
 - Treat "Games" as a **collective plural** rather than a collective singular expression. Example: The Special Olympics World Summer Games were held in Athens, Greece. NOT: "was held."

 - Proper title for National Games: **Special Olympics Canada Games**, Special Olympics Canada Winter Games/Special Olympics Canada Summer Games.
 - Use the proper title in the first reference in your document; after that you can shorten to National Games if desired. For example: The members of Team BC are training hard for the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games. For many of them, this will be their first National Games experience.

 - Proper title for Provincial Games: **Special Olympics BC Games**, Special Olympics BC Summer/Winter Games.
 - Use the full title in the first reference in your document; Provincial Games is acceptable in later references if desired.

 - When you are writing about a **National, Provincial, or World Games** on second reference, you should always use capital letters as identified here. You are describing an entity, Games, that is distinct from the general noun games.
 - For example: SOBC athletes will compete in the next National Games. Our floor hockey team played three great games last week.

 - Special Olympics International style for names of Games: Special Olympics World Winter Games Austria 2017, Special Olympics World Summer Games Abu Dhabi 2019 – this is recommended in order to have the emphasis on Special Olympics by placing it first, rather than the year or location first. Special Olympics BC believes in observing colloquial

language and names our Games with the year first: 2017 Special Olympics BC Summer Games, 2019 Special Olympics BC Winter Games.

- Special Olympics competitive opportunities operate on a four-year cycle for both summer and winter sports:
 - Year 1: Regional Qualifiers
 - Year 2: Provincial Games
 - Year 3: National Games
 - Year 4: World Games
- Games Ceremonies:
 - **Opening Ceremony.** Capitalize and treat as singular. Example: The Opening Ceremony was held at Thunderbird Arena. Also note: Many volunteers worked at both the Opening and Closing Ceremonies.
 - **Closing Ceremony.** Capitalize and treat as singular. Examples: The Closing Ceremony starts at 5 p.m. BUT: Thousands of athletes plan to attend both Opening and Closing Ceremonies.
- Other SOBC-specific terms:
 - An SOBC community program is called a **Local**. Capital L.
 - But note that when you're using local as an adjective, it shouldn't be capitalized. For example: The SOBC – Kamloops Local is running many wonderful programs this season. Their local mayor is very excited and supportive.
 - SOBC Regions: capital R. **Region 1**, Region 2, Region 3... you get the picture. ☺ For example: Region 1 athlete Shelly Poland was the first SOBC – Golden athlete to compete in Special Olympics Canada Games.
 - As with Local vs. local, region and regional should not be capitalized when used abstractly, i.e. not speaking about a specific SOBC Region. Example: The Western Canada Games is a regional competition for athletes from the western part of Canada.

- A Local Committee: The term **Local Committee** should have capital L and C, and individual roles should also be capitalized. Local Coordinator, Program Coordinator, Treasurer, etc.
- In general, capitalize all parts of a **full title** of an **event or entity**. Examples: Matthew Williams completed **Athlete Speakers Bureau** courses. He was the **Chair** of the **Global Athlete Congress**. Randy Smallwood is the **Chair** of the SOBC **Board of Directors**. Many floor hockey teams participated in the **Jon Baillie Floor Hockey Tournament** in November.
 - Capitalize an official title, whether it comes before or after the individual's name. (This is Special Olympics style, not Canadian Press style.) For example: Special Olympics BC Chair Randy Smallwood addressed the Games audience. Dan Howe, President & CEO, led a discussion of strategy.
 - However, do not capitalize words in general references. Remember that *athlete, coach, volunteer, and program* independently are nouns, not titles, as are individual *sports*. Examples: Our team played very well in the soccer tournament last weekend. The SOBC athletes are training hard. SOBC – Kamloops coaches and volunteers are amazing people. We are excited about the next basketball game. Our Local offers basketball, floor hockey, and soccer.
 - No commas are needed between a name and a title if the title comes first. Examples: Mary Davis, Special Olympics Chief Executive Officer, will deliver remarks at the Opening Ceremony. Special Olympics Chairman Tim Shriver is the featured speaker. NOT: Special Olympics Chairman, Tim Shriver, is the featured speaker.
- **Athlete oath:** On first mention, call it the Special Olympics athlete oath; thereafter, the oath. The proper punctuation is as follows: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." NOTE: Please do not call this "the Special Olympics oath." (*Updated 2019 per Special Olympics International 2018 Style Guide*)
- **Athlete Leadership:** Special Olympics Athlete Leadership on first reference; Athlete Leadership thereafter. NOTE: We no longer use the term Athlete Leadership Programs or ALPs. We simply refer to Athlete Leadership; no acronym or abbreviation needed. Example: Athlete Leadership aims to create a culture of inclusion where people think differently about what it means to lead and influence others.
- **Health:** Our Special Olympics Health program is growing and now includes more than Healthy Athletes events. On first reference, when referring to our overall health work, please refer to the overarching program as Special Olympics Health or the Special Olympics Health program. This can include Healthy Athletes events, fitness and wellness initiatives, and Healthy Communities programming.
- **Healthy Athletes:** Use Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® on first reference; Healthy Athletes thereafter. At Healthy Athletes events, Special Olympics athletes are offered free screenings and

services. NOTE: Healthy Athlete (singular) and Healthier Athlete(s) are incorrect. NOTE: We do not use the word “exam” to describe what takes place at Special Olympics Healthy Athletes events – “screenings” is the preferred noun.

- There are eight types of Healthy Athletes screening programs, as identified below. When mentioning any of the Healthy Athletes disciplines, include Special Olympics on first reference, as in: Special Olympics Special Smiles.

Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes® (vision)*

Special Olympics Special Smiles® (dental)

Special Olympics Healthy Hearing (hearing)

Special Olympics FUNFitness (physical therapy and nutritional advice)

Special Olympics Health Promotion (general health and fitness)

Special Olympics Fit Feet (podiatry)

Special Olympics Strong Minds (adaptive/coping skills)

Special Olympics MedFest® (sports physical screenings) (*not offered in B.C.*)

**This is a partnership between Special Olympics and Lions Clubs International. Always use the full name as shown above on first reference; use Opening Eyes thereafter.*

- **Healthy Community:** Within Special Olympics, a Program is identified as having achieved Healthy Community recognition after meeting several criteria related to year-round health programming. The plural term Healthy Communities may be used when referencing the overall year-round Special Olympics health work and recognition structure.
 - For a Program receiving one-year or three-year Healthy Community grants, it is important to refer to such a Program as a “Healthy Community grantee” or one that is “seeking to achieve Healthy Community recognition” until officially recognized as a Healthy Community. Special Olympics BC achieved Healthy Community recognition in 2018.
 - Examples: Special Olympics BC is recognized as a Healthy Community through its dedication to athlete health year-round. Special Olympics is seeking to create Healthy Communities around the world.

- **Intellectual disabilities:** As of 2004, this is the official term used by Special Olympics to refer to our focus population. Use “people-first language,” i.e. children and adults with intellectual disabilities – never mentally or intellectually disabled person, or person suffering from, afflicted with, or a victim of intellectual disabilities.
 - Use the singular term when referring to one person, e.g. “an individual with an intellectual disability.” Use the plural when referring to more than one person, i.e. “adults and children with intellectual disabilities.”
 - May be abbreviated as ID on second reference.
 - NOTE: Special Olympics does not use the term intellectual and developmental disabilities, which is a broader category.
 - Developmental disabilities: a general term for a range of conditions related to impairment in physical, learning, or behavioural areas. These conditions include intellectual disabilities. NOTE: Special Olympics uses the more specific term intellectual disabilities.

- **Inclusive health:** The 2016-2020 Special Olympics Health Strategy references supporting inclusive health for people with intellectual disabilities. Inclusive health means equitable access to quality health care, education, and services for people with intellectual disabilities.

- **Divisioning:** Special Olympics competitions are structured so that athletes compete with other athletes of similar ability in equitable divisions. The practice of divisioning marks one of the fundamental differences between Special Olympics competitions and those of most other sports organizations. Lower case divisioning when it is not beginning a sentence.

- **R-word:** Refers to the word “retard” or “retarded,” and Special Olympics actively advocates its elimination. Note the hyphen and capital R in the term. Use of these words can hurt millions of people with intellectual disabilities as well as their families and friends.
 - The **Spread the Word to End the Word** campaign called for people to think about the hurtful and disparaging uses of the R-word and pledge to stop using it.
 - This campaign rebranded in 2019 and is now known as **Spread the Word: Inclusion**, a global engagement campaign to increase inclusion among people with and without intellectual disabilities through grassroots action in schools, workplaces, and communities around the world. <https://www.spreadtheword.global/>

- Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics: the **Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics BC** is the full proper name of the B.C. leg of this global movement. Use in full on first reference; use Law Enforcement Torch Run, Torch Run, or LETR and BC LETR thereafter.

- **Final Leg:** capitalize. A Final Leg consists of the last kilometres of a Law Enforcement Torch Run in the days leading up to the Opening Ceremony of a Special Olympics competitive event.
- **Flame of Hope:** capitalize, no quotes, no italics. The torch carried in the Law Enforcement Torch Run and used to light the cauldron at Special Olympics Games.
- Note that law enforcement officer is lowercase, no hyphens.
- **Polar Plunge®:** capitalize. A Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics fundraiser. Polar Plunge is a registered trademark of Special Olympics and is recommended over “Polar Bear Plunge” and other similar names not registered by Special Olympics.
- **Global Messengers:** always capitalize. The term refers to Special Olympics athletes who have received training to become spokespeople for people with intellectual disabilities and to raise awareness of Special Olympics. Athletes who have been through that training anywhere in the world are referred to as Special Olympics [Program name] Global Messengers (as in, Special Olympics Canada Global Messengers).
 - In addition, every few years, 12 athletes are chosen from Special Olympics Programs around the world to serve two- or four-year terms as spokespersons for the Special Olympics movement; they are referred to as **Special Olympics Sargent Shriver International Global Messengers**.
- **Special Olympics Team Canada and Special Olympics Team BC:** Always use Special Olympics Team Canada and Special Olympics Team BC on first reference, not just Team Canada or Team BC. (Team Canada – without the words Special Olympics – refers to the Canadian Olympic team. Team BC – without the words Special Olympics – is a separate entity for participation in the mainstream multi-sport Canada Games; Team BC usually includes top youth athletes from all over the province and a contingent of Special Olympics athletes.) Special Olympics Team Canada is the Canadian delegation to Special Olympics World Games. Special Olympics Team BC is our province’s delegation to Special Olympics Canada Games.

Writing and talking about Special Olympics athletes

- It’s important to use people-first language putting the athlete/individual first, rather than the condition. For example: Thousands of individuals with intellectual disabilities participate in Special Olympics BC programs throughout the province. NOT Thousands of intellectually disabled people participate in SOBC programs.
 - A person has intellectual disabilities, NOT is suffering from, is afflicted with or is a victim of intellectual disabilities. For example: Jane Public, who has an intellectual disability

- Disabling conditions do not have to be life-defining in a negative way. Refer to a person’s disability only when it is relevant and necessary, and don’t use the adjective “unfortunate” when talking about people with an intellectual disability.
- Do not describe Special Olympics athletes as “kids,” unless you are referring specifically and solely to participants in youth programs. There is a misconception that Special Olympics athletes are kids, when in fact SOBC athletes range in age from two to 90-plus. The majority of SOBC athletes are adults, and are involved in programs throughout their lives, keeping them active at all ages.
- Special Olympics is for individuals with intellectual disabilities, while the Paralympics involve athletes with physical disabilities.
- When someone asks, “When is the Special Olympics?” or “When are the next Special Olympics?” the answer is that athletes are in action year-round in Special Olympics programs throughout British Columbia and around the world. We don’t say “the Special Olympics.”
- Common mistakes to avoid:
 - **Incorrect:** the Special Olympics
Correct: Special Olympics programs, Special Olympics Games, the Special Olympics movement – do not use the word “the” in front of Special Olympics unless describing a specific Special Olympics event, team or coach, or describing the Special Olympics movement as a whole
 - **Incorrect:** Special Olympians
Correct: Special Olympics athletes
 - **Incorrect:** Downs Syndrome, mongoloid
Correct: Down syndrome
 - **Incorrect:** Special Olympic athletes, Special Olympic team
Correct: Special Olympics athletes, Special Olympics team – the words “Special Olympics” should never be written without the “s” at the end of “Olympics”

CORRECT	INCORRECT
General Terms	
✓ Special Olympics	the Special Olympics
✓ Special Olympics athletes	Special Olympians
✓ Special Olympics event <small>or athlete, supporter, etc. Always add an “s”</small>	Special Olympic event <small>or athlete, supporter, etc.</small>
Capitalization	
✓ the Special Olympics movement	the Special Olympics Movement
✓ athlete <small>athlete is lowercase</small>	Athlete
✓ partner <small>partner is lowercase</small>	Partner