



Special Olympics
Health
MADE POSSIBLE BY FOUNDATION **Golisano**

Year 2

Fitness Captain

Participant Workbook

January 2026



**ATHLETE
LEADERSHIP**

? Instructions

1. When you participate in the Year 2 Fitness Captain training you will use this workbook. For the activities do one of the following:

- **Print out and complete it by hand.**
- **Complete it on your computer and save.**



2. It can also be helpful if you go through it before the training session so you can get familiar with the information beforehand.

Part 1:

Year 1 Review

- Fitness Captain Responsibilities
- Warm-Up and Cool-Down Practice
- Communication

Part 1:

Year 1 Review

Fitness is Your best health and performance through proper **physical activity**, **nutrition**, and **hydration**.



QUESTION: Think of a person you consider fit. What kind of things do they do, or you think they do to stay fit?

Being fit has many benefits to your health and performance:



Improve Sports
Performance



Increase
Energy



Feel Happier



Improve Sleep



Healthy Weight



Live Longer



Reduce Stress

Warm-Up and Cool-Down Practice



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.

WARM-UPS

A warm-up should be the first physical activity in every training session or competition. **It helps athletes prepare their body and mind for their sport.**



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.

Why do athletes need to warm-up?

Every sport is different, and each sport has specific skills and movements. **The warm-up should be specific to the sport you're playing and the ability levels of your teammates.**

These two elements should be included in all warm-ups:

1. Aerobic Activity
2. Dynamic Stretches



1 Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activities are whole body movements that will increase the heart rate.

- Start a slow pace and gradually increase in intensity/difficulty
- Last at least 5 minutes

Athletes should feel warm, a little out of breath and energized by the end. This can be a fun part of your training session.

Tips for aerobic activities:

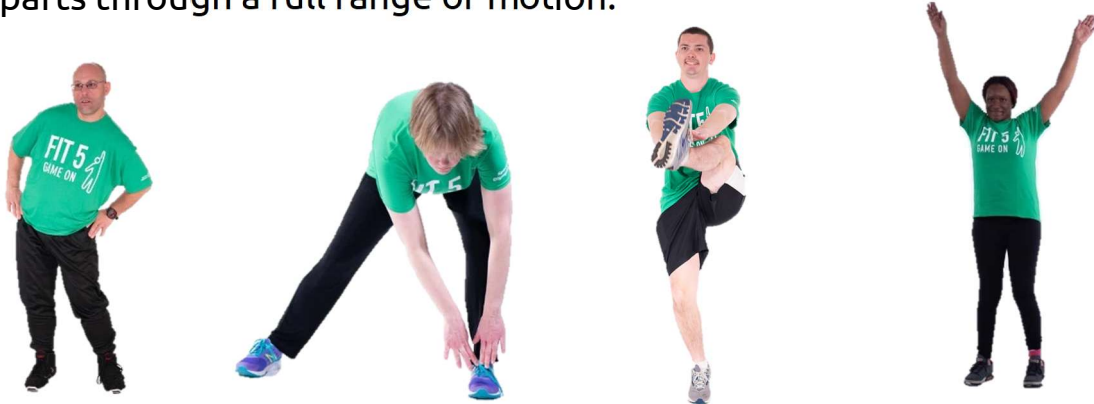
- You can introduce games or dances
- Involve your teammates in choosing the activity
- Routine can be helpful for some athletes, but variety is also important.

2

Dynamic Stretches

Once your body is warm, it's time to focus on stretching the muscles you will use during your sport!

Dynamic stretches consist of active, controlled movements that take body parts through a full range of motion.



Dynamic stretches help keep the body temperature and heart rate elevated. **Do you remember the difference between dynamic and static stretches?**

COOL-DOWNS

When your training, practice or sport session is complete, you should always cool down. It is just as important to have a good cool-down as it is to have a good warm-up.



A good **cool-down** allows the body to gradually return to a state of rest.

Why do athletes need to cool down?

What do you notice about this list? How does it differ from warm-ups?

Like warm-ups, your cool-down should be specific to the sport you're playing and the ability levels of your teammates.

These two elements should be included in all cool-downs:

1. Light Aerobic Activity
2. Static Stretches

1 Light Aerobic Activity

The aerobic activity should gradually decrease in intensity or difficulty. You should be putting in **half your effort or less**. This means that you aren't trying to go as fast as you can, but you aren't going as slow as you can either. **You should be able to move and hold a conversation without being out of breath. Your heart rate should be slowing down.**



Examples:

- Light jog into a walk
- Slow skate around the rink

2 Static Stretches

Stretching is a great way to help your muscles recover and prevent injuries! **Static stretches should be held for 30 seconds or more and can help to improve flexibility.**

Each sport places stress on different muscles and joints, so it is important to make your stretches sport specific.

Communication



It's important for you to talk to your coach about being a Fitness Captain. This should happen at the start of the season, and you can check-in before/after practices if you would like. **Remember that your coach and Program staff are here to help you!**

SHARING HEALTH TIPS

Fitness Captains will use their leadership skills to share Health Tips to their teammates. Health Tips are small but useful pieces of advice that can help you and your teammates make healthy choices.

You can give a health tip about any of the parts of fitness:

- ✓ Physical Activity
- ✓ Hydration
- ✓ Nutrition

How long should a Health Tip take?

What are some ways to keep teammates interested when you share Health Tips?

There are helpful resources that you can use if you need ideas for Health Tips.

- **Health Tip Library:** throughout your sports season, you can refer to this guide for Health Tips and resources to share with your teammates
- **Year 1 Fitness Captains Training workbook**

As Fitness Captains, you can also **work together and share new Health Tip ideas with each other!** Don't forget that you can always ask your coach, a family member, your Program staff, or a fellow Fitness Captain for support when planning Health Tips!

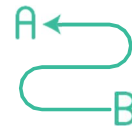
Consider the following information as your start writing your tip:



WHEN will you share your tip?



What do you want your teammates to **KNOW**?



What do you want your teammates to **DO**?

See the example below and use the outline to write your own Health Tips!

Topic: <u>Hydration</u>	
When will you share your tip?	I will share my tip during cool-down stretches.
What do you want your teammates to know?	Staying hydrated keeps your body working properly.
What do you want them to do?	Drink at least 5 bottles of water per day.
Health Tip (3-4 Sentences)	Staying hydrated is important for your health, especially when you exercise! If you lose too much water without drinking more, your body won't work as well. Your goal with Fit 5 is to drink 5 bottles of water every day! Try to have a glass of water with every meal and bring a reusable water bottle with you wherever you go.

Your turn! Here's a blank table for you to use when preparing your Health Tips. You can reuse this outline every time you make a new tip.

Topic: _____	
When will you share your Health Tip?	
What do you want your teammates to know?	
What do you want them to do?	
Health Tip (3-4 Sentences)	

Practice makes perfect! Once you have your Health Tip ready, it's time to practice. Ask a mentor, friend, family member to listen and give you feedback before you share the tip with your teammates.

Things to Remember



Be Confident: Practice reading your tip many times. Do not feel like you must memorize your tip. It is okay to read it from a piece of paper or a device.



Emphasize Words: Your voice is a powerful tool. You can use pauses between sentences, don't speak too slow or too fast and use your voice to emphasize words.



Watch your Body Language: Using your body movements can be an effective tool for adding emphasis and clarity to your words. Consider your facial expressions, eye contact, and body movements when speaking.



Keep Calm: You can always pause and re-start the word or phrase if you are feeling nervous or made a mistake. Take a deep breath – you can do this!



Visual Aids: You can bring visual aids, like your Fit 5 Guide or photos, to help you when you present your Health Tip. This may help your teammates remember what you said.

Part 2:

Game Day Minds

- Taking Care of Yourself
- Strong Messages
- Breathing and Stretching

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Game Day Minds

Taking Care of Yourself



Self-care, or taking care of yourself, is important for your overall health. Self-care is when you take the time to do activities that reduce stress.

QUESTION: What does self-care mean to you? What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the words “self-care.”

There are many ways to practice self-care! You can use the **Self-Care Checklist** on the next page to help you learn your self-care style.

I Feel Better When I...

Self-Care Checklist

Directions: Review the different self-care activities. Color in the circle or use a check mark next to the self-care activities that you do. It's time to learn your self-care style!

PHYSICAL



- ☐ Exercise or play a sport
- ☐ Pick healthy food options
- ☐ Spend time away from technology
- ☐ Take the time to enjoy my food
- ☐ Keep my space clean
- ☐ Take my time when I get ready

MENTAL



- ☐ Take a mental break from the day
- ☐ Spend time alone
- ☐ Resolve conflicts or issues
- ☐ Spend time outside in nature
- ☐ Do yoga
- ☐ Meditate

SOCIAL



- ☐ Meet new people
- ☐ Spend time with friends or family
- ☐ Call my friends or family on the phone
- ☐ Try new hobbies
- ☐ Attend an event in the community
- ☐ Volunteer my time

EMOTIONAL



- ☐ Let myself cry if I need to
- ☐ Write down my thoughts in a journal
- ☐ Say strong messages to myself
- ☐ Receive support from others
- ☐ Forgive myself when I make a mistake
- ☐ Spend time with people that I enjoy

SELF-CARE PLAN

You can use the tips for self-care to help you create your self-care plan!

My Self-Care Plan	
Signs to watch for:	
One (1) small change that I will make:	
When can I schedule self-care into my day?	
What might get in the way of my self-care?	
Who can help me?	

Strong Messages



Strong Messages are **positive or encouraging words or phrases** that improve our confidence or ability to handle stress. These messages can help motivate you to work hard and try your best.



QUESTION: How do you feel after reading these messages out loud?

As a Year 2 Fitness Captain, your new responsibility is to help your teammates use Strong Messages.

At the beginning of every sports practice, help your teammates get their “head in the game”. **Share a Strong Message with your teammates when they arrive or during warm-ups.**

Notice how these two Strong Messages use “YOU” rather than “I”.



WAYS TO USE STRONG MESSAGES

Here are some other ways you can use Strong Messages with your teammates:



If your teammates feel very nervous before a competition, **ask them what their Strong Message is**



Encourage your teammates to **write down a Strong Message** and read it when they start to get 'worked up'



Make a plan with a teammate that you will each say a Strong Message to each other before practices and competitions

Breathing and Stretching

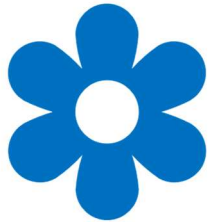


As a Year 2 Fitness Captain, your new responsibility is to include breathing practice during cool-down stretches.



Calm breathing helps you stay calmer when things go wrong, be steady and ready for challenges, pay attention and focus better.

A **calm breath** is a slow, easy breath that feels relaxing. When you take calm breaths, it can help calm your mind.



Pretend you are smelling
a flower by **slowly
breathing in through
your nose**



Pretend you are blowing
out a candle by **slowly
breathing out through
your mouth**

STRETCH, BREATHE, RELAX

You can **combine breathing and stretching** with an exercise called “**Stretch, Breathe, Relax**”. Hold the stretch for at least 5 deep breaths. This should take around 30 seconds. **Holding stretches longer**, up to a minute, or 10 breaths **will allow the muscles to relax even more**.

1. **Stretch!** Start your stretch.
2. **Breathe!** Take 5 calm breaths as you hold the stretch.
3. **Relax!** Let go of the stretch.



Review & Reminder

To review, **you have four key responsibilities as a Year 2 Fitness Captain.**

Your first two responsibilities were included in your role as a Year 1 Fitness Captain. You will continue to do these activities!



1. **Lead your teammates in a warm-up and cool-down** at every training session



2. **Share Health Tips with your teammates.** Remember, it is important that you lead by example and practice the healthy behaviors that you are encouraging your teammates to do!

Your two new, additional responsibilities are:



3. **Share a Strong Message with your teammates** when they arrive or during warm-ups. Smile and make eye contact. If you want, you can also give your teammates a fist bump or high five when you say your message.

Remember: you can also share Strong Messages in other moments when your teammates might need support or encouragement.



4. During your cool-down stretches, **help your teammates with their breathing.** You can use the “**Stretch, Breathe, Relax**” technique.

Congratulations! Thanks for participating, you have now concluded the Year 2 Fitness Captain training course.

To be a great athlete, you must be a healthy athlete. Your role as a Year 2 Fitness Captain is important! You will encourage and empower your teammates to be healthy and fit.

Special Olympics has created a lot of resources to help you be the best Fitness Captain that you can be!

- [Dynamic Warm-Up Guides and Videos](#)
- [Fit 5 Guide and Fitness Cards](#)
- [FTS Playbook](#)
- [Health Promotion – Educational Materials](#)
- Fitness Captain workbooks
- Your Program's fitness resources and guides

Your coach, Program staff and fellow Fitness Captains are here to help you!

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