

*Special
Olympics*



Fitness Captain

Overview

July 2023

**ATHLETE
LEADERSHIP**

Fitness Captain

Overview

? What?

Fitness Captains are athletes on a sports team who lead the team in activities related to fitness and a healthy lifestyle. Fitness Captains can use their leadership and communication skills to **encourage and empower fellow athletes to be healthy and fit** on all Special Olympics teams. Teams that have Fitness Captains will:

- Complete safe and effective warm-up and cool-down routines
- Learn health education tips or lessons
- Be supported to practice healthy behaviors and encouraged to participate in other health/fitness programming

Fitness Captains have a passion for fitness and healthy behaviors. They can bring this mindset to their teammates and ensure **sports is a key setting for fitness**.

✓ Why?

To be a great athlete, you must be a healthy athlete. Living a healthy lifestyle takes knowledge, skills, support, and a dedication to healthy behaviors year-long and lifelong. Athletes not only need a coach that promotes health and fitness, but a peer leader who can be the example and encourage their teammates to practice healthy behaviors. Through a **peer-led programming** model, athletes will have the opportunity to learn health-related information from a teammate who shares their experiences as an athlete and a person with an intellectual disability.

A focus on fitness through the lens of sport can help drive positive daily choices that support improvement in overall health and wellbeing. Regularly integrating fitness training and health education within sports practice and competition can help athletes

- Reduce injury, improve sports performance, and achieve their personal best
- Increase knowledge of health topics
- Increase awareness of personal health habits
- Improve health behaviors in physical activity, nutrition, and hydration



Leadership Roles

Fitness Captains will work closely with their coaches to help ensure health and fitness is a key component of the sports experience by participating in these leadership roles:

1 Lead Warm-Ups and Cool-Downs

Fitness Captains can take on the responsibility of leading their team to complete safe and effective warm-up and cool-down routines at all practices and competitions. A **warm-up** helps athletes to reach a state of physical and mental readiness. When athletes prepare both the body and the mind, they are less likely to suffer an injury and will perform better at each practice, training, and competition.

A **cool-down**. A good cool-down allows the body to gradually return to a state of rest and increases the rate of recovery from exercise.

2 Teach Healthy Habits

Fitness Captains will **teach their teammates healthy habits that improve fitness and sports performance**. For example, Fitness Captains will use [Fit 5](#) to share lessons on:

- Staying active outside of sport
- Eating healthy foods that fuel performance
- Drinking hydrating beverages

Fitness Captains are expected to share a health education tip or lesson at each training session. They will also lead by example during all points of the sports experience.



Training

The purpose of the training course is to provide Fitness Captains the required skills and knowledge to promote fitness through sport and competition.

First Year

Topic	Description	Estimated time
Lesson 1: Overview of Fitness	Fitness is the state of optimal health and performance through adequate physical activity, nutrition, and hydration. Learn about the basics of physical activity, nutrition, hydration and how to educate your teammates to practice healthy habits at practice and at home.	60 - 90 minutes
Lesson 2: Leading Warm-Ups and Cool-Downs	Warm-ups and cool-downs are important parts of every workout, training session and competition. Learn how to lead safe and effective warm-ups and cool-downs routines that are tailored to each sport.	60 - 90 minutes

First Year Training is mandatory and consistent across all Fitness Captains.

Athletes must attend at least one training each year to stay active as a Fitness Captain. However, in each year of training the Fitness Captains are provided with new skills, roles, and responsibilities, as determined by their Program. Additional training modules will be available to support this progressive training approach.



Delivery Method and Resources

You can utilize these resources to offer the training virtually or in-person.

Workbook

The **workbook** is designed to be used by the participants during the sessions.

Facilitator's Guide

The **Facilitator's Guide** is to assist staff in leading the training and a discussion.

PowerPoint Slides

The **PowerPoint slides** are to be used as a visual during the discussion. The presentation includes the training for Lesson 1 and Lesson 2.

Fit 5 Guide and Health Tip Library

The **Fit 5 Guide and Health Tip Library** can assist Fitness Captains to deliver health education.

Warm-Up Guides

The sport-specific **Warm-Up Guides** are to be used before any workout, practice, or competition. Dynamic stretches consist of active, controlled movements that take body parts through a full range of motion.

Cool-Down Guides

The sport-specific **Cool-Down Guides** are to be used after any workout, practice, or game. A good cool-down allows the body to gradually return to a state of rest and helps recovery.

Questions? Please email Gwendolyn Apgar, Manager of Fitness for Sports Performance: gapgar@specialolympics.org