



Sample Training Session

Special Olympics athletes generally respond to a simple, well-structured training routine. A structured routine can be a positive experience for Special Olympics athletes because it provides familiarity, stability and consistency. In addition, an organized plan, prepared before the coach arrives on site, will enable the coach to make the best use of limited time. It will also assist the head coach in organizing and communicating responsibilities with the assistant coaches. Every practice session should contain the following elements:

- Warm-up
- Stretches
- Previously taught skills
- New skills
- Competition experience
- Fitness training
- Cool-down
- Feedback on performance

The amount of time spent on each element will vary because of several factors:

1. Time of the season - more skills practice is provided earlier in the season. In comparison, more competition experience is provided later in the season.
2. Skill level - more practice of previously taught skills is needed for lower ability athletes.
3. Number of coaches - the more coaches present and the more quality 1-to-1 instruction offered, the more improvement seen.
4. Total amount of training time available - more time is spent on new skills in a 2-hour session than in a 90-minute session.

A recommended 90-minute training plan with coaching tips is outlined in the next column.

1. Warm-Up and Stretching (20-25 minutes)
 - Provide a safe court.
 - Provide a basketball to every athlete, if possible.
 - Start with a team cheer.
 - Use a basketball as much as possible.
 - Provide footwork activities.
 - Stretch each muscle group.
 - After the routine is learned, have athletes lead the stretching while coaches provide individual assistance, when needed.
2. Basic Skills (15-20 minutes)
 - Review previously learned skills.
 - Introduce the new skill theme for this training session.
 - Demonstrate simply and dramatically.
 - Physically prompt and assist athletes with lower ability, when needed.



Special Olympics Basketball Coaches Quick Start Guide

3. Competition Experience (20-30 minutes)
 - After being introduced to skills, athletes learn by playing the game. The game is the greatest teacher, for it is an opportunity to apply those skills.
 - Mini games (Mini Basketball) teach basic rules and an understanding of the game.
 - Scrimmages teach basic positions and the game itself.
 - Utilize “freeze play” to periodically stop the game and reinforce proper skills.
 - Teamwork and effort should be recognized and reinforced.
 - Always allow at least 10 minutes of free play where the coach says nothing, but does enforce the game rules.
4. Cool-Down And Team Talk (5 Minutes)
 - Slowly jog, walk and stretch.
 - Comment on the training session as the athletes cool down.
 - Provide positive reinforcement on what they did well; recognize everyone’s contribution.
 - Finish with a team cheer.

Principles of Effective Training Sessions

Keep all athletes active	Athlete needs to be an active listener
Create clear, concise goals	Learning improves when athletes know what is expected of them
Give clear, concise instructions	Demonstrate – increase accuracy of instruction
Record progress	You and your athletes chart progress together
Give positive feedback	Emphasize and reward things the athlete is doing well
Provide variety	Vary exercises – prevent boredom
Encourage enjoyment	Training and competition is fun – help keep it this way for you and your athletes
Create progressions	Learning is increased when information progresses from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Known to unknown – discovering new things successfully• Simple to complex – seeing that “I” can do it• General to specific – this is why I am working so hard
Plan maximum use of resources	Use what you have and improvise for equipment that you do not have – think creatively
Allow for individual differences	Different athletes, different learning rates, different capacities