

# POWERLIFTING

## TRADITIONAL EVENTS

- Bench Press
- Deadlift
- Squat
- Combination (Bench Press, Squat and Deadlift)

## UNIFIED EVENTS

- Unified Bench Press
- Unified Deadlift
- Unified Squat
- Unified Combination (Bench Press, Squat and Deadlift)

**Athletes must be at least 14 years old to compete in Powerlifting.**

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Powerlifting shall govern all Special Olympics competitions. Special Olympics has created these rules based upon International Powerlifting Federation (IPF) rules, which shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the [Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Powerlifting](#).

An athlete with Down Syndrome who has been diagnosed with Atlanto-Axial Instability may not participate in the back squat lift in Powerlifting.

## COMPETITION MANAGEMENT

1. Athletes in Powerlifting must be at least 14 years old by June 12, 2026 to be eligible.
2. The Head Coach of each Powerlifting team must have been certified by attending a Special Olympics Powerlifting Coaches Training School or another training offered and approved by Powerlifting's National Governing Body (NGB).
3. Athletes will be weighed in while wearing their competitive uniform (singlet/lifting suit, or tight shirt, shorts, socks, and shoes).
4. Athletes must attend weigh-ins on the day their anticipated weight class is scheduled to compete.
5. The coaches must declare the athletes' opening lift for each event during the weigh-in.
6. Order of Competition
  - a. The order of events shall be 1) Squat 2) Bench Press 3) Deadlift.

## DIVISIONING

1. Athletes will be divided by gender.
2. Athletes will be put in divisions based on their weight class. Weight class is established on the weight at weigh ins.
3. Athletes from the same county may be placed in the same division.
4. The Wilkes Formula will be used when there are not at least three (3) athletes in a weight class.
5. Divisions of not less than three (3) lifters or more than eight (8) lifters will be made using the following criteria.
  - a. Lifters will be put in the appropriate weight class based on their body weight at weigh-in.
  - b. Lifters can then be divisioned within the weight class based on body weight.
6. Athletes will not be disqualified for Maximum Effort for Powerlifting.

## CONVERSION CHART

1. Competition will be using kilograms. A conversion chart can be found in the Official Special Olympics Powerlifting Rules.
2. To convert kilos to pounds, multiply kilos by 2.2046. Rules state that poundage's shall be rounded off by reducing to the nearest quarter, i.e., 107.5 kilos multiplied by 2.2046 equals 236.99450. The poundage then becomes 236—3/4 rather than 237.

WEIGHT CLASSES	
MALE	FEMALE
117 lbs and under	95 lbs and under
118-130 lbs	96-103 lbs
131-145 lbs	104-114 lbs
146-163 lbs	115-125 lbs
164-183 lbs	126 -139 lbs
184-205 lbs	140 -158 lbs
206-231 lbs	159-185 lbs
232-264 lbs	186 lbs and up
265 lbs and up	

## SPORT RULES

### UNIFORM SPECIFICATIONS

1. The lifting costume shall consist of a one-piece, full length lifting suit of one-ply stretch material without any patches or padding. A non-supportive weightlifting/wrestling type suit is also a legal suit. The straps of the suit must be worn over the shoulders at all times while lifting in competition.
2. No sweat pants or shorts are allowed.
3. A singlet with a T-shirt underneath must be worn by all competitors during all events.
4. Socks may be worn. Long socks (at least to the knee) must be worn for the Deadlift.
5. Some type of shoe or boot (i.e. trainer or powerlifting boots) must be worn. The height of the heels shall not exceed 5cm. Hiking or work boots are not permitted.
6. Athletes with physical disabilities may wear a two-piece outfit with both upper and lower pieces being form fitting and snug to the body.



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## EQUIPMENT

1. A belt made of leather, vinyl, nylon, or other similar non-stretch or non-metal (other than buckle and stud attachments material) may be worn on the outside of the suit. The belt may not encircle the body more than once. A lifting belt must be used in the deadlift. The athletes must provide their own.
2. Gloves may not be used.
3. Bandages of rubber or supports of rubber substitutes are forbidden.
4. The use of oil, grease, and all other lubricants is strictly prohibited. Baby powder may be used.
5. Wrist
  - a. Bandages of gauze or medical crepe may be worn with a maximum width of 8cm (3-1/4") and a maximum length of one (1) meter (3' 3-1/2").
6. Knee
  - a. Bandages of gauze or medical crepe may be worn with a maximum length of two (2) meters (6' 6-3/4").
  - b. Alternatively, an elastic knee cap may be worn with a maximum length of 20cm (8 inches). A combination of the two (2) is forbidden.
  - c. Any other type of brace or wrap, other than those specified in #4 and #5 above, require a physician's note.

## GENERAL RULES

1. The Chief Referee shall be seated in front of the platform. The three (3) referees may seat themselves according to the best points of vantage; usually the head judge sits directly in front of the platform and the other two (2) judges on each side of the platform.
2. The bar is loaded progressively; the lifter taking the lowest weight will lift first. In no case can the bar be reduced to a lighter weight when the lifter has performed a lift with the weight announced.
3. Round's System
  - a. Lifters will be divided into flights of no more than 14 lifters. The lifter with the lightest attempt will lift first and the weight will progressively increase until the 14th lifter has lifted. The bar will be unloaded and second attempts will be performed in the same fashion, followed by the third attempt. Then the next flight will lift.
  - b. Each competitor has one (1) minute from the calling of their name to the start of the attempt. If the delay exceeds one (1) minute, the attempt shall be forfeited. Lifters with physical disabilities declared at weigh-in will be granted extra time, up to three (3) minutes).
  - c. First round attempts should be submitted at weigh-ins. After completing an attempt, once the lights are activated, a lifter must submit the next attempt within one (1) minute. If no weight is submitted within the time limit, the lifter will be granted a 5-pound increase on the next attempt. If no weight is submitted, and the previous attempt failed, no weight increase will be granted.
4. If a lifter, after the referee's inspection, changes part of their costume, belt, or bandages or puts on anything which has not been authorized or which is contrary to the rules, they shall immediately be disqualified from the competition.
5. Each athlete must have an accurate lift recorded for each event entered.
6. Individuals will be placed in competitive divisions according to age group, gender, and qualifying score. The Powerlifting Sport Management Team reserves the right to re-classify or disqualify any individual whose pretournament scores do not fairly represent their ability.
7. In Powerlifting, athletes may be entered in each of the four (4) events offered.

## LIFTING STANDARDS

1. Bench Press Standards
  - a. The lifter must assume the following position on the bench, and maintain the position during the entire lift; the head and trunk (including buttocks) must be in contact with the surface of the bench, and the feet must be on the floor. The hands must grip the bar with thumbs around grip, thus locking the bar safely in the hands.
  - b. After removing the bar from the racks, the lifter shall wait with elbows and arms in full extension for the Chief Referee's signal. The signal will consist of a downward movement of the arm with the audible command "START of DOWN".
  - c. When the bar is absolutely motionless against the chest, the Chief Referee will give the audible command "PRESS".
  - d. After the referee's signal, the bar is pressed vertically to straight arm's length and held motionless for the referee's signal to replace the bar. This signal will be a backward movement of the arm with the audible command "RACK".
  - e. The spacing of the hands shall not exceed 81cm measured between the forefingers.
  - f. For the lifters whose feet do not touch the floor, the platform may be built up with 45lb plates to provide firm footing.



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- g. Reasons for Disqualifications in the Bench Press
  - i. During the lift, any change of the lifting position.
  - ii. Any raising or shifting of the lifter's head, shoulders, buttocks or legs from the bench, or movement of the feet.
  - iii. Any heaving or bouncing of the bar from the chest.
  - iv. Allowing the bar to sink excessively into the lifter's chest prior to the uplift.
  - v. Any uneven extension of the arms.
  - vi. Stopping of the bar during the press proper.
  - vii. Any touching of the bar by the spotters, before the referee's signal to replace the bar.
  - viii. Failure to wait for the referee's signal.
  - ix. Touching against of the uprights of the bench with the feet.
  - x. Touching the shoulders against the uprights of the bench during the press.
  - xi. Allowing the bar to touch the uprights of the bench during the lift in order to gain an advantage.
2. Deadlift Standards
  - a. The bar must be laid horizontally in front of the lifter's feet, and gripped with both hands, and uplifted with one (1) continuous motion until the lifter is standing erect. At completion of the lift, the knees must be locked and the shoulders thrust back. The referee's signal (audible command "DOWN") shall indicate the time when the bar is held motionless in the final position.
  - b. Reasons for Disqualifications in the Deadlift
    - i. Any stopping of the bar before it reaches the final position.
    - ii. Failure to stand erect.
    - iii. Failure to lock the knees.
    - iv. Supporting the bar on the thighs.
    - v. Any raising of the bar or any deliberate attempt to do so shall count as an attempt.
    - vi. Any shifting of the feet during the performance of the lift.
    - vii. The heels or toes may be raised, provided that either foot is not displaced or comes down in a different position.
    - viii. Lowering the bar before the referee's signal to do so.
    - ix. Allowing the bar to return to the platform without maintaining control with both hands
3. Squat Standards
  - a. The lifter will assume the upright position with the top of the bar NOT more than 3cm (1.18 inches) below the top of the anterior deltoids. The bar shall be held horizontally across the shoulders with the hands in contact with the bar and the feet flat on the platform with the knees LOCKED. The lifter's hands may be against the inside collars but not on the inside collars nor on the plates.
  - b. After removing the bar from the racks, the lifter must move backwards to establish the starting position. The lifter will wait in this position for the Chief Referee's signal. The signal will be given as soon as the lifter is MOTIONLESS, ERECT WITH THE KNEES LOCKED, and the bar is PROPERLY POSITIONED. The signal will consist of a downward movement of the arm and the audible command "SQUAT". Before receiving the starting signal, the lifter may make position adjustments within the rules without penalty. Once the lifter has received the starting signal, the feet may NOT move and the hands may NOT slide laterally on the bar.
  - c. Upon receiving the starting signal, the lifter must bend the knees and lower the body until the top surface of the legs at the hip joint is lower than the top of the knees. Only one (1) descent attempt is allowed.
  - d. The lifter must recover at will from the deepest point of the squat, without double-bouncing or any downward movement (stopping is permitted) once the upward motion has started, to an upright position with the knees locked. When the lifter is motionless, the Chief Referee will give the signal to replace the bar: "RACK". The signal will be given when the lifter is in the apparent final position as best determined by the Chief Referee (even if the final position is not correct according to the rules). The "RACK" signal is given along with a backward movement of the hand.
  - e. Upon receiving the "RACK" signal, the lifter MUST make a bona fide attempt to return the bar to the racks. This is defined as one (1) step towards the racks; the lifter may then request aid to rack the bar if necessary.
  - f. The lifter may enlist the aid of the spotter/loaders in removing the bar from the racks; however, once the bar has cleared the racks, the spotters/loaders may NOT assist any further with regard to proper positioning, foot placement, bar position, etc.
  - g. Reasons for Disqualifications in the Squat
    - i. Failure to observe the Chief Referee's signals at the commencement or completion of the lift.
    - ii. Double bouncing or more than one (1) recovery attempt at the bottom of the lift.
    - iii. Failure to assume an upright position with the knees locked at the COMMENCEMENT or COMPLETION of the lift.
    - iv. Any shifting of the feet laterally or stepping forward or backward during the performance of the lift. The toes and/or heels may come up off the platform, but MUST return in the same position.



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- v. Failure to bend the knees and lower the body until the top surface of the legs at the hip joint is lower than the top of the knees.
- vi. Changing the position of the bar across the shoulders after the commencement of the lift. This applies to intentional or unintentional rolling of the bar to aid in performance of the lift - it does NOT apply to a minute amount of position change that would not aid the lifter.
- vii. Contact of the bar or the lifter by the spotters before the referee's signal to replace the bar.
- viii. Contact of the elbows or upper arms with the legs.
- ix. Failure to make a bona fide attempt to return the bar to the racks. Bona fide attempt consists of one step towards the rack.

## UNIFIED POWERLIFTING RULES

1. Unless otherwise stated, the Powerlifting Rules stated in the 2022-2023 Program Information Guide shall govern the Unified powerlifting competition.
2. A Unified powerlifting team shall consist of one (1) athlete and one (1) Unified partner.
3. There will be three (3) classes based on gender: 1) Male 2) Female 3) Coed
4. Divisions will be determined using the combined weight of the athlete and partner.
5. Both the athlete and partner are expected to attend weigh-ins on the day of competition.
6. Each team's place is determined using the combined Wilkes scores for the athlete and partner. For example: Athlete (Team A) weighs 150lbs and lifts a total of 600lbs, yielding a Wilkes score of 209. Partner (Team A) weighs 200lbs and lifts a total of 700lbs, yielding a Wilkes score of 202. The combined Wilkes score for Team A is 411. Athlete (Team B) weighs 200lbs and lifts a total of 650lbs, yielding a Wilkes score of 187. Partner (Team B) weighs 250lbs and lifts a total of 800lbs, yielding a Wilkes score of 212. The combined Wilkes score for Team B is 399. Team A would be awarded the higher place in this scenario.