



Special Olympics

CYCLING COACHING GUIDE

Planning a Cycling Training & Competition Season



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Setting Goals

Realistic yet challenging goals for each athlete are important to the motivation of the athlete both at training and during competition. Goals establish and drive the action of both training and competition plans. Sport confidence in athletes helps to make participation fun and is critical to the athlete's motivation. Please see Principles of Coaching Section for additional information and exercises on goal setting.

Goal Setting

Setting goals is a joint effort with the athlete and coach. The main features of goal setting include the following:

Structured into short-term, intermediate and long-term

- ♦ Stepping stones to success
- ♦ Must be accepted by the athlete
- ♦ Vary in difficulty – easy attainable to challenging
- ♦ Must be measurable

Long Term Goal

The athlete will acquire basic cycling skills, appropriate social behavior and functional knowledge of the rules necessary to participate successfully in cycling competitions.

Short Term Objectives

- ♦ Given demonstration and practice, the athlete will warm up properly before cycling.
- ♦ Given demonstration and practice, the athlete will successfully perform Level I (Basic) cycling skills.
- ♦ Given demonstration and practice, the athlete will successfully perform Level II (Intermediate) cycling skills.
- ♦ Given demonstration and practice, the athlete will successfully perform Level III (Advanced) cycling skills.
- ♦ Given standard or modified rules for competitive cycling, the athlete will adhere to those rules while participating in cycling competition.
- ♦ Given written and verbal safety instruction, the athlete will cycle safely at all times.
- ♦ Given a cycling activity, the athlete will exhibit sportsmanship at all times.

Benefits

- ♦ Increases athlete's level of physical fitness, coordination and agility.
- ♦ Teaches self discipline.
- ♦ Teaches the athlete sports skills that are essential to a variety of other activities.
- ♦ Provides the athlete an alternative means of transportation.
- ♦ Provides the athlete with a means for self-expression and social interaction.



Assessing Goals Checklist

1. Write a goal statement.
2. Does the goal sufficiently meet the athlete's needs?
3. Is the goal positively stated? If not, rewrite it.
4. Is the goal under the athlete's control, and does it focus on that person's goal and no one else's?
5. Is the goal actually a goal, and not a result?
6. Is the goal sufficiently important to the athlete that he/she will want to work toward achieving it? Does he/she have the time and energy to do it?
7. How will this goal make the athlete's life different?
8. What barriers might the athlete encounter in working toward this goal?
9. What more does the athlete know?
10. What does the athlete need to learn how to do?
11. What challenges does the athlete need to overcome?



Planning a Cycling Training & Competition Season

Preseason Planning and Preparation

The cycling coach needs to prepare him/herself for the upcoming season. The list below offers some suggestions on getting started.

1. Improve his/her knowledge of cycling and coaching skills by attending training sessions and clinics.
2. Locate a venue (park, lightly traveled roadway, car park, etc.) with safe environment for a practice session.
3. Recruit volunteer assistants from local cycling programs. Train these assistants in handling techniques to ensure athletes' safety during training sessions.
4. Recruit volunteers to transport the athletes to and from practice and competition.
5. Check with your local program regarding procedures for volunteer recruitment.
6. Ensure that all prospective cycling athletes have a thorough physical examination before the first practice. Also, be sure to obtain parental/ guardian and medical releases.
7. Establish goals and draw up an eight-to-twelve-week training plan such as the one provided later in this guide.
8. Try to schedule a minimum of two training sessions per week.
9. Plan a mini-competition for your athletes during the halfway point in the training season.



Confirmation of Practice Schedule

Once your venue has been determined and assessed, you are ready to confirm your training and competition schedules. It is important to publish training and competition schedules to submit to the interested groups below. This can help generate community awareness for your Special Olympics cycling program.

- Local Special Olympics program
- Local authorities regarding venue use
- Volunteer coaches
- Athletes
- Families
- Media
- Management team members
- Officials
- Medical personnel

The training and competition schedule is not exclusive to the areas listed below:

- Dates
- Start and end times
- Registration and/or meeting areas
- Coaches' phone numbers



Essential Components of Planning a Cycling Training Session

Each training session needs to contain the same essential elements. The amount of time spent on each element will depend on the goal of the training session, the time of season the session is in and the amount of time available for a particular session. The following elements need to be included in an athlete's daily training program. Please refer to the noted sections in each area for more in-depth information and guidance on these topics.

- Warm-up
- Previously taught skills
- New skills
- Competition experience/
Specific event workout
- Cool-down
- Feedback on performance

The final step in planning a training session is designing what the athlete is actually going to do. Remember – when creating a training session using the main components, the progression through the session allows for a gradual buildup of physical activity.

1. Easy to difficult
2. Slow to fast
3. Known to unknown
4. General to specific
5. Start to finish

In organizing the athletes for effective teaching and learning experiences, the coach should always arrange the session so that:

- The safety of the athlete is ensured.
- Everyone can hear the instructions.
- Everyone can see the demonstration.
- Everyone will have the opportunity for maximum practice.
- Everyone will have an opportunity to be checked regularly for skill improvement.

The procedures for learning and practicing skills on the road are determined by the skill to be learned, the skill level of the cyclists, the size of the training area, the extent of varying terrain and accessible roads, and the number, sizes and ages of the athletes.

Following are recommendations to ensure successful learning, regardless of the type of teaching approach used.

1. Athletes, if at all possible, need to face away from the sun and from distracting influences during demonstrations.
2. Athletes must be able to see and hear the instructions during demonstrations and practice sessions.
3. Athletes must have the opportunity to make the physical and mental adjustment to the bike and road in relation to the skill to be learned.
4. Coaches must schedule maximum time during practice for skill work. This practice must include analysis of each athlete's movements and appropriate and timely suggestions by the coach for the improvement of the athlete.
5. Cyclists must have ample space to practice without interference by other athletes.



Tips for Organizing a Good Training Session

- ♦ Check the weather and alter the plan according to the weather.
- ♦ For skills training, secure a paved location with minimal car and pedestrian traffic access, minimal obstacles to riding (e.g., speed bumps, curbs and light poles) and a smooth surface. A large parking lot may be ideal. A grassy playing field may be appropriate for some skill work.
- ♦ For endurance training, select a route with minimal traffic and smooth pavement. Routes should be pre-measured for mileage.
- ♦ Assign assistant coaches their roles and responsibilities in accordance with your training plan.
- ♦ Include appropriate time for equipment inspection and safety check.
- ♦ Organize skill stations by ability and have all equipment and stations prepared before the athletes arrive. No one should be standing around while you arrange things.
- ♦ Introduce and acknowledge coaches and athletes.
- ♦ Review intended training session with everyone. Keep athletes informed of changes in schedule or activities.
- ♦ Group the athletes by ability.
- ♦ Demonstrate the sports skill as frequently as possible.
- ♦ Devote a part of each training session to group activity.
- ♦ If an activity is going well, it is often useful to stop the activity while interest is high.
- ♦ Devote the end of practice to a group activity that can incorporate challenge and fun, always giving the athletes something to look forward to at the end of practice.
- ♦ If a cyclist joins the team after training has begun, skill assessment should be done.
- ♦ Summarize the session and announce arrangements for next session.



Principles of Effective Training Sessions

Keep all athletes active	Athlete needs to be an active listener
Create clear, concise goals	Learning improves when athletes know what is expected of them
Give clear, concise instructions	Demonstrate – increase accuracy of instruction
Record progress	You and your athletes chart progress together
Give positive feedback	Emphasize and reward things the athlete is doing well
Provide variety	Vary exercises – prevent boredom
Encourage enjoyment	Training and competition is fun – help keep it this way for you and your athletes
Create progressions	Learning is increased when information progresses from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Known to unknown• Simple to complex – seeing that “I” can do it• General to specific
Plan maximum use of resources	Use what you have and improvise for equipment that you do not have – think creatively
Allow for individual differences	Different athletes, different learning rates, different capabilities



Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

The most important factor in planning a training session is to provide for the safety and well-being of the athlete. Every effort must be made to prevent accidents by taking appropriate safety precautions, including providing safe conditions. Though the risks can be few, coaches have the responsibility to ensure that athletes/ parents/ guardians know and understand the inherent risks of cycling.

- Establish clear rules for behavior at the first practice, and enforce them:
 - Keep your hands to yourself.
 - Listen to the coach.
 - When you hear the whistle or command to stop – first be sure it is safe to stop and that the riders near you are aware that YOU are stopping – NEVER STOP SUDDENLY WITH RIDERS BEHIND YOU.
 - Stop, Look, and Listen.
 - Ask the coach before you leave the training area.
- When the weather is poor, have a plan to immediately remove athletes from inclement weather.
- Make sure athletes bring water to every practice.
- Check your first aid kit; restock supplies as necessary.
- Make sure coaches have medical forms and emergency contact information for each athlete.
- Train all coaches on emergency procedures, and provide athletes information on emergency procedures.
- Choose a safe training area. Do not practice in areas with loose gravel, speed bumps or holes in pavement that could cause injury.
- Walk the training area and note curbs or obstacles, and mark them with safety cones. Sweep up gravel.
- If training on open roadways, pre-ride the course to ensure safe conditions.
- Review your first aid and emergency procedures. Have someone who is trained in first aid and CPR on or very near to the field during practice and games.
- Establish clear rules for behavior at your first practice.
- Warm up and stretch properly at the beginning of each practice to prevent muscle injuries.
- Train to improve the general fitness level of your cyclists. Physically fit cyclists are less likely to get injured. Make your practices *active*.
- Athletes must be proficient with the skills outlined in the Basic Skills section before progressing to open road riding.
- A ratio of one coach per five athletes is recommended. A ratio of 1:1 is recommended for road riding. Coaches should ride with the athletes and be available to point out all potential hazards and traffic regulations.
- Rules, such as adherence to all traffic regulations at all times, must be explained and reinforced:
 - Ride on the right side of the road at all times.
 - Adhere to all traffic signs.
 - Yield to cross traffic.
 - Use correct hand traffic signals – be sure your athletes know how to use hand signals.
- All athletes must be accounted for at the start of the period, at regular intervals during the period and at the close of training.



- All cyclists and coaches must wear helmets whenever they are on the bike and keep both hands on the handlebars.
- Coaches should conduct an equipment check prior to every practice:
 - Helmets should be fitted properly and checked for cracks and working straps.
 - Clothing will not interfere with riding.
 - Hair and/or glasses should not interfere with the athlete's line of sight.
 - Bicycle frame and fork are in good condition.
 - Bicycle seat (saddle), handlebars and stem are tight.
 - Accessories (such as water bottle cage, pump, saddlebag or computer) are fastened correctly.
 - Brakes work properly (brake pads grip the rim securely).
 - Tires are properly inflated and wheels are centered properly.
 - Quick-release or wheel nuts are secure.
 - Chain has adequate lubrication and gears are functioning correctly.



Selecting a Safe and Rider-friendly Practice Venue

Finding the ideal place to learn and practice cycling is not always easy. A flat, clean, smooth road with good visibility, which is closed to motor vehicles, is the ultimate venue. A bike path might make a good riding area if used at times of low cycling and pedestrian traffic. Some skills are better learned on grass; these include any drills where crashing is a possible outcome, such as wheel touching or drafting. The grass will not only soften the fall somewhat but also keep the speed down. Of course, other, more advanced skills must be learned on the open roads. To cycle safely and efficiently in traffic, one will have to experience sharing the roads. It is most important that a rider first knows the rules of the road and has good operating skills before mixing with traffic. Athletes should be taught the hazards of storm grates (wheels can get caught) and the proper way to cross railroad tracks if need be.

Bicycle Racing Opportunities

Competition motivates athletes, coaches and the entire sport management team. Expand or add to your schedule as many competition opportunities as possible. A few suggestions have been provided below.

1. Host an area or regional cycling competition.
2. Ask area cycling clubs if your athletes can compete with them.
3. Join the local cycling club or the UCI Cycling.
4. Contact your national governing body or go to www.uci.ch for contacts within each country.
5. Create a cycling club in your community.



Sample Training Session

The following training program provides an example plan for Special Olympics cycling athletes. The program provides coaches with a basic concept of progression of cycling skills. Each coach needs to conduct his/her training program according to his/her athletes' specific skills and ability levels. Coaches may need to modify training sessions according to available training venues and time constraints.

The program takes cyclists from an introduction to cycling through competitions. In many cases, it will take 8-12 weeks to achieve the aerobic conditioning and skill development to compete. The following conditions are assumed prior to starting this training program:

1. The plan is based on a minimum of 60-minute training sessions.
2. The plan is based on the venue being available one or more times per week.
3. The plan assumes the athlete can ride a bicycle without assistance.



12-Week Beginners Program – Sample

Cyclists will begin the 12-week training program with different skill levels. Some athletes will need more time to learn the skills, while other athletes may have good skills and be able to go directly into the conditioning phase of the program. Each athlete must be treated individually. By the 12th week, your athletes should be proficient with the skills, achieve sufficient aerobic conditioning and have had the opportunity to compete.

Week #1	Get to know practice area, volunteer coaches, athletes, family and caregivers Venue familiarization, rules, bike & equipment check, safety procedures Warm-up, skills assessments, group activity, cool-down
Week #2	Reinforce Week 1 Bike check & safety inspection, warm-up, continuing skills assessments, group activity, cool-down
Week #3	Warm-up Finalize skills assessments Goal setting for each individual for the season Identify and develop individual programs Aerobic conditioning Cool-down
Week #4	Warm-up Skill development work based on individual programs Increase aerobic conditioning (35-40 minutes) Cool-down
Week #5	Warm-up Review previous session Continue Skill Development Work Aerobic conditioning (30 minutes; up to 55 minutes for conditioned athletes who can train on the road) Cool-down
Week #6	Warm-up Skill development – work on weak spots Aerobic conditioning (30-55 minutes) Review individual goals – adjust as required Cool-down



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Week #7	Warm-up Conduct skills assessment Work on skills identified Aerobic conditioning (30-40 minutes) Cool-down
Week #8	Warm-up Aerobic conditioning (30-55 minutes) Introduce racing skills (starts, drafting) Cool-down
Week #9	Warm-up Introduce competition events as identified for each group Practice in a noncompetitive environment Cool-down
Week #10	Warm-up Introduce race aspects of events Practice good sportsmanship, cheer on teammates Cool-down
Week #11	Warm-up Conduct final skills assessment for season Practice skills progression – e - end with fun events Cool-down
Week #12	Fun competition event with awards, Certificates of Achievement for the season

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