



You can use the equipment for support in the water, and the athlete can grasp the other side of it. You can then pull the athlete to safety, or you can let go of the piece of equipment and tell the athlete to start kicking toward safety.

Always keep the piece of equipment between you and the athlete. If the athlete should panic and grab you, you could be in danger too.

## **Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions**

1. If at an outdoor pool, have a plan to evacuate athletes if there is danger of lightening.
2. Always rope off the swimming areas so that athletes do not obstruct other swimmers.
3. Make sure athletes bring water to every practice, especially in hotter climates.
4. Check your first-aid kit; restock supplies as necessary.
5. Identify the nearest phone that is accessible during practice.
6. Ensure that the locker rooms and/or restrooms are available and clean during practice.
7. Train all athletes and coaches on emergency procedures.
8. Do not allow athletes to swim while wearing watches, bracelets or jewelry, including earrings.
9. At the beginning of each practice, provide proper stretching exercises after warming up.
10. Provide activities that also improve general fitness levels. Fit athletes are less likely to get injured.

## **Pool Preparation**

Before swimming, it is critical to make sure the area is safe and clear of objects. Swimming aids and all other pool equipment should be in a designated place. No equipment or articles should be left lying on the deck area.

Many Special Olympics athletes train in a public pool, so it is important that swimmers are aware of the designated areas /lanes allocated to them for training purposes.

Although most Special Olympics athletes do not require special facilities for swimming, some modifications and adaptations may be necessary for safety reasons. Following are necessary factors to consider when planning a swimming training session.

- Architectural barriers within and around the pool
- Entrances
- Doorways
- Restrooms and showers
- Locker or change rooms
- Pool decks and bottom
- Water depth and condition
- Water and air temperature
- Ladder, steps, stairs and ramps
- Lighting
- Review emergency plan, and determine the specific signals that are used in identifying an emergency within the facility
- Check for slippery deck conditions and remove standing water
- Ensure there are certified lifeguards with no other duty but to guard
- Check wheelchair access



## **Special Olympics Aquatics Coaching Quick Start Guide**

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- If in a public pool, designate an adult/volunteer to act as a spotter for the group. Life guards may not be specifically watching your group/squad all the time
- Check location of safety equipment for emergency use around the pool area
- Be aware of other users within the complex

Always be ready to make adaptations and modifications in both your program and facility if necessary. Remember, it is always better to adapt the program to the facility than not to offer any swimming instruction and training at all.