Special Olympics USA Games

Special Olympics has sports competitions for athletes. Athletes with intellectual disabilities compete in the sports competitions all year long. The athletes include adults and kids. Every four years, Special Olympics has a huge event named the USA Games. The 2026 USA Games is June 20–26. Each USA Games is in a different city. The 2026 USA Games is in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. This is the second time Minnesota has hosted a major Special Olympics event. More than 3,000 athletes will compete in the 2026 USA Games. The athletes come from all 50 states around the USA!

The Opening Ceremony

The USA Games starts with an opening ceremony on June 20. Athletes will march into a large sports stadium during the opening ceremony. They will march to honor their states. The opening ceremony will have live performances, including music and dancing. People will use a torch to light a fire in a big container called a cauldron. It is called the Flame of Hope. Then the USA Games will start!

The Sports

Athletes will compete in 16 different summer sports during the USA Games. The sports include basketball, gymnastics, golf, tennis, cheerleading, swimming, and more. This year they added new competitions in cornhole and pickleball. Athletes may compete on teams or by themselves. More than 1,500 coaches and 15,000 volunteers will work with the athletes during the USA Games. The athletes will compete in different places during the USA Games, including the National Sports Center in Blaine, Minnesota. The athletes will compete to win medals. An athlete wins a gold medal for first place, silver medal for second place, and bronze medal for third place. Some athletes win ribbons in competitions too.

The Closing Ceremony

The USA Games will end with a closing ceremony on June 26. People will celebrate Special Olympics athletes at the closing ceremony. The torch is given to the next host city of the USA Games. In 2030, the USA Games will be hosted in Cleveland, Ohio. Many people will go to the 2026 USA Games in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The USA Games are a celebration of all athletes with different abilities.

Special Olympics

Special Olympics is a group for athletes with intellectual disabilities. Eunice Kennedy Shriver started Special Olympics in 1968. Its headquarters is in Washington, D.C. The athletes include adults and kids. More than 5 million athletes are part of Special Olympics. Special Olympics has more than 100,000 sports competitions every year. Special Olympics USA Games are every four years.

University of Minnesota

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games will be at the University of Minnesota. This is a college in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. More than 50,000 students go to college at the University of Minnesota. Their school mascot is Goldy the Gopher. Winters are severe in Minnesota. The University built a large system of tunnels and skyways, called the Gopher Way. People can walk around the university campus without going outside in the extreme cold.

Review

1. **WHAT is the main idea of this article?**

   - ◯ The USA Games starts with an opening ceremony on June 20.
   - ◯ Athletes will compete in 16 different summer sports.
   - ◯ Athletes with intellectual disabilities compete in Special Olympics USA Games.

2. **CIRCLE True or False about the following statements:**

The USA Games will end with a closing ceremony on July 4.	True	False
Athletes win bronze medals for first place.	True	False
Athletes in the USA Games come from all 50 states.	True	False

3. **ANSWER these questions about the article:**

   What does Special Olympics have for athletes? _____

   What will athletes honor in the opening ceremony?

   _____

4. **NUMBER these events in the order they happen:**

   _____ People celebrate athletes at a closing ceremony.

   _____ The USA Games start with an opening ceremony.

   _____ Athletes compete in different summer sports.

5. **CIRCLE Fact or Opinion about the following statements:**

Golf is the best summer sport.	Fact	Opinion
Special Olympics USA Games are every four years.	Fact	Opinion

Think

1. **WHAT is your favorite sport? WHY?**

2. **WHAT do you like to do during the summer? WHY?**

3. **WHAT kind of team would you like to compete on? WHY?**

4. **WOULD you rather compete in summer sports or winter sports? WHY?**