



Frequently Asked Questions About SOfit™

How many leaders should a SOfit team have?

As many as needed – for contact purposes it's required to have 1 point person, or 'head coach.' It is best to try and keep a ratio of 10-15 participants (including Unified Partners) for every 'leader' or coach, but that is not mandatory.

How long should each team meeting be?

Classes can vary in length, though it's advised to allow at least 45-60 minutes to ensure a solid experience. Classes with younger participants may choose to be shorter (with more activity) whereas classes with adults tend to stretch longer, with more 'lecture' involved. Ideally 90 minutes can be used, to allow for check in time at the beginning, group chat/discussion, teaching the lesson component, as well as activity and breaks.

How much time should be dedicated to activity and fitness during each meeting?

As mentioned above, this can fluctuate with the age/attention span of the group and depth of information covered. Lessons typically take 20-45 minutes to cover, while activity should be around 30 minutes.

How large should a team be?

Classes are highly flexible in size, ranging from a single athlete/Unified Partner pair to groups of 30 individuals. Limiting factors are typically number of leadership volunteers and space to meet. Coaches are the most familiar with their team's participants and should use their judgment on how many people are on their team.

Where should meetings be held?

Class (practice) can be held anywhere there is room/facilities for the group. Be sure there is an accessible bathroom, as well as enough room for individuals. Some ideas include: community spaces, church rooms, libraries, schools, living rooms, local gyms, park, etc. Many individuals may also be OK with sitting on the floor (very healthy for those who have the mobility to get down and up) which is encouraged (healthier than chairs for most people).

What metrics are taken?

All participants are asked to collect and track metrics throughout their wellness journey. These include gender, height, weight, resting heart rate, body measurements, blood pressure and age. We use these (anonymously) to track some parts of the program, though we realize not everyone is unhealthy or has weight loss goals.

What materials are needed for taking metrics?

Materials for collecting metrics are included with your initial SOfit startup kit and include a scale, measuring tape, blood pressure machine, and height measuring tape.





What type of activities should a team do?

SOfit groups are strongly encouraged to tailor any activities to their group. This can include activities designed as part of a SOfit lesson, or something new the instructor dreams up, as long as it pertains to the wellness pillar/lesson and is appropriate for the group. If suitability is in question, please contact Special Olympics SOfit staff for approval.

What about bringing fitness instructors or wellness experts in?

SOfit groups are strongly encouraged to bring in professionals to help run the fitness/active part of each session. For example, if the group wants to have a yoga experience, see if there is a local instructor to help teach it. Always best to learn from professionals, and safety must be the chief concern with movement. Likewise, if the group is doing a lesson on nutrition and want to bring a nutritionist in, please feel free! Regardless of topic, if bringing in an expert, connect with them beforehand to ensure they teach to a level that the group can learn from and take away.

What are some possible goals that can be set?

Often people think only of physical or body composition (more muscle, less fat – usually called “weight loss”) goals, but SOfit is much more than that. Some ideas ‘outside the box’ include – making friends, hosting a movie night, raising hands to ask questions, trying a new activity, eating vegetables each meal, or practicing mindfulness every day. Remember, the most important thing is to choose goals that are attainable and positive! For more ideas, read “Habit Coaching Techniques” below.

Is there a best way to develop new healthy habits?

One of the best ways to help someone (or yourself) identify, focus and accomplish lasting changes in wellness is to practice habit forming techniques. Simply put, start small and work toward a larger goal. For example, I want to be more socially engaged. I will start by creating a goal to identify one thing I’d like to do each week. Next, I will make it my goal to attend one thing per week (month, two months, etc.) After that, I will increase the frequency until I have met my goal. I will not put myself down if I don’t achieve the goal every week – instead I will adjust and keep working on it, recognizing the larger continuum of wellness and celebrating success as it comes.

This technique can be used for any goal, and often works great with a partner for support! Also, recognize every day is different than the next, so sometimes goals are much easier to accomplish, sometimes much more challenging. The important part is doing what you can and recognizing the small actions make lasting changes.

What is the overall philosophy of SOfit?

Wellness can be challenging. But, the philosophy of SOfit is fairly simple! We strive to intentionally create a respectful, positive, unified environment to explore holistic wellness together. We work to ensure educational topics paired with physical activity to generate an experience that leads to lasting changes in a participants’ quality of life.

Does each athlete have to have a mentor/ mentor have to have an athlete?

A major part of the SOfit Program is its Unified nature; building relationships is a significant part of Wellness! We strive for a 1:1 ratio - that said, we also don’t want to exclude anyone simply because they do not have a mentor. Sometimes it works well to have an athlete work with another Unified Partner/athlete pair; other times this is not possible. The best way to think of this is that everyone should have support within the group, and take it on a case by case basis.





Who sees the measurements?

No one but the group leader and SOfit manager and potentially an intern should see any names included with the measurements.

What if a participant doesn't want their weight measured?

A participant is strongly encouraged to collect their weight and measurements, but this is not required for participation in the SOfit Program. We realize some are sensitive about their numbers, and respect that choice. That said, it is confidential, and we encourage you to recognize that while a number can be considered indicative of some measure of health, it is not a judgment of who you are, or your value. We remind participants that weight is simply a number, and goals can be accomplished on any topic, to any extent.

Is there a program manual?

At the moment, we provide one comprehensive SOfit manual for each Unified Partner/athlete pair, with the idea they can use it together. Every participant also receives a SOfit folder for keeping any loose papers/lessons in one spot.

Are the only lessons the ones in the manual?

There are additional lessons located online at:

<http://specialolympicsminnesota.org/sofit-resources/>. This will be updated as more lessons are generated. If you or your group have ideas for lessons, please contact the Minnesota state office so we can add it to the database.

How can I find participants for a new SOfit team?

One of the most successful ways to check interest in a group is to craft an initial informational email explaining what SOfit is, what the goals are for the program, and how the group intends to run the program. It is also helpful to state requirements on this contact, as well as ask for anyone willing to help out in an advanced volunteer role.

How should the meetings be taught?

Strive to generate a comfortable, respectful, organized environment. Encourage participation, but not interruption. Ask questions and generate a positive group dynamic. Remember that with a diverse audience everyone learns differently. Examples, stories, activities – all are encouraged and play to individuals' learning styles. Remember – "I hear, I forget; I see, I remember; I do, I understand."

Is there training and support involved?

Training and support are both involved. The "Head Coach" or SOfit point-person will be required to have a web based Train the Trainer session with Special Olympics SOfit staff. In person is best, but can be accomplished via phone if necessary. Ongoing support for any questions or concerns is provided by Special Olympics SOfit staff – communication is encouraged! Please share any success stories, challenges, ideas and concerns from active teams and participants.

Is SOfit expensive to run?

SOfit can be run for very little cost. Teams looking to start SOfit should ask their local SO program about any available startup funds. In some cases, a stipend may be available. However, after the initial stipend the team is responsible for supporting itself. For fundraising ideas, please contact your Special Olympics SOfit Staff.

