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Preface

Using a consistent writing style and form in all Special Olympics communications enhances the clarity, professionalism, and impact of our materials. When we speak consistently about Special Olympics, we help everyone understand who we are and what we do. We break down misconceptions and increase understanding of our athletes, programs, and organization.

Most of the time, Special Olympics BC follows the Special Olympics Inc. Style Guide for words specific to our organization, and the Canadian Press Stylebook for general sport and national terms. We do have some words and uses that are specific to our province. Those terms are noted here and were decided based on the feedback and needs of our community.

The Special Olympics BC Style Guide is designed as a quick reference; it is not a glossary of every term or program. Instead, this Style Guide focuses on the most commonly asked questions on correct use. It also points out where Special Olympics style diverges from Canadian Press or international style.

If you're looking for a specific word and can't find it here, Special Olympics BC has messaging and brand resources specific to many of our programs and events. Please use the [Marketing & Communications Resources page on the SOBC website](#) for further questions. It is regularly updated with the latest information and tools.

This guide begins with a one-page snapshot of the Most Common Questions, followed by the rest of our key terminology and style questions.

We appreciate ongoing feedback to make sure this guide is as helpful and easy as possible. If you have questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact Special Olympics BC's Marketing & Communications team at marcomms@specialolympics.bc.ca.

Thank you for opening hearts and minds to the abilities of athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and strengthening inclusion and awareness of the year-round Special Olympics programs throughout our province!



Most Common Questions

CORRECT		INCORRECT	
General Terms			
✓	Special Olympics	the Special Olympics	
✓	Special Olympics athletes	Special Olympians	
✓	Special Olympics event or athlete, supporter, etc. Always add an "s"	Special Olympic event or athlete, supporter, etc.	
Capitalization			
✓	the Special Olympics movement	the Special Olympics Movement	
✓	athlete athlete is lowercase	Athlete	
✓	partner partner is lowercase	Partner	
Program – P or p?			
Capital P when referring to accredited Programs (Special Olympics Australia, Special Olympics Zambia, etc.) Lower case in all other uses (Healthy Athletes program)			
Other			
Special Olympics always comes first (on first reference)			
Correct: Special Olympics Healthy Communities® Incorrect: Healthy Communities®			



Special Olympics BC Terminology

- **Special Olympics:** The global movement's 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, Special Olympics British Columbia** – *not* BC Special Olympics, BCSO, Special Olympics B.C., S.O.B.C. or the Special Olympics of BC
 - NOTE: The abbreviation SOBC can be used. But use of any acronyms or abbreviations should be limited, to help everyone understand what you're saying. Please see the General Grammar and Style section about abbreviations and acronyms.
 - NOTE: The province, B.C., when written on its own, does need the periods after each letter. Usually, when abbreviating for British Columbia, 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**
 - This structure puts Special Olympics first in order to increase understanding of our movement and mission, and to be consistent with our legal name.
 - Please make an effort to be consistent in using this style – particularly the [space] en dash [space] between the two parts of the title.
- National name: **Special Olympics Canada**



- The correct style for **Special Olympics BC's official sports** is below. Individual sport names 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
 - floorball
 - 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 remember the "s" at the end of Special Olympics.
- **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 does not begin a sentence.
- How to write about **Special Olympics Games:**



- Treat “Games” as a **collective plural** rather than a collective singular expression. Example: The Special Olympics World Summer Games were held in 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 full title the first time you use it in your document; after that you can shorten to National Games if desired. For example: The members of Special Olympics 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 **Special Olympics BC, Canada, 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: Special Olympics BC athletes will compete in the next National Games. Our floor hockey team played three great games last week.
- **World Games** style: Special Olympics World Summer Games Santiago 2027, Special Olympics World Winter Games Switzerland 2029. This follows international format for writing dates.
- Special Olympics BC follows Canadian Press style and colloquial language. We title our Special Olympics BC Games with the year first: **2027 Special Olympics BC Winter Games, 2029 Special Olympics BC Summer Games.**



- In B.C. and Canada, Special Olympics competitive opportunities operate on a four-year cycle for both summer and winter sports:
 - Year 1: Regional Qualifiers
 - Year 2: Special Olympics BC Games (Provincial Games)
 - Year 3: Special Olympics Canada Games (National Games)
 - Year 4: Special Olympics 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.
- Internally, a Special Olympics BC 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: Special Olympics BC – Kamloops is running many wonderful programs this season. Their local mayor is very excited and supportive.
 - Many people outside Special Olympics BC are unfamiliar with the term Local. When you're talking to an external audience, it's easier to say Special Olympics community or community programs.
- **Special Olympics BC Regions:** capital R. **Region 1**, Region 2, Region 3... you get the picture. J 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 are a regional competition for athletes from the western part of Canada.
- **Special Olympics BC Local Committees:** The term Local Committee should have capital L and C, and individual role titles 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 was the Chair of the Special Olympics Global Athlete Congress. Nicola Lambrechts is the Chair of the Special Olympics BC Board of Directors. Many teams participated in the Special Olympics BC – Abbotsford Brooke Watkins Memorial 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 Nicola Lambrechts 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 Special Olympics athletes are training hard. Special Olympics coaches and volunteers are amazing people. We are excited about the next games. Our community offers basketball, bocce, 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.
- **Intellectual disabilities**: 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.”
- Developmental disabilities: a general term for a range of conditions related to impairment in physical, learning, or behavioural areas. These conditions include intellectual disabilities. Increasingly, Special Olympics uses the general term intellectual and developmental disabilities together, which encompasses both categories and provides more opportunities for athlete outreach.
- **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)*
- **Youth Programs:** Special Olympics BC offers Youth Programs specifically designed for children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities to build vital motor, sport, and social skills in fun, welcoming, and inclusive environments.
 - **Active Start** for ages 2 to 6
 - **FUNDamentals** for ages 7 to 11
 - **Special Olympics BC Unified Sports®** in schools for ages 12 to 18
NOTE: On first reference in content, please write out Special Olympics BC Unified Sports®. Unified Sports is acceptable on second reference.
NOTE: Special Olympics BC Unified Sports programs team up students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities. Players without intellectual disabilities are called Unified partners (lower case p).



- **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. There are other entities using those names, so saying Special Olympics Team BC in full provides clarity and awareness of our movement.
 - 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.
- **Inclusive Health:** To Special Olympics, inclusive health means that people with intellectual disabilities have equitable access to health services. The health services should be of good quality. It also means that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are empowered to take an active role in deciding their health and life choices. To make inclusive health a reality, we must ensure that people with ID have easier access to health services that are adapted to meet their needs.
 - Our [Special Olympics BC Inclusive Health program](#) includes Special Olympics Healthy Athletes events as well as a range of programming and resource development. On first reference, when referring to our overall health work, please refer to the overarching program as Special Olympics BC Inclusive Health or the Special Olympics BC Inclusive Health program. This can include Healthy Athletes events, programs like Club Fit and Fit Families & Friends, and fitness and wellness initiatives.
- **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: In B.C., we do not use the word “exam” to describe what takes place at Special Olympics Healthy Athletes events – “screenings” is the preferred noun in our province (this is different from Special Olympics International and U.S. Programs).

 - We offer eight types of Healthy Athletes screening programs in B.C. 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)

**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.*

- **Athlete Leadership:** Special Olympics Athlete Leadership on first reference; Athlete Leadership thereafter. Athlete leaders are those who participate in Athlete Leadership activities and/or hold leadership roles. Use lowercase when referring to individuals, e.g., athlete leaders.
 - 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.
- **Special Olympics Sargent Shriver Global Messengers:** always capitalize. The term refers to Special Olympics athlete leaders chosen from Programs around the world to serve four-year terms as advocates for the Special Olympics movement. They are engaged at the Regional level and at World Games that take place during their term. NOTE: Please end use of the outdated term “Sargent Shriver International Global Messengers.”
- 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 a Law Enforcement Torch Run 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.
- **R-word:** refers to the word “retard” or “retarded.” Derogatory use of these words can hurt millions of people with intellectual disabilities, their families and friends. Note the hyphen and capital R in the term.
 - 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 is now known as [Spread the Word](#), a global engagement campaign to increase inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities through grassroots actions in schools, workplaces, and communities around the world.



Special Olympics Language Guide

- 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 Special Olympics programs.
 - A person has an intellectual disability, 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 Special Olympics athletes range in age from two to 80-plus. The majority of Special Olympics BC 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”



General Grammar and Style

abbreviations and acronyms

To help everyone understand what you are saying, it is best to write out terms in full as often as possible, even if it feels repetitive, instead of using short forms and acronyms. Not everyone knows what “SOBC” stands for (as just one example). Saying Special Olympics BC in full helps people understand, and it helps screen readers and tools that search for words.

ages

Always use numbers. Examples: Special Olympics athletes can range in age from 2 to over 80.

Please note that this is for ages only. For dates, times, and general numbers, please see below.

Active vs. passive voice

Using the active voice makes your writing both more powerful and more concise. Use active voice whenever possible. Take the time to read and rephrase sentences so they are active instead of passive. It can be hard to train yourself to do at first, but once you get into the habit, it will flow naturally.

- Active: We checked the score and found out we won.
Passive: When the score was checked, we found out we won.

Affect vs. effect

Affect, as a verb, means “to influence” – ex. The amount that the athletes practiced affected the outcome of the game. Effect, as a verb, means “to cause” – ex. We effected positive change in the athlete’s life. (That’s very formal.) But in most cases, affect is used as a verb and effect is a noun.

a.m., p.m.

Lowercase with periods.

Format for times: 6 to 9 p.m. PT – not 6:00 pm; not 6-9 pm (unless space forces you).

Remember to include the time zone, because some Special Olympics BC communities are in MT.

Apostrophes

The Oatmeal has a useful (but silly) comic [guide to apostrophe use](#).



athlete

Lowercase in all uses. Example: Special Olympics athletes are children and adults with intellectual disabilities in 200 countries around the world.

athlete leader

Lowercase.

Colons

If a colon is followed by a full sentence, the first letter of the sentence should be capitalized. If what follows the colon is a fragment, not a full sentence that could stand on its own, the first letter should be lower case. The following are examples.

- Athletes competed in eight sports at the 2027 Special Olympics BC Winter Games: 5-pin bowling, alpine skiing, cross country skiing, curling, figure skating, floorball, snowshoeing, and speed skating.
- In Special Olympics, athletes do so much: They achieve greatness in their sports, feel pride in their accomplishments, gain important skills, and inspire everyone who gets to see them in action.

Compound modifiers

When you are using a several related words as an adjective to describe something, and if the words comes before the thing that is being described, that is called a compound modifier. The words in the compound modifier should be hyphenated.

- Examples: a high-energy performance; a much-loved coach; our well-attended event; an 80-year-old volunteer
- Note that you do not hyphenate the terms when the first one is an adverb (ends in –ly). Examples: a highly motivated athlete (includes an adverb)
- Note: Do not hyphenate when the compound modifier follows the object of the description. Examples: Our event was well attended. The swimming coach is much loved by her players.

Date format

January 1, 2014, (write out the name of the month in full; use two commas around the year)
or January 2014 (no commas)

- For example: Our next bowling tournament is scheduled for February 14, 2029, at Ballbreakers on Meridian Street. Our next registration day will be in September 2028 at the community centre.



- Please do not use a conversation form, e.g. September 22nd through September 24th. Correct format would be: September 22 to 24.

Email

No hyphen in email (per Canadian Press style) and lowercase e when not beginning a sentence. Example: Please contact her by email for details.

Exclamation marks

These fun pieces of punctuation indicate excitement. But many people tend to overuse exclamation marks, in an attempt to soften or jazz up their written words. If you find that you are inclined to throw in lots of exclamation marks to make your writing more fun, take another look at what you've written on the page – how can you choose other words or rephrase the sentence in order to convey excitement without having to turn to more exclamation marks? If more than one exclamation mark is used in a document that is being issued publicly, it tends to look unprofessional. And when they are overused, they lose their impact. Use only occasionally, and they'll be much more effective.

Health care

Write health care as two words, per Canadian Press style.

If the term appears as a compound modifier before a noun, it should be hyphenated. In this case, that means we would write (for example) the Canadian health-care system.

(Note: The American Associated Press style guide has changed to one word: healthcare. Canadian Press is aware of this but maintains their style as of August 2026.)

It's vs. its

It is, abbreviated with an apostrophe, vs. a possessive word.

- It is a good thing that so many athletes are participating in this tournament. It's a good thing they're participating.
- The house is looking old. Its paint is peeling and its roof is leaking.

Long distance

As a noun, two words; as an adjective, hyphenate. Examples: She has been training to be a long-distance runner. It's a long distance to the beach.

Long jump

As a noun, two words; as an adjective, hyphenate. Examples: He competed in the long jump. She won a medal in the long-jump event.



Longtime

One word as a compound modifier. Examples: They are longtime supporters of Special Olympics. They've been friends a long time.

Numbers

In general use, spell out numbers from one to nine (single digits). Numbers 10 and higher should be written with numerals – unless they are at the start of a sentence.

- Examples: We have nine athletes participating in the bocce program this year. There are 79 athletes participating in our programs. Seventy-nine athletes are involved.
- However, the above rule does not apply when writing costs (ex. \$9, \$100), addresses (ex. 5 Milton St.) and dates (ex. January 1, 2014).
- **Large numbers:** Use commas to separate each three digits (counting right to left). For example: Up to 1,800 athletes, coaches and volunteers from across Canada will gather for the Special Olympics Canada Summer Games.
- **Percentages** in text: 15 per cent (two words), nine per cent, 100 per cent.

Quotation marks

Please note that commas and periods always go inside quotation marks, even with sentence fragments. Example: We call this "an easy rule." NOT: We call this "an easy rule".

Semicolons

Semicolons should be used to combine two sentences that could stand independently, separated by a period, but that are related or contrasting, so you want to tie them together more closely for effect. Example: We're looking forward to seeing how the athletes do at National Games; we know they have been training hard.

- Note that in the example, both parts of that sentence could stand alone as fully formed, correct sentences. i.e. We're looking forward to seeing how the athletes do at National Games. We know they have been training hard.
- Do not use a semicolon when you have a contraction in the sentence.
 - **Incorrect:** We are going to run a golf program this year; but we aren't sure how many athletes we will have.
Correct: We are going to run a golf program this year; we know there are many athletes who are interested in playing.



Serial/Oxford commas

The serial comma is the comma that comes before the last word or name in a list. Some people feel using the serial comma adds clarity to the contents of your list. But most publications and style guides are phasing it out. Decide whether you want to use it or not based on your own audience, but be consistent in whatever you do.

- Special Olympics BC's in-house style is to use the Oxford comma. Example: The dog, cat, and bird were all great friends.

Spacing

Only one space after punctuation.

- Example: This sentence is great. Between the period and the start of the next sentence, there should be only one space.

T-shirt

Capitalize the T in T-shirt, even if it's in the middle of a sentence. Example: I wear my blue T-shirt for practice.

Their vs. they're vs. there

Possessive vs. contraction vs. location.

- *Their* is possessive, meaning it owns something. Example: SOBC coaches are wonderful. Their dedication to their athletes is inspiring.
- *They're* is a contraction for "they are." Example: The athletes in the floorball team are playing in a tournament this weekend. They're really excited.
- *There* refers to a location or to something abstract. Examples: (a) Ballbreakers is a good bowling alley. We are going to hold our next event there. (b) There are more than 3,400 Special Olympics BC athletes.

Then vs. than

Generally speaking, time-related vs. comparative.

- *Then* is used for time-related references. Example: We drove to Abbotsford for the game, and then we drove home.
- *Than* is used for comparisons. Example: We have more programs now than we did last year.

To vs. too vs. two

Generally speaking, direction vs. in addition vs. number.



- *To* is a function word, most often indicating direction. Example: We are going to the Special Olympics Canada Games.
- *Too* means also, indicating something in addition to something else. It can also mean excessive/to an excessive degree. Example: (a) Athletes are going to the game too. (b) She was driving too fast and missed the turn.
- *Two* is a number. Example: There are two new programs we want to offer.

Weather vs. Whether

Climate vs. indirect question involving alternatives.

- *Weather* pertains to the climatological conditions outside. Example: The weather outside was frightful, but the dedicated athletes played soccer anyway.
- *Whether* refers to an indirect question involving alternative conditions or possibilities, and is often used with “or.” Example: We didn’t know whether we should run the bocce program, but when we saw there were many interested athletes we decided to do it.

Website

One word, lowercase w. Example: The Special Olympics BC website has many helpful resources; you should check it out. 😊

Who vs. that

“Who” and “that” are sometimes mixed up, using them interchangeably to apply to people and things/animals. “Who” and “whom” refer only to people; “that” refers to things, animals and groups. Examples:

- The athletes who went to the soccer tournament played hard and came home victorious.
- The equipment that we need is in the car.
- The teams that are going to the tournament are well prepared.
- **Which** replaces *that* when you have written a subordinate clause separated by a comma. Example: The team that is going to the National Games has been practicing hard. The basketball team, which has athletes of a wide range of ages, will represent B.C. at the Special Olympics Canada Games.

Who’s vs. whose

Contraction vs. possessive.



- *Who's* is the contraction of "who is." Example: Suzanne is the athlete who is the most passionate about bowling. Suzanne is the athlete who's the most passionate about bowling.
- *Whose* is a possessive word. Example: We didn't know *whose* hockey stick it was until Elvis came back to get it.

Your vs. you're

Possessive vs. contraction.

- *Your* is a possessive word. Example: Your program is very strong, and your athletes are very dedicated.
- *You're* is the contraction of you are. Example: You are doing a great job with the athletes. You're doing a great job!



Plain Language

Plain-language writing is direct and conversational. We can all use it to communicate clearly and effectively. Many people are busy and have lots of priorities. They are more likely to read and understand writing that is simple and clear. Plain-language writing is also more accessible to people with disabilities.

Steps to take:

- Start with the most important information. Continue to add information by order of importance.
- Write short sentences. Aim for no more than 15 to 20 words. *Example:* Special Olympics BC changes lives through the power of sport.
- Keep paragraphs to one topic. Ideally, they should be no more than three sentences.
- Omit unnecessary words and details. Keeping your text short makes it more readable. *Examples:*
 - Athletes can ~~pick and~~ choose which sports to play.
 - ~~The fact is that~~ Special Olympics promotes inclusion.
 - ~~Essentially,~~ I hope ~~that~~ the athletes are ready to compete.
- Use lists instead of long sentences. Choose bulleted lists for unordered information, and numbered lists for ordered information.
- Use simple, common words.
 - “Apply” not “Submit an application”
 - “Use” not “Utilize”
 - “Documents” not “Documentation”
- Write it like you would say it. Once you’ve written it, read it out loud to yourself. Was it easy to read? Are there places where you can break up sentences or choose words that are more clear?
- Use active voice instead of passive voice. Active sentences start with the subject. They are shorter and stronger than passive voice.
 - Passive voice example: “The Regional Qualifier was organized by volunteers”
 - Active voice example: “Volunteers organized the Regional Qualifier”
- Use the clearest, most popular terms. Avoid jargon, idioms, and expressions since they can be confusing. When you need to use a complicated term, define it or provide an example.
- Avoid acronyms when possible. If you do need to use one, make sure readers know what you mean. *Examples:*



- “Local Coordinator” not “LC”
- “Healthy Athletes screening” not “HAS”
- “Provincial sport organization” not “PSO”
- Include clear, descriptive titles and headings. This helps readers identify sections and find relevant information.

[Special Olympics North America resources for plain-language writing and easy-to-read content](#)

More Resources

[Special Olympics BC Marketing & Communications Resources homepage](#)