



Introduction

On behalf of Special Olympics International, THANK YOU for contributing your time and expertise. The knowledge you share with the course participants will make a significant impact on the lives of athletes with intellectual disabilities.

The Volunteer Coach Course offers a basic introduction to coaching Special Olympics aquatics. The course should be relevant to coaches involved with average to lower ability Special Olympics athletes. Higher-level skills and tactics are introduced in the Advanced Coach Course and in NGB and other accreditation coaching programs. Because this course will focus on the sport of swimming, instructors should strongly urge coaches to adhere to the Special Olympics Aquatics Coaching Guide when teaching diving. The recruitment of a diving specialist is strongly recommended.

Coaches should leave the training with a clear understanding of the following:

- Official Special Olympics aquatics events, including the rules
- How to use the Special Olympics Aquatics Coaching Guide
- How to organize a training session
- Techniques for warm-up and stretching
- Basic knowledge of the fundamentals of all competitive strokes
- Ideas for appropriate drills and activities to teach each stroke
- How to teach Special Olympics athletes the basic strategies of each event

Review the Quick Quiz at the end of this guide to identify major points and ensure that they are covered within the course.

Suggestions for Instructors

- **Review the Special Olympics Aquatics Coaching Guide.** It provides the necessary background to our coaching program.
- **Stay on schedule.** There is a lot of material to be covered, and it is easy to fall behind. Remember, this course is an overview. Encourage coaches to take additional coaching courses outside of Special Olympics to continue their coaching education.
- **Use team teaching.** Two instructors can bring different expertise to the course and also make the course more enjoyable for the participants. It is suggested that one instructor be a specialist in Aquatics and the other in Special Olympics.

Your ideas on the course are welcomed. Please send any ideas for future improvement to the SOI Aquatics Director, 1133 19th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.



Aquatics Volunteer Coach Training School Agenda

PART 1 Classroom Session (90 minutes)

- 1.0 Introduction and Using the Special Olympics Aquatics Coaching Guide
- 1.1 Special Olympics Coaching Philosophy
- 1.2 Coaching Resources
- 1.3 Athlete Assessment
- 1.4 Special Olympics Aquatics Events and Rules
- 1.5 Preparing for Your Aquatics Program
- 1.6 Eight-Week Training and Competition Plan
- 1.7 Organizing a Training Session
- 1.8 Safety and Prevention of Injuries
- 1.9 Coaching Athletes with Intellectual Disabilities

PART 2 Activity Session (120 minutes)

- 2.1 Warm-up and Adjusting to the Water
- 2.2 Getting in the Water
- 2.3 Becoming Water Safe - Floating
- 2.4 Technique

PART 3 Special Olympics Athletes Training Session (90 minutes)

- 3.1 Model Training Session

PART 4 Classroom Wrap-Up (30 minutes)

- 4.1 Review (Questions)
- 4.2 Quick Quiz
- 4.3 Certification Process and Application

Materials

- Course Agendas (one per participant)
- Special Olympics Aquatics Coaching Guide
- Samples of recommended resource books/videos

Equipment

- Kickboard
- Wall clock
- Safety equipment
- Lane lines
- First-aid kit
- Drinking water





PART 1
Classroom Session
(90 minutes)

1.0 Introduction and the Using the Special Olympics Aquatics Coaching Guide [5 minutes]

- Introduce yourself and your coaching background.
- Ask participants to briefly introduce themselves.
- Review the training school agenda.
- Walk through the Coaching Guide, highlighting the different information.
- Refer to this text as you go through the course.

1.1 Special Olympics Coaching Philosophy [10 minutes]

- The use of the word “**Olympics**” means a commitment to high standards of coaching.
- **Training and safety** are critical for athlete development.
- Coaches must continually **challenge** athletes to push on to new levels of achievement.
- In Special Olympics, athletes train to **compete**, not just recreate.
- Refer to oath: “Let Me Win, But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

1.2 Coaching Resources [5 minutes]

- Provide examples of coaching **books and videos**.
- Encourage coaches to join **U.S. Swimming, U.S. Diving, FINA**, or other applicable organizations.
- Provide information on other **National Governing Body coaching courses**.
- Stress the importance of **assistant coaches and Partners Clubs®** with high schools and colleges. (Many Special Olympics athletes need individualized attention in order to progress.)

1.3 Athlete Assessment [10 minutes]

- All athletes must be **medically certified** to participate in Special Olympics (review the **Special Olympics medical form**)
- All athletes with **Down syndrome** must have an **atlantoaxial X-ray**. Refer to the **Official Special Olympics Summer Sports Rules** for complete eligibility requirements.
- Coaches will encounter athletes of all levels of abilities. Try to **individualize** training and competition placement to benefit each athlete.



PART 1 (Continued)

1.4 Special Olympics Aquatics Events and Rules [10 minutes]

(Refer to the Official Special Olympics Aquatics Rule. If the course attendees are unfamiliar with the rules, spend more time on this section.)

- **There are Aquatics events appropriate for all ability levels.**
- Special Olympics Aquatics **rules** include some modifications to FINA rules and NGB rules.
- **Divisioning** allows athletes to compete against those of similar abilities, ages, and gender.
- It is vital that **accurate times and scores** from prior competitions are provided by coaches to ensure proper divisioning.

1.5 Preparing for Your Aquatics Program [10 minutes]

- List the minimum **equipment** needed for a training session.
- Emphasize the importance of **good equipment** and **quality swimwear** for athletes.
- Provide the names of **dealers** who will supply low-cost, quality equipment.

1.6 Training and Competition Plan [10 minutes]

- Athletes should **practice three days a week**.
- A **season training plan** helps coaches effectively allocate time to different events and strokes.
- Athletes need **regular competition**. Review the competition opportunities offered at the Chapter or Area level. Coaches may need to take the initiative organize their own meets.
- An athlete's progress through the season can be charted using the **Assessment Record** in the Coaching Guide.

1.7 Organizing a Training Session [10 minutes]

- Emphasize the importance of a **written training plan**.
- Outline a simple **training plan**:
 - Warm-up and Stretching
 - Review of Strokes (previously covered)
 - New Strokes
 - Conditioning and Competition Experience
 - Cool-Down and Discussion



PART 1 (Continued)

1.8 Safety and Prevention of Injuries [10 minutes]

- **Safety** is a coach's number one priority and should be a primary concern at all times.
- **There must be a certified lifeguard on duty** at all times during training sessions and competitions.
- **Check the pool area** for safety hazards before each practice.
- Establish **training rules** to minimize accidents.
- Have an **emergency action plan**, and practice it.
- Coaches should be **well-informed and trained in emergency procedures**, accident reports, and follow-up procedures to incidents.
- **Never leave athletes alone** in pool area.

1.9 Coaching Athletes with Intellectual Disabilities [10 minutes]

- Establish clear **rules** to help athletes understand exactly what is expected of them and to reduce behavior problems.
- **Break down skills** and concepts into simple parts.
- Use **one-part instructions** and "**Key Words**" to explain and reinforce technical stroke components.
- Instruct and demonstrate, but also coach through asking appropriate *questions*.
Challenge athletes to think for themselves.
- Be aware of **physical impairments** that affect the way players hear, see, move, and/or pay attention.
- Establish a consistent **pre-meet** and **post-meet routine** at competitions.
- Ask coaches to suggest any of their own **coaching tips**.





PART 2
Activity Session
(120 minutes)

The **goals** of this session are two fold. One is to help coaches understand the importance of a consistent warm-up and stretching routine and the technical components of all strokes. The other is to provide simple activities, drills, or progression to teach Special Olympics athletes these strokes. All the activities should be taken from the Coaching Guide.

Note: Try not to spend too much time on any one stroke. Give an overview of each of the four competitive strokes. Provide a progression to help effectively teach Special Olympics athletes each stroke.

Teaching Suggestions

- Involve as many participants as possible. Make this an **active** session with an emphasis on participation.
- Know exactly what you are going to do and stick to the schedule. Time goes by very quickly.

2.1 Warm-Up, Stretching, and Acceleration Runs [15 minutes]

Activities

• **Stretching exercises (on pool deck)**

Examples are trunk rotation, calf stretch, and groin stretch.

• **Strengthening exercises (one pool deck)**

Concentrate on developing overall body strength. Examples are sit-ups, push-ups, and controlled jumping jacks.

• **Water adjustment activities**

Some athletes may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the water. Coaches can encourage athletes to sit on the edge of the pool, kick the water with his/her feet, and slowly enter the water via the ladder.

Teaching Suggestions

- Instruct the proper stretching techniques, for example slow stretching, no bouncing.
- Show the effectiveness of having an athlete demonstrate a stretch while the coaches focus on assisting athletes with low ability.
- Use “**Key Words**” rather than technical explanations. Keep it simple!





PART 2 (Continued)

2.2 Getting in the Water [15 minutes]

Activities and Suggestions

- **Moving from the deck to the water** – for athletes already comfortable with the water
 - Demonstrate and discuss water-entry methods (shoulder method, hand-to-hand, twist, and ladder).
 - Demonstrate and discuss racing form and technique.
- **Water adjustment drills**
 - Walking Race (Athletes are lined up at the wall in the shallow end. On the “start” signal, they race walk to the other side.)
 - Obstacle Course (athletes must move through an obstacle course which utilizes various toys or pieces of equipment.)

2.3 Becoming Water Safe – Floating [30 minutes]

Activities and Suggestions

- **Water holding positions**
 - Discuss and demonstrate the Waist Hold, and other holding positions.
 - Practice putting the face in the water and blowing bubbles.
- **Floating positions**
 - Demonstrate the prone float.
 - Demonstrate the prone float recovery.
 - Demonstrate the prone glide.
- **Water exit**
 - Demonstrate the proper side-of-the-pool exit.
 - Demonstrate the proper ladder exit.





PART 3
Special Olympics Athletes Training Session
(90 minutes)

Guidelines

This part of the training school provides an opportunity for coaches to work directly with Special Olympics athletes and to observe expert instructors demonstrating some of the ideas introduced earlier.

Coaches will benefit from seeing how a complete training session is run. Therefore, we recommend that the instructors run a **model training session** rather than use only stroke work. Stroke work is only one component of a training session. Coaches should **observe** and assist the instructors as necessary.

A minimum of six Special Olympics Aquatics athletes are needed.

The instructors should lead this session and involve as many coaches as possible as active training partners. Take 5 minutes before the session to review the activities and rotation, identify responsibilities, and assign participants specific groups.

3.1 Warm-up and Entering the Water [10 minutes]

- Trunk rotation, calf stretching, groin stretching exercises
- Sit-ups, push-ups, and jumping jacks
- Water Adjustment drill, such as Walking Race or Obstacle Course

3.2 Stroke Work [40 minutes]

- Briefly demonstrate and practice all four competitive strokes.
- Allow 10 minutes per stroke.

3.3 Conditioning and Competition Training [15 minutes]

- 4x50 meter freestyle at medium effort (*provide a 45-second rest period between each*)
- 4x25 meter breaststroke at medium effort (*provide a 45-second rest period between each*)

3.4 Cool-Down and Stretching (all participants) [5 minutes]

- Swim 50 meters at low effort.
- Play a fun game or provide a free swim.





PART 4

Classroom Wrap-up Session

(30 minutes)

4.1 Review (Questions) [5 minutes]

4.2 Quick Quiz (see following page) [15 minutes]

- Ask coaches to complete the Quick Quiz.
- Provide the answers to each question.
- Coaches grade their own quiz.

4.3 Certification Process and Application [5 minutes]

- Ask coaches to fill out the first part of the certification form.
- In addition to taking this course on teaching and coaching a specific sport, a Special Olympics coach must do the following in order to achieve certification:
 - Attend a General Orientation as a basic introduction to Special Olympics
 - Complete a course on the basics of teaching and coaching Special Olympics athletes.
 - Complete 10 hours of working with Special Olympics athletes under an experienced coach
 - Complete the training programs for Protective Behaviors and Concussion Training and submit confirmation of completion to the Local Special Olympics Program (U.S. only).
 - Receive endorsement from his/her Program as having fulfilled the above criteria, as well as general screening approval as a suitable individual to work with Special Olympics athletes.

4.4 Training School Evaluation [5 minutes]

- Coaches complete the course evaluation and return it before leaving the training school. (See attached form.)





Quick Quiz

1. The 10% Performance Guideline is

2. The more supervision and coaching you can provide the better. For safety and effectiveness, there should be at least ___ coaches at every practice.
3. You should check _____ of your athletes prior to your first training session.
4. Coaches are helping Special Olympics athletes when they do not enforce the proper rules of the sport. True False
5. Name three national organizations that will help with resource materials for aquatics.

6. List eight ways to a better workout.

7. Before you begin practice, you should review the overall _____ at your facility.
8. In case of a swimmer hitting the bottom or side of the pool with possible serious injuries, err on the side of caution. Do not move any part of the swimmer’s body. Seek medical assistance by calling 911. Keep the swimmer _____ until help arrives.
9. There must be one lifeguard for every ___ swimmers at all Special Olympics practices and competitions.
10. Two medical concerns that coaches should address for competitive swimmers are _____ and _____.
11. When teaching side breathing in the freestyle, you should tell swimmers to leave their _____ in the water and to look _____.
12. The freestyle flutter kick should be done with _____ and _____.
13. When doing the backstroke, swimmers should keep their heads _____ and _____.
14. When doing the breaststroke arm pull, keep arms _____ to begin the pull.
15. Butterfly dolphin kick is done by moving the hips with a _____.
16. Breaststroke and butterfly turns are initiated by touching the wall with _____ simultaneously.



**Quick Quiz
Answers**

1. The 10% Performance Guideline is **the difference in performance scores between the best performing athlete and the worst shall not differ by more than 10%**.
2. The more supervision and coaching you can provide the better. For safety and effectiveness, there should be at least **two** coaches at every practice.
3. You should check **ability levels** of your athletes prior to your first training session.
4. Coaches are helping Special Olympics athletes when they do not enforce the proper rules of the sport. True False
5. Name three national organizations that will help with resource materials for aquatics.
The American Swimming Coaches Association, United States Swimming, and U.S. Diving.
6. List eight ways to a better workout.

Be organized.	Be safe.
Develop an “Agreement for Behavior at Practice.”	Make activities short and intense.
Be positive.	Be patient.
Be dynamic and have fun.	Be prepared.
7. Before you begin practice, you should review the overall **Emergency Action Plan** at your facility.
8. In case of a swimmer hitting the bottom or side of the pool with possible serious injuries, err on the side of caution. Do not move any part of the swimmer’s body. Seek medical assistance by calling 911. Keep the swimmer **stabilized in the water** until help arrives.
9. There must be one lifeguard for every **25** swimmers at all Special Olympics practices and competitions.
10. Two medical concerns that coaches should address for competitive swimmers are **atlantoaxial instability** and **seizure disorders**.
11. When teaching side breathing in the freestyle, you should tell swimmers to leave their **ear** in the water and to look **back**.
12. The freestyle flutter kick should be done with **legs straight** and **toes pointed**.
13. When doing the backstroke, swimmers should keep their heads **back** and **still**.
14. When doing the breaststroke arm pull, keep arms **straight** to begin the pull.
15. Butterfly dolphin kick is done by moving the hips with a **slight knee bend**.
16. Breaststroke and butterfly turns are initiated by touching the wall with **both hands** simultaneously.