



Special Olympics  
**Junior Athletes**

# Athletics



## WHAT IS ATHLETICS?

In Special Olympics, “Athletics” means Track and Field events. These endurance games test your speed, strength, jumping, and throwing skills—and there’s something for everyone!

### TRACK EVENTS: (RUNNING RACES)

- 50m Dash
- 100m Race
- 200m Race
- 400m Walk
- Wheelchair Races
- Relay Race

### FIELD EVENTS: (JUMPING & THROWING)

- Standing Long Jump
- Softball Throw
- Mini Javelin Throw
- Shot Put
- High Jump



## CONNECTING TO SPECIAL OLYMPICS YOUNG ATHLETES

The sport skills align with the categories of walking & running, balance & jumping, trapping & catching, throwing, striking, and kicking. Coaches who are familiar with the Young Athletes program will notice that the core gross motor skills taught there are continued and further developed in the Junior Athletes program. If you have athletes who need a little extra practice, reference the skill in Young Athletes for more skills, games, and activities. [Click here](#) or scan the code to access the Young Athletes activity guide.



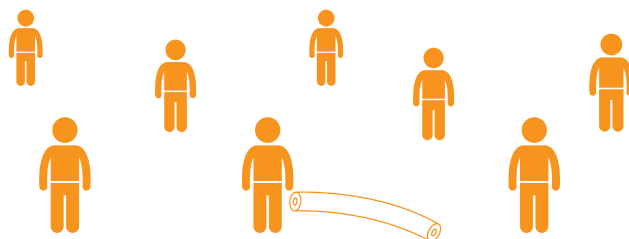
## WARM-UP 1: FREEZE TAG

### Equipment

- Optional: pool noodle

### Setup

Players spread out; the player who is "it" uses a pool noodle or their hand to tag others



### How to Play:

- Pick one person to be "it." This person will try to tag other players.
- Everyone else runs away and tries to stay away from the person who is "it."
- If "it" tags you, you have to freeze! Stand still like a statue with your feet planted.
- To get unfrozen, another player has to tag you. Then you can run again!
- The game keeps going until everyone is frozen, or you can switch who's "it" after a few minutes.

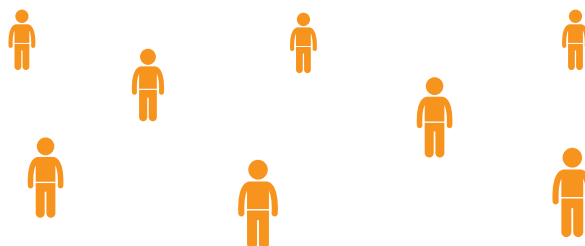
## WARM-UP 2: STRETCHING

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players spread out throughout the space



### Stretches



Arm Circles



Side Bend



Lunge Stretch



Calf Stretch

## SKILL: STARTING A RACE

### Equipment

- Line on the floor

### Setup

Players stand behind a line



Show players how to line up to start a race:

- They can either start standing up or bent forward in ready position.
- Their eyes should be forward, one foot ahead of the other with arms bent.
- Use "on your mark...get set...go!" cue and explain that when the whistle blows or a sound is made, they should start running.

Let athletes start on the line and blow a whistle to have them practice running to another line.

Have athletes walk back to the starting line and repeat.

Note: Use a whistle, timer beeper, music, or hands clapping to signal the start.

## GAME: BEAT THE CLOCK

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players find a partner and have one person (runner) at the starting line and one person (counter) at the finish line.



### How to Play:

- Each runner needs a partner. The runner stands at the starting line, while the partner (counter) stands at the finish line.
- The counter yells, "on your mark...get set...go!" and then begins counting until the runner crosses the finish line.
- The runner runs to the finish and remembers the number while walking back to the starting line.
- Repeat 2 more times with the goal of beating your time each time!
- Repeat with the counter becoming the runner and the runner becoming the counter.

This is a great activity because athletes are just competing against themselves. Encourage partners to cheer each other on and say kind things after each run.

## BONUS GAME: FOLLOW THE LEADER—SPEED EDITION

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players line up behind the leader, leaving a few feet between them and the person in front of them



### How to Play:

- Choose one athlete to be the leader (or the coach can start).
- The rest of the players line up behind them, spaced out enough to move freely.
- The leader starts moving around the play area doing fun, active motions like:
  - » Jogging
  - » Skipping
  - » Marching
  - » Zigzag running
  - » Fast walking
  - » Big arm circles while moving
- Everyone follows and copies the movement.
- After a short time (30 seconds to 1 minute), pick a new leader.
- Adjust the speed and complexity of the movement for different ability levels.

This game encourages creativity and inclusion—athletes with mobility devices can lead using their own movements (e.g., arm movements, wheelchair spins). It's also great for reinforcing taking turns, following directions, and body awareness.

## COOL-DOWN: SLOW MOTION RACE (WHO CAN GO THE SLOWEST)

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players stand behind a line



Say "On your mark...get set...go!" and have players try to run the slowest. They always have to be in motion, slowly moving their bodies to the finish line. Once a few athletes have crossed the line, feel free to stop the race, especially if some athletes aren't even moving!

### Stretches



**Lunge  
Stretch**



**Hamstring  
Stretch**



**Shoulder  
Stretch**



**Butterfly  
Stretch**

### Lesson 1 Reflection

What helped you beat your time during the game?



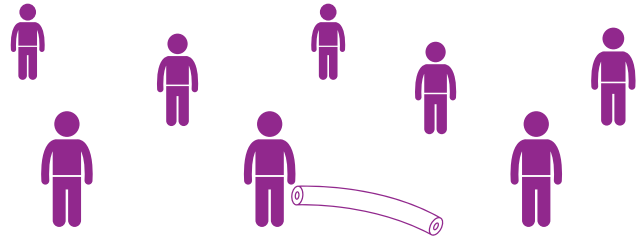
## WARM-UP 1: FREEZE TAG

### Equipment

- Optional: pool noodle

### Setup

Players spread out; the player who is "it" uses a pool noodle or their hand to tag others



### How to Play:

- Pick one person to be "it." This person will try to tag other players.
- Everyone else runs away and tries to stay away from the person who is "it."
- If "it" tags you, you have to freeze! Stand still like a statue with your feet planted.
- To get unfrozen, another player has to tag you. Then you can run again!
- The game keeps going until everyone is frozen, or you can switch who's "it" after a few minutes.

## WARM-UP 2: STRETCHING

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players spread out throughout the space



### Stretches



Arm Circles



Side Bend



Lunge Stretch



Calf Stretch

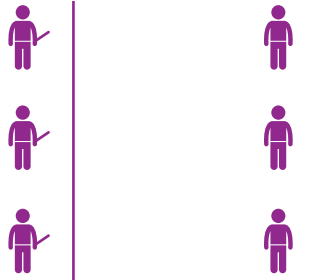
## SKILL: RELAY RUNNING

### Equipment

- Lines or floor markers
- Baton/stick/beanbag

### Setup

One player holds a baton; the other player starts 10-15 feet away, ready to receive the baton



Give each player a partner and a baton or beanbag, and have a floor marker or line where each partner should start.

Demonstrate with these instructions:

- To the runner with the baton:  
Hold the baton tight and run fast. When you get close to your teammate, say "Go!" loudly and clearly so they know when to start running.
- To the runner getting the baton:  
Start running when you hear "Go!" and hold your hand back like a high five with your palm facing up.
- The handoff:  
The first runner puts the baton right into the other runner's hand.  
The goal is a smooth pass—no stopping!
- Keep Going:  
Once the baton is in your hand, keep running fast to the finish!

Let athletes practice a few times, making sure they reset each time. They can switch after the first runner gets 3 tries.

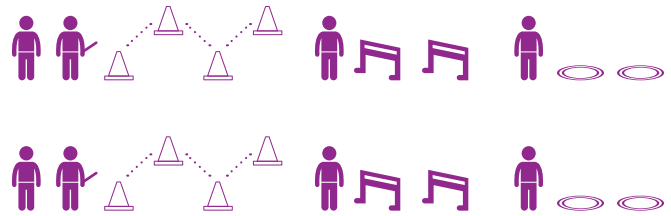
## GAME: RELAY OBSTACLE COURSE

### Equipment

- Baton/stick/beanbag
- Obstacles

### Setup

Create 2 or 3 obstacle courses with whatever equipment you have (hurdles, balance beam, tunnel, cones to zigzag, etc.); players start at the beginning of each new obstacle



### How to Play:

- The first athlete begins with the baton and completes the first obstacle.
- At the end of the obstacle, they hand off the baton to the second athlete, who is waiting at the start of the next obstacle.
- The first athlete stays at that handoff point, and the second athlete completes the second obstacle.
- This pattern continues: each athlete completes their obstacle, then passes the baton to the next teammate and stays at that station.
- When the final athlete completes the last obstacle, they run with the baton all the way back to the start of the course.
- Once back at the start, they can either hand off the baton to the first athlete to begin a new round, or the game ends, depending on how many rounds you want to play.

Variations: Use different natural elements (logs, rocks, sticks) if outside.

Obstacle:	Modification Idea:
Hurdles	Attach a pool noodle to cones or a chair and have athletes weave and duck through them
Balance Beam	Use floor markers and cones to weave around
Tunnel	Hold up a parachute for them to go under or hang a curtain of ribbons to go through

## COOL-DOWN: SLOW MOTION RACE (WHO CAN GO THE SLOWEST)

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players stand behind a line



Say "On your mark...get set...go!" and have players try to run the slowest. They always have to be in motion, and slowly move their bodies to the finish line. Once a few athletes have crossed the line, feel free to stop the race, especially if some athletes aren't even moving!

### Stretches



**Lunge  
Stretch**



**Hamstring  
Stretch**



**Shoulder  
Stretch**



**Butterfly  
Stretch**

### Lesson 2 Reflection

**Why is teamwork important in a relay race?**

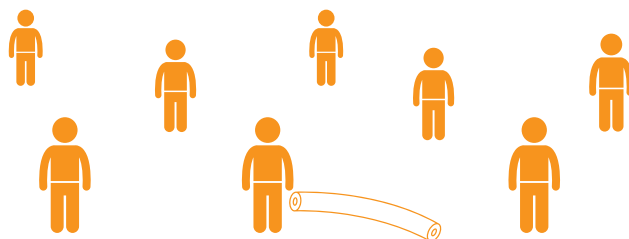
## WARM-UP 1: FREEZE TAG

### Equipment

- Optional: pool noodle

### Setup

Players spread out; the player who is "it" uses a pool noodle or their hand to tag others



### How to Play:

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- Everyone else runs away and tries to stay away from the person who is "it."
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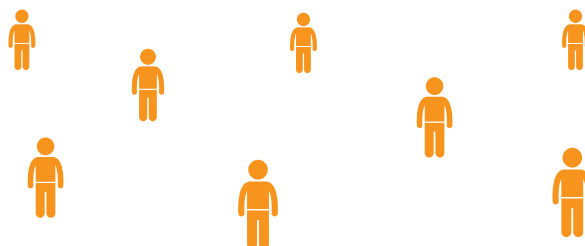
## WARM-UP 2: STRETCHING

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players spread out throughout the space



### Stretches



Arm Circles



Side Bend



Lunge Stretch



Calf Stretch

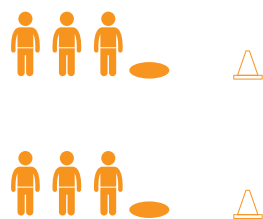
## SKILL: STANDING LONG JUMP

### Equipment

- Floor markers or tape lines for jumping and landing
- Cones or chalk to mark jump distances

### Setup

Place floor markers or tape lines on the ground spaced 1–2 feet apart for visual targets; set up stations for 2–3 jumpers per group



Demonstrate “Swing, Spring, Stick”:

- Swing: Swing arms back and forth to build momentum.
- Spring: Bend knees and jump forward using both feet.
- Stick: Land on both feet and try not to fall or step back.

Emphasize arm swing, bent knees, and soft landings.

Let athletes practice jumping from a standing position to a target spot.

Use cones/chalk to mark where each player lands. Let them try to beat their own distance.

Adaptations:

- Use hoops or larger landing zones for athletes needing more support.
- Encourage any safe form of jumping or scooting forward for athletes with limited mobility.

### Adaptations for Limited Mobility:

Measure how far the athlete can reach out their arms forward

Instead of jumping, have the athlete start with rolling forward to a line; then toss a beanbag and measure how far it goes

Measure how far an athlete can roll with one push



## GAME: TEAM JUMP

### Equipment

- Chalk
- Cones
- Tape

### Setup

Create 3–4 lanes for players to line up and take turns jumping to make it to the finish line



### How to Play:

- One by one, players do a standing long jump.
- A peer or coach marks their landing spot. That is the starting point for the next person.
- Continue having players jump and move the line until they reach the finish line.

### Adaptations:

- Use a floor marker to keep track of the line and be able to move it easily.
- If a player uses a wheelchair, have them toss a beanbag or roll their wheelchair for their turn.

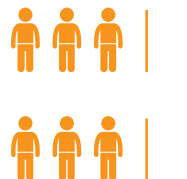
## BONUS GAME: JUMP THE RIVER

### Equipment

- Two ropes, jump bands, or long pieces of tape
- Optional: blue paper, cloth, or chalk to decorate the “river”

### Setup

Lay the two ropes/tape lines parallel to each other on the ground to create a “river.” Start with a narrow gap (e.g., 1 foot apart). Make multiple river lanes if you have a large group.



### How to Play:

- Athletes line up and take turns jumping over the “river” without landing in the “water” (the space between ropes).
- After everyone jumps, widen the river slightly.
- Continue increasing the width each round—see who can make it across!
- Allow athletes to opt out when it gets too wide and become the “river rangers”—cheering, measuring, and spotting.

Encourage self-challenge, not competition.

Easily adapt this game by adjusting the distance or allowing side jumps or step-throughs for different abilities.

## COOL-DOWN: SLOW MOTION RACE (WHO CAN GO THE SLOWEST)

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players stand behind a line



Say "On your mark...get set...go!" and have players try to run the slowest. They always have to be in motion, and slowly move their bodies to the finish line. Once a few athletes have crossed the line, feel free to stop the race, especially if some athletes aren't even moving!

### Stretches



Lunge Stretch



Hamstring Stretch



Shoulder Stretch



Butterfly Stretch

### Lesson 3 Reflection

What helped you improve your jumping distance?

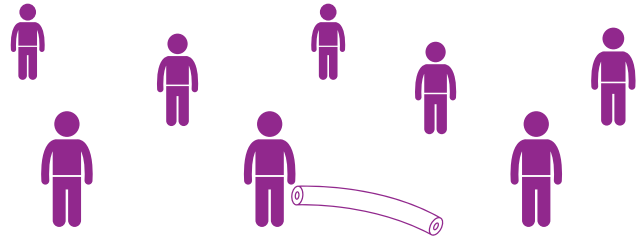
## WARM-UP 1: FREEZE TAG

### Equipment

- Optional: pool noodle

### Setup

Players spread out; the player who is "it" uses a pool noodle or their hand to tag others



### How to Play:

- Pick one person to be "it." This person will try to tag other players.
- Everyone else runs away and tries to stay away from the person who is "it."
- If "it" tags you, you have to freeze! Stand still like a statue with your feet planted.
- To get unfrozen, another player has to tag you. Then you can run again!
- The game keeps going until everyone is frozen, or you can switch who's "it" after a few minutes.

## WARM-UP 2: STRETCHING

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players spread out throughout the space



### Stretches



Arm Circles



Side Bend



Lunge Stretch



Calf Stretch

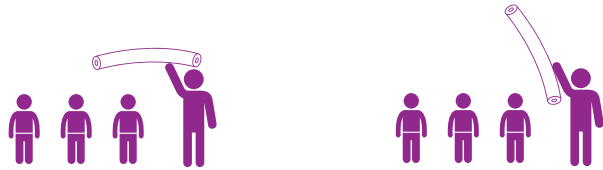
## SKILL: VERTICAL & HIGH JUMP

### Equipment

- Pool noodles or stick with balloon on the end
- Cones for line-up

### Setup

Create 2–3 jumping stations with vertical targets; use pool noodles held at various heights



### Instructions:

- Demonstrate “Step, Swing, Lift”:
  - » Step: Step with one foot for momentum.
  - » Swing: Swing arms to lift the body.
  - » Lift: Jump off one or two feet and aim to touch the pool noodle.
- Practice vertical jumps by tapping objects hung overhead.

### Adaptations:

- Lower the targets or allow vertical reach while seated.
- Let athletes tap a partner’s raised hand or balloon.

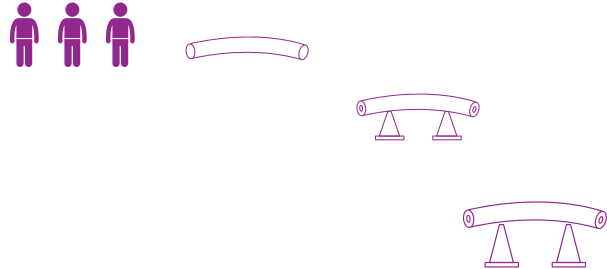
## GAME: NOODLE HIGH JUMP CHALLENGE

### Equipment

- Pool noodles
- Cones
- Optional: beanbags

### Setup

Set up 2–3 stations with different noodle heights.



### How to Play:

- Athletes take turns running up and jumping over the noodle.
- If successful, move to the next height or repeat.
- Optional: earn points or beanbags for each successful jump.

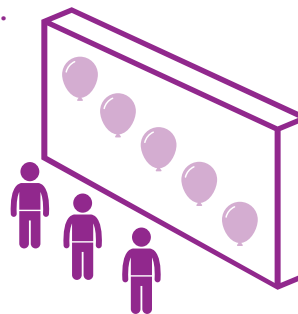
## BONUS GAME: TOUCH THE SKY CHALLENGE

### Equipment

- Pool noodles, balloons, streamers, or small soft objects
- String or tape
- Chairs, cones, or wall space to hang targets at various heights

### Setup

Hang lightweight targets (balloons, ribbons, etc.) from a string or tape them to a wall at different heights.



### How to Play:

- Each athlete takes a turn trying to jump and tap a target.
- They can move to the next height if they succeed.
- Set a challenge to tap as many targets as possible.
- Let athletes create their own “skyline” by choosing where to try next.

With straightforward goals and added visual fun, this game focuses on vertical reach without the pressure to “clear” something. It's great for both jumping and seated/arm-reach adaptations.



## COOL-DOWN: SLOW MOTION RACE (WHO CAN GO THE SLOWEST)

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players stand behind a line



Say "On your mark...get set...go!" and have players try to run the slowest. They always have to be in motion, and slowly move their bodies to the finish line. Once a few athletes have crossed the line, feel free to stop the race, especially if some athletes aren't even moving!

### Stretches



Lunge Stretch



Hamstring Stretch



Shoulder Stretch



Butterfly Stretch

### Lesson 4 Reflection

What helped you jump higher today?

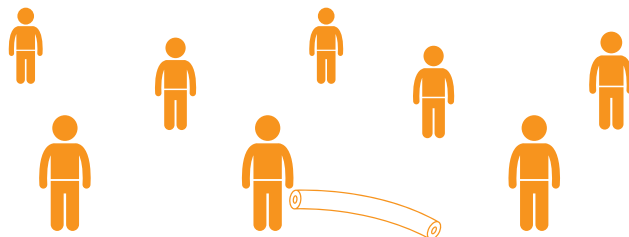
## WARM-UP 1: FREEZE TAG

### Equipment

- Optional: pool noodle

### Setup

Players spread out; the player who is "it" uses a pool noodle or their hand to tag others



### How to Play:

- Pick one person to be "it." This person will try to tag other players.
- Everyone else runs away and tries to stay away from the person who is "it."
- If "it" tags you, you have to freeze! Stand still like a statue with your feet planted.
- To get unfrozen, another player has to tag you. Then you can run again!
- The game keeps going until everyone is frozen, or you can switch who's "it" after a few minutes.

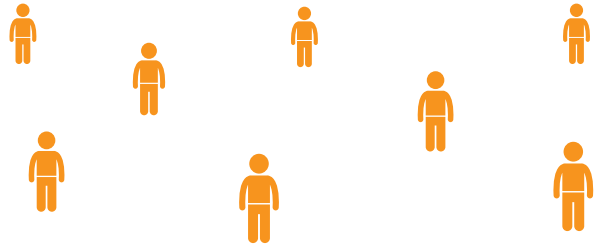
## WARM-UP 2: STRETCHING

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players spread out throughout the space



### Stretches



Arm Circles



Side Bend



Lunge Stretch



Calf Stretch

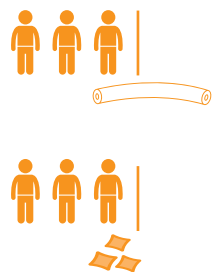
## SKILL: THROWING TECHNIQUES

### Equipment

- Beanbags (shot put)
- Foam noodles or small soft javelin toys
- Hoops, cones, or targets

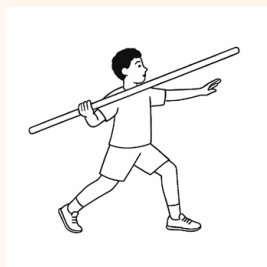
### Setup

Set up 2 throwing stations (one for beanbags, one for noodles); mark throwing lines and distances



#### Shot Put Instructions:

- Push, don't throw.
- Hold beanbag at shoulder with elbow bent.
- Step with opposite foot.
- Push the beanbag forward (don't throw overhead).



#### Javelin Instructions:

- Step and throw.
- Hold noodle by one end.
- Step with opposite foot.
- Swing back and release forward, aiming for distance or target.

#### Adaptations:

- Allow seated throws.
- Use different sizes or weights of beanbags.

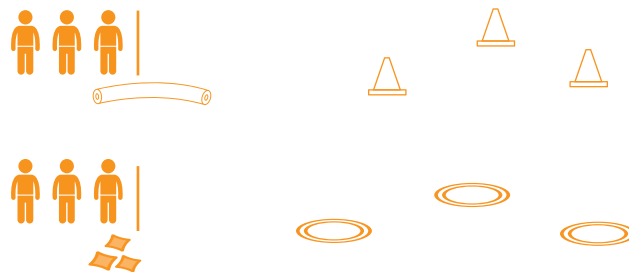
## GAME: TARGET TOSS

### Equipment

- Beanbags (shot put)
- Foam noodles or small soft javelin toys
- Hoops, cones, or targets

### Setup

Scatter hoops or cones as targets at various distances



### How to Play:

- Athletes rotate between stations.
- Try to land the beanbag (shot put) or noodle (javelin) in or near a target.
- Earn points for each successful hit.

## COOL-DOWN: SLOW MOTION RACE (WHO CAN GO THE SLOWEST)

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players stand behind a line



Say "On your mark...get set...go!" and have players try to run the slowest. They always have to be in motion, and slowly move their bodies to the finish line. Once a few athletes have crossed the line, feel free to stop the race, especially if some athletes aren't even moving!

### Stretches



Lunge Stretch



Hamstring Stretch



Shoulder Stretch



Butterfly Stretch

### Lesson 5 Reflection

Which throwing technique did you like better—shot put or javelin, and why?

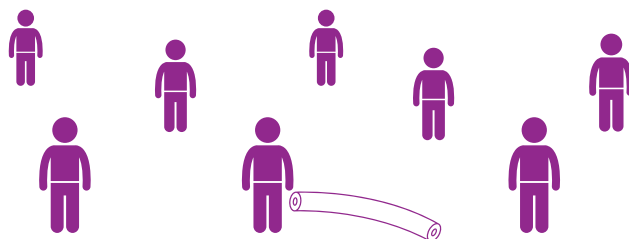
## WARM-UP 1: FREEZE TAG

### Equipment

- Optional: pool noodle

### Setup

Players spread out; the player who is "it" uses a pool noodle or their hand to tag others



### How to Play:

- Pick one person to be "it." This person will try to tag other players.
- Everyone else runs away and tries to stay away from the person who is "it."
- If "it" tags you, you have to freeze! Stand still like a statue with your feet planted.
- To get unfrozen, another player has to tag you. Then you can run again!
- The game keeps going until everyone is frozen, or you can switch who's "it" after a few minutes.

## WARM-UP 2: STRETCHING

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players spread out throughout the space



### Stretches



Arm Circles



Side Bend



Lunge Stretch



Calf Stretch



## PRACTICE MEET EVENT 1: SOFT JAVELIN THROW

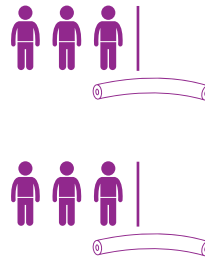
For the Skills Showcase, put on a practice athletics meet. Start off your meet with a pep talk from a Special Olympics athlete or coach! Divide players into 3 groups to rotate through the events every 10-15 minutes.

### Equipment

- Foam noodles or small soft javelin toys
- Line
- Measuring tape

### Setup

Set up 2 throwing stations



Have players take turns throwing the javelin and then measure how far they threw it. Measure from the throwing line to the tip of the javelin that is closest to the throwing line. Give each player 3 tries.

## PRACTICE MEET EVENT 2: STANDING LONG JUMP

### Equipment

- Two ropes, jump bands, or long pieces of tape
- Optional: blue paper, cloth, or chalk to decorate the “river”

### Setup

Lay the two ropes/tapes parallel to each other on the ground to create a “river.” Start with a narrow gap (e.g., 1 foot apart). Make multiple river lanes if you have a large group.



Have players take turns standing on the starting line and swinging their arms to jump as far as they can! Use a tape measure to measure the distance from the starting line to the back of their shoe, closest to the starting line. Give each player 3 tries.

## PRACTICE MEET EVENT 3: SPRINT RACE

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players stand behind a line



Create 2–4 lanes and have a clear start and finish line.

Say, “Ready, set, go!” and blow a whistle.

Focus on having athletes congratulate each other after they finish.

## COOL-DOWN: SLOW MOTION RACE (WHO CAN GO THE SLOWEST)

### Equipment

None needed

### Setup

Players stand behind a line



Say "On your mark...get set...go!" and have players try to run the slowest. They always have to be in motion, and slowly move their bodies to the finish line. Once a few athletes have crossed the line, feel free to stop the race, especially if some athletes aren't even moving!

### Stretches



Lunge  
Stretch



Hamstring  
Stretch



Shoulder  
Stretch



Butterfly  
Stretch

### Lesson 6 Reflection

What are you most proud of from today's practice meet?  
What is one skill you want to keep working on?

## PRACTICE MEET WRAP-UP

Bring players together to congratulate them and give them a certificate and medal (optional). This is a great time to share about local SO events coming up where they could eventually compete or go and cheer on the athletes.

Then do a quick round of shout-outs, such as:

- “Who tried something new today?”
- “Who helped a friend?”
- “Who felt proud of their throw/jump/run?”

Make sure to thank parents and encourage them to look for additional opportunities to stay involved with Special Olympics!

## WRAPPING UP THE SKILLS SHOWCASE

**Thank you for your dedication to the Junior Athletes program.**

As you close out the Skills Showcase, be sure to highlight the next steps in your participants' Special Olympics journey. Junior Athletes is a multi-sport experience designed to introduce children to a variety of activities—not just one sport. Use this moment to inspire families and help them see what comes next. Here are some ideas to help you plan:

- **Promote What's Next:**  
What sport will your Junior Athletes learn about next? Create a simple way for parents to sign up or learn more—whether it's a flyer, a sign-up sheet, or a QR code linked to more info. Don't forget to collect emails if you don't already have them!
- **Celebrate Every Athlete:**  
Hand out certificates to recognize each child's achievement. Take photos to send to families as a fun and meaningful wrap-up.
- **Recognize All Pathways:**  
Congratulate every athlete and share that while some may continue with Junior Athletes, others might be ready for competitive play—and no matter what, there's a place for everyone in Special Olympics.
- **Invite a Local Program Staff Member:**  
Having someone available to answer questions about area teams, how to start competing, or how to get involved can make a big difference for families.
- **Include a Guest Athlete Speaker:**  
Invite a Special Olympics athlete to speak about their own journey. Hearing firsthand experiences can help parents understand the possibilities for their child's future in the program.

# CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

PRESENTED TO:

---

FOR:

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**CONGRATULATIONS ON A FANTASTIC SEASON!**

COACH'S SIGNATURE

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COACH'S SIGNATURE

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Special Olympics  
**Junior Athletes**