



## 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 Training School offers a basic introduction to coaching Special Olympics athletics. The course should be relevant to coaches not yet ready to coach higher skilled Special Olympic athletes of low to average ability. Higher-level skills and strategies are introduced in the Advanced Coach Course and in NGB and other accreditation coaching programs.

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

- Official Special Olympics Athletics events and rules
- How to use the Special Olympics Athletics Coaching Guide
- How to organize a training session
- Techniques for warm-up and stretching
- Basic knowledge of the fundamentals and key technical skills of each event
- Ideas for appropriate drills and activities to teach events
- How to teach Special Olympics athletes the 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 Athletics 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 athletics and the other in Special Olympics.

Your ideas on the course are welcomed. Please send any ideas for future improvement to the SOI Athletics Director, Special Olympics International, 1133 19<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.





## **Athletics Volunteer Coach Training School Agenda**

### **PART 1 Classroom Session (90 minutes)**

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

### **PART 2 Activity Session (120 minutes)**

- 2.1 Warm-Up and Stretching
- 2.2 Basic Technical Skills
- 2.3 Conditioning Activities
- 2.4 Cool-Down

### **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 Athletics Coaching Guide
- Samples of recommended resource books/videos

### **Equipment**

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| • 1 measuring tape                       | • 4 batons                 |
| • 1 roll of athletic tape                | • 2 stopwatches            |
| • 12 traffic cones                       | • 4 clipboards and pencils |
| • 6 softballs                            | • 1 rake                   |
| • High jump standards, crossbar, and pit | • Water                    |
| • First-aid kit                          |                            |





**PART 1**  
**Classroom Session**  
(90 minutes)

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

- Introduce yourself and your coaching background.
- Ask participants to briefly introduce themselves.
- Review the training school agenda.
- Introduce and review the Athletics Coaching Guide; refer to it 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.  
Life-long fitness is crucial in the lives of Special Olympics athletes.”

**1.2 Coaching Resources [5 minutes]**

- Provide examples of coaching **books and videos**.
- Encourage coaches to affiliate with **IAFF** or NGB organization (**USA Track & Field**).
- 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.)
- Involve the **family members**.

**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. Those who are determined to have atlantoaxial instability cannot participate in the high jump or pentathlon. 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 Athletics Events and Rules [10 minutes]

- **There are athletics events appropriate for all ability levels.**
  - 17 events are provided for athletes with low ability, including events in sprinting, race walking, wheelchair racing, standing long jump, and throws.
  - 30 events are provided for athletes with higher ability, including events in sprinting, long-distance running, hurdles, race walking, jumps, throws, and wheelchair racing.
- Special Olympics Athletics **rules** include some modifications to IAAF 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 Athletics Program [10 minutes]

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

1.6 Training and Competition Plan [10 minutes]

- Athletes should **practice 3-5 days a week**, 2 of which may be individualized training **AT HOME** with parents, siblings, or caregivers.
- **A season training plan** helps coaches allocate time effectively to different events and technical themes.
- An Athlete's progress through the season can be charted using the **Assessment Record** in the Coaching Guide.
- 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.





PART 1 (Continued)

**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 Skills/Events (previously covered)
  - Stations (cover new skills and/or continue event progression)
  - Conditioning and Competition Experience
  - Cool-Down and Discussion

**1.8 Prevention of Injuries [10 minutes]**

- **Safety** is a coach's number one priority.
- **Check the track and field for areas** for safety hazards before each practice.
- Establish **training rules** to minimize accidents.
- Have an **emergency action plan**, and practice it.
- **Never leave athletes alone** while attending an injured athlete.

**1.9 Coaching Athletes with Intellectual Disabilities [10 minutes]**

- Establish clear **rules** to help athletes understand exactly what is expected of them.
- **Break down skills** and concepts into simple parts.
- Use **one-part instructions** and "**Key Words**" to explain and reinforce technical skill 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, 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 each introductory event. The other is to provide simple activities or drills to teach Special Olympics athletes these events. All the activities should be taken from the Coaching Guide.

**Note:** With the large number of events, there is not enough time to demonstrate the more advanced events. Set up activities for two of the introductory events (for instance, running events and softball throw). Point out that the high jump, shot put, and running long jump are covered in the Advanced Coaches Course.

#### *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

- **Jogging.** To circulate the blood and warm up muscles, jog slowly for 3-4 minutes.
- **Stretching exercises.** Examples are calf stretch, straddle stretch, abdominal stretch, knee lift, and toe touch.
- **Acceleration Runs.** Runs should be about 30m long, and should increase in speed so that by the final run athletes are performing at about 80% effort. These heighten physical fitness and should serve to improve running technique.

#### *Teaching Suggestions*

- Alternate running exercises with stretching. This helps warm up muscles, making stretching more effective, and also helps maintain interest.
- Instruct proper stretching technique, such as 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!
- To keep athletes involved, set up activities at two or more stations and have athletes rotate. For example, set up one station for running events, one for throwing and jumping events, and a third for the walking events.





## **PART 2 (Continued)**

### **2.2 Basic Technical Skills [80 minutes]**

In this short period of time, you are trying to help coaches understand the basic components of each skill and/or event. Then provide drills/progressions to teach athletes how to perform them.

Events 1 & 2: **RUNNING AND RELAY RACING, Including Form Drills** [20 minutes]

- **Sprinting**
  - Demonstrate and discuss starting techniques.
  - Demonstrate and discuss racing form and technique.
- **Distance and Middle Distance Running**
  - Demonstrate proper running mechanics.
- **Relay Racing**
  - Identify incoming and outgoing runner responsibilities.
  - Demonstrate receiving position.
  - Demonstrate and practice receiving the baton in a visual pass.

Event 3: **RACE WALKING** [20 minutes]

#### *Activities and Suggestions*

- Demonstrate and discuss proper form and technique.

Event 4: **STANDING LONG JUMP** [20 minutes]

#### *Activities and Suggestions*

- Demonstrate ready-to-jump position and take-off procedures.
- Demonstrate proper flight technique and landing procedures.

Event 5: **SOFTBALL THROW** [20 minutes]

#### *Activities and Suggestions*

- Demonstrate and practice proper softball grip.
- Demonstrate approach and throw techniques.
- Demonstrate throwing techniques for wheelchair athletes.



## **PART 2** (Continued)

### **2.3 Conditioning Activities** [15 minutes]

The conditioning segment of the activities session should focus on helping coaches understand the importance of improving the strength and endurance of their athletes.

#### Activities and Suggestions

- **Strengthening exercises**

- Concentrate on the developing overall body strength.
- Examples are sit-ups, push-ups, knee bends, back arches, and arm circles.

- **Endurance work**

- Jogging/running in place
- Wind sprints

### **2.4 Cool-Down** [10 minutes]

- Slow jog
- Light stretch





**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**.

**A minimum of nine Special Olympics athletics 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 stations.

**3.1 Warm-Ups, Stretching, and Acceleration Runs** (all participants) [20 minutes]

- Jog slowly.
- Perform toe touch, straddle, and side twist stretches.
- Jump and reach.
- Perform 30m acceleration runs.

**3.2 Specific Event Technique Drills** [40 minutes]

- Demonstrate two events while coaches observe.
- Provide 20 minutes per event.

**3.3 Conditioning Activities** (all participants) [15 minutes]

- Run 4x200 meters at 75% effort; rest 3 minutes between each.
- Jog/sprint in place.
- Perform sit-ups and push-ups.

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

- Jog slowly and perform light stretching.





**PART 4**  
**Classroom Wrap-up Session**  
(30 minutes)

**4.1 Review (Questions and Answers) [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. For both safety and effectiveness there should be at least \_\_\_\_ coaches at every practice.
2. The five main components of a well-organized training session are \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_.
3. The first two responsibilities for a coach at the start of a new season are  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Athletes who must be screened by their doctor for atlantoaxial instability are players with  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. The International Governing Body (IGB) for Athletes is  
\_\_\_\_\_.
6. When faced with a athletic injury, it is best to \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Some of the “Key Words” used to teach the softball throw are \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Some of the “Key Words” used to teach the standing long jump are  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
and \_\_\_\_\_.
9. When coaching at the competition the coach should be  
\_\_\_\_\_.
10. The 10% Performance Guideline is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.



## Quick Quiz Answers

1. For both safety and effectiveness there should be at least **two** coaches at every practice.
2. The five main components of a well-organized training session are **Warm-Up and Stretching, Technique Work, Competition Training, Conditioning, and Cool-Down.**
3. The first two responsibilities for a coach at the start of a new season are **obtain athletes' medicals** and **assess each athlete's skills.**
4. Athletes who must be screened by their doctor for atlantoaxial instability are players with **Down Syndrome.**
5. The International Governing Body (IGB) for Athletes is **Internationale Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF).**
6. When faced with a athletic injury, it is best to **treat it to the worst situation.**
7. Some of the "Key Words" used to teach the softball throw are **"Grip it", "Follow Through", and "Snap the Wrist".**
8. Some of the "Key Words" used to teach the standing long jump are **"Pop Up", "Reach Forward" and "Extend the Arms".**
9. When coaching at the competition the coach should be **relaxed, encouraging or positive, and prepared.**
10. The 10% Performance Guideline is **performance entry scores (athletes one to eight) within a division should not differ by more than 10% so that competition will be reasonably equal.**

