



High 5 for Fitness Lessons

Ages 12-14

Special Olympics





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Introduction

High 5 Lesson Plan Overview



High 5 for Fitness (“High 5”) is a collection of resources ([here](#)) designed to help youth ages 8–21 take charge of their fitness by making healthy choices about physical activity, nutrition, and hydration. To complement these resources, Special Olympics developed a series of structured fitness lessons to support teachers in delivering effective, school-based programs. These lesson plans can empower educators and school staff to create inclusive and engaging fitness experiences for youth with and without intellectual disabilities using the High 5 materials. Beyond the classroom, the lessons can also be used in community programs and sports settings to encourage healthy habits and active lifestyles among young people.

HIGH 5 FOR FITNESS:

High 5 is designed to increase knowledge and awareness of healthy behaviors, and to promote youth engagement in physical activities that improve flexibility, strength, and endurance. The program offers an inclusive approach to teaching students with and without intellectual disabilities across three age groups: 8-11, 12-14, and 15-21 years.

For youth between the ages of 12-14, High 5 focuses on three healthy lifestyle goals:



HIGH 5 RESOURCES:

In addition to these lessons, High 5 for Fitness includes the following materials:

1) **Health Guide** that provide information on how to be healthy including nutrition tips, ways to stay hydrated, and exercises for health and sport performance,



- 2) **Cards** that include a variety of exercises that target flexibility, endurance, and strength, and progress through three levels (Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3) to challenge youth to engage in more complex exercises while meeting their current ability level,
- 3) **Videos** that serve as a supplementary resource and provide demonstrations of each exercise, with music by Hip Hop Public Health and a timer/counter so that students can keep track of how long they perform each exercise,
- 4) **Educator's Guide** with simple tips that describes how to use High 5 resources in schools or community settings, and
- 5) **Caregiver's Guide** that provides simple tips on how to use High 5 resources at home.

(***For links to each of the bolded resources listed above, see Appendix E***)

HIGH 5 LESSON PLANS OVERVIEW:

The **High 5 Lesson Plans** consist of twelve 15–30 minute lessons designed to be implemented twice per week over a six-week period. Requiring minimal equipment and space, these lessons are flexible and can be used in various settings as part of physical education classes, movement breaks, structured recess, or community-based after-school programs.

The inclusive, exercise science-based approach to the fitness lessons provides the opportunity for all youth to develop physical activity knowledge, apply key fitness concepts, and build self-efficacy as part of their physical literacy journey.

Physical Literacy is...

"...the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge, and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life." (IPLA 2017)

UNIQUE FEATURES:

The High 5 lessons were designed to promote exercise participation and build fitness among students with and without intellectual disabilities in inclusive settings. Youth with intellectual disabilities may face barriers to physical activity that limit their participation and results in low fitness levels and increased risk for adverse health conditions. As such, these youth can benefit from individualized instruction that meets their diverse needs. High 5 lessons offer the following unique features that promote fitness and inclusive participation for all students:



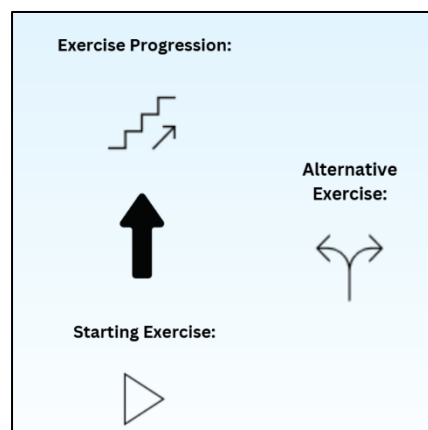
- **Variety of Fitness Formats:** Lessons give students the opportunity to experience multiple types of fitness training, including circuit training, interval training, Unified Partner/Teammate workouts, and more.
- **Exercise Modifications:** Each lesson provides detailed teaching progressions and regressions for strength exercises to accommodate varying levels of coordination, cognitive ability, and fitness.
- **Facilitator Prompts:** Sample spoken prompts are included to guide educators in delivering clear, supportive instructions that enhance student understanding of lesson objectives.
- **Progression Challenges:** “Progression Challenges” give students a chance to try advanced exercises aligned with higher skill levels or older age groups.
- **Educator Exercise Science Tips:** Each lesson features “Educator Exercise Science Tips,” which offer insights into exercise training principles and physiological responses. These tips help educators build foundational knowledge and awareness of key exercise science concepts.
- **Make It Fun Activities:** Select lessons include a “Make It Fun” section that provides optional games or activity add-ons to boost student engagement during exercise instruction.
- **Standards Alignment:** Lessons align with components of the fitness concepts and physical activity knowledge outlined in SHAPE America’s Health and Physical Education Standard 2.
- **Health Education Activities:** Each lesson includes health education components that equip students with knowledge to support healthy nutrition and hydration habits at school and at home.
- **Visual Learning Supports:** Ladder-style visuals illustrate the teaching progression and key lesson themes, helping students and educators track learning pathways.
- **Inclusive Environment Strategies:** The resource offers strategies for fostering inclusion, including suggestions for peer and para-educator support, as well as guidance on adapting learning progressions for diverse needs.



HIGH 5 LESSON ICON LEGEND:

Icons are used in the High 5 Lessons to draw attention to several unique features. Use this icon legend to assist navigation through the lessons:

Videos:	
Teaching Progression:	
Starting Exercise:	
Exercise Progression:	
Alternative Exercise:	
Progression Challenge:	
Facilitator Prompt :	



Use the above icon template to navigate Activity B images.

HIGH 5 LESSON TARGET AUDIENCE:

The fitness lessons are intended to be delivered in an inclusive (Unified) environment, meaning youth with and without intellectual disabilities participate together. The activities, instructions, themes, and formats in this version of the High 5 Lesson Plans are suitable for youth between ages 12-14. Considering that one size does not fit all, the lessons can be (and should be) modified to meet the diverse abilities and learning styles of all youth.

We want to hear from you! Please consider completing the High 5 Lesson Plan Feedback Form (using the QR code to the right) so we can consistently improve our resources to align with your preferences.

High 5 Lesson Plan Feedback





USING HIGH 5 LESSONS:

Each lesson is designed with flexible timing to accommodate different schedules and settings. While lessons typically average about 20 minutes, educators are encouraged to adjust the duration as needed. This might involve completing only *Activity A* for a quick movement break, implementing all activities during fitness clubs, or even combining two lessons for extended physical education periods. Incorporating warm-up and cool-down activities is strongly recommended (see Appendix E for relevant resources). For warm-ups, choose movements that mirror the main lesson activities to help students prepare for the specific skills they will practice. Cool-downs provide an opportunity to focus on static stretches that promote flexibility.

High 5 exercise cards are organized into Levels 1 through 3, providing a structured progression from foundational to more advanced fitness skills. Level 1 activities are simpler and less physically demanding than those in Levels 2 and 3. Educators may adjust the sequence as needed to match students' current abilities and goals. While each lesson builds upon the previous one, the lessons can also be used independently or in any order.

Exercise progressions and regressions are not strictly tied to fitness level and are not inherently positive or negative. Factors like mobility, coordination, cognitive ability, and core strength can influence which exercise is best for each student. For example, if a student is learning to progress from a bodyweight squat to a weighted squat, they may first need to refine their form by practicing sit-to-stand exercises with weights. Shifting focus to foundational movements can often be an essential step in mastering new skills and building strength.

The tips below may be helpful in supporting students of all abilities:

Communication:

- Use concise and simple language during exercise instruction.
- Demonstrate/model activities and provide visual cues (e.g., High 5 for Fitness cards & videos).
- Provide simple verbal cues (e.g., instructions on the High 5 for Fitness cards).
- Provide opportunities for students to ask questions and seek clarification as needed.

Activity Implementation:

- Use Unified Teammates where a student with an intellectual disability is partnered with a student without a disability.
- Break activities into small steps and allow for practice or “walk through” for complex activities.
- Reduce wait time and provide continuous feedback during activities.
- Use repetition & multiple opportunities for practice to support skill development.



We want to hear how you are using High 5 Lessons. Use the QR Code to access a resource library that includes materials created by educators and PE professionals who have piloted these lessons. Please share any resource that you have created or use the existing resources at your school or in your community.



LESSON THEMES

Inspired by the [SHAPE America Health and Physical Education Standards](#), each lesson provides a suggested teaching progression to meet a range of cognitive abilities, foundational knowledge, and fitness experiences. Each theme is covered in two lessons.

The Benefits of Staying Active: Students will learn the importance of regular physical activity, identify ways to incorporate activity into their daily lives, and understand how activity supports a healthy transition into adulthood.

Your Heart in Action: Students will explore how physical activity strengthens the heart, learn how to monitor their heart rate, and apply this knowledge to improve fitness and ensure safety.

Exercise, Rest, and Recovery: Students will understand how exercise affects their body, the role of rest in recovery, and how to create a balanced physical activity routine that promotes overall health.

Fueling Your Body: Students will recognize how food and hydration choices impact energy levels, understand the relationship between nutrition and physical activity, and identify snacks and foods that affect performance, recovery, and enjoyment during exercise.

Stretching for Success: Students will recognize the importance of stretching, understand the need for warm-ups and cool-downs, apply dynamic and static stretching techniques, and design a flexibility training plan.

Setting Fitness Goals: Students will identify physical activities that contribute to fitness, set goals for fitness development, monitor progress through self-assessment, and create a practice plan to improve a self-selected skill.



Fitness Components and Training Formats

THREE FITNESS COMPONENTS

High 5 for Fitness, and the lesson plans, focus on building three components of health-related fitness through targeted exercises that become progressively more challenging. The three components of fitness are defined below:

Strength: The goal of strength exercises is to build muscle strength while also improving endurance and power, key components that support motor skill development, daily functioning, and athletic performance. Learning strength exercises progressively helps students develop proper form, coordination, and technique, reducing injury risk and building confidence. Each lesson introduces progressive variations of one *High 5* strength exercise. When selecting which variation a student should perform, consider factors such as coordination, confidence, mobility, cognitive ability, and core strength.

Endurance: Aerobic endurance is the ability to perform moderate intensity exercise for extended periods of time. The goal of endurance exercise is to improve how long the body can sustain physical activity without fatigue. Endurance training emphasizes gradually increasing the duration or distance, intensity, or frequency of an aerobic activity. A step-by-step progression of form and technique is not typically part of endurance training, so detailed variations of endurance exercises are not provided as they are for strength exercises.

Flexibility: Flexibility is defined as the range of motion of a joint or group of joints. The goal of flexibility exercise is to increase the range of motion of the joints and improve overall muscle elasticity. Flexibility training focuses on gradually deepening stretches and extending the duration of holds, rather than the step-by-step progression of form and technique, so detailed variations will not be provided in these lessons.

SIX TRAINING FORMATS

The lessons incorporate a variety of exercise training formats, presented in developmentally appropriate ways.

Circuit Training: A series of exercises performed in sequence with minimal rest, with students moving between stations to target different muscle groups or skills.

Intervals: Alternating periods of work and rest, with exercises designed to build endurance and strength, ranging from relays to structured High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) workouts.

Sports Skill Training: Using practice of specific sports-related skills in a way that mimics fitness training, such as 30 seconds of dribbling and 30 seconds of rest to mimic intervals.



Challenges: Activities where students work individually or in teams to complete as many repetitions or rounds as possible within a set time, fostering goal setting, perseverance, and a sense of accomplishment.

Supersets/Giant Sets: Pairing two or three exercises back-to-back with little to no rest, designed to enhance strength and endurance by targeting different muscle groups or the same group in diverse ways, in an efficient amount of time.

Unified Partners: Exercises or activities completed in pairs, emphasizing teamwork, communication, and mutual support.



High 5 for Fitness Lessons

Lesson 1 – Flexibility, Warm-ups, Cool-downs

Lesson Objectives, Equipment, Set-up Time

Objectives: (1) Identify major muscle groups involved in common stretching exercises. (2) Differentiate between static and dynamic stretches. (3) Understand the benefits of flexibility for overall health, injury prevention, and athletic performance.

Equipment Requirements: High 5 Cards, Guides, and Videos

Set-Up Time Estimate: 5 minutes

Activity A (4-5 minutes): Introduce High 5 Flexibility

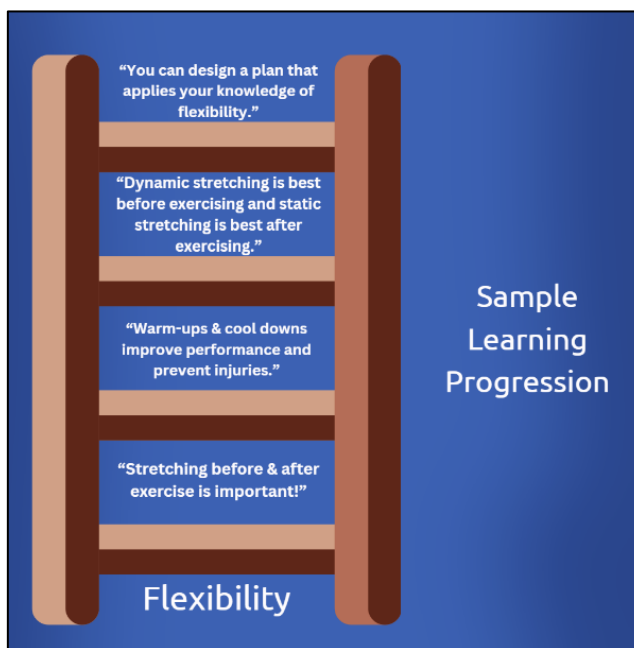


Educator script is presented in quotations and/or denoted by the icon to the left.

"Today we're going to learn why it's important to stretch before and after exercising. We'll practice different types of stretches that help our muscles warm up, stay flexible, and cool down."



Use the following prompts to discuss flexibility before completing the circuit. Prompts align with the sample learning progression to the right →



Activity Prompts:

"Why do you think we need to stretch before and after exercising?"

Instructions: Ask students to list examples of dynamic stretches. Sample stretches are listed below each answer.



Before Exercising Answer: “We need to wake our muscles up and get them ready for movement. Before exercising you should always do some dynamic stretching to improve performance.”

(Examples: **Hamstring Scoops**, **T-Rotations**)

After Exercise Answer: “We need to cool our muscles down after we move. After exercising you should always do some static stretching to assist with muscle recovery.

(Examples: **Butterfly Stretch**, **Chest Stretch**)

“Which stretches are best before playing a sport or running? Which ones are best after a game?”

“Dynamic stretches help prevent injuries by warming up muscles, while static stretches are for cooling down and improving flexibility.”

“Different activities need different stretches—dynamic stretches are best before jumping and running, while static stretches are best after a game. .”

Activity B (10-15 minutes): Flexibility Circuit

Place one flexibility exercise from Level 1 or 2 at each station.



“During this activity, we’ll rotate through a circuit of six stations. You will have 30-60 seconds at each station to perform your flexibility exercise.”

“Remember to take deep breathes and control your movements when you stretch.”

“Wait for my signal to move to the next station.”



****TIP:** Use High 5 video demonstrations (links in Appendix D) of each exercise to ensure students use correct form.**

Sample Flexibility Circuit

Station 1



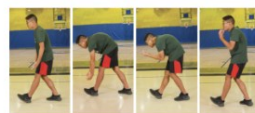
Butterfly Stretch

Station 2



Chest & Shoulder Stretch

Station 3



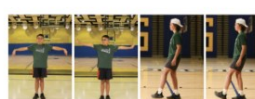
Hamstring Scoops

Station 4



T-Rotations

Station 5



Wrist and Ankle Rotations

Station 6



Walking Toe Touch

Unified Teammate Support



Use props like yoga blocks as reaching targets instead of the floor. Remind students to breathe deeply and slowly to help them relax into the stretch. If a student struggles to reach, have them modify the exercise by bending their knees or using a strap to extend the stretch.

Educator Exercise Science Tip

Students with cerebral palsy or spastic muscle conditions can have increased muscle tightness, which can cause involuntary contractions if stretched too quickly. To avoid this, use slow, gentle movements to allow muscles to gradually relax.

Make It Fun

Game Title: “Stretch Relay”

Objective: Students get a chance to practice the flexibility poses they learned with a competitive twist.

How to Play:

1. **Set Up:** Divide students into two lines of equal number. Place a cone or marker every five paces in front of each line of students. Assign one coach to each set of cones to ensure that students are performing each stretch with the appropriate form and for the appropriate amount of time.
2. **Poses:** Assign each cone or marker a pose that the students have learned.
3. **Explanations:** Instruct one student at a time to walk or run to each cone and perform the associated stretch for a specified length of time (depending on time constraints).
4. **Game Conclusion:** Challenge each team member to perform one stretch at one cone. The game concludes when each team member has completed a stretch and is sitting down behind the start line.



Lesson 2 – Circuit Training

Lesson 2 Objectives, Equipment, and Estimated Set-Up Time

Objectives: (1) Learn how to complete a basic exercise circuit with correct form and pacing. (2) Practice a safe and efficient transition between stations and exercises. (3) Develop the ability to modify exercises based on ability level.

Equipment: High 5 Strength and Flexibility Cards, High 5 Videos

Estimated Set-Up Time: 5 minutes

Activity A (2-4 minutes): Introduce the High 5 Level One Curl Ups



"Today, we are going to learn another core exercise, **High 5 Curl Ups**. If you already know how to do a Curl Up, you will have the opportunity to improve and challenge yourself."



"Find a space on the floor and lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the ground, and hands on your thighs."

"Raise your head, shoulders, and upper back while you reach your hands toward your knees. Pause and lower back down with control."

Activity B (5-6 minutes): Curl Up Exercise Modifications



"Now that you know how to perform a High 5 Inchworm, let's keep practicing so you feel comfortable trying it on your own!"



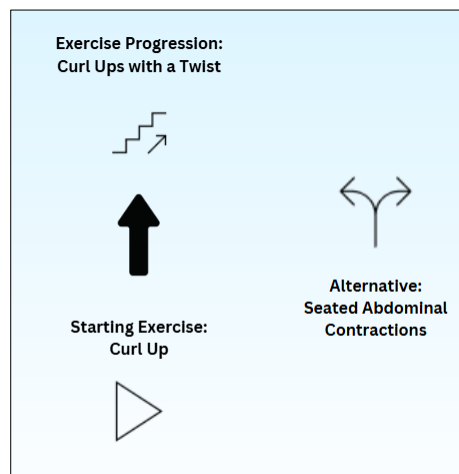
"If you can perform the **High 5 Curl Up** and would like to keep practicing it, you can do 3x10 with a 20-second rest in between."



"If you can perform a High 5 Curl Up and want to challenge yourself, you can do a **High 5 Curl Up with a Twist** at the top."



"If you would like to strengthen your abs without doing curl ups, you can do 3x5 **Seated Abdominal Contractions**. (5-10 second holds each)"



Activity C (7-10 minutes): Small Group Circuit Training



Set up 4-6 stations. One station should be dedicated to the **High 5 Curl Up**, allowing students to practice the version they chose. The remaining stations should include a mix of flexibility and endurance exercises. Each station should have a Level 1, and a Level 2 or 3 exercise from the same fitness category, so students can self-select based on their comfort and skill level.

“Today, we’re going to rotate through different stations. At each station, you’ll see options for exercises at different levels. Choose the one that challenges you! We’ll spend 20-40 seconds at each station, and when it’s time to switch, we’ll use the transition as an active recovery. This means you’ll walk slowly to the next station.”

Unified Teammate Support

Support the selection of appropriate exercises at each station. Repeat instructions/demonstrations. Ensure a smooth transition to the next station.

Educator Exercise Science Tip

Did you know that students struggling to keep their heels down during a squat may have reduced need to improve core strength? Incorporate ankle circles/calf stretches, and planks into lessons to improve core strength and ankle mobility.

Make It Fun!

End the circuit with a fun activity that promotes peer leadership called the **“Mirror Me Challenge”**. Pair each student with a partner and instruct one member of the pair to perform an exercise from a station of their choice while their partner mirrors them. Set a timer for 30 seconds and when the timer runs out, instruct the other partners to perform a different exercise for the first demonstrating partner to follow.



Lesson 3 – The Benefits of Staying Active & Circuit Training

Lesson 3 Objectives, Equipment, and Estimated Set-up Time

Objectives: (1) Recognize circuit training can be adapted for different fitness levels and health-related goals. (2) Identify short-and long-term benefits of circuit training.

Equipment: High 5 Guides

Estimated Set-up Time: 3-4 minutes

Activity A (5-10 minutes): Small Group Circuit Training

See lesson one. Keep the **Curl Up** exercise so students can continue to practice the version they chose, or progress to the next version. If students need more practice, select the same exercises as the previous lesson. If you're prioritizing variety, select different endurance/flexibility exercises, for more practice.

***LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY*:** Choose a few students to select and demonstrate the exercises for the circuit.

Activity B (5-10 minutes): Physical Activity Reflection

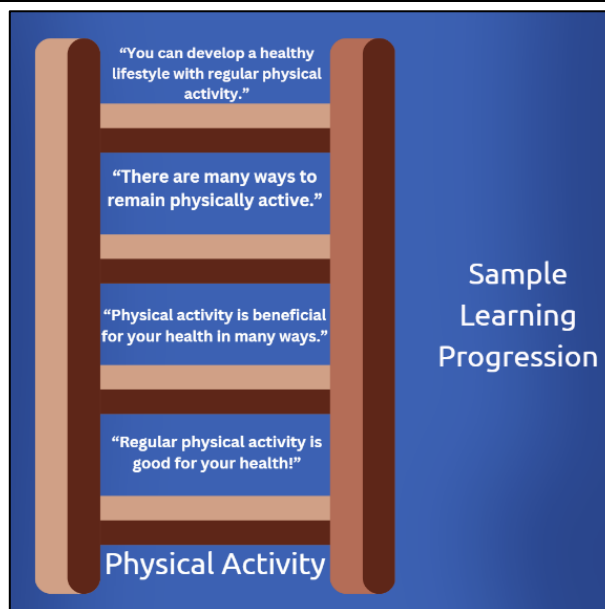
Choose one of the four activities below. Activities are listed in a sample learning progression based on the suggested steps toward physical literacy shown in the diagram to the right →.

Determine whether students will be working as a class, small groups or pairs based on the activity you choose. Decide how you will provide examples and how you want students to respond/identify their answers.



Activity Options/Instructions:

1. "All of you will start seated. I will state an activity. Stand up if it is a physical activity. Stay seated if it is not a physical activity."
2. "I'm going to give you an example of physical activity. You are going to indicate if that physical activity is an endurance activity, strength activity, or flexibility activity."
3. "Think about your daily routine. Come up with two ways that you can incorporate more physical activity into your day. Consider what that activity is and what part of your day you could do it."





4. “When you become an adult, you may not have the same opportunities to be active. What two physical activities that you participate in now will you be able to continue with? What are two new activities that might be easier to access as an adult?”



****TIP: Use High 5 video demonstrations (links in Appendix D) to illustrate different forms of physical activity.****

Unified Teammate Support

Assign groups or Teammates different prompts (selected based on ability). Unified teammate can answer the question first to provide an example. Provide visual cues for the physical activities stated (broom for chores, soccer ball, etc.)

Make It Fun!

Game Title: “Rock-Paper-Scissors Fitness Frenzy”

Set-Up:

1. **Pair Up** Students find a partner and stand facing each other.
2. **Rock, Paper, Scissors, Shoot!** Students play one round of rock, paper, scissors. Losing partner performs five repetitions of an exercise of their choice while the winning partner cheers them on. Repeat. **After 2-3 rounds have the students change partners.**



Lesson 4 – Sports Skills Training

Lesson 4 Objectives, Equipment, and Estimated Set-up Time

Objectives: (1) Perform drills that enhance agility, reaction time, and coordination
(2) Demonstrate proper technique for 3–5 sport-specific skills

Equipment: High 5 Cards, 5 Basketballs, 5 Footballs, 5 Soccer Balls

Estimated Set-up Time: 5 minutes

Activity A (2-4 minutes): Introduce the High 5 Level One Plank Hold

“Today we are going to develop skills to perform a **Plank Hold**, by performing a **Knee Plank**. If you already know how to do a **Knee Plank**, you will have the opportunity to improve and challenge yourself. Our core includes abdominal and back muscles.”

“Find a space on the floor and kneel. Place your forearms on the ground with your elbows directly under your shoulders. Your knees should remain on the floor, and your body should form a straight line from your head to your knees (demonstrate).”



“Hold this Knee Plank position for 5 seconds, then rest for 5 seconds. Focus on keeping your back straight and core tight. Repeat two more times, trying to increase the time you hold as you get stronger.”

Activity B (5-6 minutes): Knee Plank Exercise Modifications

“Now that you know how to perform a High 5 Inchworm, let’s keep practicing so you feel comfortable trying it on your own!”

“If you can perform the **Knee Plank** and would like to keep practicing it, you can do 3x10-second holds, with a 15-second rest in between.”

“If you feel confident in your Knee Planks and want to try the **High 5 Plank Hold**, you can do 3x10 second holds, with a 15-second rest in between.”

“If you would like to strengthen your abs without doing planks, you can do 3x5 **Seated Abdominal Holds** (5-10 second holds each).”

Progression Challenge: “If you feel confident in your High 5 Plank Hold, lift one of your feet up off the ground while holding the plank position. Repeat with the other foot and continue to alternate between feet.”

Exercise Progression:
High 5 Plank Hold



Starting Exercise:
Knee Plank Hold



Alternative:
Seated Abdominal
Contractions



“Now, we are going to use sports drills to improve both our skills and fitness. A strong core helps athletes perform better in sports and in our favorite physical activities. Practicing sport-specific skills will help improve your overall fitness.”

Choose one sport or several. Set up 4-6 stations with drills that mimic fitness training, such as 30 seconds of skill practice followed by 30 seconds of rest. Include at least one station focused on core strength.

Station examples-work for 30 seconds, rest for 30 seconds (mimicking intervals):

- Dribble basketball around cones
- Football agility shuffles
- Toe taps on soccer ball
- High 5 Plank Hold

****TIP: Consider using Special Olympics’ sport-specific warm-up or cool-down resources included in Appendix E before or after the completion of this activity.*****

Unified Teammate Support

Remove cones and allow straight line dribbling for students as needed. Use lower hoop options for lay ups if needed. Consider adding a tactile marker (e.g., a foam block) under the abdomen to provide sensory feedback on maintaining alignment.

Educator Exercise Science Tip

Small-sided games, like 3v3 soccer or basketball, mimic high-intensity interval training (HIIT) by combining bursts of activity with rest, while also improving sports skills. Have students play for 3 minutes, then rest for 3 minutes.

Make It Fun!

Basketball Capture the Flag: End the sports skills circuit with a familiar game of capturing the flag. Split students up into teams of equal number and assign each student a number. Place a basketball in the center of the gym. Instruct the students to run towards the basketball when their number is called. The two selected students must try to score a basket before a 30 second timer ends.



Lesson 5 – Sports Skills Training & Your Heart in Action

Lesson 5 Objectives, Equipment, and Estimated Set-up Time

Objectives: (1) Understand the role of the heart during physical activity. (2) Identify ways to measure heart rate before and after exercise

Equipment: 3 Soccer Balls, 6 Bean Bags, 3 Hula Hoops, 10-12 Floor Spots, 4 Kick Balls

Estimated Set-up Time: 7-8 minutes

Activity A (10-15 minutes): Small Group Circuit Training

Set up the sports skills training circuit like lesson three. Keep the **Plank** exercise so students can continue to practice the version they chose, or progress to the next version. For variety, select different sports skills or training exercises, for more practice select the same exercises.



Before the circuit:

“Before we begin the circuit, let’s try to feel your heartbeat. During the circuit we’ll check for it again to see if it’s faster or slower than before.”

Here are some simple and direct speaking cues for guiding students to feel their heartbeat. Choose the most appropriate for your class or provide a couple of options.

Chest: “Place your hand over the left side of your chest, right below your collarbone. Press gently and stay still. Can you feel a soft ‘thump-thump’ under your hand? That’s your heart beating!”

Neck: “Using two fingers, gently press the side of your neck, just below your jawline and next to your windpipe. Don’t press too hard—stay still and feel for a pulsing sensation.”

Wrist: “Hold out one arm with your palm facing up. Using two fingers from your other hand, place them just below your thumb on the inside of your wrist. Press gently until you feel a steady beat.”

Activity B (5-10 minutes): Your Heart in Action

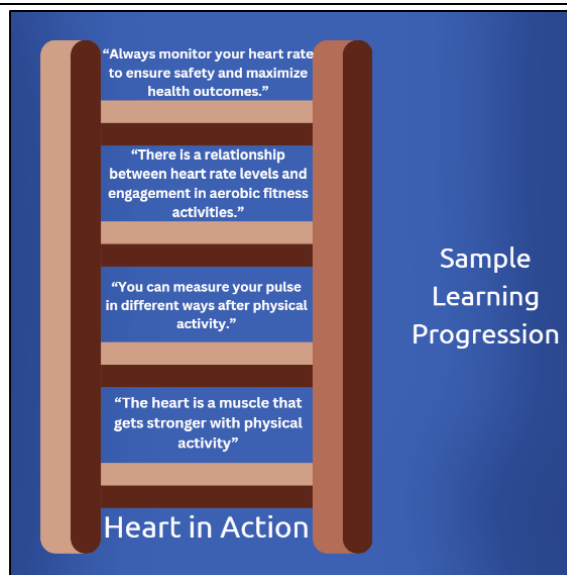


After the circuit, students gather for a group discussion. Ask students if they noticed anything about their heart during the circuit using the following prompts ordered in a learning progression at the bottom of this activity.

- **Question 1:** “When you were dribbling the basketball or running between cones, did you notice what happened to your heartbeat? Did it start to beat faster or slower?”
 - **Teacher Response 1:** “That’s right, it beats faster because your heart is working hard to send more blood and oxygen to your muscles so you can keep moving!”
- **Question 2:** “Think back to when you were doing the lay-ups. Why do you think your heart was beating faster during these exercises? How does a faster heartbeat help you during sports?”
 - **Teacher Response 2:** “A faster heartbeat helps your muscles get the energy they need, which is why your heart speeds up when you’re doing something active.”



- **Question 3:** “How did your body feel when you were dribbling compared to when you were doing the Plank?”
 - **Teacher Response 3:**
“Monitoring your heart rate shows how steady-state activities keep it consistent, but high-intensity intervals cause spikes that your body can’t sustain for as long, which is why you need rest between bursts of effort.”



Unified Teammate Support

Assign groups or Teammates different prompts (selected based on ability). Unified Teammate can answer the question first to provide an example.

Educator Exercise Science Tip

Heart rates over 200 beats per minute are normal and expected when healthy children participate in active play, fitness training, or sport. During high-intensity bouts all-out (meaning your heart will be beating fast and you’ll be working as hard as you can) are encouraged.

Make It Fun!

Zone Tag: Conclude Activity B with a familiar game of tag with a twist. Assign one or two students as taggers. Pick three colors and assign a corresponding walking speed (i.e. Red = walking, Yellow = brisk walk, Blue = speed walk). Taggers and remaining students must walk at this speed during the entire round. After 30 seconds at a specific color, have students stop and measure their heart rate. Have them discuss the differences that they felt after each speed.



Lesson 6 - Interval Training

Lesson 6 Objectives, Equipment, Estimated Set-up Time

Objectives: (1) Identify different types of interval training and their purposes (2) Learn how to modify exercise intensity and duration

Equipment: High 5 Cards, High 5 Guides

Estimated Set-up Time: 4-5 minutes

Activity A (2-4 minutes): Introduce the High 5 Level One Squat

“Today we are going to develop skills to perform a **High 5 Squat**. We are all going to start with a Wall Squat. If you already know how to Wall Squat with good form, you will have the opportunity to improve and challenge yourself.”

“Find a space and stand with your back against the wall. Your feet should be as wide as your shoulders and a little more than a ruler’s length away from the wall. Your arms hang at your sides.” (demonstrate)



“Keep your heels on the ground and slowly slide your back down the wall by bending your knees, lowering your body until your thighs are parallel to the floor, or as low as comfortable. Ensure your knees are aligned with your ankles and not extending past your toes.”

“Hold this squat position for 5 seconds, then push through your heels to slide back up the wall to the starting position without using your arms.”

Activity B (5-6 minutes): Squat Exercise Modifications

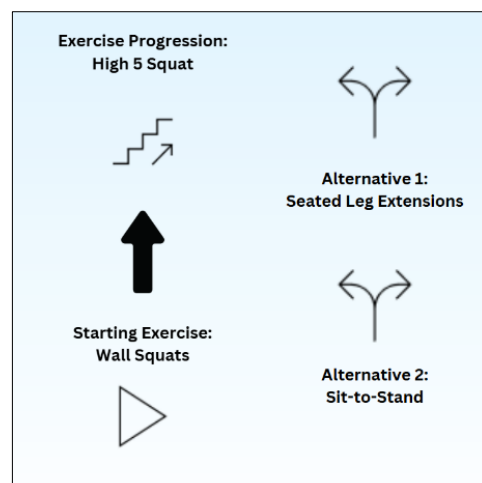
“Now that you know how to perform a High 5 Inchworm, let’s keep practicing so you feel comfortable trying it on your own!”

“If you can perform the **Wall Squat** and would like to keep practicing it you can do 3x8, 30 sec. rest.”

“If you feel confident in your wall squats and want to try the **High 5 Squat**, you can do 3x10, 30 sec. rest”.

“If you would like to practice your technique before doing more squats, you can practice the **Sit-to-Stand**.”

“If you would like to strengthen your leg muscles without squatting, you can do 3x8 **Seated Leg Extensions** (each leg).”





Progression Challenge: “If you feel confident in your High 5 Squat, you can try a Squat with a Jump. At the bottom of the squat, lift your arms up and jump up as high as you can and return to the starting position.”

Activity C (7-10 minutes): Interval Training



“We’re going to work on endurance with interval training, which means doing short bursts of hard exercise followed by a break. This strengthens your heart and improves your endurance, so you can exercise longer and at higher levels. There are many ways you can do interval training. Today we will try Tabata.”

“In Tabata, we’ll perform each exercise for 20 seconds at full effort, followed by a 10-second rest. After each rest, we’ll go right into the next exercise. We’ll go through all four exercises and repeat the cycle for 8 rounds. The whole workout will take about 4 minutes, so stay focused, give your best effort, and have fun!”

Choose four High 5 Level 1 or Level 2 endurance exercises. You can do this workout as a large group or divide into small groups, depending on your class size and space available. Make sure each group has the same exercises in the same order so that you can coach technique to everyone.

Unified Teammate Support

Have someone stand with the person demonstrating the original exercise and have the second person offer alternative exercises based on student needs, such as seated marching, seated punches, or modified jumping jacks.

Make It Fun!

End the interval training session with an **Interval Cone Dash**. Split the students up into two groups of equal number, and have them stand one behind the other on one side of the gym or space. Set up one cone at the opposite end of each line (approximately 50 feet away). Instruct the student at the front of each line to run or walk to the opposite cone, touch it, and turn back towards their line. Have the student give a high five to the next student competing. A round is over when every student has participated. At the end of each round of walking or running, have the students check their pulse and discuss the differences that they felt at each speed.



Lesson 7 – Interval Training, Changes to the Body and Recovery

Lesson 7 Objectives, Equipment, Estimated Set-up Time

Objectives: (1) Demonstrate proper form in 4–6 interval exercises (2) Reflect on how exercise affects energy, mood, and self-confidence

Equipment: High 5 Cards, High 5 Guides

Estimated Set-up Time: 4-5 minutes

Activity A (5-10 minutes): Core Practice



"We are going to start our fitness session today with a core strength exercise. You can choose one core exercise to do for 1 minute. You are going to do the exercise for as many seconds as you can and take a short 5 second rest when you need to. Start again after you recover until we reach one minute. Try to challenge yourself."

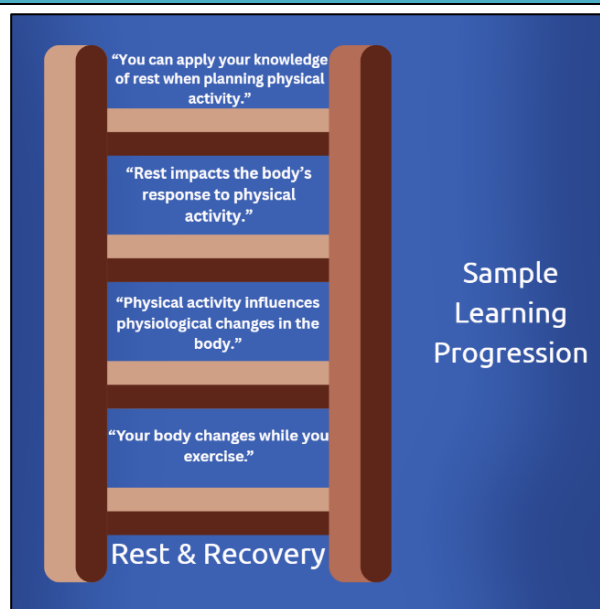
"You can choose to do 1) a **Plank** or **Knee Plank Hold**, 2) **Curl-ups** or 3) a **Seated Abdominal Contraction**."

Activity B (5-10 minutes): Exercise, Your Body and Rest

You'll see three questions for discussion below. Use these prompts to connect fitness concepts to interval training. Questions align with the learning progression diagram to the right →

Choose one or more questions listed below for a quick discussion before beginning the training. After the discussion, using the four exercises from lesson five, your students will perform interval training, 30 seconds of work and 30 seconds of active recovery.

- **Question 1:** "Do you notice your heart beating faster when you exercise?"
 - **Explanation 1:** "As you move, your heart works harder to pump blood to your muscles so they can keep moving. In interval workouts, your heart beats faster during the hard parts, then slows down during rest to help you recover."
- **Question 2:** "Do you know why your heart beats faster and you breathe harder when you exercise?"
 - **Explanation 2:** "When you exercise, your body needs more oxygen to fuel your muscles, so your heart pumps faster and you breathe harder to deliver that





oxygen. In interval workouts, this happens during the intense parts, and during rest, your heart slows down to help you recover."

- **Question 3:** "How does taking short breaks during an interval workout help you perform better?"
 - **Explanation 3:** "Rest in interval training gives your muscles and heart time to recover, so when you start the next intense interval, you can work at full effort again."

Interval Instructions: Choose 3-5 High 5 level one or two endurance exercises. Use the Core Exercises for active rest.



Activity Prompts:

"We are going to practice our endurance exercises again, but this time we are going to work for 30 seconds and then do an active rest for 30 seconds."

"Active recovery is when you perform low-intensity movements or a different type of exercise during the rest periods, rather than stopping completely."

"After you do the endurance exercise for 30 seconds you will do your core exercise from the beginning of the class for 30 seconds. This keeps strengthening your muscles while allowing your heart rate to recover for the next high-intensity exercise."

Unified Teammate Support

If there are a range of cognitive abilities, consider assigning small groups or pairs and giving appropriate questions to each group/pair.

Educator Exercise Science Tip

Did you know if students don't have stable shoulders, strong triceps, or the ability to engage the core, push-ups can be challenging? It's a complex exercise even on your knees, which is why incline push-ups and shoulder presses are good alternatives.

Make It Fun!

Wrap up this interval training with a game or two of **Rest Zone Tag**. Dedicate a small space in the field/area of play to be the "Rest Zone" where students that get tagged will go to perform a recovery exercise for 30 seconds. Once they perform the exercise, they are free to rejoin the game. Switch taggers after rounds of 3-4 minutes.



Lesson 8 – EMOM (Every Minute on the Minute)

Lesson 8 Objectives, Equipment, Estimated Set-up Time

Objectives: (1) Practice how to complete simple movements during timed intervals. (2) Understand how to balance effort and rest to complete each minute successfully.

Equipment: High 5 Cards, High 5 Guides

Estimated Set-up Time: 4-5 minutes

Activity A (2-4 minutes): Introduce High 5 Knee Push-Ups



“Today we are going develop skills to perform a **High 5 Knee Push-up** by performing a **Wall/Incline Push-Ups**. If you already know how to do Wall/Incline Push-Ups, you will have the opportunity to improve and challenge yourself.”



“Find a place along the wall or bench. Put your hands on the wall or bench with your shoulder in line with your wrists.”

“Keep your body in a straight line from head to heels by using your core muscles. Bend your elbows and lower your chest toward the surface. Do not reach with your head.”

Activity B (3-4 minutes): Push-up Exercise Modifications



“Now that you know how to perform a High 5 Inchworm, let’s keep practicing so you feel comfortable trying it on your own!”



“If you can perform a **Wall or Incline Push-Up** and would like to keep practicing it, you can do 3x8 with a 30-second rest in between.”



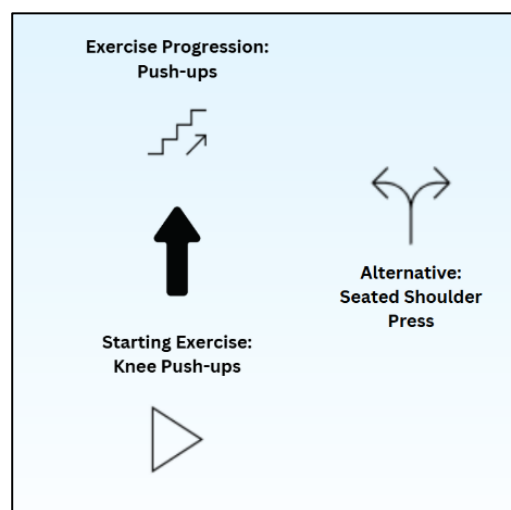
“If you feel confident in your Incline Push-Ups and want to try a **High 5 Knee Push-Up** you can move to the floor and do 3x8, with a 30-second rest in between.”



“If you feel confident in your High 5 Knee Push-Up you can lift your knees off the ground and do a **High 5 Push-Up**.”



“If you would like to strengthen your upper body without doing push-ups, you can do 3x10 **Seated Shoulder Presses**”





Activity C (5-7 minutes): Every Minute on the Minute



“To get the benefits of exercise, you need to challenge your body. Today, you'll challenge yourself with an EMOM workout. It's normal for your heart to beat fast, your muscles to get tired, and to sweat a bit—that's your body adapting!”

Use a variety of strength and endurance level 1 or 2 High 5 cards, focusing on exercises like **Push-ups, Squats, Ski Jumps, and Curl-Ups**, which allow for set repetitions. Consider your students' abilities when choosing exercises, break into small groups if needed, or let students pick from a provided list.

“Now we are going to do an **EMOM workout** (Every Minute on the Minute), ' meaning you have 1 minute to complete each exercise, and any time left in the minute is your rest.”

“In the first minute, you'll do 10 (Push-ups). If you finish in 30 seconds, you get to rest for the rest of the minute. When the second minute starts, you'll do 15 (Squats). In the third minute, you'll do 20 (Ski Jumps), and for the fourth minute, you'll do 10 (Curl-ups).”

Para-Educator/Unified Teammate Support

Assign an exercise to each pair of Unified Teammates to lead for the class, with one student demonstrating the High 5 exercise and the other an alternate version (e.g., knee push-ups or seated shoulder press) so the rest of the class can follow the exercise that they choose.

Make It Fun! (5 minutes): EMOM Partner Edition

Try out “**EMOM Partner Edition**” at the end of Activity C! Have each student pick a partner and stand facing each other. On the educator's signal one partner will start performing an exercise of their choice (one that they learned in Activity C) for one minute while the other follows along. At the end of a minute the other partner must perform a different exercise while the other follows their lead. End the game after 2-3 rounds.



Lesson 9 – Supersets/Food & Hydration

Lesson 9 Objectives, Equipment, Estimated Set-up Time

Objectives: (1) Demonstrate proper form for 2–3 pairs of superset exercises
(2) Explain why hydration is essential for performance, focus and safety during superset workouts
(3) Learn how to choose drinks and foods that support physical activity

Equipment: High 5 Guides & Nutrition Printables (Appendix F)

Set-up Time: 5-7 minutes

Activity A (2-4 minutes): High 5 Knee Push-Ups and Squats (superset!)



“Today, we’re going to start by practicing push-ups using a training technique called Supersets. A **superset means doing two exercises back-to-back without resting** in between. You can target the same muscle group (like sit-ups and planks) or different ones (like push-ups and squats) to increase intensity, save time, and keep your heart rate up.

“Last class, you chose the Push-Up version that worked best for you—**Wall, Incline, Knee, Shoulder Press, or Full-Body**—and you can do the same today. We’ll be super setting Push-Ups with Squats (see appendix for variations). Let’s get started by doing 5 push-ups and 5 squats!”

Activity B (10-15 minutes): Fuel Your Body Racetrack



“Today we will be doing an activity called ‘**Fuel Your Body Racetrack**’ to learn how some types of foods and water help us during physical activities. Just like a car needs the right fuel to run, our bodies need the right food and water to stay active and healthy.”

“There are many food groups and nutrients that support our health, but today we’re focusing on just three: **Carbohydrates, Protein, and Water**. This doesn’t mean the others aren’t important, but these three have a big impact on exercise and performance.”

“The **Carbohydrates** corner represents foods like bread, rice, pasta, and fruits, which give us quick energy to keep moving.”

“The **Protein** corner represents foods like chicken, beans, and yogurt, which help build and repair muscles after exercise.”

“The **Water** corner represents plain water, which keeps us hydrated and helps prevent muscle cramps or fatigue.”

“I’ll ask a question, and you’ll ‘drive’ to the corner you think is the best answer. Once there, talk with others about why you picked that corner. After each question, we’ll meet back at the starting line and do a quick superset of **5 Push-Ups and 5 Squats** together before the next question.”

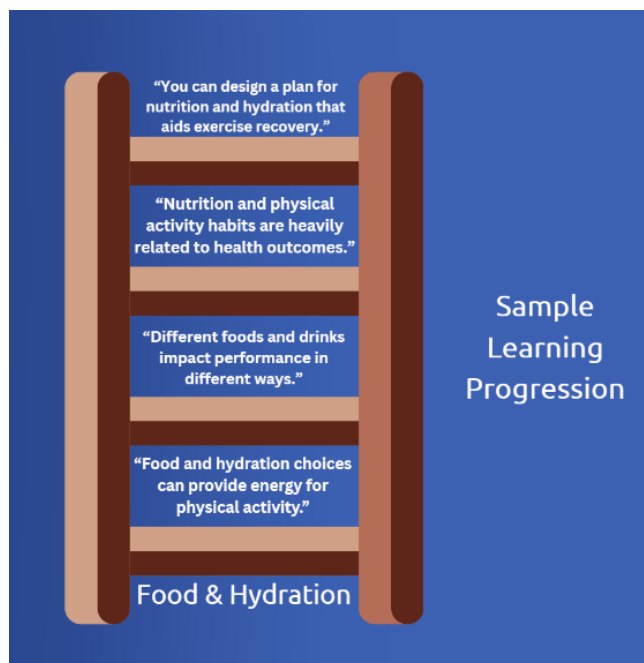


Question order aligns with the learning progression on the next page.

(sample answer is provided, but others may not be wrong):



1. If you're about to run a race and need quick energy, which corner will give you the best fuel? (**Answer:** Carbohydrates – provides quick, easily accessible energy.)
2. After playing soccer, which corner will help repair and strengthen your muscles? (**Answer:** Protein – helps rebuild and repair muscle fibers. Water/Carbohydrates play a role too.)
3. It's a hot day, and you're sweating a lot playing a game. Which corner is best to visit throughout the game? (**Answer:** Water – prevents dehydration)
4. If you're feeling tired and your muscles are cramping, which corner should you visit? (**Answer:** Water – hydration prevents cramps and keeps muscles functioning properly.)
5. If you're training for a long-distance run, which corner gives you the best fuel to keep going? (**Answer:** Carbohydrates – steady energy for endurance activities.)
6. Which corner would you pick to build muscle after lifting weights? (**Answer:** Protein – helps muscles grow stronger and repair after resistance training.)
7. If you snack on watermelon between games, which corner would it fall into and what benefit would it provide? (**Answer:** Both Carbohydrates and Water – watermelon offers natural sugars for quick energy (Carbs) and the high-water content to help with hydration.)



Alternative Activity B: Meal Match Up



"Today we will be doing an activity called '**Meal Match Up**' to learn how some types of foods and water help us during physical activities."

"There are many food groups and nutrients that support our health, but today we're focusing on just three: **Carbohydrates, Protein, and Water**. This doesn't mean the others aren't important, but these three have a big impact on exercise and performance."



"The **Carbohydrate** corner represents foods like bread, rice, pasta, and fruits, which give us quick energy to keep moving."

"The **Protein** corner represents foods like chicken, beans, and yogurt, which help build and repair muscles after exercise."

"The **Water** corner represents plain water, which keeps us hydrated and helps prevent muscle cramps or fatigue."



Activity Prompts/Instructions: "I'll assign each of you one of these nutrients, make sure to remember which one you are. On my signal you must go find two classmates from the other two groups. Once you form a team of one carbohydrate, one protein, and one water, each of you must think of an example of that nutrient (students assigned water can pick a healthy beverage alternative)."

****Repeat 2-3 times. Assign different nutrient types until all participants have been assigned to each group.****

Unified Teammate Support

Offer students multiple ways to reach the corners, such as walking, rolling, or skipping. Pairs or Paras should demonstrate these different options.

Educator Exercise Science Tip

Muscular strength and coordination are crucial for performing motor skills like moving our bodies or objects. These two elements work together to make movements strong and accurate. Developing both helps children perform various physical activities energetically and proficiently, encouraging lifelong physical activity.



Lesson 10 – Supersets

Lesson 10 Objectives, Equipment, Estimated Set-up Time

Objectives: (1) Demonstrate proper form for 2–3 superset pairs using bodyweight
(2) Learn how to construct a superset with different exercise variations

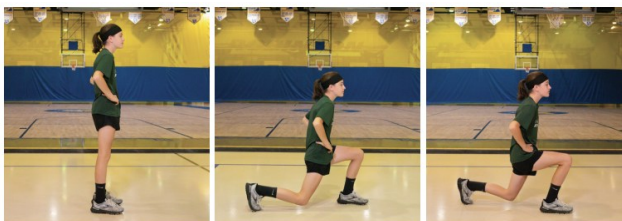
Equipment: High 5 Cards

Set-up Time: 2-3 minutes

Activity A (2-4 minutes): Introduce the High 5 Level Two Backward Lunge



“Today we are going develop skills to perform a **High 5 Backward Lunge** by performing a **Stationary Lunge**. If you already know how to do a Stationary Lunge, you will have the opportunity to improve and challenge yourself.”



“Start by standing in a split stance with your right foot forward and left foot back, keeping your feet about shoulder-width apart for balance. You will stay on the ball of your foot/toes on the back leg”

“Lower your body by bending both knees until your front thigh is parallel to the ground and your back knee almost touches the floor. Push through your front heel to return to the starting position without changing your stance.”

Activity B (5-6 minutes): Lunge Exercise Progression



“Now that you know how to perform a High 5 Inchworm, let’s keep practicing so you feel comfortable trying it on your own!”



“If you can perform **Stationary Lunges** and would like to keep practicing, you can do 2x8 lunges on each side”



“If you feel confident in stationary lunges and want to try a **High 5 Backward Lunge**, start with feet together, and hands on your hips. Take a big step backward with your right foot and bend both knees so that your right knee is almost touching the ground. Do 2x8 on each leg.”

Exercise Progression: Backward Lunge



Starting Exercise:
Stationary Lunge



Alternative 1:
Seated Leg Extension
Pulses



Alternative 2:
Kneel-to-Stand





"If you want to practice balance and pushing through your front heel rather than toes, you can do 3x8 **Kneel-to-Stands**, where you start kneeling and stand up one leg at a time, then return to kneeling without banging your back knee on the ground."



"If you'd like to strengthen your legs while seated, you can do 2x10 **Seated Leg Extension Pulses**, focusing on squeezing your leg muscles each time."



Progression Challenge: "If you feel confident in High 5 Backward Lunges, you can add a jump while switching legs into the movement."

Activity C (10-15 minutes): Superset Workout in Pairs



"To build strength and fitness, you need to push your body a bit more each time—whether it's doing more reps, lifting heavier, or holding a position longer. Today's **superset workout** will be a chance to see how much more you can do! If it feels tougher than usual, that's good—it means your muscles are working harder, which is how you get stronger over time!"

Each pair of Unified Teammates will complete both exercises in each superset twice (two sets per exercise) before rotating to the next station. Multiple pairs may be working at each station simultaneously; ensure pairs take turns and maintain adequate space for safety and ease of movement.

Superset Station 1:

Teammate A: **16 Backward Lunges**

Teammate B: **20 Quick Punches**

*After completing it twice, rest for 30 seconds before moving to **Superset 2**.*

Superset Station 2:

Teammate A: **15 Squats**

Teammate B: **10 Push-Ups**

*After completing it twice, rest for 30 seconds before moving to **Superset 3**.*

Superset Station 3:

Teammate A: **30-Second Plank**

Teammate B: **15 Curl-Ups**

After completing the stations, ask students if station 3 felt more difficult because the superset worked the same muscles in each exercise.



Unified Teammate Support

Use rest times to briefly review proper form. Adjust rest times if needed based on students' fitness levels.

Educator Exercise Science Tip

Youth with disabilities face a higher risk of health problems like diabetes and heart disease due to lack of physical activity and increased screen time. Similarly, adults with disabilities are less active and have higher rates of chronic diseases, which is why building healthy habits early can help youth stay active and lower these risks as they get older.

Make It Fun!

Wrap up the pair superset workout with small games of **Simon Says**. Have one member of each pair come up with their own superset of one upper body strength movement and one lower body strength movement. Each pair will complete their superset together and encourage one another to use proper form.



Lesson 11 – Side Leg Raises and Teammate Challenge

Lesson Objectives, Equipment, Estimated Set-up Time

Objective: (1) Practice effective teamwork and communication strategies with a peer.

Equipment: High 5 Cards

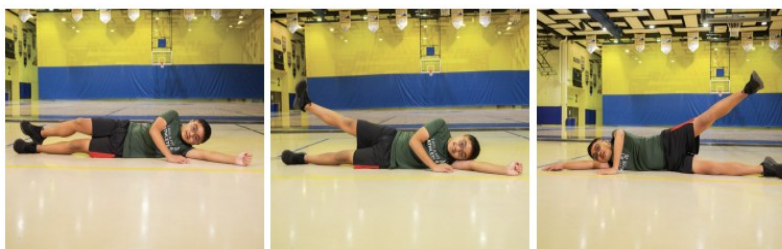
Set-up Time: 3-4 minutes

Activity A (2-4 minutes): Introduce the High 5 Side Leg Raise



"Today, we are going to learn a lower body exercise called the **High 5**

Side Leg Raise. If you already know how to do a Side Leg Raise, you'll have the opportunity to improve and challenge yourself."



"Start by lying on your right side on the floor, with your body in a straight line and your legs stacked on top of each other. Rest your head on your right arm and place your left hand on the floor in front of you for balance." *This exercise can also be done standing. Have students stand upright with their hands resting on a wall or chair for balance. Instruct them to lift one leg straight out to the side (demonstrate)

"Slowly lift your left leg up toward the ceiling, keeping it straight with your toes pointing forward. Lift up and pause, and then slowly lower it back down without letting your leg rest completely. Make sure your bottom leg stays glued to the floor." (Demonstrate.)

Activity B (5-6 minutes): Side Leg Raise Exercise Modifications



"Now that you know how to perform a High 5 Inchworm, let's keep practicing so you feel comfortable trying it on your own!"



"If you can perform **High 5 Side Leg Raises** and want to keep practicing lying down or standing, you can do 2x12 leg raises on each side."



"If you feel confident with side leg raises, try the **Side Leg Raise with a Pulse**. Once the leg reaches the top of the movement, they should perform small, controlled pulses by lifting and lowering the leg slightly. Do 2x20 on each side. *This can be done standing."



"If you'd like to strengthen your legs in a seated position, try 3x10 of a **Seated Clamshell**."

Exercise Progression:
Side Leg Raise w/
Pulse



Starting Exercise:
Side Leg Raises



Alternative:
Seated Clamshell



Activity C (10-15 minutes): Teammate Challenge

Divide the class into pairs of Unified Teammates. Each pair receives a set of High 5 cards.

One Teammate in each pair picks a card, decides the number of repetitions (e.g., 10 squats, 15 ski jumps), and then goes to challenge another pair to complete the same exercise.

Both pairs do the two exercise together, cheering each other on.

After finishing the second exercise, both pairs separate and find new pairs to challenge.

Unified Teammate Support

Assist pairs with choosing exercises and exercise variations that match their skill levels.

Educator Exercise Science Tip

Youth with disabilities can often do more than expected and can learn new skills, though they typically have lower fitness levels and higher fatigue. You should tailor programs to include brief, low- to moderate-intensity activities with rest periods, gradually increasing intensity over time.



Lesson 12 – Reflection and Fitness Goals

Lesson 12 Objectives, Equipment, Estimated Set-up Time

Objectives: (1) Reflect on the skills acquired over the past several weeks (2) Identify exercise completion successes and areas for improvement (3) Learn how to set your own fitness goals based on your abilities and interests

Equipment: High 5 Guides or Cards

Estimated Set-up Time: 3-4 minutes

Activity A (10 minutes): Create Your Own Workouts!

"Today, we're going to use what we've learned to create our own small group workouts! You can choose a focus—strength, flexibility, or endurance—based on a fitness goal or sport you want to improve in. At that station, you'll pick a level and do all the High 5 exercises in the deck for 30 seconds each. Encourage your group and work hard!"

Set up three areas (**strength, flexibility, endurance**) and have multiple sets of cards or enlarged copies) of just the exercises in that specific category to reduce confusion.

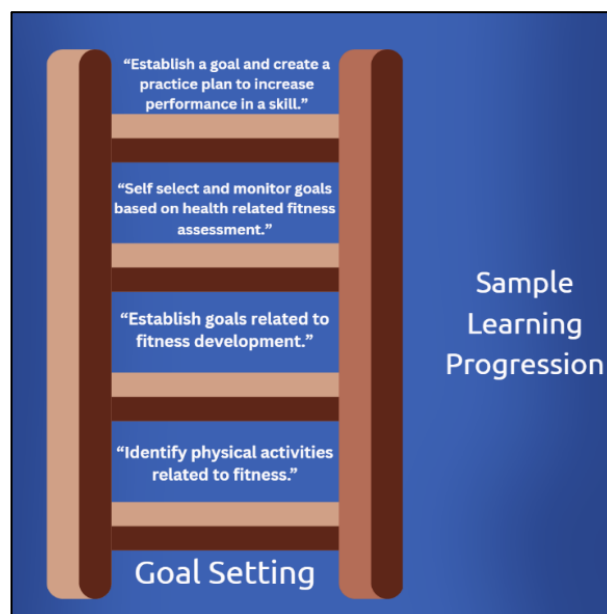
Activity B (10 minutes): Reflection and Goal Discussion

"Let's reflect on what we've accomplished using High 5 cards and how you can continue to improve your fitness and set personal goals."



Use the questions listed below for a group discussion. Prompts are ordered in a sample learning progression to the right →

1. "Which High 5 exercises did you enjoy the most, and how did they make your body feel?"
2. "Think about a few High 5 exercises that help with endurance, strength, or flexibility. Can you tell me how each one helps your fitness, like building strong muscles or making your heart healthier?"
3. "What's one High 5 exercise or activity that you'd like to get better at? Is it related to endurance, strength, or flexibility?"
4. "If you want to improve a specific High 5 exercise or a skill in another sport you enjoy, what small steps could you take each week to get better?"





5. “Looking back at the High 5 unit, which area of fitness—endurance, strength, or flexibility—do you want to continue working on and why?” How would improving in this area help you in other activities or sports you like?”
6. “What strategy will you use to monitor your progress? Would you use a fitness log, keep track of your High 5 card exercises, or ask a friend to help you stay on track?”

Unified Teammate Support

Use “goal buddies” so students set and talk about goals together.

Educator Exercise Science Tip

Physical activity is a powerful way to boost cognitive function in youth. Studies show that regular exercise can improve memory, attention, and overall brain function in individuals with and without intellectual disabilities.

Make It Fun!

Fitness Jeopardy: End the lesson plan on the right note with a game of jeopardy that allows students to test what they’ve learned! Have students split up into even numbered teams. Ask exercise related questions, such as those listed above, and challenge the answering team to act out their answers for added fun!



Appendix A: Strength Exercise Progressions and Modification Options

This section includes Level 1, 2 and 3 strength exercises.

Curl Up (Level 1)

Difficulty Modification-Assisted Curl-Up:

Provide students with assistance by allowing them to use their hands to push off the ground slightly as they curl up or by anchoring their feet under a stable object.

Progression-Sit-Up:

Instruct students to lie on their back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Have them cross their arms over their chest or place their fingertips behind their ears. Guide them to engage their stomach and lift their entire upper body off the ground, reaching towards their knees in a controlled motion. Once they reach an upright seated position, they should slowly lower back down to the starting position.

Alternate Exercise- Seated Abdominal Contractions (for students with neck discomfort or those with an inability to lie on the ground):

Have students sit upright in a sturdy chair with feet flat on the floor. Instruct them to place their hands on their abdomen, take a deep breath, and as they exhale, contract their abdominal muscles, pulling their belly button towards their spine. Hold the contraction for 3-5 seconds, then relax.

Arm and Leg Raises (Level 1)

Difficulty Modification- Arm or Leg Raises:

Have students begin by raising only one arm or one leg at a time while keeping the other limbs on the ground for stability. Instruct them to raise their arm or leg, hold briefly, and then lower back down with control.

Progression -Same Side Arm and Leg Raises:

Instruct students to raise their right arm and right leg together, maintaining balance and control. After holding briefly, they should lower back down with control.

Alternate Exercise-Seated Arm and Leg Extensions:

Have students sit upright in a chair with feet flat on the floor. Instruct them to extend one leg straight out while reaching the opposite arm forward. After holding briefly, they should return to



the starting position and repeat on the other side. This alternate exercise is suitable for students who have difficulty kneeling or balancing.

Plank Hold (Level 1)

Difficulty Modification-Knee Plank:

Have students begin by performing the plank on their knees instead of their toes. Instruct them to keep their body in a straight line from their head to their knees, with their core engaged and back flat.

Progression-Forearm Plank with Alternating Leg Lifts:

Instruct students to lower down onto their forearms rather than hands, keeping their body in a straight line. To increase the challenge, they can lift one leg slightly off the ground, hold briefly, and then alternate legs, maintaining core stability throughout the exercise.

Alternate Exercise- Seated Resistance Hold:

Have students sit upright in a chair with their feet flat on the floor. Instruct them to hold a light weight with their arms extended straight out in front of them at shoulder height, keeping the arms parallel to the floor. Guide them to engage their core muscles and maintain an upright posture while holding this position. Hold for 10-30 seconds, then relax. This alternate exercise is suitable for students who have difficulty kneeling.

Squat (Level 1)

Difficulty Modification-Sit to Stand:

Have students sit on the edge of a chair with their feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. Instruct them to stand up using their leg muscles, keeping their body weight right around where their shoes are tied. Then, guide them to slowly sit back down, maintaining control throughout the movement.

Regression-Wall Squats:

Ask students to stand with their back against a wall, feet shoulder-width apart and positioned about two feet away from the wall. Instruct them to slowly slide their back down the wall by bending their knees, lowering their body until their thighs are parallel to the floor or as low as comfortable. Ensure their knees stay aligned with their ankles, not extending past their toes. Hold the squat position for 5 seconds, then press through their heels to slide back up the wall to the starting position.



Alternate Exercise-Seated Leg Extensions:

Students will sit in a chair with feet flat on the ground. Instruct them to lift one leg, extending it straight out in front of them. Ensure their leg is fully extended, with the knee straight but not locked. Hold the extended position for 2-3 seconds, focusing on engaging the quadriceps. Then, guide them to slowly lower their leg back to the starting position, controlling the movement as their foot returns to the floor. Repeat with the other leg. This alternate exercise is suitable for students with limited joint mobility or non-weight bearing.

Plank Hold with Straight Arm Raise (Level 2)

Difficulty Modification-Wall, Incline, Knee, or Full Plank:

Have students stand facing a wall with their hands placed flat against it at shoulder height. Instruct them to walk their feet back slightly, creating a diagonal line with their body. They should engage their core and hold the position, ensuring their body remains in a straight line from head to heels. This can also be done with hands on a bench or floor with shoulders above the wrists.

Progression - Forearm Plank with Reaches:

Instruct them to perform the plank on their forearms and, while maintaining the position, lift and extend one arm forward to tap the floor in front of them. Alternate arms while keeping the hips stable and core engaged.

Alternate Exercise-Seated Core Hold:

Have students sit upright in a chair with their feet flat on the floor and hands gripping the sides of the chair. Instruct them to lean back slightly while keeping their back straight and core engaged, lifting their feet an inch or two off the floor. They should hold this position while maintaining a straight back, simulating the engagement of the core muscles in a plank. This alternate exercise is suitable for students unable to do the exercise on the ground.

Knee Push-Ups (Level 2)

Difficulty Modification-Incline Push-Up:

Have students perform push-ups with their hands placed on an elevated surface like a bench or wall. Instruct them to keep their body in a straight line from head to heels, engaging their core and maintaining proper form as they lower their chest toward the surface.



Progression-Full Push-Up (on Toes):

Instruct them to start in a plank position on their toes, with hands directly under their shoulders and body in a straight line from head to heels. Have them bend their elbows to lower their chest toward the ground, then push back up to the starting position, maintaining core engagement and proper form throughout.

Alternate Exercise-Seated Shoulder Press:

Have students sit upright in a sturdy chair with their feet flat on the floor. Instruct them to extend their arms out to the sides and bend their elbows at 90 degrees, so their hands are at shoulder height. Guide them to press their arms upward until they are fully extended overhead, then slowly lower their arms back down to the starting position. Ensure they engage their core to maintain a stable posture throughout the exercise. This alternate exercise is suitable for students who cannot perform a push-up with a rigid core or if they are non-weight-bearing.

*resistance/dumbbells optional

Side Leg Raises (Level 2)

Difficulty Modification-Knee Bent Side Leg Raises:

Have students lie on their side with their bottom leg bent for stability and their top leg slightly bent as well. Instruct them to lift their top leg upward, keeping it slightly bent, and then slowly lower it back down with control.

Progression-Standing Side Abduction Pulses:

Have students stand upright with their hands resting on a wall or chair for balance. Instruct them to lift one leg straight out to the side, keeping the leg extended and toes pointing forward. Once they reach the top of the movement, they should perform small, controlled pulses by lifting and lowering the leg slightly. Repeat on the other side.

Alternate Exercise-Seated Clamshell:

Have students sit upright in a sturdy chair with their feet flat on the floor and knees bent. Instruct them to place their hands on their knees and press their knees outward against their hands, creating resistance. Hold the position for a few seconds, then relax. This exercise focuses on the outer thighs and hips, providing a seated alternative that still targets similar muscles. This alternate exercise is suitable for students with limited hip range of motion or those unable to stand or lay on the ground.



Backward Lunges (Level 2)

Difficulty Modification-Kneel to Stand:

Instruct students to start by kneeling on the floor with one knee up and the other knee down. Have them press through the front foot to stand up, bringing the back foot forward to meet the front foot. Then, guide them to step back into the kneeling position with control.

Regression-Stationary Lunges with Optional Balance Support:

Have students start in a split stance with one foot forward and the other foot back, keeping the front foot flat on the floor and with weight on the ball of the back foot. Instruct them to bend both knees, lowering their body straight down until their back knee is just above the ground. They can use a wall or chair for balance if needed. Once they reach the bottom of the movement, guide them to push back up to the starting position.

Progression-Forward Lunges:

Instruct them to stand upright and take a step forward with one leg, lowering their body until both knees are bent at 90 degrees. Ensure that the front knee stays above the ankle. After reaching the bottom of the movement, they should push through the front heel to return to the starting position.

Alternate Exercise-Seated Leg Extension Pulses:

Have students sit upright in a sturdy chair with their feet flat on the floor. Instruct them to extend one leg straight out in front of them, keeping the leg straight and toes pointing up. Once the leg is fully extended, guide them to perform small, controlled pulses by lifting and lowering the leg slightly. Repeat with the other leg. This exercise targets the quadriceps and helps to build lower body strength without the need to stand or bear weight.

Side Plank (Level 3)

Difficulty Modification-Forearm and Knee Side Plank:

Have students start by lying on their side with their forearm directly under their shoulder and their knees bent at a 90-degree angle. Instruct them to lift their hips off the ground, keeping their body in a straight line from their head to their knees. Guide them to hold this position while maintaining core engagement and balance.



Progression-Side Plank with Leg Lift:

Have them perform a side plank and then lift the top leg while maintaining the side plank position. Instruct them to keep the leg straight and control the movement, focusing on maintaining balance and core stability.

Alternate Exercise-Seated Rotations:

Have students sit upright in a sturdy chair with their feet flat on the floor. Instruct them to cross their arms over their chest or hold a light object in front of them. Guide them to engage their core and slowly rotate their upper body to one side, then return to the center, and rotate to the other side. This exercise targets the obliques and core, providing a seated alternative that still focuses on core stability and strength. This alternate exercise is suitable for students whose shoulders or wrists hurt during side planks or are unable to be on the ground.

Wall Sit Hold (Level 3)

Difficulty Modification-Wall Squat (Sliding Back Down the Wall):

Have students stand with their back against the wall, feet shoulder-width apart. Instruct them to slowly slide their back down the wall into a squat position, then slide back up, maintaining control throughout the movement.

Progression-Wall Sit with Arms Raise:

Instruct them to raise and hold their arms overhead or in front of them while maintaining the squat position.

Alternate Exercise - Seated Leg Extensions:

Have students sit in a chair with their back against the chair and feet flat on the ground. Instruct them to extend one leg straight out in front, hold briefly, then lower it back down. This alternate exercise is suitable for students who are non-weight bearing or have knee discomfort squatting.

Hip Bridge (Level 3)

Difficulty Modification-Hip Bridge with Wider Feet and Hands on Ground:

Have students lie on their back with their feet wider than hip-width apart and hands flat on the ground. Instruct them to lift their hips off the ground, engaging the glutes and lower back, while maintaining balance with the wider stance.



Progression-Single-Leg Hip Bridge:

Students can progress to lifting one leg off the ground while performing the bridge. Instruct them to keep their hips level.

Alternate Exercise-Seated Abduction:

Have students sit upright in a chair with feet flat on the floor. Instruct them to press their knees outward into their hands (placed on the outside of their knees).

Squat Jumps (Level 3)

Difficulty Modification-Squats:

Instruct them to stand with feet shoulder-width apart, bend their knees, and lower their hips as if sitting back into an imaginary chair. Stand back up, engaging the core and glutes.

Progression-Deep Arms Up Squat Jumps:

Instruct students to lower into a squat position holding their hands behind their heads. They should go as low as they can and explosively jump upward. Have them land softly, immediately going into the next squat, focusing on maintaining control and depth.

Alternate Exercise - Seated Leg Extensions:

Have students sit in a chair with their back against the chair and feet flat on the ground. Instruct them to extend one leg straight out in front, hold briefly, then lower it back down. This alternative exercise is suitable for students who are non-weight bearing or have knee discomfort squatting.



Appendix B: Sample Learning Progression Explained & Key Messages

The Benefits of Staying Active-

Key Messages: (1) Recognize that regular physical activity is good for their health. (2) Explain the benefits of physical activity. (3) Identify ways to be physically active. (4) Discuss the benefits of physically active lifestyles as it relates to young adulthood.

Your Heart in Action-

Key Messages: (1) Identify the heart as a muscle that gets stronger with physical activity. (2) Identify location of pulse and provide examples of activities that increase HR. (3) Demonstrate knowledge of HR and describes its relationship to aerobic fitness. (4) Apply heart rate concepts to ensure safety and maximize health-related fitness outcomes.

Changes to the Body and Recovery-

Key Messages: (1) Recognize physiological changes in their body during physical activities. (2) Recognize and explain how physical activity influences physiological changes in their body. (3) Examine how rest impacts the body's response to physical activity. (4) Apply the knowledge of rest when planning regular physical activity

Food & Hydration-

Key Messages: (1) Recognize food and hydration choices that provide energy for physical activity. (2) Describe the impact of food and hydration choices on physical activity. (3) Explain the relationship among nutrition, physical activity and health factors. (4) Identify snacks and food choices that help and hinder performance, recovery and enjoyment during physical activity.

Flexibility, Warmups, & Cool Downs-

Key Messages: (1) Recognize importance of stretching before and after physical activity. (2) Identify the need for warm-up and cool-down relative to various physical activities. (3) Apply knowledge of stretching, warm-up, cool-down, flexibility, and endurance activities. (4) Design and implement a plan that applies knowledge of flexibility training exercises.

Fitness Goal Setting-

Key Messages: (1) Identify physical activities that contribute to fitness. (2) Establish goals related to enhancing fitness development. (3) Self-select and monitor goals based on self-selected health-related fitness assessment. (4) Establish a goal and create a practice plan to improve performance of a self-selected skill.



Appendix C: Terminology

Active recovery – a rest period that involves performing low-intensity movements or a different type of exercise, rather than stopping completely.

Core exercise - any exercise that involves the use of the stomach muscles and back muscles in a coordinated way. Core exercises are designed to strengthen and stabilize the trunk and hip muscles that surround the spine and pelvis.

Intellectual disability - a condition characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Intellectual functioning refers to general mental capacity such as learning and reasoning. Adaptive behavior refers to the conceptual, social, and practical skills learned and performed by people in their daily lives. These limitations begin early in development, typically before age 22.

Progression: Adjusting an exercise to make it more challenging or complex, allowing students to advance in their skills and fitness levels. Progressions help meet individual needs, enabling each student to experience success as they grow.

Difficulty Modification: Modifying an exercise to make it easier or more accessible, ensuring that all students can participate meaningfully. Regression allows students to practice at their own level without feeling discouraged. It recognizes that everyone's fitness journey is unique, and moving back in difficulty can be a valuable step toward inclusion and personal growth.

Sets x Repetitions – in many of the lessons, you will see two numbers expressed like an equation such as 3x12 or 2x10. These numbers represent exercise sets and repetitions (reps). The first number refers to sets and the second number refers to reps. So, 3x12 means that students should complete 3 sets of 12 repetitions of an exercise.

Unified programming - a program that includes activities for students of all abilities. In the case of this resource, Unified means students with and without disabilities coming together on equal terms with ample and appropriate support through fitness activities.

Unified teammate – a student peer with or without a disability who provides reciprocal support to another student. A teammate is not a tutor, but an equal partner in an activity.



Appendix D: High 5 Lessons Complementary Resources

Educator Guide: [High-5-Educators-Guide.pdf](#)

Caregiver Guide: [High-5-Caregivers-Guide.pdf](#)

Ages 12-14:

Cards: [High5Cards 12-14](#)

Guide: [High5Guide 12-14](#)

Video Links

- Level 1 Flexibility – (Butterfly Stretch, Hamstring Scoops, Chest & Shoulder Stretch, T-Rotations): <https://youtu.be/fzwL76YErma>
- Level 1 Endurance – (Marching, Quick Punches, Skier Jumps, Elbow to Knee Touches): <https://youtu.be/fZdRRNeY0E0>
- Level 1 Strength – (Arm and Leg Raises, Curl Ups, Plank Hold, Squats): <https://youtu.be/QHiFC0fRKHQ>
- Level 2 Flexibility – (Wrist & Ankle Rotations, Standing Knee Hugs, Walking Toe Touch, Triceps & Side Stretch): <https://youtu.be/KCW07RdR0SY>
- Level 2 Endurance – (Jogging Place, Ski Jacks, Windmills, Punches with Kicks): <https://youtu.be/viB5G18y1Ts>
- Level 2 Strength – (Knee Push-Ups, Side Leg Raises, Plank Hold with Arm Raises, Reverse Lunges): <https://youtu.be/hu5eou9nqg>
- Level 3 Flexibility – (Standing Hamstring Stretch, Arm Swings, Standing Side Reaches, Walking Quad Stretch): <https://youtu.be/Pouv9Ofq6S0>
- Level 3 Endurance – (High Knees Jogging in Place, Mountain Climbers, Seal Jacks, Frog Jumps): <https://youtu.be/K3ro77RpWnE>
- Level 3 Strength – (Hip Bridges, Side Plank, Wall Sit Hold, Squat Jumps): <https://youtu.be/RGXIJp8k9RQ>

High 5 Resource Webpage QR Code:





Appendix E: Additional Resources

The following links to additional Special Olympics resources may be helpful to educators.

- Sport Specific Warm-Up/Cool-Down Resources: (For more information or to access the full list of Special Olympics' sport specific warm up and cool down resources please visit: [Sports & Coaching](#))
 - Athletes –
 - Warm Up: [Athletics WU](#)
 - Cool Down: [Athletics CD](#)
 - Basketball –
 - Warm Up: [Basketball WU](#)
 - Cool Down: [Basketball CD](#)
- [Young Athletes Year Long Lesson Plans](#) – These lesson plans are designed with the elementary school classroom in mind as it is an opportunity for students of all ability levels to come together to grow and develop in friendship, leadership, and sports skills.
- [Junior Athletes](#) - Junior Athletes is a non-competitive, multi-sport play program for children with and without intellectual disabilities from ages 6 to 12. Junior Athletes focuses on the development of a child's physical literacy prior to competitive or recreational Special Olympics sport participation and supports the development of key social and emotional skills, like teamwork, cooperation, and self-management. Resources currently offered for Junior Athletes include an introduction guide and lesson plans.
- [Special Olympics Unified Schools](#) - learning portal with a variety of courses:
 - [Introduction to Unified Champion Schools for Educators](#) (**Description:** A course that allows learners to experience real-life implementation examples of each of the SOUCS components and gain resources for building and championing Unified Champion Schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.)
 - [Global Unified Schools Teacher Training](#) (**Description:** Intended for a global audience, this course provides a basic overview of best practices for implementation of Special Olympics Unified Champion School programming.)
 - [Building Inclusive Communities Through Unified Champion Schools](#) (**Description:** A brief and engaging information tool to build awareness of the Unified Champion Schools strategy and its power to spread inclusion from schools to the larger community through the impact of its three components and inclusive engagement of youth, educators and families.)
- [Special Olympics Unified Sports®](#) - resources for inclusive sports or fitness programming to assist individuals who are just beginning to learn about how Special Olympics Unified Sports can become part of the Unified Champion School strategy at their school.



Appendix F: Nutrition Cut-Outs

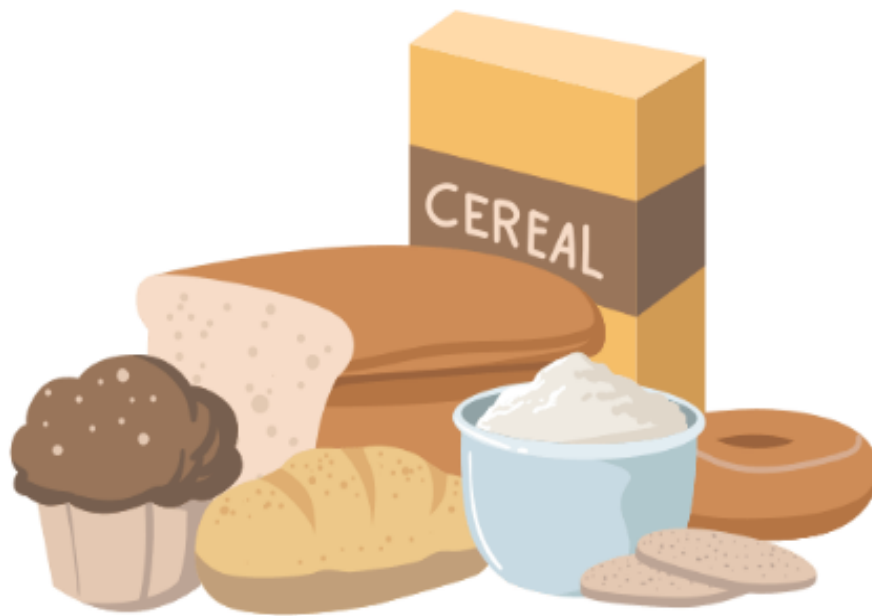
These images support the implementation of Alternative Activity B (Meal Match Up) in Lesson 9. Print these images out and distribute them to participants in accordance with activity instructions.



Water



Proteins



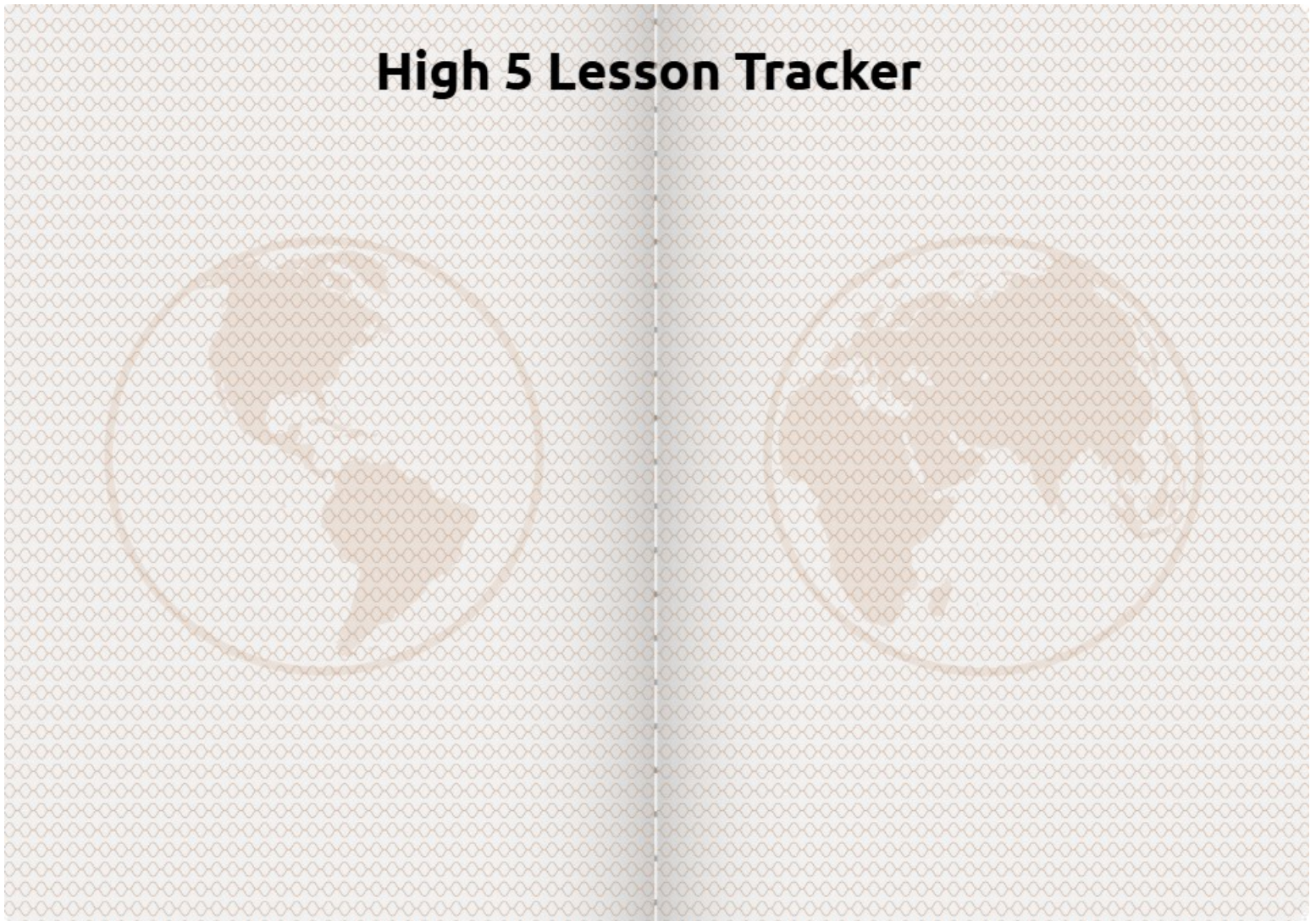
Carbohydrates



Appendix G: Lesson Progress Tracker & Badges

The printables below are High 5 Lesson Plan Trackers and Badges. The badges can be cut out by students upon the completion of a High 5 Lesson, and glued or taped to the Lesson Tracker to monitor a student's progress towards their fitness goals. This tracker can also be used in tandem with incentive systems in each school (i.e. completing all 12 lessons allows a student to receive a reward that is common within their school such as an item from a prize box).

High 5 Lesson Tracker





High 5 Lesson Badges

