



A POSITIVE SPORTS EXPERIENCE STARTS WITH THE COACH

Special Olympics Southern California athletes participate in more sports and at higher levels than ever before. Much of this success can be attributed directly to our coaches. As a coach, you provide the sports skills and spirit that, when instilled, define a true athlete. You are a role model and character builder. You give Special Olympics athletes the most immediate awareness of their self-worth, ability, courage, and capacity to grow and improve.

Special Olympics coaches play an indispensable role in the success of this sports program. Despite it being one of the most demanding responsibilities you may ever take on, we challenge you to find one more rewarding! Special Olympics Southern California (SOSC) local programs are always in need of good coaches. Whether you are a high school coach or the local librarian, we can use your help.

Coach's Oath

"In the name of all coaches and in the spirit of sportsmanship, I promise that we will act professionally, respect others, and ensure a positive experience for all. I promise to provide quality sports and training opportunities in a safe environment for all athletes."

Why Become a Special Olympics Southern California Coach?

Coaches play an indispensable role in Special Olympics, and coaching education helps to ensure each coach and athlete has the best sport experience possible. The coach's attitude towards sports and competition will directly affect the athletes. Special Olympics believes that the athletic experience and the camaraderie shared by teammates are what benefits athletes the most.

Coach Responsibilities:

- Teach all coaching staff and athletes the rules of the sport.
- Organize and conduct a sports training program.
- Promote fair competition at all events.

How Do I Become a Coach?

The requirements to be a Special Olympics Southern California coach are very simple... have a big heart and enjoy having a good time. Through the Coach Education Plan, you will go through a required certification process, which enables you to learn the skills necessary to help athletes reach their sports potential. Depending on your background and experience, different options are available to become certified. Experienced and knowledgeable instructors will provide the resources you need.

Coaching: A Place for Everyone

The idea of coaching a team may seem overwhelming, but you don't have to coach alone. You can share the responsibility and joy of coaching with another coach, friend or family member. There are no limits to your coaching potential or staff.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: COACHES

Who does Special Olympics serve?

Individuals with intellectual disabilities ages 8 and up

What would I do as a coach?

A Head Coach will oversee trainings sessions one to two times per week, one to two hours in duration, for an eight to ten week period. The Head Coach is responsible for teaching sports skills to athletes, working with Assistant Coaches; submitting competition registration materials and chaperoning athletes during travel to two or three competitions each season.

The Assistant Coach is will take on duties and tasks as directed by the Head Coach and provide supervision during travel to two or three competitions each season.

How much time is involved in coaching?

Depending on the sport(s) you coach, practices are generally one to two hours in duration, held one to two times per week, for a period of eight to ten weeks. One or two competition opportunities are provided on a weekend day, with Summer Games or Fall Games offered at the end of each season.

What sports are offered?

Sports available may vary depending on your location, due to facility and coaching availability in your Local Program's area.

Special Olympics Southern California offers the following sports:

Spring/Summer season (February to June):

- Aquatics
- Athletics
- Basketball
- Bocce
- Golf
- Gymnastics (Artistic and Rhythmic)

Fall/Winter season (August to December):

- Bowling
- Floor Hockey
- Soccer
- Softball
- Tennis
- Volleyball



Will I receive training before I coach?

Training is available in several ways. If you have a high level of sports experience, we offer a helpful three-hour course entitled "Coaching Special Olympics Athletes". If you have limited sports experience, we offer a one-day training school for your sport. You'll learn tips and training techniques for running effective training sessions.

How do I sign up as a volunteer coach?

Contact your Local Program, their information is available on our website at www.sosc.org. Click on the 'Local Programs' tab.

By getting in touch with your Local Program; you will learn what sports are offered and how to get started.

As you get started you will be asked to complete the following steps:

New volunteers are asked to complete the following steps.

1. Submit a Class A Volunteer Application
2. Complete the Protective Behaviors online course.
3. Agree to allow Special Olympics Southern California to complete a background check
4. Complete a General Orientation

Your Local Program will walk you through these steps and provide all of the materials needed to meet these requirements.

Why do I need a Volunteer Application?

This application allows Special Olympics Southern California to perform a criminal background check for the protection of all involved and provides us with your emergency contact information.

Will it cost me anything to coach

There are no costs incurred by you to volunteer. The costs associated with having a background check performed and training are paid by Special Olympics Southern California.

What if coaching isn't for me?

SOSC needs sport knowledgeable volunteers in key leadership roles for local, area and state level events as officials and in sport development and competition management roles.

How do I find out more about the 2015 World Games?

Los Angeles will host the Special Olympics World Summer Games in 2015. Visit www.la2015.org to learn more about World Games.

SPORTS VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

There are many opportunities for volunteers both on and off the field:

Sports Volunteer (Chaperone): This position is for individuals who want to be out on the practice field or court, ready to help the athletes with drills and skill development, but not quite ready to take on a leadership position. It is helpful to have some sports knowledge but not a requirement. SOSC will



provide sports training opportunities for individuals interested in this position. Sports Volunteers are responsible for assisting coaches with sports training and competitions as assigned by the coach. It is recommended that a coach have some knowledge of the sport. Special Olympics Southern California will provide sports training opportunities for individuals interested in this position.

Requirement

- This position requires 15-30 hours per season
- Coaching Special Olympics Athletes

Assistant Coach: This position is for individuals that will work with the Head Coach during all practices and competition. Assistant coaches are responsible for assisting with the training plan, skill development, athlete/team evaluations and competitions. It is recommended that a coach have some knowledge of the sport. Special Olympics Southern California will provide sports training opportunities for individuals interested in this position.

Requirement

- This position requires approximately 30-50 hours per season
- Coaching Special Olympics Athletes
- Sports Skills Training
- Additional Training (required every 3 years)

Head Coach: This position is for individuals who want to lead a team of athletes through training and competition. Coaches create training plans, oversee practice and work with other coaches and sports volunteers to create a positive and fun environment for all athletes. It is recommended that a coach have some knowledge of the sport. Special Olympics Southern California will provide sports training opportunities for individuals interested in this position.

Requirement

- This position requires 50+ hours per season
- Coaching Special Olympics Athletes
- Sports Skills Training
- Principles of Coaching
- Additional Training (required every 3 years)

Head coaches and assistant coaches with five (5) or more years of experience and that meet all certification requirements are eligible to apply for National Games and World Games coach positions.

Official: We need individuals with expert knowledge of a sport to be volunteer officials at our scrimmages, tournaments and competitions. It is helpful to have fully certified officials, and we are happy to have high school and college athletes and coaches volunteer as officials. Special Olympics Southern California will provide training for anyone interested in being officials for bocce and floor hockey.

Sports Development Team member: This position is for individuals who have expertise in a specific sport and/or in a category of sports management. This volunteer will provide resources, sports knowledge, experience and leadership to new coaches and competition directors and assist with development of the sport.



Games Management Team (GMT) member: This team of volunteers are responsible for managing all aspects of a competition or tournament. Volunteers should select a position on the team based on your interests as each position is unique and critical to ensuring a successful event. Below is a sample of key positions available on the GMT:

- Games Director –this position will coordinate with each team member and oversee logistics of the event throughout the venue and event development.
- Competition Director – this position will coordinate the details of the competition venue(s).
- Ceremony Manager – this position is responsible for coordinating the logistics and details for the Opening Ceremony and Closing Ceremony for the event.
- Awards Manager – this position will coordinate the awards distribution and presentation following each competition.
- Evaluation Manager – this position will write a report identifying the successes and challenges before and during the event. This information will be used in planning the following year’s event.



Below is a list of available coach courses. Coaches may attend trainings outside of SOSC but all courses must be approved by the Assistant Vice President, Sports and Training and Director, Competition and Coaches Education. The costs for attending outside training (unless specifically noted) will be the responsibility of the individual.

To provide opportunities to volunteers and coaches, training will be provided both “in person” and online courses*. The “in person trainings” will be offered on an as needed basis and to support any certification requirements. The minimum number of participants for the “in person” training is 10 people. Trainings that do not meet that requirement are subject to possible cancelation. Each division of Regions; (North – San Luis Obispo County, Santa Barbara County and Ventura County), (LA – Greater Los Angeles, San Gabriel Valley, Santa Clarita, Tri Valley and Kern County), (South – Orange County, Inland Empire and San Diego County) will provide training opportunities for all sports offered in that geography. Online training courses will provide opportunities to coaches take additional, rules specific or advanced training.

*Please note that online coaches training courses will be introduced as the online courses are developed.

Coaching Special Olympics Athletes Course

Duration: 3 Hours

Required: Once, certification does not expire. Coaches may re-take if needed or desired.

Practicum Hours: 10 Hours required

Location: Classroom, full participation required/Available online

This course is designed to give coaches, new and veteran, information about athletes, expectations and responsibilities, information on training plans and what to expect during competition. This course is required for all coaches and sports volunteers.

Principles of Coaching Course

Duration: 6 Hours

Required: Once, certification does not expire. Coaches may re-take if needed or desired.

Practicum Hours: 10 Hours required

Location: Classroom, full participation required/Available online

This course is designed to give coaches more information on sports sciences, working with and motivating athletes, increasing skill development, developing assistant coaches, working with families. This course is required for coaches interested in becoming Head Coaches. Head Coaches are only required to take this course once but may re-take if needed.

Sports Skills Course

Duration: 2-6 Hours, depending on sport.



Required: Coaches must attend an SOSC approved sports training every 3 years to maintain certification. Expires: Sports training certifications will expire after 3 years.

Location: Sports field or court, full participation required, dress appropriately

Offered in each sport, this is a beginner level course that focuses on the basic skills and strategies of the sport. This course is required for all coaches.

Coaches that have extensive knowledge in a sport (example High School or College coaches) may request to test out of the sports skills course. Experienced coaches may also fill out an application to become a sports clinician. Coaches that serve as sports clinicians will need to do a minimum of one training per year to maintain certification status.

Sample agenda below, times and activities are approximate and will vary depending on sport.

Agenda Overview

Check-In Facility/Classroom (30 minutes before official training start)

- Welcome/Introductions/Expectations of training (15 minutes)
- Review all rules and any SOSC approved modifications (1 hour)
- Discuss athlete/team assessment tools, best practices (30 minutes)
- Create sample training plan (1st practice) as a group, break into small groups to create an additional training plans (2nd, 3rd, 4th practice etc.) (30 minutes)
- Questions (15 minutes)

Meet on field or in gym (depending on sport) - Execute sample training plan (1st practice) created above

- Warm Up/Roll Call/Discuss goals of the training session and season (30 minutes)
- Player evaluation (30 minutes)
- Skill Development: 4 drills (1 hour)
- Competition Experience (30 minutes)
- Cool down, review lessons learned, goals for the season (30 minutes)

Tactics Course

Duration: 2-6 Hours, depending on sport.

Required: Coaches must attend an SOSC approved sports training every 3 years to maintain certification. Expires: Sports training certifications will expire after 3 years.

Location: Sports field or court, full participation required, dress appropriately

Offered in each sport, this sport-specific course focuses on development of higher-level sports skills, game or event tactics and strategies, expanded skill instruction, and enhancement of athlete performance. This course is required for all coaches.

Coaches that have extensive knowledge in a sport (example High School or College coaches) may request to test out of the tactics course. Experienced coaches may also fill out an application to become a sports clinician. Coaches that serve as sports clinicians will need to do a minimum of one training per year to maintain certification status.



Sample agenda below, times and activities are approximate and will vary depending on sport.

Agenda Overview

Check-In Facility/Classroom (30 minutes before official training start)

- Welcome/Introductions/Expectations of training (15 minutes)
- Review all rules and any SOSC approved modifications (30 hour)
- Discuss athlete/team assessment tools, best practices (30 minutes)
- Discuss challenging athletes, encouraging athletes to the next level (30 minutes)
- Develop sample training plan for team moving up to the next level of competition.
- Questions (15 minutes)

Meet on field or in gym (depending on sport) - Execute sample training plan created above

- Warm Up/Roll Call/Discuss goals of the training session and season (30 minutes)
- Player evaluation (30 minutes)
- Skill Development: 4 drills (1 hour)
- Competition Experience (45 minutes)
- Cool down, review lessons learned, goals for the season (30 minutes)

Unified Sports Course

Duration: 6 Hours

Required: Once, certification does not expire. Coaches may re-take if needed or desired.

Practicum Hours: 10 Hours required

Location: Classroom/Available online

Special Olympics Unified Sports is a program that integrates athletes with and without intellectual disabilities (partners) on sports teams for training and competition. This course will train coaches on selecting athletes and partners, player and team assessment, skill development, creating a training plan and creating good competition opportunities.

Officials Training

Duration: 6 Hours

Required: Once, certification does not expire but officials are expected to be aware of all rules changes and updates. Volunteers may re-take if needed or desired.

Practicum Hours: 10 Hours required

This training, offered in Bocce and Floor Hockey, is for volunteers that want to become officials. There is no cost and sport experience is not required.

Games Management Training

Duration: 3-6 Hours (training may be offered in segments over multiple days)

Required: Once, certification does not expire. Volunteers may re-take if needed or desired.

Practicum Hours: 10 Hours required



This is training for volunteers interested in serving on a Games Management Team. Games Management Team members will oversee and manage different aspects of games and tournaments. This is a great option for volunteers that are not interested in or able to commit to coaching for a season.

Maintaining Your Coaches Certification

Annually, attend a Regional Meeting or recertify online (*mandatory*). This opportunity is offered at the beginning of each season. It is during this meeting or online recertification that coaches learn about rule changes, policies and procedures, new sports, the calendar of events, etc. Coaches who choose to attend the Regional Meeting should attend the meeting in their Region (or they may attend a meeting in another Region with the approval of their Regional Director and host Regional Director).

Remain active in the Special Olympics program in the specific sport(s) selected. An absence of more than 12 months will result in a lapse of certification and require the coach to attend another training school. Examples of remaining active in the sport include, but are not limited to, practicing with a team in the sport; conducting clinics in the sport; or serving as a training clinic sports clinician.

Attend all required coaches meetings for the sport in which they are active.

Additional Online Courses:

To access all free online course visit www.nfhslearn.com

Under the red “course” tab at top of website, click on “Free Courses” to access all online classes. Once doing so, click the “Please Login to Order” tab under the course description. An email address and password are required for each course—set up through account.

Coaching Unified Sports (Duration: 1 hour 45 minutes)

Unified Sports is an inclusive sports program that unites Special Olympic athletes and partners as teammates for training and competition. While many of the coaching challenges are similar—defining roles in line with ability and fostering teamwork—coaching a Unified Sports team is unlike any other coaching position. This course will help you understand and implement the most successful coaching strategies for this very special mix of teammates.

Sportsmanship (Duration: 20 minutes)

Gives one a better understanding of sportsmanship, how it impacts the educational process and your specific role in modeling it at all interscholastic athletic events. Insight is shared throughout the course from fans, players, parents, teacher-coaches and officials. Coaches can complete a course immediately and will have up to 1 year to review and access all printable resources.

A Guide to Sports Nutrition (Duration: 30 minutes)

This course hosted by sports medicine specialist Dr. Mick Koester, will provide info that can help your students be performing at their peak. Students spend a lot of time and energy working out and playing sports, but they often don’t think about what they eat and drink. Proper nutrition can optimize athletic performance. As a coach, you may think this is an area that you have little



influence or control over, however this course will provide you practical tips on how you can model and teach proper nutrition.

Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment (Duration: 45 minutes)

This course educates the user about their responsibility to provide a safe and respectful environment for the students in their care. Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment will define and provide recommendations in 3 specific areas; inappropriate relationships and behaviors, hazing, and bullying. Coaches can complete a course immediately and will have up to 1 year to review and access all printable resources.

A Guide to Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Prevention (Duration: 35 minutes)

Exertional Heat Stroke is the leading cause of preventable death in high school athletics. Exertional Heat Stroke also results in thousands of emergency room visits and hospitalizations throughout the nation each year. This course is designed to give you the critical info you need to minimize the risk of Exertional Heat Stroke among your athletes.

Concussion in Sports (Duration: 25 minutes)

Sports-related concussion in sports can be serious or even life-threatening if not managed correctly. In this course you will understand the impact sports-related concussion can have on your players, how to recognize a suspected concussion, the proper protocols to manage a suspected concussion, and steps to help your player return to play safely after experiencing a concussion.

Additional Courses:

CPR and First Aid

Sport Safety and Risk Management

Coaches Code of Conduct Agreement

The Coaches Code of Conduct Agreement is designed to assist the coach in abiding by the mission and philosophy of Special Olympics. In return, coaches are treated with respect and openness and have access to self-improvement training opportunities.

Code of Conduct: Coaches

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all coaches to honor sport and Special Olympics.

All SOSOC coaches and sports volunteers are required to abide by the following Code of Conduct:

Respect for Others

- I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of staff, athletes, coaches other volunteers, friends and spectators in Special Olympics
- I will treat everyone equally regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
- I will be a positive role model for the athletes I coach

Ensure a Positive Experience



- I will ensure that for each athlete, the time spent with Special Olympics is positive.
- I will respect the talent, developmental stage and goals of each athlete.
- I will ensure each athlete competes in events that challenge that athlete's potential and are appropriate to that athletes' ability.
- I will be fair, considerate and honest with athletes and communicate with athletes using simple, clear language.
- I will ensure that accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete into any event.
- I will instruct each athlete to perform to the best of the athletes' ability at all preliminaries/heats and finals in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.

Act Professionally and Take Responsibility For My Actions

- My language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation will demonstrate high standards.
- I will display control, respect, dignity, and professionalism to all involved in the sport (athletes, coaches, opponents, officials, administrators, parents, spectators, media, etc.).
- I will encourage athletes to demonstrate the same qualities.
- I will not drink alcohol, smoke or take illegal drugs while representing Special Olympics at training sessions or during competition.
- I will refrain from any form of personal abuse towards athletes and others, including verbal, physical and emotional abuse.
- I will be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed toward athletes in my care.

Quality Service to the Athletes

- I will seek continual improvement through performance evaluation and ongoing coach education.
- I will be knowledgeable about the Sports Rules and Skills of the sport(s) I coach.
- I will provide a planned training program.
- I will keep copies of the medical, training, and competition records for each athlete I coach.
- I will follow the Special Olympics and the National Governing Body rules for my sport(s).

Health and Safety of the Athletes

- I will ensure that the equipment and facilities are safe to use.
- I will ensure that the equipment, rules, training and the environment are appropriate for the age and ability of the athletes.
- I will ensure that each athlete's medical form is current and be aware of any limitations on that athlete's participation noted on that form.
- I will encourage athletes to seek medical advice when required.
- I will maintain the same interest and support towards sick and injured athletes.
- I will allow further participation in training and competition only when appropriate.

By signing below, I agree that I have read the Code of Conduct, agree to abide by it, and that if I violate the Code of Conduct, I may be terminated as a Special Olympics coach.



Signature

Date

Coaches Conduct

Certification may be revoked if a coach fails to meet these requirements, or if he or she behaves in a significantly negligent or incompetent manner.

Special Olympics coaches are role models whose behavior serves as a positive example for their athletes. They must strive to provide the fairest and most positive competitive experience to every Special Olympics athlete in a competition.

A coach is expected to uphold the Olympic ideals and values. The coach must exhibit, above all, respect for the athletes, coaches, volunteers, families and officials (game and staff). They must have positive interpersonal relationships; uphold the highest of moral values; and be honest, trustworthy and courteous to all people at all levels of the organizations. Furthermore, the coach's principles of coaching must be compatible with the philosophy and objectives of Special Olympics. If a coach's philosophies are in conflict with those of Special Olympics, then he or she should not seek or accept a coaching position.

The coach's verbal and physical behavior is expected to reflect a positive and constructive attitude toward Special Olympics competition and toward those volunteers, coaches, officials and event coordinators whose time and efforts provide that competitive opportunity. This attitude should reflect a confidence in the decisions of the games committee and sports officials, and belief that their decisions are made with the best interests of a fair competitive experience in mind and are in keeping with the goals and philosophies of Special Olympics.

The coach accepts the responsibility for the behavior of his or her athletes, parents and spectators, both in and out of the competitive arena, while attending a Special Olympics event. Coaches should be recognized by their athletes, parents and spectators as the sole representative in dealing with the games committee and sports officials.

The Special Olympics coach is one who has succeeded in tempering his or her own competitive urges and desires for success in order to ensure that the fairest and most positive competitive experience is realized by all people involved in the event.

A good coach realizes that the Special Olympics experience is not limited to competition. Athletes benefit in every facet of their lives. They become more productive at home, in the workplace and in society as a whole. The most successful coach is one who focuses on the lifelong benefits the athlete receives, not solely on competition.

Additional Responsibilities for Head Coaches, Assistant Coaches and Sports Volunteers

Because Summer Games and Fall Games last an entire weekend, it is very important that coaches are adequately prepared to deal with the athletes for an extended period of time.

Listed below are some of the necessary and helpful procedures that should simplify the job.



- The coach is responsible for the athlete 24 hours a day. It is up to the coach to ensure that the physical and emotional needs of the athletes are met during any event or games competition. This responsibility includes, but is not limited to:
 - Ensuring that athletes are properly warmed-up prior to any competition.
 - Taking precautions to prevent any athlete from suffering sunburn or heat exhaustion by using sunscreen, drinking plenty of fluids and taking advantage of shaded areas whenever possible.
 - Bringing a first aid kit and knowing how to administer first aid.
 - Ensuring athletes get adequate rest away from the competition.
 - Ensuring that athletes display appropriate behavior.
 - Ensuring that the athletes eat properly and avoid overeating or missing meals. Note: If an athlete requires a special diet, it is the responsibility of the coach to provide for the athlete's needs. For special diets, bring a cooler with all the proper foods.
- The coach is expected to be familiar with the medical condition, precautions and medication requirements of each athlete. It is the coach's responsibility to ensure that medication is administered. Knowledge of the medication regimen (what, how much and when) is essential.
- The coach is expected to carry a copy of the valid Athlete Enrollment/Medical Release Form for each athlete at all times.
- The coach must ensure that credentials are worn by athletes and coaching staff at all times.
- The head coach is responsible for making sure that the athletes are dressed appropriately for all competitions, including appropriate sports specific undergarments.
- The coach must ensure that the athlete is on time for all sports competition but also has the opportunity to participate in special activities.
- The coach is expected to be familiar with Special Olympics Sports Rules. Questions or concerns about sporting events can be addressed to the Head Official, Venue Director or Competition Director.
- No alcoholic beverages are allowed at Special Olympics practices and competitions. Smoking is also prohibited except in designated areas.

Safety Guidelines for All Coaches

When you become a coach, whether you are paid or a volunteer, you assume some legal responsibilities. While we do not want you to become alarmed about the possibility of being named in a lawsuit, we want you to be aware that there are things you need to do to lessen the risk. When coaches are sued, it is most often for negligence.

Negligence – “occurs when you fail to perform a legally owed duty, as would a reasonable and prudent coach, with this failure resulting in actual damage that is a consequence of your breach of duty and that should have been foreseen.”

A coach has at least nine important duties:

- To provide a safe environment.
- To properly plan the activity.
- To evaluate athletes for injury or incapacity.
- To match athletes of similar abilities to ensure fair competition.
- To provide adequate and proper equipment.



- To educate on how to safely participate in sport training (no diving into the shallow end of the pool, etc.).
- To supervise the activity closely.
- To know emergency procedures and first aid.
- To keep adequate records.

The following safety guidelines are recommended to help implement legal duties of a coach

- Establish procedures for accidents and emergencies, including appropriate report forms. Safety rules and regulations should be included and enforced.
- Establish an adequate plan of supervision and make sure that those assisting are competent to do so.
- Regularly and thoroughly inspect any facilities, apparatus and equipment. This step is a good form of preventative maintenance.
- Teach skills in their proper progression and take into account individual variance.
- Do not force first aid on an athlete if he or she resists. Notify the appropriate personnel if an injury is of a more serious nature (broken bone, severe cut, etc.).
- Complete a First Report of Accident/Incident Form as soon as possible. Document all accidents and incidents during training, travel and competition.
- Ensure that your athletes have proper transportation to and from events and practices.

Coaching Athletes

The Special Olympics Coaching Philosophy – Athletes First, Winning Second

As a coach, your attitude toward sports and competition will directly affect your athletes. Special Olympics believes that the athletic experience and the camaraderie shared by teammates is what benefits an athlete the most. Coaches should be aware of how they influence their athletes, and should follow these guidelines in all aspects of their interactions with athletes.

- Successful coaches help athletes master new skills, enjoy competition with others and feel good about themselves.
- Successful coaches are not only well-versed in techniques and skills, they know how to teach these skills to people.
- Successful coaches not only teach athletes the skills of the sport, they also teach and model the skills needed for successful living in society.
- Successful coaches are those who can learn new skills, who are flexible enough to change old ways when change is needed, who can accept constructive criticism and who are able to critically evaluate themselves.

Coaching Objectives

- To have fun – both the coaches and athletes.
- To help athletes develop:
 - Physically, by learning sports skills and rules, improving physical conditioning, developing good health habits and avoiding injuries.
 - Psychologically, by learning how to control their emotions and develop feelings of self-worth.



- Socially, by learning how to cooperate in a competitive context and by learning appropriate standards of behavior, including sportsmanship.
- To cooperate and exercise sound judgment in every decision that affects athletes, coaching staff, volunteers, family members, officials (volunteers and staff) and the organization.
- To be a positive role model exhibiting good interpersonal relations, moral values, respect, honesty, trust, fairness and courtesy towards the athletes, coaches, volunteers, family members and officials.

With proper leadership, sports programs produce athletes who accept responsibilities, who accept other and, most of all, who accept themselves.

What Makes a Successful Coach?

- Knowledge of the sport – The more knowledge you have of the basic skills of a sport, and the more you know about teaching these basics in the proper sequence, the more fun you and your athletes will have.
- Motivation to be a good coach – Process skills, knowledge and self motivation to help others succeed on and off the field of play.
- Empathy – The ability to readily understand the thoughts, feelings and emotions of your athletes and convey this to them. Successful coaches possess empathy. They are able to understand athletes' emotions of joy, frustration, anger and anxiety.
- Communication – The coach must be able to communicate with athletes, parents and assistant coaches. Everyone works together better when goals and objective are clear.

Coaching Tips

- Keep the athletes active.
- Keep verbal communication brief.
- Praise the athlete; be specific about what skills you are praising.
- New skills should be taught at the beginning of the lesson. Do not over-coach; teach just one thing at a time.
- Be patient. Respect and accept the athlete as an individual.
- Review for reinforcement.
- Know your athlete – his or her abilities, interest and goals.
- Keep all practices short and fun.
- Choose activities that challenge the individual.
- Be firm, understanding, organized and imaginative.
- Set up special awards, such as hardest worker, most improved, etc.
- Set realistic goals that are meaningful, challenging and attainable.
- Set a goal at the beginning of each lesson or practice and then evaluate at the end of the orientation as to whether it was achieved. Be positive; there is no room for negative expectations.
- Plan a fitness program.
- Be flexible. Have the courage to change methods to better the program.
- Give the athlete confidence. Use your voice and face to express yourself.
- Focus on ability, not disability. Emphasize potential, not deficiency. Encourage, don't discourage.



- Before you act, remember that you are a focal point on and off the field of play and that your actions, attitudes and words could have a profound influence on the lives of your players and the individual around you.
- You set an example. Be a positive role model by exhibiting positive interpersonal relations, high moral values, respect, honesty, trust, fairness and courtesy toward others.

Working with People with Intellectual Disabilities

As a Special Olympics coach, you will be looked up to and help in esteem by the Special Olympics athletes. The Special Olympics athletes will look to you for friendship as well as for coaching guidance. Therefore, we have developed some basic guidelines for working with Special Olympics athletes which may help you in establishing discipline, coaching routines and interpersonal relationships.

The method and manner by which you conduct your program will, in large part, determine your success as a coach. While coaching, approach your athletes enthusiastically. Present the day's lesson in an enjoyable manner. Remember, Special Olympics athletes return the excitement and enthusiasm transmitted to them by you. There are a variety of things you can do as a planner and instructor to create a positive, acceptable human environment to support learning in a group.

Goals

It is very important that you, as a coach, have certain objectives or goals for the athletes on a daily and weekly basis. On a daily basis, physical conditioning should be stressed. On a seasonal basis, preparation for Special Olympics events might be in order. Specific rewards which motivate productivity are necessary on a year-round basis so that athletes progress and move on to different sports events and activities.

All short-range goals should lead up to the sound development of each athlete. Physically, mentally, socially and emotionally, the long-range goal is the enhancement of each athlete's self-image.

Discipline

In general, a "firm, but fair" approach is best; the athlete should realize that you are there to impart information as well as to offer guidance. You, therefore, should remain flexible and open-minded in your expectations and demands. This "open-ended" approach helps create a cooperative spirit and a greater desire to perform. Above all, consistency in your expectations for discipline is a key to success.

Physical Conditioning

It is important that you become familiar with the physical abilities of each participant. Then you can carefully plan your training orientations, aiming to help each athlete achieve maximum physical potential. The best way to encourage your athletes to perform is through your demonstration and participation in the activities.

Competition

Special Olympics athletes should be encouraged to compete, above all, with themselves. The key lies in the motivation; therefore, it is up to you to encourage interest by changing activities frequently. This is achieved by not making formal practice orientations too long, and by varying your approaches to the fundamentals and skills you are coaching.



It is important for you to help your athletes keep and review accurate records of their progress. As the athletes gain more and more control over their bodies, records will help them achieve awareness of their progress, which in turn stimulates further interest in competing against themselves.

Reinforcement

Rewards are a good motivation for achievement. Some athletes may respond best to verbal praise and encouragement; others may require more tangible rewards such as stars, ribbons, patches, certificates or medals. The most important tool you can have is knowledge of each athlete's needs. The spirit of achievement is a fine inducement for continued improvement. Acknowledgment of the efforts of your Special Olympics athletes in the form of rewards or reinforcements helps to bolster their self-image.

Finally, the following teaching suggestions may be helpful to you as you are learning to coach.

Before the Lesson

- Always plan and understand the lesson thoroughly.
- Set realistic goals for each athlete.
- Minimal time should be spent standing or waiting around. Maximize participation of all Special Olympics athletes and available equipment.
- Always allow for warm-up.

During the Lesson

- Closely analyze the athlete's attempts and always provide feedback.
- RELAX! Attempt to learn the rhythm and style of your team the first day.
- Be flexible. Adapt instruction to meet the needs of a particular athlete or group.
- Use confidence builders and motivation. Always attempt to prevent an athlete from encountering repeated failures.
- Stand and face athletes during instruction (mirroring reverse instruction of left and right).
- Provide brief and clear instructions.
- Teach by indirection as well as direction. Athletes are great imitators; be a good model.
- Allow the athlete plenty of time to become familiar with one skill before teaching another skill. Introduce one or two skills per practice orientation.
- Always point out the positive before correcting
- Be firm.
- Be consistent.
- Follow through with any warning you may give.
- Devote a part of each training period to vigorous activity.
- Participate in the activity with the athletes. Stay active.
- Individualize your instruction.
- Repetition and practice are the keys to success. Overlearn.
- Passive manipulation. Physical assistance is often needed to ensure proper learning.
- Don't expect immediate results in skill learning - practice patience, patience and more patience.



Sample 8-Session Training Plan

Each individual entering a Special Olympics Southern California competition shall participate in at least eight sessions of training and preliminary competition before the culminating event. This plan must include at least one local competition or two scrimmages. The suggested guidelines listed below follow 90-minute training sessions. These are minimum standards. Athletes will benefit from more frequent training and/or additional competition opportunities when possible.

Session 1

Orientation (10 minutes)
Warm Up (15 minutes)
Skill Development (30 minutes)
Scrimmage/Trial (15 minutes)
Conditioning (15 minutes)
Closing/Cool Down (5 minutes)

Session 2

Welcome (5 minutes)
Warm Up (10 minutes)
Skill Test/Preliminary Scores (60 minutes)
Conditioning (10 minutes)
Closing/Cool Down (5 minutes)

Session 3

Welcome (5 minutes)
Warm Up (10 minutes)
New Skills (15 minutes)
Skill Development (30 minutes)
Scrimmage/Trial (15 minutes)
Conditioning (10 minutes)
Closing/Cool Down (5 minutes)

Session 4

Welcome (5 minutes)
Warm Up (10 minutes)
New Skills (15 minutes)
Skill Development (15 minutes)
Scrimmage/Trial (30 minutes)
Conditioning (10 minutes)
Closing/Cool Down (5 minutes)

Session 5

Welcome (5 minutes)
Warm Up (10 minutes)
Competition (70 minutes)
Closing/Cool Down (5 minutes)

Session 6

Welcome (5 minutes)
Warm Up (10 minutes)
New Skills (15 minutes)
Skill Development (15 minutes)
Scrimmage/Trial (30 minutes)
Conditioning (10 minutes)
Closing/Cool Down (5 minutes)

Session 7

Welcome (5 minutes)
Warm Up (10 minutes)
Competition (70 minutes)
Closing/Cool Down (5 minutes)

Session 8

Welcome (5 minutes)
Warm Up (10 minutes)
Skills (15 minutes)
Scrimmage/Trial (30 minutes)
Closing/Cool Down (30 minutes)