



Special Olympics

Young Athletes™

8

im

A PROGRAM FOR YOUR SWIMMERS'
FIRST INTRODUCTION TO THE WATER

MICHAEL PHELPS
FOUNDATION



Special thanks to the Children's Foundation for their generous support which made this program possible.

MICHAEL PHELPS FOUNDATION

DREAM. PLAN. REACH

Michael established the Michael Phelps Foundation with the \$1 million-dollar bonus he received following his record-breaking performance at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Upon returning home to the U.S. after competing in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Michael launched the Michael Phelps Foundation and embarked upon an eight-city tour across the country to share his **Dream, Plan, Reach** message with Boys & Girls Clubs of America members.

In 2009, the Foundation created their signature **im** program to promote water-safety, health, wellness, and goal-setting. Developed with the help of KidsHealth.org and the Michael Phelps Swim School, **im** is implemented through strategic partnerships with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Special Olympics International across the world.


In 2010, Michael joined fellow Olympians Ross Powers, Lenny Krazelburg, Seth Wescott, and Daron Rahlves in launching the Level Field Fund, a grant-giving program that provides funding for uniquely talented athletes in need of financial support. Level Field Fund- Swimming strives to bridge gaps in funding following the belief that opportunities to pursue excellence in swimming should not be limited by an athlete's financial situation.

In the fall of 2010, the Foundation hosted its inaugural Golf Classic, which has since become the Foundation's largest fundraiser for its programs.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Michael Phelps first became involved with the Special Olympics when he served as an Ambassador for the 2007 World Summer Games in Shanghai. As part of his role, he held a swimming clinic, visited multiple schools to speak with children, and participated in a fan run show to help promote Special Olympics, raise awareness, and change prejudices about people with intellectual disabilities.

In an effort to expand its reach, the Foundation partnered with Special Olympics to launch an international pilot program in 2011 to bring 

to seven Special Olympics programs around the world including China, India, Australia, South Africa, Scotland, Brazil, and the United States. We are currently in over 250 Special Olympic Teams in 33 countries.

As the Official Swimming Training Program for Special Olympics, Michael and the Foundation provide a year-round swimming program for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience joy.



“ We are thrilled to have Michael Phelps join our Movement in a way that will encourage our athletes to develop sports skills that transcend the pool. Michael’s involvement in Special Olympics and the support of his foundation will only increase participation in aquatics throughout Special Olympics - a sport that was near and dear to my mother, Eunice Kennedy Shriver. ”

TIMOTHY SHRIVER
Chairman, Board of Directors Special Olympics



im offers a multi-faceted line-up of water safety lessons, recreational aquatic activities, organized swimming, as well as health, wellness and goal setting instruction at a world-class level. The Michael Phelps Foundation **im** program includes all levels of swimming. Please visit [this link](#) for more information.



imsafe

Provides each participant with the opportunity to become comfortable, confident, and safe in the water.

imfun

Keeps water-safe participants active in the pool by creating a fun environment that fosters continued development of in-water skills.

imfast

Provides participants with a coordinated training regimen that further develops the swimmer's overall fitness level and helps athletes realize their potential.


imhealthy

Teaches the basics of healthy living including good eating habits, stress management, and physical activity.

imsuccessful



Teaches how to set goals, develop a plan, and work towards achievement, based on Michael's Dream, Plan, Reach philosophy.

Introduction

The Young Athletes  program is about the child's initial introduction to the swimming experience. The environment and instructors need to be warm and inviting. Because of the short attention span of young children moving quickly through skills activities will keep the class interesting. This manual accompanies a video, which is translated in six languages, found at www.specialolympics.com/young_athletes.



Although they may not be able to execute a particular skill, they are going through the motions and a seed is being planted. At the appropriate developmental stage the child will eventually be able to demonstrate some aspect of a skill, if not the skill itself.

We are giving parents and children the opportunity to acclimate to the experience of water. Once they are comfortable with the Young Athletes  program the subsequent levels in  are achieved with more ease and better understanding.

Before you start

Take time after reading this program to get in the water and try the skills yourself. Think about how you feel in the water.

- How did you get into a particular position (back float, front float, streamline)?
- How does the water feel and how do you feel in the water? Are you relaxed? Are you fighting/pushing the water or do you lean and make subtle adjustments to your balance shifting your center of gravity?
- Are you holding your breath? Are you purging air (blowing bubbles)? Are you clenching your jaw? Do you get water up your nose? If so, why? If not, what do you do to prevent this?
- Is water in your ears uncomfortable? Are your ears submerged or are you trying to hold them out of water?
- Is your body relaxed and streamline or are you dropping your knees, holding up your head (face in/ears out)?
- Do you use the water to help you or are you fighting the water?

Preparing for Class

Time and pace of class is determined by the number of participants and their familiarity with class content as well as the speed of the instructor's songs and directions. Sections can and should be eliminated early in the program then added as needed so the class can progress and build.

SAFETY FIRST

For a safe learning environment follow the safety requirements below.

- o Warm water – 90 Fahrenheit/32 Celsius
- o Depth no more than 4 feet/1.2 meters
- o Easy entrance into pool
- o Clean and safe
- o Appropriate toys available
- o Props and activities prepared

Purpose of Young Athlete Program

- Create a safe and fun learning environment in the water.
- Establish trust between the adult and teacher, the parent and child, and the child and teacher.
- Introduce fundamental swimming skills to infants through toddlers in an age and developmentally appropriate manner.
- Encourage swimmer skill development by introducing the supervising adults to specific holds and activities.



INTRODUCTION


- Introduce yourself to parents and children as participants enter the pool. Focus on the child- read and be sensitive to signs of anxiety.
- Speak to parents about carries and keeping child low in water for warmth.
- Speak about being aware of where the child is in the water.
- Announce that there are no toys until Core Lesson is complete (Free Time)

The first 5-10 minutes is teacher-led with all participants in a circle, with children facing away from parents. The following activities will encourage the children to let go of their parents, trusting the teacher.

Reach up and say “good morning”, introducing the streamline position. Reach both hands overhead, straight and together. Repeat three times.



Class Time

There are 16 songs and two activities in the full Young Athletes  Program. You should start with a less songs and add as the participants become more comfortable with class. The song title is listed along with the activities that accompany the song. You should watch the video after reviewing the directions below.

SONG 1

If you're happy and
you know it,
clap your hands,
splash your feet,
kick your legs,
splash your hands,
blow some bubbles,
paddle your hands,
shout hooray.

SONG 2

I'm a Little Teapot

On “tip me over” encourage parents to lean child to one side and submerge one ear. Progress to the challenge of leaning back and submerging both ears. Repeated head back water in ears, head up water out of ears is a fun teacher directed experience. Further progression leads to asking the child “how long can you keep your ears in the water?” Try to get child to count to ten.

SONG 3

The Itsy Bitsy Spider

Hiding in a plastic watering can is an “Itsy Bitsy Spider.” Ask a child to get the spider hiding in the can.

SONG 4

It's Raining, It's Pouring

After the song, demonstrate on yourself how water from the can will be poured over each child's head. Beginners should be gently sprinkled while veterans should receive a generous dowsing of water.

After everyone has been sprinkled, demonstrate on yourself with a steady, slow flow of water, closing your eyes and blowing bubbles. Practice sharing and passing the spider around the circle, recalling each child's name. This will help you and other participants learn names.

Put the spider away and set up for assisted gliding activities.

SONG 5

Did You Ever See a Lassie/Laddie?

Explain and demonstrate how the parent should hold the child under his/her arms and slide the child on his/her back and stomach gently across the water. This allows the flow to aid in the extension of legs into gliding positions. The first verse should be calm and gentle and the second verse robust and rowdy. Parents continue the motions with the child with greater exuberance allowing the child an opportunity to experience the splashing and force of the water.

SONG 6

Ring Around the Rosie

Resume the circle formation and prepare the class for submerging their children. Facing the parent, explain how to cue the child by blowing gently in his/her face to stimulate an inhale (reflexive in younger children only) prior to submerging. Demonstrate on a child during the first class of the session.

SONG 7

ABC Song

Have the circle move in a clockwise direction. Repeat the activity in a counterclockwise direction. Continue in this circle direction, allow the class to use the full length of the pool for kicking and back floats.

SONG 8

There are Ten in the Bed and the Little One Said, "Roll Over"

Parent walks backward guiding their child with hands under chest/torso with palms up, fingers extended. Child does front glide with kick in a streamline position. Encourage children to reach for parents' shoulders. Parents and children should be looking at each other. Walking backwards allows the flow of water to help raise and extend the child's legs. Extended fingers help keep thighs and knees from dropping. Infants need a hold with thumbs over the shoulder to help keep their faces out of the water.

Continuing in this pattern, prepare for back float/back glide.

SONG 9

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Have parents change hold to introduction to back float. Turn child around and place his/her head on parents shoulder, wrapping near arm over the child's chest, and other hand under the lower back. Hold face cheek to cheek. Parent lowers into the water to allowing child's ears to gently submerge. Constantly encourage and praise child.

ACTIVITY

Wake Up! Horse Riding Time

Help parents get their children onto their backs. Parents will hold their children's hands over their shoulders. To start, parents can seat children on the wall, maintaining contact, turn and have child reach over their shoulders. Dismount can be the same, progressing to self-reaches to the wall.

SONG 10

William Tell Overture; Up and Down

Traveling in a circle, gallop children around pool. Dismount for self-support on the wall.

SONG 11

Slap, Slap, Slap. Slap the Water!

Children have two hands on the wall. If they do not hold themselves up, parents can hold each child from above by the hand, wrist, and forearm to produce an automatic flexion of the arm.

SONG 12

Down by the Station

With both hands on the wall, alternately pick up each hand and travel along the wall. This encourages self-support and self-locomotion along the wall.

SONG 13

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Ask if children can hold on by themselves and blow bubbles. Explain the hold for back glides. Parents need to stand up and take their children by the shoulders, placing thumbs in front and palms up hands on child's back. Recline the child in the water on cue to "life is but a dream".

SONG 14

Humpty Dumpty Sat on a Wall

This is an introduction to exiting and entering the pool. Encourage the children to climb out having the parent spot them. Ask the children to reach for a parent's shoulders from a sitting position. Parents should catch the children at torso. Discourage grabbing hands. Progress to jumping from the standing position. Continue the reach-for-shoulder, catch-at-torso routine. Ask parents to stand up and get closer until the children build trust and confidence.

ACTIVITY

At this time the instructor works individually with each child and parent, passing the child between the adults in a front glide position. Three complete passes are made back to the parent. On the third pass, the instructor cues the child that s/he will be going under water. On the count of three, blow gently in the child's face and submerge him/her pushing gently towards the parent. Encourage the child to reach toward the parent in a streamline position. As the child develops comfort and skills, a streamline reach and front glide can be executed. While the instructor works one on one the other participants are practicing their skills while playing with toys.

SONG 15

Clean Up, Clean Up

Everyone, Everywhere

Clean Up, Clean Up

Everybody do Their Share

The instructor passes around the toy basket so the children can put away their toys. This is the cue that class is about to end and circle formation is resumed for the closing song.

SONG 16

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
round and round
all through the town.

(Swim motion of the arms)

The wipers on the bus go swish,
swish, swish.

The horn on the bus goes beep,beep,
beep. (Splash water with hands).

The lights on the bus go blink, blink,
blink. (Flick fingers and blink eyes).

The motor on the bus goes
brrr, brrr, brrr. (Blow bubbles).

The people on the bus go
up and down.

(toss children up and down)

The mommies on the bus say
I love you

The children on the bus say
I love to swim

The Instructor (Name) on the bus
says see you next week, see you next
week, see you next week, I'm very
proud of you!

CLASS IS NOW OVER.

DREAM. PLAN. REACH.