



Special Olympics

FLOOR HOCKEY COACHING GUIDE

Planning a Floor Hockey Training & Competition Season



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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 the Principles of Coaching section for additional information and exercises on goal setting.

Benefits of Goal Setting

- Increases athlete's level of physical fitness
- Teaches self-discipline
- Teaches the athlete sports skills that are essential to a variety of other activities
- Provides the athlete with a means for self-expression and social interaction

Goal Setting and Motivation

Developing Self-Confidence through Goal Setting

Accomplishing goals at practice through repetition in settings similar to the competition environment will instill confidence. Setting goals is a joint effort between athletes and coaches. The main features of goal setting include:

1. Goals must be structured as short-term, intermediate and long-term.
2. Goals should be viewed as stepping stones to success.
3. Goals must be accepted by the athlete.
4. Goals should vary in difficulty — from easily attainable to challenging.
5. Goals must be measurable.
6. Goals should be used to establish the athlete's training and competition plan.

Athletes with or without an intellectual disability may be more motivated by accomplishing short-term goals than long-term goals; however, do not be afraid to challenge athletes. Include athletes in setting their personal goals. For example, ask the athlete, "How many goals do you want to score today? Let's see how many goals you scored at the last practice. What is your personal best? What do you think you can do?" Awareness of why the athlete is participating is also important when setting goals. There are participation factors which may influence motivation and goal setting:

- Age appropriateness
- Ability level
- Readiness level
- Athlete performance
- Family influence
- Peer influence
- Athlete preference

Performance Goals versus Outcome Goals

Effective goals focus on performance, not outcome. Performance is what the athlete controls. Outcomes are frequently controlled by others. An athlete may have an outstanding performance and not win a contest because other athletes have performed even better. Conversely, an athlete may perform poorly and still win if all other athletes perform at a lower level. If an athlete's goal is to score 2 goals in a competition, the athlete has greater control in achieving this goal than winning. This performance goal ultimately gives the athlete more control over his/her performance.



Motivation through Goal Setting

Goal setting has proved to be one of the most simple and effective motivational devices developed for sport within the past three decades. While the concept is not new, today the techniques for effective goal setting have been refined and clarified. Motivation is all about having needs and striving to have those needs met. How can you enhance an athlete's motivation?

1. Provide more time and attention to an athlete when he/she is having difficulty learning a skill
2. Reward small gains of achievement in skill level
3. Develop other measures of achievement outside of winning
4. Show your athletes that they are important to you
5. Show your athletes that you are proud of them and excited about what they are doing
6. Fill your athletes with self-worth

Goals give direction. They tell us what needs to be accomplished. They increase effort, persistence and the quality of performance. Establishing goals also requires that the athlete and coach determine techniques for how to achieve those goals.

Measurable and Specific

Effective goals are very specific and measurable. Goals stated in the form of "I want to be the best that I can be!" or "I want to improve my performance!" are vague and difficult to measure. It is positive sounding but difficult, if not impossible, to assess whether they have been reached. Measurable goals must establish a baseline of performance recorded during the past one or two weeks for them to be realistic.

Difficult, but Realistic

Effective goals are perceived as challenging, not threatening. A challenging goal is one perceived as difficult but attainable within a reasonable amount of time and with a reasonable amount of effort or ability. A threatening goal is one perceived as being beyond one's current capacity. Realistic implies that judgment is involved. Goals based upon a baseline of performance recorded during the past one or two weeks are likely to be realistic.

Long- versus Short-Term Goals

Both long- and short-term goals provide direction, but short-term goals appear to have the greatest motivational effects. Short-term goals are more readily attainable and are stepping stones to more distant long-term goals. Unrealistic short-term goals are easier to recognize than unrealistic long-term goals. Once they are identified, unrealistic goals can then be modified before valuable practice time has been lost.

Positive versus Negative Goal Setting

Positive goals direct what to do rather than what not to do, whereas negative goals direct our attention too heavily to the errors we wish to avoid or eliminate. Positive goals also require coaches and athletes to decide how they will reach those specific goals. Once the goal is decided upon, the athlete and coach must determine specific strategies and techniques which allow that goal to be successfully attained.

Set Priorities

Effective goals are limited in number and meaningful to the athlete. Setting a limited number of goals requires that athletes and coaches decide what is important and fundamental for continued development. Establishing a few carefully selected goals also allows athletes and coaches to keep accurate records without becoming overwhelmed with record keeping.

Mutual Goal Setting

Goal setting becomes an effective motivational device when athletes are committed to achieving those goals. When goals are imposed or established without significant input from the athletes, motivation is unlikely to be enhanced.



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Set Specific Time Lines

Target dates provide urgency to an athlete's efforts. Specific target dates tend to eliminate wishful thinking and clarify which goals are realistic and which are not. Time lines are especially valuable in high-risk sports where fear often promotes procrastination in learning new skills.

Formal versus Informal Goal Setting

Some coaches and athletes think that goals must be set in formal meetings outside of practice and require long periods of thoughtful evaluation before they are decided upon. Goals are literally progressions that coaches have been using for years but are now expressed in measurable performance terms rather than as vague, generalized outcomes.

Team versus Individual Goals

While team goals appear to have great importance for team sports, the reality is that most team goals can be broken down into individual roles or responsibilities. Each player must achieve these individual roles or responsibilities for the team to function effectively.

Goal Setting Domains

When asked to set goals, athletes typically focus on the learning of new skills or performances in competitions. A major role of the coach is to broaden the athlete's perception of those areas, and goal setting can be an effective tool. Goals can be set to enhance fitness, improve attendance, increase intensity, promote sportsmanship, develop team spirit, find more free time or establish consistency.

Goal Setting Summary

Setting goals is a joint effort between the athlete and coach. Following are the main features of goal setting:

Structured into short-term and long-term

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

Short-Term Objective

- ♦ Learning floor hockey in a fun environment

Long-Term Goal

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



Assessing Goals Checklist

1. Write a goal statement.
2. Does the goal sufficiently meet the athlete's needs?
3. Is the goal positively stated?
4. Is the goal under the athlete's control?
5. Is the goal a goal and not a result?
6. Is the goal important enough to the athlete that he/she will want to work toward achieving it?
7. What barriers might the athlete encounter in working toward this goal?
8. What does the athlete need to learn?
9. What risks does the athlete need to take?



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Planning a Floor Hockey Season

There will be many different skills to teach players during the course of a season. A season-long training plan will help coaches present skills in a systematic and effective way. The sessions in the plan below are organized in a twice-a-week format. Make time at each practice to work individually with your goalkeepers for 10-15 minutes. If you do not have an assistant coach, you may have to do this before or after the practice session.

Basic Practice	
Athletes put equipment on Warm-ups Drill 1 Water break Drill 2/scrimmage Cool-downs Athletes put equipment away	
Preseason	
Week #1	Athlete/parent meeting Drill 1: Use the Individual Skills contest to assess your athletes Drill 2/scrimmage: Finish Individual Skills contest assessment
Week #2	Drill 1: Passing and Receiving Drill 2/scrimmage: Dodge Puck
Competition Season	
Week #3	Drill 1: Stick Checking and Face-offs Drill 2/scrimmage: Two on Two Drill
Week #4	Drill 1: Red Light, Green Light & Steal the Bacon Drill 2/scrimmage: Shoot Around the Goal
Week #5	Drill 1: Assess athletes: play a mini game, playing all athletes Drill 2/scrimmage: Using assessment, repeat a previous practice drill to reinforce a skill team needs to work on
Week #6	Drill 1: Screening Drill Drill 2/scrimmage: Give and Go Drill
Week #7	Drill 1: Triangle Drill Drill 2/scrimmage: Play a full game
Week #8	Drill 1: Four Corner Drill Drill 2/scrimmage: Play a full game



Confirmation of a Floor Hockey Season Schedule

Once your venue has been determined and assessed, you are now 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 Floor Hockey Program.

- Facility Representatives
- Local Special Olympics Program
- Volunteer Coaches
- Athletes
- Families

The training and competition schedule should contain the following information:

- Training dates
- Training start and end times
- Training location
- Competition dates
- Competition start and end times
- Competition location
- Contact name and phone numbers



Essential Components of a Floor Hockey Training Session

Special Olympics athletes respond well to a simple, well-structured training routine with which they can become familiar. An organized plan, prepared before you get to the facility, will help establish such a routine and help make the best use of your limited time. A basic training plan is outlined below.

Warming Up

- Every athlete warms up.
- Stretch each muscle group.
- Have athletes lead the stretching while coaches assist individual athletes when necessary.

Skills Instruction

- Quickly review previously taught skills.
- Introduce the theme of the skills activity.
- Demonstrate skills simply and with enthusiasm.
- Divide into smaller groups, if possible.
- Physically assist and prompt lower ability athletes when necessary.
- Introduce and practice new skills early in the training session.

Competition Experience

- Athletes learn a lot by simply playing the game.
- Use drills (i.e. One on One / Three on Two) to teach basic skills.
- Use scrimmages to teach game mechanics and teamwork.
- Try to end the training with a fun competitive activity.

Cooling Down

- Slow run/walk/stretch.
- As the athletes cool down, comment on the session and the next training session and/or competition.
- Finish with a team cheer.



Considerations for Training

- When designing trainings, exercises and drills, consider the strengths and weaknesses of each athlete and your team as a whole. Choose activities that allow your athletes to improve.
- Make trainings fun. Design trainings that hold the athletes' attention. Use exercises and drills that your athletes enjoy. Use these exercises to lighten the load of hard work and to establish positive team attitude. When practicing drills, do enough to improve technique, yet not so much as to bore your athletes.
- Keep your talking to a minimum. Short, concise instructions are better than long explanations.
- Be willing to create or adapt drills to meet unique needs of your team. Skilled athletes master drills fairly quickly, so add some new twists to challenge these athletes.
- As you introduce new skills and techniques, you also need to review fundamental ones. Drills are a good way to improve your athletes' skills.
- Introduce new skills early in the training session, when athletes are fresh and attentive. Practice new skills for several sessions before incorporating them into more complex drills and game scenarios.
- Use drills and scrimmages that encourage communication and teamwork among athletes.
- Above all, be organized.



Preparing for a Training Session

Your Training Plan

Training is where you teach, make mistakes, gain fitness, practice game strategy and tactics and prepare for the next competition. A successful training plan creates an environment that helps you accomplish your goals. With your goals in mind, design your trainings specifically to fulfill those goals. Be sure to determine the time needed for each phase of training. However, be willing to make time adjustments, depending on specific circumstances.

Equipment Setup

Before each training session begins, determine the sequence of drills and where you will set up equipment. When possible, set up your facility and equipment before the start of training. You can also designate exercise captains to help organize players for drills, creating leaders within the team.



Sample Training Plan Form

Date:		Location:		Time:	
Goals:					

Warm-Up - Make the body ready for training.

Leader	Activity	Equipment

Team Talk - Let the athletes know your expectations for training.

Goals for Today	
Previous Skill Lesson	
New Skill Lesson	

Skill Development - Games and exercises to reinforce learning. Make it fun.

Leader	Activity	Equipment

Break - Supply water and take the skill into the scrimmage.

Reinforce Skill from Today	
-----------------------------------	--

Scrimmage - Emphasize last week's skill and new skill.

Previous Skill	
New Skill	

Team Talk - Emphasize new skill and techniques from scrimmage.

Scrimmage Lesson 1	
Scrimmage Lesson 2	
Review Last Week's Skill	

Cool-Down - Cool the body down after training.

Leader	Activity	Equipment



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Tips for Conducting Successful Training Sessions

- Assign assistant coaches their roles and responsibilities in accordance with your training plan.
- When possible, have all equipment and stations prepared before the athletes arrive.
- Introduce and acknowledge coaches and athletes.
- Review intended program with everyone. Keep athletes informed of changes in schedule or activities.
- Alter the plan according to weather or changes in the facility, and to accommodate the needs of the athletes.
- Change activities before the athletes become bored and lose interest.
- Keep drills and activities brief to hold athletes' attention.
- Devote the end of the training to a group activity that can incorporate challenge and fun, always giving the athletes something to look forward to at the end of training.
- If an activity is going well, it is often useful to stop the activity while interest is high.
- Summarize the session and announce arrangements for next session.
- Keep the **fun** in fundamentals.



Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

Though the risks can be few, coaches have a responsibility to ensure that athletes know, understand and appreciate the risks of floor hockey. The safety and well-being of athletes are the coaches' primary concerns. Floor hockey is typically not a dangerous sport, but injuries do occur. It is the head coach's responsibility to minimize the occurrence of injuries by providing safe conditions.

1. Establish clear rules for behavior at your first training and enforce them.
 - Keep your hands and sticks to yourself.
 - Listen to the coach.
 - When you hear the whistle, "Stop, look, and listen."
 - Ask the coach before you leave the court/facility.
2. When the weather is poor, have a plan to immediately remove athletes from a training facility in inclement weather.
3. Encourage the athletes to bring water to each training session.
4. Keep a fully stocked first-aid kit with equipment; restock supplies as necessary.
5. Train all athletes and coaches on emergency procedures.
6. Review your first aid and emergency procedures. It is recommended to have someone who is trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on or very near to the facility during trainings and games.
7. Check the facility and remove unsafe objects. Be particularly vigilant when you are playing in cluttered indoor gyms. Remove anything that an athlete might run into.
8. Warm up and stretch properly at the beginning of each training to prevent muscle injuries. Cool down at the end of each training session.
9. Train to improve the general fitness level of your athletes. Physically fit athletes are less likely to get injured. Make your trainings active.
10. Make sure that athletes are of equal ability in games where they play against each other head-to-head (e.g., one-on-one drills).
11. Require all your athletes to wear mandatory equipment. The use of athletic supporters and fitted mouth guards is recommended.



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Selecting Team Members

The key to the successful development of a traditional Special Olympics or Special Olympics Unified Sports® team is the proper selection of team members. We have provided some primary considerations below.

Ability Grouping

Traditional or Unified Sports Floor Hockey teams work best when all team members have similar sports skills. Floor hockey teams should be composed of athletes with similar skills and abilities. Athletes or Unified Sports partners with abilities that are far superior to other teammates will control competition. In both situations, the goals of interaction and teamwork are diminished and a true competitive experience is not achieved.

Age Grouping

All team members should be closely matched in age when possible.

- Within 3-5 years of age for athletes 21 years of age and under.
- Within 10-15 years for athletes 22 years of age and over.

Creating Meaningful Involvement in Unified Sports

Unified Sports embraces the philosophy and principles of Special Olympics. Unified Sports teams are organized to provide meaningful involvement for both athletes and partners. Every teammate should play a role and have the opportunity to contribute to the team. Meaningful involvement also refers to the quality of interaction and competition within a Unified Sports team. Achieving meaningful involvement by all teammates on the team ensures a positive and rewarding experience for everyone.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

- Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
- Teammates compete according to the rules of competition.
- Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team.
- Teammates understand how to blend their skills with those of other athletes, resulting in improved performance by athletes with lesser ability.

Meaningful Involvement Is Not Achieved When Team Members

- Have superior sports skills in comparison to their fellow team members.
- Act as on-field coaches rather than teammates.
- Control most aspects of the competition during critical periods of the game.
- Do not train regularly and only show up on the day of competition.
- Lower their level of ability dramatically, so that they do not hurt others or control the entire game.

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