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Ways to Qualify for the 2027 National Senior Games

The National Senior Games include two types of sports: Qualifying and Open.

Qualifying Sports require athletes to qualify the year before the National Senior Games. There are multiple ways an athlete can qualify. Please review Appendix A of the National Senior Games rulebook (included at the end of this document) for details on each qualification option. The table below summarizes ways to qualify for each Qualifying Sport.

Qualifying Sports						
Sport	Place+	MPS+	Qualifying Down+	Bonus+	Reciprocal+	Limited+
Archery	1st-4th	X	X	X		
Badminton	1st-4th		X			
Basketball Teams	1st-3rd		X			
Bowling	1st-4th		X			NA*
Cycling	1st-4th		X		5K/10K, 20K/40K	20K/40K
Golf	1st & 2nd	X	X			
Pickleball	1st-3rd		X			
Road Race	All Finishers		X		5K/10K	5K, 10K
Shuffleboard	1st-4th		X			NA*
Softball Teams	1st-3rd		X			
Swimming	1st-4th	X	X	X		
Table Tennis	1st-4th		X			
Tennis	1st-4th		X			
Track & Field	1st-4th	X	X			Pole Vault
Triathlon	All Finishers		X			Individual
Volleyball Teams	1st-3rd		X			



Ways to Qualify for the 2027 National Senior Games

For **Open Sports & Events**, any athlete who is at least 50 years old by Dec. 31, 2026, is eligible to participate. Qualification is not required.

Open Sports & Events

Basketball Shooting Skills	Golf Scramble
Beach Volleyball	Pickleball NA Singles*
Billiards	Powerlifting
Bocce	Power Walk
Climbing	1-Mile Road Race
Cornhole + NA Cornhole*	Tai Chi
Cycling (Recumbent)	Triathlon (Recumbent)
Disc Golf	Tri Relay + Tri Relay (Recumbent)
Flag Football	

* NA = Non-ambulatory Event

APPENDIX A

QUALIFICATION FOR THE NATIONAL SENIOR GAMES

An athlete may qualify for the National Senior Games in several ways. An athlete can qualify by place or meeting the minimum performance standard for the event in their age division at a NSGA qualifying Senior Games. An athlete participating in a Games that allows out-of-state people to enter may also qualify through a process known as qualifying down. In Road Race and Cycling, an athlete may qualify through reciprocal qualification. Reciprocal qualification automatically qualifies an athlete in a second event when they qualify in a similar event. Finally, if certain circumstances exist an athlete may qualify using the limited opportunity rule. Since qualifying for the limited opportunity rule requires submission of a request form and written proof of performance these qualifiers are identified by the NSGA staff.

QUALIFYING BY PLACE

Prior to the beginning of the qualifying year, the National Senior Games Association Board of Directors specifies the number of places that will qualify. The number of qualifying places is not the same for all events; for example, during the 2026 qualifying year, (qualifying for the 2027 National Senior Games) in most events the top four places qualify. In Golf, first- and second-place qualifies and in Triathlon and Road Race, all finishers qualify.

Some states require athletes to qualify at a local or regional game in order to participate in their state games. The state games qualifying rules may differ from the national rules. For more information, contact your state qualifying site.

QUALIFYING BY MINIMUM PERFORMANCE STANDARD (MPS)

Minimum performance standards have been established for many of the individual events where the performance can be measured by time, distance, or score. An athlete does not have to meet both the placement and MPS in order to qualify—it is one or the other.

Sports which have minimum performance standards are: Archery, Golf, Swimming, and Track and Field. In these sports it's possible to have many qualifiers. If the top 10 participants all meet the minimum standard, all 10 qualify. The MPSs are recalculated after each National Game by the NSGA staff and board. These calculations follow an established formula.

QUALIFYING BY QUALIFYING DOWN

State games have the option to be open or closed. A closed state does not allow athletes who are not residents of the state to participate in their games.¹ Open states allow out-of-state participants (OOS) and the qualifying down rule applies to these states. The NSGA sport rules specify that an out-of-state athlete cannot displace an in-state athlete from a qualifying place. In applying this rule if an out-of-state athlete places in a qualifying spot then an in-state athlete can be moved up to a qualifying place.

In doubles events where one player is in-state and one is out-of-state, the team is considered an out-of-state team. For qualifying team sports: Basketball, Softball and Volleyball, the team captain must specify the team's home state when registering for the Qualifying State Senior Games.

Closed states define an in-state resident in different ways. One state may consider people who live in a neighboring state but work in their state an in-state resident for senior games. One state established rules that anyone who ever lived or worked in the state would be allowed to participate in the state games.

Application of qualifying down process is best explained through the use of a chart.

Example 1: 4 places qualify.

Athlete	Status	Actual Finishing Place	Place after Qualifying Down	Qualified
Sue	OOS	1	1	Yes
Rachel	OOS	2	2	Yes
Linda	In-State	3	1	Yes
Betty	In-State	4	2	Yes
Cindy	In-State	5	3	Yes
Lisa	OOS	6	6	No
Karen	In-State	7	4	Yes
Sarah	In-State	8	Optional	No

Example 2: 3 places qualify

Athlete	Status	Actual Finishing Place	Place after Qualifying Down	Qualified
George	In-State	1	1	Yes
Horace	In-State	2	2	Yes
Tom	In-State	3	3	Yes
Dick	In-State	4	4	No
Harry	OOS	5	5	No
Adam	OOS	6	6	No
Bill	OOS	7	7	No
Jeff	In-State	8	Optional	No

Example 1 shows the top two finishers from out-of-state. Both of these individuals qualify by place. The third-place finisher is an in-state athlete and qualifies by winning third-place but through the qualifying down rule can be awarded an in-state first place. Since the first two places were won by out-of-state people, the in-state participants can be moved up two places. This allows Cindy, who finished fifth overall to be moved into an in-state third place and she is qualified. The same is true for Karen who moved to fourth place in-state.

Example 2, which shows three places qualifying and first second and third places were won by in-state athletes. These are the only three people who will qualify by place in this example.

¹ Closed states define an in-state resident in different ways. One state may consider people who live in a neighboring state but work in their state and in-state resident for senior games. One state established rules that anyone who ever lived or worked in the state would be allowed to participate in the state games.

RECIPROCAL QUALIFICATION

In 5K/10K Road Race and Cycling, athletes may qualify in a second event by qualifying in a similar event. Specifically, in Road Race, if an athlete qualifies in the 5K Road Race, he/she is reciprocally qualified in the 10K Road Race. Reciprocal qualification works the other way also; if the athlete qualifies in the 10K Road Race, he/she is reciprocally qualified in the 5K Road Race.

Reciprocal qualification works in a similar fashion for Cycling events. An athlete qualifying in either of the Cycling time trials (5K and 10K) is reciprocally qualified in the other. An athlete qualifying in either of the Cycling road races (20K and 40K) is reciprocally qualified in the other.

BONUS EVENTS

The Archery and Swimming qualification rules allow athletes to select certain events as bonus events.

For swimming, if an athlete qualifies in a Swimming event that has shorter distances using the same stroke, then the athlete may choose the shorter distance as a bonus event. For example, if an athlete qualifies in the 200yd freestyle that athlete may choose the 100yd and 50yd freestyle as bonus events. However, the athlete may not choose the 500yd freestyle because it is a longer stroke than the one event in which qualified.

An athlete may select bonus events when registering for the National Senior Games but may not exceed the limit of six events in which he/she may enter.

QUALIFIED STROKE <i>Bonus events must be of same stroke and lesser distance</i>	BONUS STROKES
Backstroke 200	Backstroke 50, 100
Backstroke 100	Backstroke 50
Breaststroke 200	Breaststroke 50, 100
Breaststroke 100	Breaststroke 50
Butterfly 200	Butterfly 50, 100
Butterfly 100	Butterfly 50
Freestyle 500	Freestyle 50, 100, 200
Freestyle 200	Freestyle 50, 100
Freestyle 100	Freestyle 50
Individual Medley 400	Individual Medley 100, 200
Individual Medley 200	Individual Medley 100

For Archery the rule is, if an athlete qualifies in an Archery event, then the athlete may choose one additional style as a bonus event.

An archer may select one bonus event when registering for the National Senior Games but may not exceed the entry limit of two Archery events.

QUALIFIED STYLE	BONUS STYLE <i>One style may be chosen as a Bonus Event</i>
Barebow Compound	Barebow Recurve, Compound Fingers, Compound Release, Recurve
Barebow Recurve	Barebow Compound, Compound Fingers, Compound Release, Recurve
Compound Fingers	Barebow Compound, Barebow Recurve, Compound Release, Recurve
Compound Release	Barebow Compound, Barebow Recurve, Compound Fingers, Recurve
Recurve	Barebow Compound, Barebow Recurve, Compound Fingers, Compound Release

LIMITED OPPORTUNITY QUALIFICATIONS

The Cycling road races (20K and 40K), Pole Vault, Road Races (5K and 10K), Triathlon and the following non-ambulatory sports – Bowling and Shuffleboard - are considered limited opportunity events. Athletes may qualify in limited opportunity events if his/her home state does not offer the event. The participation

and documentation requirements are different for the different events and are detailed in the Senior Games rulebook. The submitted requests for limited opportunity qualifications are evaluated by the NSGA staff and notices of approval or disapproval are sent to the athletes.