



***Special Olympics***

**Motor Activities Training Program**

**Coaches Guide**

Section IV: Training



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**Special Olympics Motor Activities Training Program: Training**

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### **Motor Activity Training Program Training Goals: Consistency and Adaptation**

The Motor Activity Training Program encourages a high level of consistency for the athlete and a high level of flexibility for the coach to modify activities to meet the athlete's abilities and interests. Consistency involves establishing a routine within the athlete's training program. This allows the athlete to know what is expected, which in turn enables him or her to relax and enjoy the familiarity of the training routine. Consistency is especially important when an athlete participates in Motor Activity Training Program Days at locations other than his or her training facility. Consistency of the routine helps the athlete to be familiar with the activity regardless of the facility in which the sport activity is conducted.

Flexibility refers to the way that a training program is prepared and developed. When an athlete has difficulties with a particular sport activity, coaches should use different training methods and modify the activities so that the athlete can enjoy participating in the activity. Coaches must be creative and remember that there are a variety of ways to train an athlete to learn a sport skill.

Training programs should include only a few skills, recognizing that several activities may be utilized to teach each sport skill. It is better for an athlete to make a lot of progress in one or two sport skills rather than make only a small amount of progress in five or six sport skills. After establishing the goals and objectives for the training program, coaches should decide on the number of sport skills to work on at any one time. Start the program utilizing only one or two activities to teach each skill. Add other activities as the athlete gains competence in that skill. If an athlete trains in more than one Motor Activity Training Program skill, set up the equipment for those skills close to each other. This decreases the amount of "down time" he/she will have during the process of moving to the second skill. When possible, athletes who plan to participate in a Challenge Day, should focus their training program on the official Motor Activity Training Program Skills described in this guide. This begins the progression to participation in Special Olympics Events for Athletes with Lower Ability and beyond. Adaptations of the skills should be clearly documented. This will enable future coaches to continue the training consistency and set-up activities at organized Challenge Days to match the adaptations the athlete has been practicing.



### **Goals and Objectives of Training Programs**

Training programs for Motor Activity Training Program athletes should include one or more of the motor/sport skills described in this guide. After evaluating the athlete and selecting one or two motor skills and training activities, coaches are encouraged to set long-term goals for each motor skill and short-term objectives for each selected training activity. Goals focus on the specific motor skill achievement the athlete will accomplish by the end of the training program. Short-term objectives are small, progressive steps that the athlete can achieve within two to three weeks. It should be noted that it might take longer than a few weeks for some athletes to achieve even small short-term objectives. In order to set goals, short-term objectives, and select appropriate training activities coaches should:

1. Determine the athlete's present ability level on each of the seven motor skills by using the Motor Skills Assessment found in the previous section.
2. Identify motor skills on which the athlete will train and develop goals and short-term objectives for the training.
3. Design activities that compliment existing skill levels and targeted short term objectives.
4. Determine any specialized instructional strategies, specialized equipment, or activity modifications necessary to help the athlete reach his/her objectives.



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**Principles to keep in mind:**

**A. Motor Skills and their corresponding Special Olympics Sports**

Mobility..... leads to gymnastics

Dexterity..... leads to athletics/softball

Striking..... leads to softball/bowling/volleyball/tennis/badminton

Kicking..... leads to football/soccer

Manual wheelchair.....leads to athletics

Electric wheelchair.....leads to athletics

Swimming..... leads to aquatics

- ◆ Each motor activity is written in behavioral terms so that they can be used as Individual Education Plan/Individual Home Plan objectives. Also, each motor skill has been task analyzed into smaller, teachable components.
  
- ◆ The seven motor skills should always be taught in the context of a particular sport; NEVER in isolation. For example, never just teach a participant to grasp and release. Such a skill should be taught in the context of a sport such as softball or basketball, and how the student performs the skill (with a head stick, pushing the ball, using a beanbag instead of a ball) will be how the student plays the sport.



**B. Motor Activity Training Programs are Non-competitive**

1. Motor Activity Training Programs are non-competitive programs. There are no rules that govern competitions, and there is no award system for first, second, etc.
2. The purpose of this program is to provide all participants the opportunity to participate in sport-related activities.
3. To enable safe and successful participation, you may use adapted equipment, and/or physical assistance.
4. You may organize fun competitions such as modified relay races, bowling tournaments, or team sports, but the emphasis should be on fun and accomplishment rather than winning and losing.



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**C. Age-Appropriateness**

1. Teach skills that are geared to participant's chronological age, not mental age or functional abilities.
  - Activities selected should be based on chronological age (e.g. choosing lifetime leisure sports such as bowling and/or golf for older children and adults rather than games and/or activities that are more appropriate for elementary-aged children).
  - How these activities are presented should be based on participant's abilities.
  - Whenever possible, equipment should also be geared to participant's chronological age (do not give stuffed animals or baby toys to adults).
  - Interact with participant based on chronological age, not assumed mental abilities (e.g. talking to and treating older students and adults with severe disabilities like you would interact with older students and adults without disabilities. For example, not using baby talk or stroking the hair or back of a high school aged student with a severe disability).
2. Focusing on chronologically age appropriate skills provides participants with dignity and helps them learn skills that will help them be more accepted by their peer group and their community.

**D. Activities that stress or focus on functional abilities are those that are useful in a variety of environments.**

1. Teach skills that will be used most often by participants now and into adulthood.
2. Functional skills are useful in a variety of environments.
  - Teaching a 16 year-old participant to toss a beanbag is not functional.
  - Teaching the student to push/toss that beanbag so that he can play a game of softball is more functional.
  - Better yet, determine what sports or recreational activities are available to the athlete in his/her current and future placements, and then teach skills necessary to participate in those activities. (for example, if the athlete will have access to bowling and swimming when he/she graduates, then these are the most functional sports to teach. If the participant is going to a group home where others play basketball and bocce, then these sports [with adaptations] are most functional to teach).
3. To best determine if an activity is functional:
  - Determine where athlete lives and what recreational activities will be available.
  - Ask parents/care givers about recreation interests of the family and/or the athlete.



- If possible, try to get input from the athlete directly.

**E. Community-Based Instruction**

1. The ultimate goal of teaching participants age appropriate, functional skills is giving them the opportunity to use these skills in the community.
2. If you are teaching swimming, ultimately you would like the participant to swim in an integrated environment at a local recreation center (with flotation devices and assistance as needed). Similarly, teaching bowling should lead to bowling at a local bowling center (with a ramp and assistance as needed).
3. Since the ultimate goal is to use recreation skills in the community, whenever possible instruction should take place in the community setting where the participant ultimately is placed. Teach 10-pin bowling at the local bowling center, teach basketball or softball at the local recreation center, teach lawn sports at the local group home where the participant will likely be placed.

**Length of Training Sessions**

Each training session should last 30 to 45 minutes. The major part of the session will involve practice in selected sport skill training activities. At the end of the session, a fun activity that the athlete is proficient in is often enjoyable for athletes.

A sample lesson plan for a coach working with an individual athlete might look like this:

- Warm-up: 4-5 minutes
- Sport Activity selected from the following section: 10-20 minutes
- Range of motion or other fun activity that athlete already has mastery of: 5-6 minutes

Following each training session, update the training activity sheet, recording improvements made and how they were made. Indicate how much assistance the athlete needed, the number of times the sport activity was attempted and completed as well as what can be done to elicit an improved performance from the athlete. Avoid trying to plan the entire training program at the beginning, based on long-term goals. Use the training activity sheets to plan activities on a daily/weekly basis, keeping the short-term objectives and long-term goals in mind. Each athlete is an individual and progress will be determined by the athlete's mental, physical and functional ability. Be prepared to revise long-term goals, short-term objectives and training activities based on how the athlete performs.

Each of the training sessions comprised of four components:



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**Sample Lesson Plan for small groups working together (approximately 45 min.)**

1. Warm-Up Activities (Prepare participants for training.)  
(10-12 minutes)
  - Sensory awareness and general awareness activities
  - Relaxation activities
  - Range of motion/stretching activities
  - Strengthening activities
  
2. Skill Stations (Work on specific skills used in functional sport-related activities.)  
(15-20 minutes)
  - Because athletes may be at varying levels of skill development, set up activities that develop basic motor skills of Mobility, Dexterity, Striking, and Kicking.
  
  - For those athletes with emerging sport skills, set up stations based on Special Olympics Events for Athletes with Lower Ability in the selected sport. Those events are found in the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules Book. (for example, skills used to play basketball such as Spot Shot, Speed Dribbling, Target Pass, and 10 m Dribble)
  
  - Have available at each station a variety of equipment so that students with a variety of abilities will be challenged and successful (for example, different size balls and basket height for basketball shooting).
  
  - Participants remain at each station for several minutes; Long enough to have several repetitions but not long enough to lose interest.
  
  - Rotate through 3-4 stations. Stations can be revisited as time permits.
  
  - Make activities fun and motivating (For example, use brightly colored objects and interesting targets, use music, be enthusiastic, have fun competitions.). Measure participant's progress on data sheets supplied at each station.
  
3. Group Game (Apply skills worked on in stations to a group activity.)  
(10-12 minutes)

A group game is a fun way for participants to apply the skills practiced at the various stations. It also can be structured so participants learn rules of the game and interact with peers and volunteers.
  
4. Conclusion (2-5 minutes)
  - Conduct range of motion/stretching and relaxation activities to cool down.
  - Review skill training activities of the session.



## Location of Training Sessions

Motor Activity Training Program training sessions can be conducted indoors or outdoors. In some cases, it may be easier to have training sessions at the facilities in which the athletes live because of transportation and administrative issues. Often when caregivers and residential staff see the benefits of the program, they are more likely to assist with activities such as transporting athletes to other locations for training or Motor Activity Training Program Days.

## Training Techniques

### Cues

A cue is a request, signal or sign given to an athlete that indicates a desired movement or action. Coaches use a variety of verbal, tactile or visual techniques to cue athletes. It is essential that cues be short, simple and easily understood. Cues should be introduced at the beginning of the training program, and used throughout each training session. At various times during the training program, athletes may be given the following cues.

- Verbal cues can be used while demonstrating the activity or when an athlete is practicing the skill. They are words or phrases that emphasize movements or tell the athlete what you would like him/her to do, such as, “lift your arms” or “hold the racquet longer.”
- Visual cues are used when demonstrating a movement or sport skill. Visual cues should be used even if the athlete has no voluntary control over movement and needs total assistance to complete the skill. For athletes that require total assistance, two coaches or other volunteers may be needed in order to provide both visual cues and safe total assistance. Visual cues can include performing the skill along side of the athlete, or using sign language to signal the athlete.
- Physical prompting or tactile cues are used to initiate movement or encourage a desired movement without the coach assisting the athlete through the total movement or sport skill. An example of physical prompting is to touch the back of the athlete’s knee to encourage him/her to move the leg for walking.

## Levels of Assistance

Motor Activity Training Program athletes may have little or no control over their movement and may need assistive devices and/or other assistance to perform a sport activity. Assistive devices, such as gait trainers and wheelchairs, are considered part of the athlete and should not be thought of as a part of the levels of assistance provided. The Motor Activity Training Program allows coaches to assist their athletes with performing a sport skill. However, coaches must be careful to provide the appropriate level of assistance. Four levels of assistance in the Motor Activity Training Program are provided in the Activity Section of this manual.

The goal of assisting and cueing athletes is to help all athletes, regardless of their abilities, to participate in functionally appropriate sport-oriented activities. The following are three basic guidelines for the coach to assist a Motor Activity Training Program athlete.

- 1) Know athlete’s ability and determine how much assistance the athlete needs.
- 2) Allow time for athlete to perform as much of the movement as possible
- 3) Provide only the assistance needed

Total assistance involves considerable cueing and prompting from the coach as he/she assists the athlete with the entire sport activity movement. For example, a coach may need to place the athlete’s hands on the badminton racquet



and physically move the athlete's arms through the stroke. Whenever possible, coaches should provide assistance at the joints so that the athlete's neurological system may receive specific sensory information about the movement. However, to avoid potential harm to the athlete, coaches should never grasp and pull only the fingers, hands or feet when attempting to encourage movement.

Partial assistance involves the coach cueing, prompting, or physically assisting the athlete through initiating or executing movement. Some Motor Activity Training Program athletes may be able to start a basketball push, but lack the ability to follow through. Coaches then need to provide assistance in completing the last part of the basketball push. Other athletes can complete the basketball push but need verbal and tactile cues such as touching the elbow in order to start the movement. Touching the back of the knee or ankle or verbally prompting athletes to kick the soccer ball are other examples of partial assistance.

The amount of partial assistance needed varies from athlete to athlete and will lessen as the athlete progresses. For example, after assisting an athlete with grasping and rolling a ball, the coach notices that the athlete is beginning to move his/her fingers independently. The coach may then be able to place the athlete's fingers on the ball and just slightly curl the fingers towards the ball. This prompts the athlete, allowing him/her to finish the task without assistance.

Some athletes may progress to the point where they complete the sport activity without assistance from the coach. An athlete may be able to propel his/her wheelchair forward with verbal encouragement from the coach but is unable to travel more than one meter. While this athlete is participating independently in the Motor Activity Training Program Wheelchair Push, he/she lacks the ability to participate in Official Special Olympics sports for athletes of lower ability levels.

The levels of assistance are of value as they provide opportunities for the athlete to:

- Participate in FUN activities and events
- Participate in a sport-oriented activity
- Interact with peers
- Be exposed to different types of equipment
- Experience different environments and sounds
- Participate in group activities and games
- Experience belonging to a group

## **Positive Reinforcement**

The most powerful reinforcement tool for anyone, Motor Development athletes included, is self-gratification. The second most powerful reinforcement tool is praise that comes from an authority figure. Thus, it is extremely important for coaches (authority figures) to praise athletes after each performance of a movement, whether the movement was totally assisted or not. Many Motor Activity Training Program athletes are able to understand positive reinforcement expressions such as "Great Job" or "Well Done", gestures such as clapping or cheering, and physical reinforcements (patting on the back; high five). The reinforcement should be specific and offered immediately after the movement. (i.e. You really did that release well!) Like other athletes, Motor Activity Training Program athletes appreciate and need positive reinforcement and encouragement.



### **Athlete Sport Skill Progression**

The following suggestions will help coaches identify an appropriate skill progression for each athlete.

1. Know the athlete in order to maximize the athlete's potential
2. Be flexible and creative when developing training methods
3. Ensure that training activities follow the progression of the sport activity to more advanced levels
4. Teach skills that can be used by an athlete throughout life and in the community
5. Challenge the athlete to attempt new skills
6. Communicate with parents, therapists, and teachers in order to enhance the athlete's ability to perform the sport activity
7. Keep concise records of athlete's progress for each training session and training program

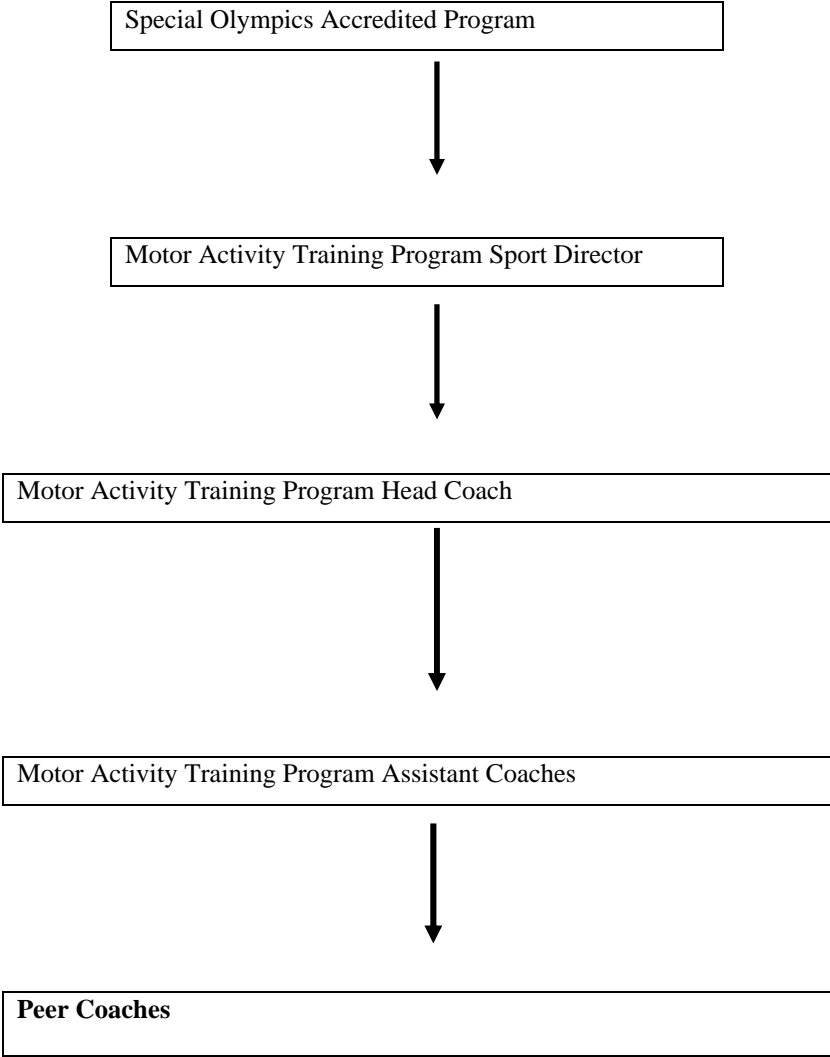
### **Proper Clothing**

Motor Activity Training Program athletes are Special Olympics athletes. Therefore, they should be dressed like their fellow Special Olympics athletes, to the greatest extent possible. This is especially important when they are participating in Motor Activity Training Program activities as well as Regional and World Games. Clothing should be comfortable and appropriate for the weather conditions but should also allow athletes to move freely in their sport activity.



**Motor Activity Training Program Structure**

A Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) coach is usually designated by the accredited program to serve as the MATP Sport Director/Coordinator. The MATP Sport Director is in charge of MATP Program development. Local training programs must be developed using the official Motor Activity Training Program manual. Procedures need to be established for participation in any Motor Activity Training Program Days that are in line with Special Olympics, Inc. guidelines. It is important for the MATP Sport Director to create a well-organized program in which all participants have a rewarding experience. The relationships between Special Olympics accredited programs, the MATP Sport Director, and Motor Activity Training Program local coaches are outlined below.





The MATP Sport Director is responsible for:

- Securing accessible facilities that have a positive training environment and the equipment needed for the athletes
- Training Special Olympics coaches for the Motor Activity Training Program
- Recruiting and training volunteers
- Conducting athlete outreach
- Supervising the evaluation & registration of qualified athletes
- Supervising the training of athletes
- Conducting Motor Activity Training Program activities

With assistance from the MATP Sport Director, the head coach and local coaches are responsible for:

- Securing facilities
- Finding, evaluating, and registering local MATP athletes
- Training and coaching MATP athletes
- Conducting Motor Activity Training Program Days

### **Length of Motor Activity Training Program Training Programs**

Motor Activity Training Program athletes must train prior to participating in a Challenge Day. It is recommended that athletes attend training sessions three times a week for eight weeks. However local programs have the right to alter the duration and frequency of training sessions according to the needs of their athletes

### **Equipment Needed for Motor Activity Training Programs**

Equipment is an important part of the Motor Activity Training Program. Equipment enables athletes to perform sport skills and thus feel a sense of accomplishment. Some equipment is adaptive in nature such as bowling ramps or bumpers. Other equipment is exactly the same as would be used by any athlete learning or practicing a sport.

Below is a list of equipment needed to offer all of the Motor Activity Training Program sport activities. A local Motor Activity Training Program does not need all of the equipment to begin a training program. Coaches will only need the specific equipment required for the activities in which their athletes participate.



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**Equipment:**

- Large bag or containers for transporting equipment
- Tape for marking courses or targets
- Flags
- Cones
- Mats
- Spring Board or 4 inch (10cm) high block or platform
- Badminton racquet-shuttle cocks
- Basketball
- Plastic bowling pins and bowling ramp
- Floor hockey stick-pucks-goal
- Football (soccer ball)
- Golf putter-plastic golf balls-plastic cup
- Balls and bean bags
- Batting tees
- Bat or stick of appropriate weight and size for athlete
- Table tennis paddle or a paddle of similar size-table tennis ball-large table
- Trainer volleyball of size similar to regular volleyball-net
- Ramps for bowling or bocce training.
- Bolsters for support during activities
- Scooter Boards for independent movement
- Toys and switches to get and keep athlete interest
- Stretch bands for muscle development
- Pool with depth no more than one meter and floatation devices such as devices that circle the athlete. Flotation boards, earplugs, webbed swimming gloves, and extra towels may be of assistance.



**Training Log:**

The following training log for Motor Activity Training Program athletes is designed for coaches to use each week of the eight-week training program to track the attendance, activity participation, and assistance needed by an athlete. Coaches who meet with an athlete one, two or three times a week can use the form.

**Motor Activity Training Program Weekly Training Log**

Athlete \_\_\_\_\_ Sport \_\_\_\_\_ SO Program \_\_\_\_\_  
 Circle Training Week    1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8

Under Assistance Level please indicate if:

- a) the skill is accomplished with Total Assistance (TA), Partial Assistance (PA) or it is Independent (I); and
- b) describe the exact type of assistance used and when the assistance is needed.

*Noting this information is of particular importance because as an athlete progresses in his/her training program, the amount and type of assistance needed may change.*

Please describe any warm-up activities or group games used with the athlete:

Please list movement concerns, health conditions and/or safety issues that should be considered when working with the athlete:

Date	Skill	Assistance Level	# Attempted	# Completed	Coach



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## Challenge Days

As previously stated, the Motor Activity Training Program emphasizes participation, rather than competition. Challenge Days are culminating activities that are intended to include the sport skills listed in this manual or modified to meet each athlete's individual needs. Challenge Days are designed to provide athletes with opportunities to demonstrate their personal best in sport skills. Often skills will have been modified to meet individual athlete's capabilities. These adaptations should be forwarded to coaches of all participants so that they can use the adaptations in their own training programs.

Many accredited programs have previously offered or cooperated with other programs that offer artistic, social, and cultural experiences. These activities can be offered alongside Challenge Days. This does not lessen the experience for the athletes but provides program directors with the opportunity to offer additional activities.

## Awards & Recognition

Athletes like to be recognized for their efforts. This is true of Motor Activity Training Program athletes who put as much effort into their sport skill development as other athletes. At the end of a training program, all athletes who participate in a Challenge Day are presented with a participation award. Awards at Challenge Days can be almost anything such as specially designed medals, certificates, pictures, hats or T-shirts. Motor Activity Training Program athletes are not eligible to receive Official Special Olympics Games medals indicating first, second or third place. Other medals may be awarded, but the presentation of soft toys is inappropriate.

## Event Management

This section is being developed in conjunction with the new Event Directors Guide to avoid duplicating materials. The new guide will be distributed with the Motor Activity Training Program Guide.

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