



INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAYBOOK

Overview and Strategies for Coaches

Welcome to the Fitness Through Sport Playbook!

This is a practical resource for you as a Special Olympics coach. It was created to help you encourage healthy habits in your athletes and their families. You may not consider yourself an expert in topics such as physical activity, nutrition, or self-care. However, your athletes look up to you. They see you as a mentor and role model in these areas!

Inside you will find accurate, relevant, and engaging information and activities. You can use these to help support the optimal health and performance of your athletes.

This Playbook is designed to provide you with information and ideas to teach fitness topics to your athletes. All we ask is that you are open to trying out new activities. If you are willing to laugh and learn with your athletes, the Fitness through Sport Playbook is for you! We will show you several ways you can use the Playbook to support your athletes.

The Fitness through Sport Playbook includes:

- Information to support healthy habits in your athletes.
- 12 lesson plans in four topic areas:
 - 1) Introduction to Healthy Habits
 - 2) Physical Activity and Exercise
 - 3) Nutrition and Hydration, and
 - 4) Game Day Minds
- “Homeplay” activities for athletes and their caregivers to work on at home.
- Supporting resources and training for coaches, athletes, and parents/caregivers.

About the Lesson Plans

Each Fitness through Sport Playbook lesson is 20-25 minutes in length and follows this format:

- 1) Welcome and Gather
- 2) Main Activity
- 3) Athlete Question of the Day
- 4) Closing

The lesson plans require little to no equipment and can be done almost anywhere. You can adjust the way you deliver the lessons based on your athletes, and how much time and space you have available. To support learning, we have included time in each lesson for discussion and reflection. When possible, we have incorporated existing Special Olympics resources, such as the Fit 5 Exercise Cards.

Lesson Plan Sections and Topics



Introduction to Healthy Habits

Lesson 1: Take Care of You

Lesson 2: Sweet Dreams



Physical Activity and Exercise

Lesson 3: Warming Up the Right Way

Lesson 4: What Moves You?

Lesson 5: Sit Less, Move More

Lesson 6: Four Types of Exercise



Nutrition and Hydration

Lesson 7: A Trip to the Market

Lesson 8: Be Sugar Smart

Lesson 9: Fuel for Performance



Game Day Minds

Lesson 10: Tips for Stress

Lesson 11: Just Breathe

Lesson 12: Strong Messages

Three Ways to Use the Fitness through Sport Playbook

1. Structured Fitness Programming

- Schedule additional time (20-25 minutes) to complete a Fitness through Sport Playbook lesson, or a portion of a lesson, before or after your sports practices.
- Programming that lasts 6 weeks or longer is more likely to result in changes in behavior, improved wellbeing, and enhanced sports performance due to the opportunity to form healthy habits. This can be done as one lesson per week or spreading one lesson over multiple weeks.
- Introduce the Fitness through Sport Playbook and logistics at a team meeting.
- Invite caregivers to assist and/or participate in the lessons.
- Enlist the support of Fitness Captains, if you have athlete leaders who serve in this role.
- Provide each athlete with a binder or folder for resources and Homeplay worksheets.

At the first meeting of the season, Team Blue agreed to add 30 minutes to one practice per week to complete the Fitness through Sport Playbook lessons. The athletes and caregivers committed to arriving 30 minutes early to practice for all 12 weeks. A parent offered to assist with communication and distributing the Homeplay handouts. The coach plans to review the lesson plans as part of their practice preparation for the week. The team's Fitness Captain will assist the coach with the lessons. Caregivers were invited to observe and participate in the lessons if they are interested and available.

2. Incorporate Content throughout the Season

Get to know the content and incorporate Playbook topics throughout the season:

- Include resources and links in team communications.
- Use the content to respond to specific challenges or opportunities that your athletes face. For example, if you notice a lot of sugary drinks before and after practice, share the 'Be Sugar Smart' resources and handouts.
- Model and celebrate healthy habits you observe throughout the season. Use the prompts in the lessons to guide discussions.
- Use lesson activities for teambuilding during team outings
- Support athletes in creating, tracking, and achieving fitness-related goals.

The coach reviews the Fitness through Sport Playbook to become familiar with the content and activities. During one practice per week, the coach chooses a topic from the lessons and builds it into the start of practice. Using Lesson 1: Take Care of You, the coach might ask athletes at the start of practice "did you wash your hands before eating today?" or at the end of practice might say, "don't forget to wash your workout clothes – we got quite sweaty today!"

The coach then continues this theme in their team chat by sending the link to the 'Healthy Habits Scorecard' Homeplay and inviting the athletes and caregivers to complete the activity to get ideas on how to stay healthy and fit. The coach reinforces the self-care theme while at competitions with reminders such as "let's remember to wash our hands before lunch."

3. Build into Existing Practices

Integrate the main activities from the lesson plans into practices to support the [Minimum Fit Practice Standards](#):

- Integrate a few activities or discussions into warm-ups or cool-down routines.
- Plan a few activities to use as teambuilding events at the start of the season, during road trips, or between events at competitions.
- Share resources and Homeplay activities in team communications.

The coach reviews the Fitness through Sport Playbook to become familiar with the content and activities. They plan to build in condensed versions of the activities into the first or last 10 minutes of each practice throughout the season.

Using Lesson 1: Take Care of You, the coach chooses one or two of the Healthy Habit Challenges to do with the team during cool down and stretching. "We all know that fruits and vegetables are good for us because the vitamins and minerals help us fight off colds, keep our eyes and skin healthy, and helps our heart, muscles and bones stay strong. Let's see how many different vegetables we can name while we do our quad stretches. Who would like to start?"

Using Lesson 4: What Moves You?, the coach leads the 'Would you Rather' Activity with the athletes as part of the warm up.

Final Note to Coaches

The instructions and prompts throughout this resource are meant as a guide that can be adapted to suit your coaching style and the needs of your athletes. As you become more familiar with the content you are encouraged to adapt the delivery method to enhance the experience for you and your athletes.