

# Foundational Skills

## WEEK ONE

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### THIS SET OF LESSONS PROVIDES

games and activities to help children develop fitness, strength, body awareness, spatial concepts, adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements) and visual tracking skills. Children will also become familiar with the Young Athletes equipment and routines.



***Special Olympics***  
**youngathletes™**

[www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes](http://www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes)

## Overview

**Lesson Plans (Day One, Day Two, Day Three) provide details to help you plan and carry out the Young Athletes program with a group of children between the ages of 2 and 7 years old.**

**Adults Needed:** Plan for at least 1 adult for every 4 children. Recruit help from families, volunteers, older students, college students and others in your community to make sure the program runs smoothly and is fun.

**Time:** Young Athletes is implemented with great enthusiasm, high energy and quick pace. Time estimates are provided to guide completion of each lesson in 30 minutes. However, the pace and length of the lesson should be matched to the needs, interests, ages, and skills of the young athletes in your group.

**Sequence:** There are three lessons for each skill area labeled Day One, Day Two and Day Three. Lessons within the skill area are designed to be offered in sequence to help children become acquainted with the activities and build skills through repetition.

**Resources:** The Lesson Plan Summary Cards include an outline of the activities, list of equipment needed, and page numbers to find the activity descriptions. The cards, Young Athletes Activity Guide, Suggestions from Teachers, and training videos are included in the online Toolkit (see website below).

**Playing at home:** Give families the Lesson Plan Summary Cards and encourage them to sing the songs and play one or two games with their child at home before the next session. Help them learn about the activities by including them in your group sessions and/or providing a family training session. Be sure they have access to the Activity Guide and Videos for more information.

**>> See the Young Athletes Toolkit online at:**  
[www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes](http://www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes)

## Opening Sports Song (5 min.)

**PURPOSE** Start each Young Athletes class with a gathering/warm-up song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with. This will help them warm-up, serve as a gathering activity, create body awareness and support adaptive skills (following directions, singing along, imitating motor movements).

**EXPLAIN** "Today is our first day of Young Athletes! An athlete is someone who plays sports and exercises the muscles in their body. We are all going to be Young Athletes while we play new games and exercise the muscles in our bodies. Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

**SING** **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class touch their toes (bend and stretch), touch their toes, touch their toes. The athletes in our class touch their toes, - all through the day.
- The runner on the team goes run run run, run run run run, run run. The runner on the team goes run run run - all through the town.
- The swimmer in the water goes swim swim swim, swim swim swim, swim swim swim. The swimmer in the water goes swim swim swim - all through the pool.



**I Spy** (5 min.)**EQUIPMENT** Floor markers, bean bags, cones, hoops, balls**PURPOSE** Identify and locate sports equipment using a variety of motor movements, strength, and general fitness.**DEMONSTRATE** "Great warm-up! Now let's play I Spy with all of our new sports equipment! I spy with my little eye a blue ball! Where is the blue ball?" Look around, find the ball.**LEAD** "Hurry, let's walk to the balls! Where is the blue ball? (balls, cones, floor markers, scarves, etc.) Great! OK, listen carefully! I spy with my little eye an orange cone! Where is the orange cone? Look around find it! Hurry, let's run to the cone!"

- Encourage athletes to find an object that is visible and everyone races to the object by walking or running.
- The I Spy game progresses as teacher (or athlete) calls out the name of a piece of equipment and all athletes find that object.
- The teacher can lead by also calling out a color and all athletes find equipment of a particular color.

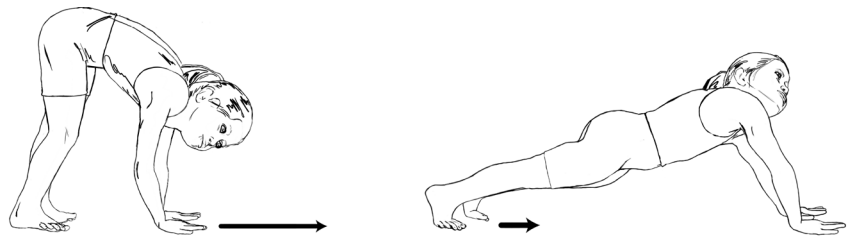
**Scarf Game** (5 min.)**EQUIPMENT** Scarf for each child**PURPOSE** Motor coordination, visual tracking, identification of body parts**DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD** "Now let's play the Scarf Game! Watch the scarf! Look where the scarf is going! Catch the scarf with your (hands, head, elbow, foot)! You/I caught a (blue, red, yellow) scarf with my/your (hand, head, elbow, foot)!"

## Inchworm Wiggle (5 min.)

**PURPOSE** Strength, general fitness, motor skills

**DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD** Bend over and put your hands on the ground. "Let's play the Inchworm Wiggle!" "Great, watch me move like an inch worm. (Model while talking.) Walk with your hands then, walk with your feet. Awesome!"

- Let's do it again! Let's do the Inchworm Wiggle.
- Walk with your hands; then walk with your feet.
- Great! Inch worm to the (name a piece of equipment: bean bags, balance beam, etc.)



## Bridges and Tunnels (5 min.)

**PURPOSE** Strength, general fitness

**DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD** "OK, now we are going to play Bridges and Tunnels! First let's make our tunnel!" If physically able, have one athlete bend forward so that hands and feet are on the ground to form a bridge and tunnels. Encourage other athletes to form a bridge or tunnel.



## Bridges and Tunnels *(continued)*

### Tunnels

"Who can bend like this to make a tunnel? (Hands and feet on ground, bottom up making tunnel) Awesome, he/she made a tunnel. Now, who can go under his/her tunnel? Great! After you go under the tunnel you make a tunnel right next to him/her! Great, now our tunnel is even bigger!"

- One athlete forms a tunnel by touching the ground with his/her feet and hands or by getting down onto hands and knees.
- The other athletes crawl, scoot, under the tunnel.
- Once they go under the tunnel, have each athlete extend the tunnel (by forming a tunnel next to the person who started the activity).

**Tips:** Make note of approximately how many times the child can perform the activity or how long the child hold up the bridge or tunnel. Encourage more repetitions or more time over several weeks to develop muscular strength and endurance. Encourage bridges and tunnels to be rigid and strong while people and objects pass under and through.



### Bridges

"OK! Now we are going to play bridges. Who can bend like this to make a bridge? (Sit on ground. Place hands/feet flat on ground. Push bottom off ground.) Great! Now let's make a bridge and go under the bridge!"

- One athlete forms a bridge by sitting with his/her hands and feet flat on the ground and pushing his/her bottom off the ground.
- The other athletes crawl, scoot, under the bridge.
- To make it easier have athletes place their feet or hands on the wall or an object and other athletes go under.



## Closing Sports Song (5 min.)

**PURPOSE** End each Young Athletes class with a closing/cool-down song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with. This builds body awareness and adaptive skills (following directions, singing along, imitation of motor movements) and helps with transitions.

**EXPLAIN** "Let's end Young Athletes with a song, If You're Happy and You Know It. Sing along with me and do what I do."

- SING**
- If you're happy and you know it, clap and stomp (wiggle your body; fly like a bird: walk around with arms outstretched).
  - If you're happy and you know it then your face will really show it if you're happy and you know it clap and stomp.



## Opening Sports Song (5 min.) with Scarf

**EXPLAIN** "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

**SING** **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class touch their toes (bend and stretch); touch their toes; touch their toes. The athletes in our class touch their toes, - all through the day.
- The player on the court jumps up and down, up and down, up and down. The player on the court jumps up and down - all during the game.
- The athlete on the team throws the scarf, throws the scarf, throws the scarf. The athlete on the team throws the scarf - all through the town.

**Tip:** Have athletes suggest additional motions and lead.

## I Spy: Bunny Hop (5 min)

Adapt the Game from Day 1 by asking athletes to hop, then crawl to the sports equipment you name.

## Inchworm Wiggle (4 min)

Repeat the Activity from Day 1

## Bridges and Tunnels (5 min)

Repeat the Activity from Day 1



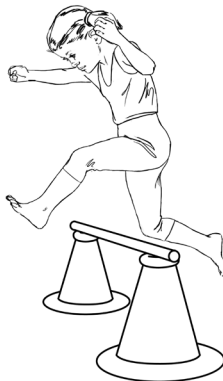


## Obstacle Course *(5 min.)*

**EQUIPMENT** Set up a 5 station course with floor markers (dots for jumping on), bean bags with hoop (throwing bean bag through hoop), a series of hurdles (cones with dowel/stick), balance beam, area to run to finish (through a ribbon).

**EXPLAIN** Now we get to run the obstacle course! Watch and follow me!

**DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD** Show the athletes how to go through the obstacle course. Then assist athletes in moving through course.



### Station 1: Jump on Dots

- Arrange 10 dots in zigzag pattern, close to one another.
- Athlete will bunny hop on two feet from dot to dot.
- Athlete will jump to the right, then jump to the left, zigzagging down length of dots.

### Station 2: Throw Bean Bag Through Target (basket, hoop)

- Use floor marker to show where athlete stands.
- Athlete will throw bean bag or small ball to a hoop held parallel to the floor or to a bucket.
- Progress to throwing through target (hoop on cone or block) from distance of 3 feet.
- Throw underhanded and if child is able proceed to throwing over-hand.
- Move distance closer or further away, depending on skill of athlete.



**Tip:** Encourage color recognition, object recognition, verbal and counting development by calling out colors, names, and numbers of objects used in each activity. Ask children to repeat the objects you reference, including their name, color and numbers. Make note of the concepts the child has mastered and those that are still developing (e.g., knows on/off; identified red, not blue). Incorporate concepts during play such as giving directions to move around stationary objects like a couch or crawl under a table to retrieve a toy.

### Station 3: Step/Jump Over Hurdles

- Make hurdle using two cones and one dowel or stick. Place dowel through holes in cone.
- Adjust height as needed for athletes and always start the bar at the lowest height.
- Always start the bar at the lowest height. If he/she is unable to jump, they can step over hurdle.

### Station 4: Walk on Balance Beam

- Athletes will independently walk the length of the beam, alternating steps.
- Add various ways to move down the beam for advanced athletes (walk backwards, side-steps, change directions – forward to backwards).
- Add length to the beam by using multiple beams.

### Station 5: Run to Finish Line (through ribbon)

- When athlete steps off beam, he/she should run to the finish line.
- Teach athletes to run through the line. Introduce this skill several times as some may stop, not wanting to hit or touch the finish line.
- The finish line is a long ribbon. To set the finish line, attach the ribbon to one side of the area while holding the other end of the ribbon in your hand (or have another person hold the other end). As the athlete touches the ribbon, let it go.

## Closing Sports Song (5 min.)

Repeat the song you used in Day 1 to end the Lesson.



## Opening Sports Song with Bunny Hop *(3 min.)*

**EXPLAIN** "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

**SING** **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class can bend and stretch, bend and stretch, bend and stretch. The athletes in our class can bend and stretch, all through the town.
- The athletes in our class can hop like a bunny, hop like a bunny, hop like a bunny. The athletes in our class can hop like a bunny - all through the day.
- The athletes in our class can go up and down (on your toes), up and down, up and down. The athletes in our class can go up and down - all through the town.

**Tip:** Have athletes suggest additional motions and lead.

## I Spy: Stomp/Tip Toes *(3 min.)*

Adapt the Game from Day 1 by instructing athletes to move in different ways to the equipment (e.g. tiptoe, stomp slowly, stomp fast, walk backwards)

## Bridges and Tunnels *(4 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 1



## Follow the Leader (4 min.) with Side Steps, Follow a Path

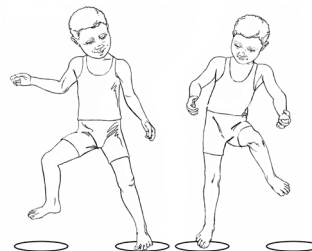
**PURPOSE** Introduction to Walking and Running skills. Motor Skills (walking, running, side steps, grasp, release), adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

**EQUIPMENT** Set up space with 3 floor markers placed about two feet apart in a line.

Place bean bags or small ball on the 2nd floor marker so athletes can side step from first marker to second marker, pick up bean bag/ball, side step to last marker, place ball on last marker. Adapt by adding more markers and/or increasing distance between markers.

**DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD** Encourage athletes to sidestep right and left onto a variety of floor markers (plastic disks, hoops). "Ok! Now let's play follow the leader!"

- March around the room, swing your arms!
- March around the room, hands on head! Side step to the right.
- Great! Side step again. Side step one more time! Now side step to the left. One big side step and again, and again!
- Now this time, side step to the marker, pick up the bean bag, side step to the next marker, drop the bean bag on the marker!



# Foundational Skills

WEEK DAY

one

1

2

3

## Running Styles *(introduction to week 2)*

**PURPOSE** Body awareness, general fitness, motor skills (walk, run, balance), adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

**DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD** Using a clap or whistle, signal change in running style, while providing verbal command for each running/walking style:

- Stomp slow/fast
- Run slow/fast
- Run backwards
- High knees run (raise knees high when running)
- Tiptoe walking

**Obstacle Course** *(7 min.)*  
Repeat the Activity from Day 2.

**Closing Sports Song** *(3 min.)*  
Repeat the song you used in Day 1 and 2 to end the Lesson.



**You have finished Week One: Foundational Skills Lessons.  
You can now begin Week Two: Walking and Running.**

