



Special Olympics Motor Activity Training Program, *Athletics Guide*



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INTRODUCTION

This guide provides information on Special Olympics Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) skills activities related to Athletics.

Below are the skill areas included in this resource:

- **Attention**– Having the student direct their attention to a specific area or body part.
- **Mobility** – Student’s preferred method of moving around (independent or assisted). Students may have more than one method of mobility. Also, some students that are assisted may have more of a sensory experience.
- **Throwing** – Moving (throwing or pushing) an object in a specific direction using an extremity (including head) or adaptive equipment.
- **Extending** – Traditional jumping activities may not be appropriate for students with severe disabilities. Instead of jumping students will focus on students extending and reaching or stepping as far as they can.

Athletes who master the MATP Skills included in this guide can progress to the lower-level. Athletics events such as:

- Assisted walk (10, 25, 50 meters)
- Race walk (25, 50, 100 meters)
- Wheelchair race (10 and 25 meters)
- Motorized wheelchair slalom (30 and 50 meters)
- Tennis ball and softball throw
- For more information please visit www.specialolympics.org



CUES AND ASSISTANCE

Cues – When talking about adapting a skill or task, adapting with cues to give attention to specific areas can be helpful. Giving cues can assist learning or help let the student focus on the movements.

Types of Cues	Examples
Visual cues can be demonstration or visual markers to indicate targets or finish lines.	Bright cones, polypots, colored tape, bright paper, walls.
Auditory cues can be short verbal instruction or sounds indicated where a target or equipment is.	“Go”, “Stop” “Hold ball” “Look at target”, Stereos/music (as a finish line), balls that make noise.
Tactical cues are useful when indicating what body part needs to move.	Nudge to start running or walking, Touching arm and shoulder to use arm, Touch in front of body to indicate stop.

Tips for Cueing

- Keep it simple. Avoid long phrases, difficult visuals, too many cues at once.
- Make it easy to understand. Which method would be best for student?
- Be consistent with cues.



Levels of Assistance

Level	Amount of Assistance	Example
Independent	No assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student is able to throw a small ball in appropriate direction without cues. - Student is able to finish 5 meter race with gait trainer after whistle.
Independent with Environmental Cues	Requires setup.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student walks to marker in lane and stopping at marker without prompting or assistance.
Independent with Verbal Cues with/without Environmental Cues	May require setup and verbal reminder for the task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After being given a verbal cue, student hands baton to next in relay. - After being instructed to reach forward touch target, student completes reaching task.
Tactile Cues with/without Other Cues	May require setup. Use tactile cues and other cues if needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student is given a touch cue on their hand to push a ball down a ramp for field event. - Student is given a verbal and touch cue on their shoulder to start and stop on a running track.
Minimal Assistance	May require cues. Physically help the student with 0-25% assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student tries to raise their hand to throw a ball, and receives minimal assistance to raise their arm at wrist or elbow.
Moderate Assistance	May require cues. Physically help the student with 25-75% assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student needs assistance at their elbow to hold their arm up to give baton to next person in relay. - When throwing a ball, student can lift their arm, but needs some guidance to bring arm back and forward in appropriate motion.
Maximum Assistance	May require cues. Physically help the student with 75-90% assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student has partial movement of legs, but needs assistance to move each leg forward to walk in gait trainer Student is able to walk down track with when assistance is given at legs.
Dependent	Full assistance while the student is passive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student's arm is moved with assistance through motion to throw tennis ball for field event. - Student needs to be pushed down track in wheelchair after starting whistle.



EQUIPMENT

Relay Races

When a track baton is too difficult to hold it can be substituted for other objects. Relay objects can be scarves, small dowel type objects, small balls. For students who have limited hand use, look at other available skills (two arm hold, head movements). An alternative movement mentioned are pushing an object along a rope, long pole or table. With a rope or pole you can adjust levels to where each student can engage best. High five and fist bumps can be used as alternatives as well.

Throwing & Pushing Objects

When selecting a throwing or pushing object, consider the following; the student's ability, surface being thrown on and distance being covered. Soft squishy balls on a soft surface (grass) will go a short distance and hard balls on a hard surface (hallways or gym floors) will go a farther distance. Be sure to match the appropriate type of ball to be pushed or thrown with the correct surface to achieve the proper distance. The size of the ball matters more for how the students throws or pushes the ball. If a student uses their head the ball will need to be soft and larger.

Throwing & Pushing Aides

Some students may be able to push a ball but unable to push it far. Using a table that is a good height for pushing can help get maximum force behind a ball. If it is safe, the ball can be allowed to roll off the table. Ramps are another great way to allow the ball to build up speed. Wood board, corrugated plastic (election signs), gutter guards and a folding table (only one side up) can be used as ramps to help give student's effort more distance.

Remember: Equipment should enable student to perform. Goals or outcome of activity should help determine which equipment is picked (a ball easier to kick vs a ball easier to push down ramp).

Prescribed Equipment – This guide will not cover prescribed mobility or movement equipment such as walkers, gait trainers, walking aides, braces, splints, or wraps. Prescribed equipment such as these should be used as directed by a parent or professional. If equipment needs to be adjusted or used for any activity, please consult a professional (PT or OT).



ACTIVITIES

Attention

TITLE: Target find

GOAL: Have student move body or eyes to find a target.

EQUIPMENT: Visual landmarks, bright targets, equipment that makes noise, volunteers or other coaches.

ACTIVITY: Have students look towards target area. Students can look, point or move towards area. Repeat targets. Ex: Different finish lines, throwing areas, resting areas, entrances and exits.

ADAPTATIONS: Focus on tracking with students' available movements, maybe neck or eyes only or whole body. Some students may want to move towards the area named. Using sounds or voices for tracking may be better for some students. If students have a hard time looking around or noticing far away objects they may need additional cue or objects to be closer.

TITLE: Target Gazing/pointing

GOAL: Have student move body or eyes to follow a target.

EQUIPMENT: Visual landmarks, bright targets, equipment that makes noise, volunteers or other coaches.

ACTIVITY: Have student look at a target. Move target at a pace student can track. Students can look, point or move their body to track the target. Have student track for a short time.

ADAPTATIONS: Focus on tracking with students' available movements, maybe neck only or whole body. Some students may want to move towards the target and that is ok. Using sounds or voices for tracking may be better for some students. If students have a hard time keep movements slow and predictable.



Mobility

TITLE: Destination walk/wheel

GOAL: Have students engaged through physical, cognitive or sensory experiences using their preferred mobility to get to a set destination.

EQUIPMENT: Placement markers (cones, pictures, ploy spots, lines and goals).

ACTIVITY: Have students move to designated route or spot with visual cues or verbal cues. You can assign a task as well (high five, get ball, etc). Students can move with whatever preferred mobility they use. Students should be challenged to be independent with areas they can be (giving instructions, acknowledging movement, walking with distant supervision).

ADAPTATIONS: Start with shorter distances to promote success and then gradually increase distances. Students may need help for partial or full trip. Use consistent items, pictures and commands when giving directions. Can assign familiar task or have familiar people at destination.

TITLE: Practice Race

GOAL: Have students engaged through physical, cognitive or sensory experiences using their preferred mobility to go start to finish.

EQUIPMENT: Placement markers (cones, pictures, ploy spots), volunteers, relay baton.

ACTIVITY: Have students go from start to finish as fast as possible with visual cues, verbal cues or pictures. Students can carry relay baton if desired. Students can move with whatever preferred mobility they use. Students should be challenged to be independent with areas they can be (communicating start-stop or faster-slower, holding baton, walking with distant supervision).

ADAPTATIONS: Students may need help for partial or full trip. Use consistent people, pictures and commands when giving directions. Establish method of communication before start of race (words, signs, vocalizations, facial expression only if someone can see their face).

TITLE: Cool down walk

GOAL: To move around through preferred mobility for a certain length of time.

EQUIPMENT: Area big enough for wheelchairs/gait trainers and others to walk. Timer or watch.

ACTIVITY: Walk or move around for a short period of time 2-5 minutes.

ADAPTATIONS: For students being pushed establish a method of communication before.



Throwing/Rolling

TITLE: Ball push/roll

GOAL: To roll a ball on the floor or to push a ball from a lap, table, or ramp to a target.

EQUIPMENT: Ball and table or ramp if needed.

ACTIVITY: Have student roll ball on ground, down a ramp or off a short table to target area.

ADAPTATIONS: Ramps can be used but some ramps may require someone to hold it.

Students who have difficulty using their hands can use their legs (kicking), elbows or head to push an object or with adapted equipment.

TITLE: Assisted throw

GOAL: To release an object while the arm is still moving.

EQUIPMENT: Target/field and object to throw.

ACTIVITY: Have students throw an object with assistance (if needed) at a target.

ADAPTATIONS: Making sure the object is a good size to hold and release and weight is not too heavy.

If a student has a trouble releasing their grip having a something the ball can slide out of or off of could be used. Coach or aides can give light assistance at hand, elbow or shoulder.

Which activity to pick?

Ball push/roll is good for students who are not able to throw objects more than a few inches away. Using ramps or other adaptations can help with distance. While the assisted throw is good for students who have some clearance (even with assistance) and more practice will help their skill development.

Extending

TITLE: Far reach

GOAL: To have student reach outside their base of support. Using head, arm and trunk movements.

EQUIPMENT: Objects that are easy to grab, preferred objects, cause and effect objects.

ACTIVITY: Have student reach with hand, arm or head to grab or touch an object that requires reaching out to the front or side. Student can be seated or standing but if standing student may need cues to not move feet.

ADAPTATIONS: If student is using their head try to have a sound or texture for contact. Make sure not to stretch any student but giving assistance till resistance is acceptable.

TITLE: Tall reach

GOAL: To have student reach outside their base of support. Use head, arm and trunk movements.

EQUIPMENT: Objects that are easy to grab, preferred objects, cause and effect objects.

ACTIVITY: Have student reach with hand, arm or head to grab or touch an object that requires reaching up. Student can be seated or standing but if standing student may need cues to not move feet.

ADAPTATIONS: If student is using their head try to have a sound or texture for contact. Make sure not to stretch any student but giving assistance till resistance is acceptable.



Other Activities

TITLE: Squeeze and release or press and release.

GOAL: To have students actively or passively squeeze or push into a soft squishy object.

EQUIPMENT: Stress balls, foam balls, pillows or cushions.

ACTIVITY: Have students squeeze with hand or other body part or press down or into soft objects. Have students hold for 5 seconds if they can. Students can squeeze soft objects with one hand, two hand, knees, head and shoulder. Students can press with one or two hands, one or two feet, back or head.

ADAPTATIONS: Demonstrate and assist as needed. If assisting only give minimal assistance.

TITLE: Power exhale

GOAL: Have student blow on a light object.

EQUIPMENT: Ping pong balls, tissue, pin wheel, whistle.

ACTIVITY: Have student blow on light object to get desired effect (blow object away, spin wheel, whistle).

ADAPTATIONS: Try to pick an object that can appeal to the student's senses. Position student for optimal breathing and interaction.



Personal Best Games

These are all individual games for personal best. Not everyone has to participate the same way but can be played as a group.

TITLE: Best Reach

GOAL: To have student reach or lean as far as they can.

EQUIPMENT: Yard stick or marked measuring surface, visual to reach for.

ACTIVITY: Have students reach forward with one hand, two hands or lean forward from a sitting position.

ADAPTATIONS: Encourage students to hold onto support to help reach. Can assist but helping give students supports to reach further. Have a visual student would want to reach for if they do not understand commands.

TITLE: Time Trail

GOAL: Complete a 3, 5 or 10-meter Time Trail.

EQUIPMENT: Markers for start and finish.

ACTIVITY: Have students move 3, 5 or 10-meters with preferred mobility.

ADAPTATIONS: For students being pushed, try to engage them by indicating go and faster. For students that are unable to communicate this would be more of a sensory experience. Try to find motivators that may make students move faster (person, object, reward).

TITLE: Ball push or throw for Distance

GOAL: To push or throw a ball .

EQUIPMENT: Ball, table, ramp, area to measure distance.

ACTIVITY: Have student throw, push ball down ramp, or on a table to the longest distance the can.

ADAPTATIONS: If it is safe for the ball to roll off the table and keep rolling then that can be an adaptation. Picking the right ball (size and weight) to throw push.



Group Games

TITLE: Baton Relay

GOAL: Pass a baton or other object from first to last person on team.

EQUIPMENT: Track baton, other passable objects and long rope or cord (if needed).

ACTIVITY: Pass a baton from first to last team member. Activity can be team vs team, passing different objects or time trial. Teams can pass objects right next to each other or move forward to pass to next person. Finish can be last person holding, placing object in finish area or crossing a finish line.

ADAPTATIONS: Students can hold an object and have next teammate grab from them. Have a rope extend from start to finish and have students move object or have assistance in moving object to finish. Also relay can be pass the "high five" or "fist bump".

TITLE: Team Distance Throw

GOAL: Have the distances of all students combined throw attempts reach the goal distance.

EQUIPMENT: Distance markers (cones, tape, other), balls, ramps or tables if needed.

ACTIVITY: Measure out different marker intervals. Have students take turns throwing balls or other objects in marked area. Measure distance of each throw and record distance for furthest marker passed. Have students throw until goal distance is reached. Start with lower distance and progress to higher goal distances. Can have one big team or different teams.

ADAPTATIONS: Students can roll ball or objects. Use different objects for different students. Assist with direction and throw as needed.

TITLE: Team Pentathlon

GOAL: Have each student perform one of the events to complete pentathlon.

EQUIPMENT: 10 meter walk way, ball, half a pool noodle, yard stick and timer.

ACTIVITY: Have students complete 10 m walk, ball throw, seated reach, noodle throw, 2 minutes of walk or wheeling. Students can be on team and complete one event each or can each do all the events. Events and equipment can be adjusted to group. Students can rotate their events.

ADAPTATIONS: Adjust the 10m if needed to 1, 3, or 5m. Each event can be adapted to the student's abilities. The noodle throw can be a push or students holds it up and someone else can help push or throw. 2 minutes of moving can be any preferred mobility.



Sample Practices - 45 minutes

This is an example of a practice schedule and activities. All practices should be adjusted to meet the needs of the individual athletes in the group. Make the best effort to remain consistent with activity choices and try not switch each session. This will allow for processing and motor learning to occur between sessions and will help athletes to retain skills previously learned.

Warm up (pick 2) 7-10 mins:

- Target Gazing/pointing
- Far reach, Instructed walk/wheel
- Other general movement exercises (not listed)

Individual skills (pick 2-3) 12-15 mins:

- Practice race
- Far Reach
- Tall reach
- Assisted throw
- Baton relay
- Target find (stations are a great way to work on skills and prevent boredom. Students can spend 5-7 minutes at a station and then rotate to another station).

Games (pick 1-2) 12-15 min:

- Best Reach
- 10m Time trial
- Ball push or throw for distance
- Team distance throw
- Team pentathlon

Cool Down (pick 1-2) 3-5 mins:

- Squeeze and release or press and release
- Cool down walk
- Power exhale