

# Special Olympics Sport-Specific Sport Skills Program Guide

## FOREWORD

In Special Olympics, coaches play a unique and indispensable role. It is coaches who impart to Special Olympics athletes the sports skills and competitive spirit that define the true athlete.

Coaches are role models in the building of character; they assist in the development of the whole person; they give Special Olympics athletes the most immediate awareness of their own worth, their ability, their courage, and their capacity to grow and improve.

To be a coach in Special Olympics demands qualities of mind and spirit that transcend knowledge of specific games or events. The foundation of good coaching is still competence and solid grounding in the fundamentals. Therefore, I cannot emphasize enough that sound training of coaches and athletes alike is the basis for everything we do in Special Olympics.

This Special Olympics Sports Skill Program Guide was developed and thoroughly tested by coaches, teachers and parents. It is written and illustrated so that coaches at every level of experience can improve their skills for working with Special Olympics athletes.

Followed carefully and consistently, the Sports Skills Program will raise the level of all Special Olympics coaching and give the gift of pride and accomplishment that comes with doing something well to Special Olympics athletes and their families.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver  
Founder

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## INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM

The *Special Olympics Sports Skills Program Guide* is a step-by-step plan for teaching sports skills to people with mental retardation. It can be used in a variety of ways to:

- Coach Special Olympics athletes for competition
- Coach participants in a community recreation program
- Teach in a physical education classroom format
- Teach as part of a therapeutic recreation setting
- Teach within a family, just for fun.

This guide is designed to meet the needs of a widely diverse group of people, who may also exhibit any number of physical impairments. Suggestions for modifications and adaptations are included.

### INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

The reauthorization of United States Public Law 94-142 as part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has not changed the original policies which guarantee physical education and related services to all school age children with disabilities. U.S. Accredited Programs will want to note that care has been taken to ensure that this material will meet and comply with this legislation.

As defined in the law, the term “special education” means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. This instruction includes classroom instruction and instruction in physical education, in the home, and in hospitals and institutions. The importance of physical education in the total education of a child with a disability is evident in that physical education is the only subject area specifically addressed in the definition of special education.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

If you are coaching Special Olympics athletes or helping to prepare them for competition, you will want to start by reviewing *Section I* — “Overview of Special Olympics”. Then you will work toward developing a season plan in *Section II* and specific skills progressions in the individual training sessions in *Section III*. This guide also provides suggestions to help you improve your athlete’s performances in *Section IV* and will help you get ready for a competition in *Section V*.

If you are teaching the skills of the sport without competition as a goal, you will be most interested in the *Section II* topics of Clothing, Equipment, Facility, and Safety. You will also find the step-by-step teaching progressions for basic skills interesting in *Section III*.

For those of you using this guide to design a classroom curriculum or Individualized Education Plan, you may find the athlete’s Daily Performance Record and Sports Skills Assessment Record in *Section VI* useful.

Regardless of your reasons for teaching or coaching this sport, objectives should be based upon the following criteria:

1. Present ability of the athlete
2. Potential ability of the athlete
3. Behavioral limitations of the athlete
4. Behavioral limitations of the environment.

## THE BENEFITS OF TABLE TENNIS

Table Tennis is the most popular racquet sport in the world. Since becoming a part of Olympic Games competition in 1988, the sport has further increased its worldwide popularity. Table tennis is considered a lifetime sport. Special Olympics athletes who have mastered the basic strokes can enjoy the sport throughout their lives. The popularity of the sport has allowed access to the required equipment of a racquet, balls, and a table for most individuals wishing to participate in the sport. Modern table tennis is very different from the recreational game or “Ping-Pong” many of us first learned in our basements or at summer camp. The competitive sport of table tennis is played by well-trained and highly-skilled athletes. Played at its highest level, it is a sport of super spin and speed—sometimes the ball can attain speeds of more than 100 miles per hour. With a ball that weighs only 2.5 grams, it takes great timing and coordination to create this kind of speed. Players today rely more on spin than speed to play table tennis at a competitive level.

Table Tennis provides many benefits to Special Olympics athletes:

- Improves an athlete’s total fitness level.
- Develops hand-eye coordination, body control and movement.
- Teaches athletes to concentrate on a particular task.
- Allows athletes the opportunity to make new friends and acquaintances.
- Provides an activity which can be enjoyed with siblings and other family members.
- Above all, table tennis is FUN!

### A Preview of the Table Tennis Events Offered

The table tennis competitions are based on athletes’ ability levels. Special Olympics offers the following types of competition.

- **Individual Skills Competition** is offered for athletes who have not yet mastered the necessary skills to play a regulation table tennis match. The Individual Skills Competition is comprised of five events: 1.) hand bounce, 2.) racquet (paddle) bounce, 3.) forehand volley, 4.) backhand volley, and 5.) serve. A player’s final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of the five events.
- **Single Competition** is offered for athletes with moderate to advanced ability who have demonstrated the necessary skills to play a regulation game of table tennis.
- **Doubles Competition** is offered for athletes who have demonstrated necessary skills to play regulation table tennis and wish to play as a two-person team.
- **Unified Sports® Doubles** is an event which pairs a Special Olympics athlete with a partner without mental retardation in a regulation match.
- In addition, the following events provide meaningful competition **for athletes with lower ability levels**: target serve, racquet (paddle) bounce, and return shot.

## **SECTION I - OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

### **HISTORY**

To honor the memory of the oldest Kennedy child who was killed in World War II, the Kennedy family founded the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation in 1946. The Foundation's mission has been to seek the prevention of mental retardation and to improve the way in which society treats its citizens who have mental retardation. In the 1950s, the Foundation developed a grant program to improve and advance care for people with mental retardation. The schools and institutes, which received grants, became models for humane and progressive family, school, and clinical settings. A fact-finding trip by Eunice and Sargent Shriver throughout the United States demonstrated conclusively that improvement in the lives of people with mental retardation was the greatest unmet need among all the National Health Service delivery systems. This conclusion helped refine the direction of the Foundation, and would eventually lead to the establishment of Special Olympics in 1968.

In 1963, the Kennedy family and the Kennedy Foundation's long standing interest in the therapeutic effects of physical fitness and sports was translated into action when Eunice Kennedy Shriver started a summer day camp for 100 local children with mental retardation at her home in Rockville, Maryland, U.S.A. This program proved quite successful in demonstrating the ability of people with mental retardation to participate in and benefit from a wide variety of recreational experiences. Because of this success, the Foundation decided to support the development of similar programs throughout the country. Between 1963 and 1968, the Foundation awarded more than 80 small grants to public and private organizations in the United States and Canada, for the purpose of creating and administering community day camps for people with mental retardation.

In January of 1968, representatives of the Chicago Park District (which sponsored highly successful day camp programs funded by the Kennedy Foundation since 1964) submitted a grant proposal for a local event to be held in one of Chicago's parks. These representatives were then invited to Washington, D.C. for a meeting in which Mrs. Shriver applauded their proposal and presented her idea for an international competition, to be called "Special Olympics". The Chicago Park District was awarded a grant to plan and conduct the first Special Olympics Games with assistance from the Foundation and several of the experts who had helped develop the program.

On July 20, 1968, Opening Ceremonies for the First International Special Olympics Games were held at Soldier Field in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A., and were co-sponsored by the Kennedy Foundation and the Chicago Park District. One thousand athletes from 26 states and Canada participated in track and field, swimming and floor hockey. The Games were a tremendous success. The following year, the non-profit corporation, Special Olympics, Inc. and the creation of Special Olympics Accredited Programs in the United States were established.

### **MISSION**

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people eight years of age and older with mental retardation, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

Special Olympics is founded on the belief that people with mental retardation can, with proper instruction and encouragement, learn, enjoy and benefit from participation in individual and team sports, adapted as necessary to meet the needs of those with special mental and physical limitations.

Special Olympics believes that consistent training is essential to the development of sport skills. In addition, competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress and providing incentives for personal growth.

Special Olympics believes that through sports training and competition, people with mental retardation benefit physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. Families are also strengthened; and the community at large, can participate in and observe an environment of equality, respect and acceptance.

Special Olympics believes that every person with mental retardation who is at least eight years old should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from sports training and competition. Special Olympics also permits individual programs to accept children from ages six to seven for training, but these children may not participate in Special Olympics competition.

## **OPERATING POLICIES**

To provide the most enjoyable, beneficial and challenging activities for athletes with mental retardation, Special Olympics operates in accordance with the following operating policies. The General Rules and the Sports Rules are specifically designed to enforce these policies.

1. Special Olympics training and competition are open to every person with mental retardation who is at least eight years of age and who registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules. There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. An Accredited Program may permit children who are at least six years old to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs offered by that Accredited Program, or in specific (and age-appropriate) cultural or social activities offered during the course of a Special Olympics event. Such children may be recognized for their participation in such training or other non-competitive activities through certificates of participation, or through other types of recognition approved by SOI that are not associated with participation in Special Olympics competition. However, no child may participate in a Special Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition) before his or her eighth birthday.
2. Special Olympics must offer full participation for every athlete regardless of his/her economic circumstances.
3. Special Olympics is an athlete-centered movement and believes that the athlete is all-important. Promoting athletes as the central focus of each training or competition program or event, developing the physical, social, psychological, intellectual and spiritual qualities of the participants, and providing meaningful opportunities to participate in additional activities that support Special Olympics programming must be the focus of every Accredited Program.
4. Special Olympics encourages coaches and family members of athletes to make every effort to encourage Special Olympics athletes to reach their highest level of athletic achievement in a particular sport and to provide opportunities for them to do so.
5. Each Accredited Program shall offer comprehensive year-round sports training, conducted by qualified coaches in accordance with these Official Sports Rules. Every Special Olympics athlete who competes in a Special Olympics sport at a Games or a Tournament must have been trained in that sport. Training shall include physical conditioning and nutrition education. Accredited Programs shall establish written minimum training requirements for competitors in each Official Sport, in accordance with their respective Accreditation Criteria and these Official Sports Rules. Athletes who desire to compete in Regional Games, Multi-State Games or World Games must be trained for at least eight (8) consecutive weeks in the appropriate sport and must have several opportunities to compete (including scrimmages and practice sessions) during that period. Each Accredited Program should offer athletes who are preparing for competitions at other levels within Special Olympics, such as for National Games, Accredited Program Games or Subprogram Games (like local, area, community), the same training and competition opportunities as are offered by that Accredited Program to athletes who participate in Regional, Multi-State and/or World Games.
6. Every Accredited Program must offer a variety of sports events and activities that are appropriate to the age and ability of each athlete and consistent with the Program's Accreditation Level and that foster full participation by each eligible athlete regardless of level of ability, degree of mental or physical disability, or economic circumstances.
7. Every Accredited Program must, if required by its Accreditation Level, include Special Olympics Unified Sports® training and competition in which individuals with and without mental retardation participate together on teams, and the Motor Activities Training Program for individuals with such severe mental retardation that they cannot benefit from standard Special Olympics training and competition programs.

8. Special Olympics encourages qualified athletes to participate in school, club and community programs where they can train and compete in regular sports activities. The athletes may, at this point, wish to leave Special Olympics or continue to take part in Special Olympics activities as well. The decision rests with the athlete.
9. Special Olympics fully supports the concept of developing sports events for athletes with mental retardation in conjunction with events conducted by sports organizations for individuals without mental retardation. Accredited Programs should encourage other amateur and professional sports programs to include demonstrations by Special Olympics athletes as part of their major events. In addition, Accredited Programs should work with other sports organizations to develop sports events in which Special Olympics athletes may compete with individuals who do not have mental retardation. This can occur under circumstances that offer Special Olympics athletes realistic opportunities to excel and compete successfully, whether by participating in the same heats as all athletes or in heats organized specifically for Special Olympics athletes. Special Olympics personnel should work to create a feasible format for these integrated activities.
10. All Special Olympics sports training and competition activities and events shall be conducted in accordance with the General Rules, these Official Sports Rules and the other uniform standards. Each Accredited Program shall offer sports training and competition programs that meet the highest possible standards in facilities and equipment, athletic attire, training, coaching, officiating, administration, and related events for athletes and their families. Special Olympics sports training and competitions must be held in a manner that protects the participating athletes, provides fair and equitable conditions of competition, and promotes uniformity in testing athletic skills, so that no competitor obtains an unfair advantage over another.
11. Special Olympics believes that every athlete deserves an equal chance to excel during competition. Thus, each competition division within a given event must be structured so that every athlete/team in the division has a reasonable chance to excel during competition. This must be done by placing athletes/teams in divisions according to accurate records of previous performance or trial heats and, when relevant, grouping by age and gender.
12. Special Olympics seeks to promote the spirit of sportsmanship and a love of participation for its own sake by stressing and celebrating the importance of, and personal achievement associated with, each athlete's participation and personal effort in Special Olympics, regardless of comparative ability. Special Olympics believes that every athlete should participate to his/her fullest potential. This means that in team sports each coach must see to it that each athlete has frequent opportunities to participate. This also means that each Games and Tournament should offer as many sports as possible, with events for athletes of all ability levels. Special Olympics promotes this philosophy in the training of its coaches and officials.
13. All Special Olympics Games and competitions – at the local, state, provincial, national and international levels – shall reflect the values, standards, traditions, ceremonies, and activities embodied in the ancient and modern Olympic movement, broadened and enriched to celebrate the physical and spiritual qualities of persons with mental retardation so as to enhance their dignity and self-esteem.
14. At Accredited Program competitions, Regional Games, World Games, and other Special Olympics Games, official medals shall be presented to first, second, and third-place winners. Athletes in fourth through eight places shall receive ribbons with all appropriate ceremonies. Those who are disqualified (for reasons other than unsportsmanlike conduct or violations of the divisioning rules) or do not finish an event shall be given a participation ribbon. For competitions below the Accredited Program level (that is, at the local level) ribbons or a combination of medals and ribbons may be awarded.
15. Special Olympics training and competition activities must take place in public, with every effort made to attract spectators and generate coverage by the news media, in order to increase public awareness or and support the need and capabilities of persons with mental retardation.

16. Special Olympics shall offer every athlete multiple opportunities annually to participate in locally based competitions in Official Sports and Nationally Popular Sports in which he/she is interested. These activities should include competitions with teams or individuals other than those with whom the athlete usually trains. Each Accredited Program must offer competition opportunities in at least the number of Official Sports and/or Nationally Popular Sports required by the Accreditation Criteria for that Program's Accreditation Level. In addition, in order to give athletes broader opportunities, area, state, provincial, regional, national and international competitions as well as tournaments shall, subject to available resources, be open to athletes representing the full range of skill levels.
17. Special Olympics is not designed to train elite athletes exclusively, but does provide training and competition for highly skilled and elite athletes with mental retardation. Fair and equitable methods shall be used to select athletes for participation in non-local competitions so that every athlete, regardless of skill level, has an equal opportunity to participate in each competition at his/her skill level.
18. Although Special Olympics is a sports training and competition movement, Accredited Programs may offer or cooperate with others who offer, as an adjunct to or integral part of Special Olympics Games, a full range of artistic, social and cultural experiences such as dances, art exhibits, concerts, visits to historical sites, clinics, theatrical and motion picture performances and similar activities.
19. In some countries with newly created Special Olympics Programs, it may not be possible, due to economic or other circumstances, to organize nationwide games. In such case, SOI may authorize such Programs to focus on area or regional games. In such case, SOI may authorize such Programs to focus on area or regional games with the goal of increasing public awareness of the capabilities of individuals with mental retardation.
20. All Special Olympics training and competition must be conducted under the auspices of an organization specifically accredited and sanctioned by SOI to conduct Special Olympics programs.
21. To the greatest extent possible, Special Olympics activities should be organized by and involve local volunteers from school and college-age individuals to senior citizens, from civic clubs to businesses, in order to create greater opportunities for public understanding of and participation with people with mental retardation.
22. The families of Special Olympics athletes are encouraged to play an active role in their community Special Olympics program, to share in the training of their athletes, and to assist in the public education effort needed to create greater understanding of the purposes of Special Olympics and of the emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs of people with mental retardation and their families.
23. Special Olympics recognizes the contributions and encourages the participation of other organizations such as schools, parks, and recreational departments, institutions caring for the mentally handicapped and independent living centers, which conduct sports training for individuals with mental retardation. Accredited Special Olympics Programs should encourage such organizations to train athletes in accordance with Special Olympics rules to facilitate the athletes' participation in Special Olympics competitions.

#### **ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with mental retardation who is at least eight years of age and who registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules.

There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics is at least eight years of age. An Accredited Program may permit children who are at least six years old to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs offered by that Accredited Program, or in specific (and age-appropriate) cultural or social activities offered during the course of a Special Olympics event. Such children may be recognized for their participation in such training or other non-competitive activities through certificates of participation, or through other types of recognition approved by SOI that are not associated with participation in Special Olympics competition. However, no child may participate in a Special



Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition) before his or her eighth birthday.

Participation in Special Olympics training and competition is open to all persons with mental retardation who meet the age requirements, regardless of the level or degree of that person's disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities, so long as that person registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules.

A person is considered to have mental retardation for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies *any one* of the following requirements:

- 1) That person has been identified by an agency or professional as having mental retardation as determined by their localities; OR
- 2) The person has cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligence quotient or "IQ" testing or other measures that are generally accepted within the professional community in that Accredited Program's nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; OR
- 3) The person has a closely related developmental disability. A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care). However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes. These individuals may be eligible to volunteer for Special Olympics as partners in Unified Sports® if they otherwise meet the separate eligibility requirements for participation in Unified Sports® set forth in the Sports Rules.

An Accredited Program may request limited permission from SOI to depart from the eligibility requirements specified above if the Accredited Program believes that there are exceptional circumstances that warrant such a departure and so notifies SOI in writing. SOI will consider such requests promptly, but shall have the final authority to determine whether any departure or exception is appropriate.

#### **Participation by Individuals with Down Syndrome Who Have Atlanto-Axial Instability**

Medical research indicates that up to 15% of individuals with Down syndrome have a malalignment of the cervical vertebrae C-1 and C-2 in the neck known as Atlanto-axial instability. Injury is possible if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or radically flex the neck or upper spine. All Accredited Programs must take the following precautions before permitting athletes with Down syndrome to participate in certain physical activities:

- (1) Athletes with Down syndrome may participate in most Special Olympics sports training and competition. However, they shall not be permitted to participate in any activities which, by their nature, result in hyper-extension, radical flexion or direct pressure on the neck, or upper spine, unless the requirements of subsections (2) and (3) below are satisfied. Such sports training and competition activities include: butterfly stroke and diving starts in swimming, diving, pentathlon, high jump, squat lifts, equestrian sports, artistic gymnastics, football (soccer) alpine skiing, and any warm-up exercise placing undue stress on the head and neck.
- (2) An athlete with Down syndrome may be permitted to participate in the activities described in subsection (1) above if that athlete is examined (including x-ray views of full extension and flexion of neck) by a physician who has been briefed on the nature of the Atlanto-axial instability condition and who determines, based on the results of that examination, that the athlete does not have an Atlanto-axial instability condition.
- (3) An athlete with Down syndrome who has been diagnosed by a physician as having an Atlanto-axial instability condition may nevertheless be permitted to participate in the activities described in subsection (1) above if the athlete, or the parent or guardian of a minor athlete, confirms in writing his or her decision to proceed with these activities notwithstanding the risks created by the Atlanto-axial instability, and two (2) licensed Medical Professionals certify in writing that they have explained these risks to the athlete and his/her parent or guardian, and that the athlete's condition does not, in their judgement, preclude the athlete from participating in Special Olympics. These statements and certifications shall be documented and

provided to Accredited Programs using the standardized form approved by SOI, entitled “Special Release for Athletes With Atlanto-axial Instability,” and any revisions of that form, approved by SOI (the “Special Release Concerning Atlanto-Axial Instability”).

### **Participation by Persons Who Are Blood-Borne Contagious Disease Carriers**

No Accredited Program or GOC may exclude or isolate from participation in any Special Olympics training or competition any athlete who is known to be a carrier of a blood-borne contagious infection or virus, or otherwise discriminate against such athletes solely because of that medical condition. In view of the risk that one or more Special Olympics athletes may have a blood-borne contagious infection or virus, in conducting Special Olympics training and competition events, Accredited Programs and GOCs shall follow so-called “Universal Precautions,” or “Universal Blood and Body Fluid Precautions” for every exposure to any person’s blood, saliva, or other bodily fluid. SOI shall keep Accredited Programs apprised of the written Universal Precautions, which meet the requirements of this Section.

### **Persons with Mental Retardation**

Individuals who demonstrate a slower rate of learning and a limited capacity to learn are identified as having mental retardation. Mental retardation is seven times more prevalent than deafness, nine times more prevalent than cerebral palsy, 15 times more prevalent than total blindness, and 35 times more prevalent than muscular dystrophy.

Ninety percent of all persons with mental retardation have mild mental retardation and are generally outwardly indistinguishable from their peers without mental retardation. However, because of their learning limitation, certain teaching and coaching strategies are more successful than others. Specifically, demonstration, physical prompt, and manipulation of body part(s) are preferred to verbal instruction. Tasks to be learned should be divided into small meaningful steps, presented sequentially, and then practiced in total with as little change in the order as possible. Feedback about an athlete’s performance should be immediate and specific. Comments such as “you kept your eyes on the goal” are more meaningful and helpful than phrases like “good shot”.

Like most groups of people, athletes with mental retardation will vary greatly in terms of their physical abilities and their sport skill proficiency. The degree of mental retardation generally does not determine an athlete’s performance level. However, athletes with severe mental retardation will be more challenged by the tactical aspects of competition. These athletes will also demonstrate greater incidence of secondary impairments (such as cerebral palsy and other physical limitation) affecting motor skills. Yet, given proper coaching and sufficient practice time, most athletes with mental retardation can successfully compete alongside or against many of their non-disabled peers.

This Sports Skills Program Guide is written for coaches, teachers, family members, peer coaches, and others who train or assist in training athletes with mental retardation. The task-analyzed approach enables skills to be taught in small steps and customized for each athlete. The array of Special Olympics sports and events within each sport are designed to ensure that there is an appropriate opportunity for every Special Olympics athlete. This will be regardless of their learning or physical abilities and their sport skill proficiency.

More technical information on mental retardation is available. Please feel free to contact the following association:

American Association for Mental Retardation  
1719 Kalorama Road, NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
USA  
(202) 387-1968

### **AGE DIVISIONS**

#### **Individual Sports**

Youth: ages 8-11  
Junior: ages 12-15  
Senior: ages 16-21  
Masters: ages 22-29

#### **Team Sports**

Junior: ages 15 and under  
Senior: ages 16-21  
Masters: ages 22 and over

Senior Masters: ages 30 and over

Additional age groups may be established if there is a sufficient number of competitors within the last age group for both individual and team sports.

An athlete's age group is determined by the athlete's age on the opening day of competition. The age group of a team is determined by the age of the oldest athlete on that team on the opening day of competition.

In individual sports, if there are less than three competitors within an age group, the athletes shall compete in the next oldest age group. That age group shall then be renamed to accurately reflect the entire range of competitors within that age group. Age groups may also be combined to reduce the variance between the highest and lowest scores within a division.

In team sports and within each ability group, age groups may be combined to create divisions. If there is only one team within an age or ability group, that team must be combined with other teams for competition.

## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS SPORTS**

### **Official Summer Sports**

Aquatics (Swimming & Diving)

Athletics (Track & Field)

Basketball

Bowling

Cycling

Equestrian Sports

Football (Soccer)

Golf

Gymnastics (Artistic)

Gymnastics (Rhythmic)

Powerlifting

Roller Skating

Sailing

Softball

Tennis

Volleyball

### **Official Winter Sports**

Alpine Skiing

Cross Country Skiing

Figure Skating

Floor Hockey

Speed Skating

### **Nationally Popular Sports**

Badminton

Bocce

Snowshoeing

Table Tennis

Team Handball

## **MOTOR ACTIVITIES TRAINING PROGRAM**

Special Olympics Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) is designed for persons with severe limitations who do not yet possess the physical an/or behavioral skills necessary to participate in Official Special Olympics Sports. The program provides a comprehensive motor activity and recreation training curriculum for these participants. Trainers with various backgrounds (physical educators, recreators, and therapists) and with assistance from peer trainers and other volunteers can administer MATP. In addition, direct care workers, parents, and

volunteers will find MATP helpful in developing appropriate motor programs for individuals with severe limitations.

The Motor Activities Training Program uses goals, short-term objectives, task-analyzed activities, assessments, and teaching suggestions for individualizing motor activity instruction. However, MATP emphasizes training and participation, rather than competition. In addition, MATP provides the means for people with severe limitations to participate in appropriate recreational activities geared to their ability levels. These activities can be conducted in schools and large residential facilities as well as in community-based settings.

Individuals who participate in MATP activities work as hard as other Special Olympics athletes, and they deserve recognition for their efforts. Special Olympics has created a Challenge medal and ribbon to recognize participants who have completed an MATP eight-week program and who have participated in a Training Day. Participants in MATP activities at the Subprogram (local) or Program level events should also receive T-shirts, hats, pins and/or any other form of recognition that is provided to all Special Olympics athletes.

When MATP participants reach the necessary readiness and skill levels, each Special Olympics sport provides an appropriate transition into that sport, but at an introductory level. Specific events are identified in the Official Special Olympics Summer and Winter Sports Rules books for athletes with low ability levels. For example, in athletics, an appropriate choice for competition would be the 10-Meter Assisted Walk.

### **UNIFIED SPORTS®**

Unified Sports® is a program that first combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and peer athletes without mental retardation on sports teams for training and competition. Secondly, all players (Special Olympics athletes and partners) are of similar age and ability. Special Olympics athletes in this program need to have the necessary skill level to participate in the sport so they can be appropriately matched with partners.

Unified Sports® is an important program because it expands sports opportunities for athletes seeking new challenges. It also dramatically increases inclusion in the community by helping to break down the barriers that have historically kept people with and without mental retardation apart. At the same time, Unified Sports® provides a valuable sports opportunity to individuals with mental retardation who are not presently involved with Special Olympics, especially those with mild retardation, and those in communities where there are not enough Special Olympics athletes to conduct team sports.

Unified Sports® has become an important addition to the overall Special Olympics program and has helped further reach its mission. Teams are constructed in such a way as to provide training and competition opportunities that meaningfully challenge all athletes and often lead to improved self-esteem, equal status with peers and new friendships.

## SECTION II – ORGANIZING THE PROGRAM

### SPECIAL OLYMPICS JOB DESCRIPTION

**Position:** Coach

**Description:** The Special Olympics coach is responsible for providing athletes with comprehensive sports training and competition experiences according to the purpose, mission, and philosophy of Special Olympics.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- 1) Select, assess, and train Special Olympics athletes.
  - Recruit athletes and complete and submit all required medical and registration materials by established deadlines.
  - Assess the skill of each athlete or team, determining the appropriate events and levels for training and competition in the selected sports.
  - Develop individual training programs for each athlete including fundamental skill instruction, strength and conditioning activities, and instruction on competition and rules. This training program will be a minimum of eight weeks duration
- 2) Apply and abide by the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.
- 3) Apply the skills and rules of the sport being coached.
- 4) Develop family support to enhance athlete training opportunities.
- 5) Make sport training and competition a fun experience.
- 6) Execute the legal duties of a coach:
  - Provide a safe environment.
  - Properly plan the activity.
  - Evaluate athletes for injury or incapacity.
  - Match or equate athletes.
  - Provide adequate and proper equipment.
  - Warn of inherent risks in the sport.
  - Supervise the activity closely.
  - Know emergency procedures and first aid.
  - Have a first-aid certified coach on site at all training sessions.
  - Keep accurate records.

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A 90-minute Orientation for family members before the start of the season might include:

- Introduction of coaches and volunteers
  - Special Olympics mission and philosophy
  - Coaching philosophy
  - Demonstration by athletes, or slides, or video of athletes in the sport
  - Program specifics – dates, times, procedures
  - How families can help
  - Questions and answers
- 

#### **HELP FOR THE COACH**

**Families** are encouraged to take an active role in the Special Olympics program. Coaches may call upon family members of all ages to help as:

- Assistant coaches
- Recruiters of athletes or other volunteers
- Fund-raisers for equipment and uniforms
- Transportation providers
- Record keepers
- Chaperones for travel

**Special Olympics Partners Clubs®** are in existence in hundreds of schools across the United States and are beginning all over the world. Student groups volunteer their time to help as one-on-one coaching assistants and teammates. Special Olympics, Inc. provides Partners Clubs® Handbooks to help a school organize and establish this program. “Partners Club® and You” brochures are also available.

**Special Olympics Sports Partnerships** involve schools’ varsity and/or junior varsity teams. A Special Olympics team or athlete trains with the school’s team but competes against athletes of comparable age and ability. Each team will warm up, stretch, condition and cool down together. Athletes without disabilities serve as peer coaches, scrimmage teammates and boosters.

**Other Special Olympics volunteers** help to organize all the Special Olympics sports programs offered in your community, state or national program. Many Accredited Programs often Subprogram committees or boards headed by a Manager or Coordinator. These volunteer colleagues will be resources on:

- How to find eligible athletes
- Procedures for fund raising
- Training for coaches and assistants
- Dates for upcoming competitions

In most Accredited Programs, there will also be a volunteer Sport Director who is the expert in the sport, help to administer coaches training and major competitions. This person is the primary resource on:

- Sport rules
- Sport training techniques of athletes
- Finding instructors for sport training services
- Finding sport officials for small competitions

## **COACHES CERTIFIED TRAINING COURSES**

Special Olympics offers certified training courses that takes into account the different skill needs of coaches. Certification requires:

- 1) General Orientation (at least once)
- 2) Approved Course
- 3) 10-hour follow-up Practicum of coaching Special Olympics athletes
- 4) Completion and mailing application for certification

The **GENERAL ORIENTATION** provides a 90-minute classroom instruction about Special Olympics. It is designed for volunteers, chaperones, family members, and professionals who have an interest in providing sports training for individuals with mental retardation. The course contains information on the Special Olympics mission, philosophy, eligibility, organization, rules, sports training, and competition opportunities.

The **SKILLS COURSE** is a four to six-hour sport-specific instructional training school that is designed for volunteers, family members, and professionals who wish to coach or who already coach Special Olympics athletes. The course contains information on skills, practice drills, mental and physical preparation of athletes, events, competition rules as well as on-site experience in training Special Olympics athletes.

The **PRINCIPLES OF COACHING COURSE** is a six-hour classroom training school addressing the fundamental principles of “coaching” Special Olympics athletes. The course focuses on coaching philosophy, sports psychology, planning, and administration. This course is strongly recommended for all coaches, especially those who will serve as “head coaches” or who will organize local training programs.

The **COACHING SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES COURSE** is designed for the new coach with sport experience and the veteran Special Olympics coach looking to improve his or her training and coaching skills. This three to four-hour course involves four sections: the athlete, the coach, training and coaching the athlete, and successfully preparing for competition. The course addresses the following: What does a coach need to know about the athlete with mental retardation – mental, psychological, and social considerations? What about the expanded

role as a Special Olympics coach? How can athletes be taught and coached more positively and more successfully so that their performances and behavior improve?

The TACTICS COURSE is a four to six-hour training school designed for coaches who want to increase their knowledge of advanced sport-specific coaching. The course features in-depth sport skills development, advanced training principles, and competition strategies as well as on-site experience training Special Olympics athletes, when appropriate.

## **MATERIALS**

There are many quality books and videos available which are helpful in teaching table tennis. Some are aimed at teaching beginners and therefore useful to Special Olympics coaches. A good place to start is by contacting USA Table Tennis. (See address next page.) They offer a list of USATT and ITTF (International Table Tennis Federation) publications, videotapes, and published books about the sport. The organization also offers *USA Table Tennis Magazine*, the official publication of USA Table Tennis. You may also find table tennis instruction books at your local library or bookstore. National Programs can contact the International Table Tennis Federation (see address next page) or their sport directors for more information.

### **Recommended Books:**

Table Tennis - The Sport by Scott Preiss - Wm. C. Brown Publishers (1992).

Table Tennis by Margaret Varner and Rufford Harrison - Wm. C. Brown Publishers (1967)

The Game of Table Tennis by Dick Miles - J.B. Lippincott Company (1968)

Advanced Table Tennis by Jack Carr - Cornerstone Library (1969)

Table Tennis by David Phillip - Atheneum (1975)

Winning Table Tennis by Tim Boggan - Contemporary Books, Inc. (1976)

Table Tennis: The Skills of the Game by Gordon Steggall - Crowood Press/David & Charles, Inc., N. Pomfret, VT (1986)

Play the Game - Table Tennis by Donald Parker & David Hewitt - Ward Lock Limited (1989)

Table Tennis - Steps to Success by Larry Hodges - Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc. (1993)

### **Table Tennis Organizations**

USA Table Tennis is the National Governing Body for the sport of table tennis in the United States. Headquartered at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, USATT has more than 7,000 sanctioned players and a national network of approximately 300 affiliated clubs. These clubs conduct sanctioned tournaments, league play, coaching programs, exhibitions, and other promotional, recreation, and educational activities. Through USATT, these state and local organizations may provide helpful resources as you seek to gather materials, organize a training program and get involved in the local table tennis community. National Programs should contact the ITTF or their sport directors to identify the National Governing Body for table tennis in their respective country.

*International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF)*

53, London Road

St. Leonards-on Sea, East Sussex

TN37 6AY, Great Britain

Tel: (44-1424) 72-1414

Fax: (44-1424) 43-1871

*USA Table Tennis (USATT)*  
One Olympic Plaza  
Colorado Springs, CO 80909-5769  
Tel: 719.578.4583  
Fax: 719.632.6071  
e-mail: usatt@usa.net  
<http://www.usatt.org>

## **RECRUITING ATHLETES**

The size of your program will depend upon many things – how many coaches and assistants are available, how much individualized attention each athlete requires, space and equipment available, and scheduling and transportation concerns. The appropriate training program can range from one athlete getting private instruction and practice time to a bus-load of athletes training in a large facility moving from skill station to skill station.

Athletes are most often recruited through those organizations in the community that provide services to individuals with mental retardation. They may include:

- Schools
- Residential facilities
- Group homes
- Associations serving people with mental retardation
- Supported work environments or employment settings

Referrals from family members who have relatives in Special Olympics and from Special Olympics athletes themselves can provide additional sources of new athletes. However, individual athletes beyond school age who live with their families are often hardest to identify. Publicizing your program to churches, parks, recreation departments, and other civic associations will help to get the information to the greatest number of potential athletes.

## **RECRUITING UNIFIED SPORTS® TEAMMATES**

There are a few basic considerations in selecting appropriate individuals to serve as teammates on Unified Sports® teams. Teammates should first match in age and ability with Special Olympics athletes. Second, these individuals must also be willing to make a commitment to practice as well as to compete. Unified Sports® is not simply a one-day event where teammates are matched with Special Olympics athletes at the competition site. Furthermore, individuals who would like an organized sports experience and who are not already participating in that sport make ideal teammates.

Appropriate teammates can be identified and recruited from the following sources:

- Community service clubs
- Businesses and corporations
- Church groups
- Students who are not involved in organized sports
- Recreational sports enthusiasts
- Siblings

Careful and thoughtful selection of teammates will lead to the most positive outcomes for everyone.

## **RECRUITING ASSISTANT COACHES**

Specific sport skill is helpful, but not mandatory, in an assistant coach. Family members, teachers, neighbors, and friends of Special Olympics athletes can be taught the basic skill progressions and become excellent assistant coaches. Fraternal and civic organizations are good sources of volunteers as well as high school and college student service clubs or sports teams. Many of your coaches will come from within the sports community and the following groups:

- Adult competitive clubs members



- Former competitors
- Parents of children who participate in the sport competitively
- Professional coaches
- Recreational center employees

Make sure to plan a minimum of one orientation for those recruited. Whenever possible, assistant coaches should also take the General Orientation and the Skills Course prior to the start of the season. It is also important to give them a copy of the Sport Skills Program Guide.

## **RETAINING ATHLETES AND COACHES**

Developing appropriate, meaningful, and high-quality training and competition opportunities will increase a Program's ability to recruit and retain athletes and coaches. To this end, the coach-to-athlete ratio has a major impact. It is just as important to provide one-to-one instruction to athletes with higher ability as it is to those with lower ability. Use of peer coaches to provide one-to-one training has also been effective in improving skill level and in fostering inclusion within the community.

Having several assistant coaches allows the head coach to distribute responsibility and authority among the assistant coaches. The outcomes are lessening the load on any one person, giving each volunteer a very important and meaningful role, and ensuring a long term commitment by all.

Reports from field organizations indicate that a critical time in the retention of athletes is the period when they graduate from school into community work programs. Separation from friends and familiar programs often comes with transition. A coordinated effort among the Special Olympics program, family, and school is important to ensure that Special Olympics is a part of the athlete's transition plan. In that way, the athletes can make an appropriate and timely transition into community-based sports programs as well as continue a meaningful part of their lives.

The eight weeks of practices should build upon each other, increasing in duration and difficulty as athletes grow stronger. To establish the habit of success, begin slowly. Make sure each athlete succeeds before moving her/him to the next level.

## **CLOTHING**

Players must wear appropriate clothing to train and compete successfully. Inappropriate apparel can hinder a player's performance and be a safety hazard. Shirts and shorts should be loose fitting and allow free movement.

### **Shirts**

T-shirts are the most comfortable and practical tops for practice and training. In competition, players are required to wear a dark colored shirt to allow for clear visibility of the table tennis ball during play. Traditionally, table tennis competitions are played in tucked-in, collared shirts.

### **Shorts**

For practice, athletes should wear gym shorts or conventional "tennis-type" shorts. Preferably, the shorts will have pockets. In competition, dark colored "tennis-type" shorts are recommended. Wearing different apparel for competition can build an athlete's excitement for the competition.

### **Shoes And Socks**

Shoes should be traditional court or tennis shoes with proper ankle, arch, and heel support. Running shoes are inappropriate for table tennis because they are designed for heel-to-toe movement, and table tennis requires support for lateral (side-to-side) movement. Running shoes or worn-down shoes increase the risk of sustaining an injury like a sprained ankle. Socks should be made of an absorbent cloth material to prevent blisters.

## **EQUIPMENT**

Equipment that is appropriate and in good playing condition is essential.

### **Table Tennis Racquet (Paddle)**

There are hundreds of different models of table tennis racquets (paddles) available to today's players. The primary differences between them can be seen in the type of wood used to make the racquet (paddle) and the type of rubber which covers the striking surface. With the help of an experienced player or coach, the athlete should seek a racquet (paddle) which fits them and their style of play.

Both the handle, called the blade, and weight should feel comfortable to the athlete as they execute a stroke. The type of wood used to make the blade will affect the speed of the racquet (paddle). (The speed of the racquet (paddle) refers to the racquet's (paddle's) effect on the ball.) A hard wood (or combination of several layers of wood) will result in a faster racquet (paddle) than soft wood.

Faster racquet (paddle)s are generally used by offensive players and slower ones by defensive players. Faster racquets (paddles) are harder to control. Each striking surface of the racquet (paddle) must be covered with a rubber surface. The rules of table tennis state that the two surfaces must be of different colors and also that the only acceptable colors are black and bright red. This rule took effect in 1987, and now the only rubber sheets available for table tennis come in just those two colors.

With about 200 different types of rubber available as racquet (paddle) surfaces, there are definitely a wide-variety of choices out there. However, beginning players need to concentrate on only three basic categories. You are most likely familiar with pips-out, no sponge rubber. This pimpled hard rubber was very popular world-wide and the type found on most racquets (paddles) used for recreational play. Because of the tremendous amount of spin in today's competitive game, pimpled hard rubber racquets (paddles) are seldom used now – they cannot generate as much spin as the sponge-backed rubber coverings. Pips-out rubber is now made with a sponge rubber backing. **(Figure?)** The sponge rubber backing provides more control than the hard rubber because the ball stays in contact with the racquet (paddle) longer. This type of rubber is commonly used by players with a counter-hitting style. This rubber is also ideal for controlling heavy spin shots. The most common type of rubber used in table tennis today is the inverted pips with sponge rubber. **(Figure?)** This rubber is used because of its ability to perform a variety of techniques.

### **Table Tennis Balls**

An abundance of table tennis balls is important for a successful practice. Ideally, each table would have a separate container of balls. Standard balls are adequate for practice, however, better quality balls are suggested for tournament play. (Several brands of table tennis balls are approved by the International Table Tennis Federation for tournament play – they are labeled with three stars to indicate their higher quality.) Athletes should learn to take care of the balls by collecting balls after each drill and after practice is over.

Other coaching aids which might benefit training:

Notebook - to note attendance, telephone numbers and addresses, student comments, progress reports, and medical needs for special athletes.

**Targets - any object which will serve as a specific spot for athletes to aim. For example, rings or hoops, boxes or baskets.**

### **THE FACILITY**

The Table Tennis table is shown in the **diagram**. Today, because of the speed and spin imparted on the ball, more space is needed for high caliber play. An arena for national and international play is typically 23 feet by 46 feet (**metric**). Top players need all of this space, but beginners do not. It is recommended that a player have at least 6 feet (**metric**) on all sides of the table to attempt the correct strokes and the ceiling height should be at least 12 to 15 feet (**metric**).

### **COACH'S SAFETY CHECKLIST**

#### **COACH'S SAFETY CHECKLIST**

Before every practice session and before every new drill, a coach's primary concern is the safety of the athletes. It is important to establish safety rules at your first practice. To prevent injuries, athletes should stretch

and warm-up properly before each practice. Train your athletes to become more physically fit. *Fit athletes are less likely to get injured!*

Another important reminder is to always have your players in front of you and face the athletes when teaching. Demonstrations, however, done facing a beginner group can lead to confusion between left and right. It is much better to have another coach assist by demonstrating a procedure facing the same direction as the athletes.

### **Before Each Practice**

- Are the tables properly set-up and positioned?
- Is the practice area free of any debris or loose material?
- Is there a first-aid kit nearby?
- Does the coach have access to parents'/guardians' telephone numbers and emergency numbers?

### **During Practice**

- Are the people waiting in line far enough away from the active player?
- Are they paying attention?
- Are the athletes properly positioned to perform drill?
- Are the balls cleared from the playing area and retrieved regularly?

### *Preparing for Safety*

### *Training and Competing Safety*

## **DEVELOPING A SEASON PLAN**

### **Developing a Season Plan**

Before the season begins, a Special Olympics table tennis coach should carefully plan a training program which will prepare the athletes for competition. When considering your season, keep in mind the second part of the mission statement of Special Olympics, "to provide opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy.." It is important to remember that coaches are not only teaching athletes table tennis skills, but providing an environment to make friends and have fun.

### **Pre-Program Planning And Preparations:**

- Improve your table tennis coaching skills by attending training schools and clinics.
- Identify a local club and/or individual players who can assist you in locating a training facility and proper equipment.
- Recruit these individuals as assistant coaches, clinicians, officials, and competition management team members.
- Recruit volunteers to transport athletes to and from practices and competition.
- Create an 8-week instructional plan for your season, such as suggested in the next section.
- Establish a series of overall goals and objectives for the season.
- Ensure all athletes have completed necessary physical exams and submitted all required forms.
- Work with other coaches locally or in neighboring communities to schedule joint practice sessions and competition.
- Become knowledgeable and familiar with first aid and emergency procedures that may effect individuals with mental retardation, such as seizures.

### **Season Planning:**

- Manage your 8-week training program.
- Plan and adapt your practice sessions to meet the needs of your athletes.
- Evaluate each athlete's progress and make necessary modifications to their individual training program.
- Encourage your athletes' development by exposing them to higher-skilled competition by attending local tournaments and clinics.
- If possible, explore additional competition opportunities against non-Special Olympics opponents.

**Post-Season:**

- Review and evaluate your pre-season goals and objectives.
- Ask for comments and suggestions from athletes and parents.
- Write an evaluation of each athlete's progress and review it with the athlete and parents.
- Establish or modify long-term goals and objectives for your program.
- Regularly communicate with Chapter or National Program sport director regarding the progress of your individual program and the future goals and objectives of the overall program.

**Suggested Topics for beginners in an 8-week training program:**

Lesson 1: General introduction to equipment, proper racquet (paddle) grips, and basic strokes.

Lesson 2: Ball and racquet (paddle) handling drills. Introduce forehand (or forehand counter), and practice forehand with tossed balls and rallying or feeding drills.

Lesson 3: Continue ball and racquet (paddle) handling drills. Introduce backhand (or backhand counter) stroke, and practice backhand with tossed balls. Rallying with forehand and backhand.

Lesson 4: Introduce forehand and backhand push stroke, and practice with balls tossed or hit by coaches. Introduce proper footwork technique through demonstration and drills.

Lesson 5: Emphasis on proper footwork. Hitting and moving, feeding drills, and rally games.

Lesson 6: Introduce basic forehand and backhand service and return.

Lesson 7: Rules of competition and preparation for match play.

Lesson 8: Match play.

**Suggested Topics for Intermediate Class:**

Lesson 1: Review of all strokes.

Lesson 2: Emphasis on proper footwork and movement. Hitting and moving, feeding drills, and rally games.

Lesson 3: Serve and return technique.

Lesson 4: Introduction of advanced techniques (forehand/backhand block, forehand/backhand loop, and forehand/backhand chop). Also, the proper technique for hitting against a lob shot should also be covered.

Lesson 5: Emphasis on stroke technique and preparation for match play.

Lesson 6: Singles strategy, practice drills and point situations. (Doubles strategy and practice may also be introduced at this point.)

Lesson 7: Review and practice.

Lesson 8: Match play against teammates, an other Special Olympics team, or non-Special Olympics athletes of comparable ability.

**NOTE:** These are suggestions only. Be creative and design a program that is tailored to your particular team of athletes. If time permits, spend **two** practice sessions on each topic.

**Beginners** may have greater success if they start their table tennis experience by attempting a simple rally using the basic forehand stroke. Additional strokes (along with serve and return technique) can then be gradually introduced as the athlete progresses.

**Advanced** players can probably review the basic strokes in one or two sessions. Emphasis can then be placed on refining these basic strokes and introducing advanced techniques. It is important to stress serves and returns for these players since they will be ready for competitive situations earlier in the season. As your athletes progress, add strategy to their game.

It is highly unlikely that you will have a group of only one ability level. It will be necessary for coaches to evaluate the level of individuals and adapt their programs accordingly. Assistant coaches can be of tremendous help by taking one ability group while the head coach takes another group.

## **SECTION III – TEACHING THE SKILLS OF THE SPORT**

### **PLANNING A TRAINING SESSION**

#### **PLANNING A TRAINING SESSION**

All practices should consist of the following five parts:

- Warm-up
- Instruction - introduction or review of a specific skill
- Practice of specific skills, in drills and games
- Conditioning
- Cool-down and announcements

Special Olympics athletes respond well to a simple, well-structured training routine with which they can become familiar. A typical training session is outlined below:

#### **WARM-UP AND STRETCHING (10-15 Minutes)**

- Before stretching, have the athletes slowly jog around the practice area. (This gets the blood flowing to the muscles that will be stretched next.)
- Athletes should stretch each major muscle group.
- Have an athlete lead stretches. (This allows coaches to assist individual athletes.)
- Emphasize basic skills through drills performed by athletes (i.e. racquet (paddle) handling).

#### **SKILLS INSTRUCTION (10-15 MINUTES)**

- Introduce the theme of the new skill.
- Demonstrate the proper technique.
- Divide into smaller groups to practice skill with a coach.
- Introduce drill(s) designed to practice skill.

#### **COMPETITION EXPERIENCE (10-20 minutes)**

- Incorporate the new skill into a competition. (i.e. keep score to see who can hit the most backhand strokes over the net.)
- Emphasize the newly introduced skill in game/point situations.
- Organize practice matches.

#### **CONDITIONING EXERCISES (5-10 minutes)**

- Conduct table tennis-specific agility drills.
- Perform general drills which emphasize proper footwork and movement.

#### **COOL-DOWN (5 minutes)**

- Perform slow walk/jog/stretch.
- As athletes cool-down, make comments and announcements.
- Finish with team cheer.

## **WARMING UP**

Table tennis is a full body exercise that incorporates movement from all the major muscle groups. It is important to completely warm-up the body before starting to hit table tennis balls. A warm-up raises the body temperature and prepares the muscles to begin exercising. By warming up and stretching properly, the elasticity of the muscles is increased and the chance of injury is diminished.

The three types of warm-up are:

### **PASSIVE:**

Increases the body temperature by external means, such as a massage, heating pad, steam bath or hot shower. Athletes with physical limitations may benefit from passive warm-up.

### **GENERAL:**

Increases overall body temperature through movement of major muscle groups that may or may not be associated with the upcoming activity. Examples of this are running, jogging/brisk walking, or calisthenics.

### **SPECIFIC:**

Concentrates on the motions to be used in the upcoming activity and mimics that activity. Examples include swinging the racquet (paddle) through forehand and backhand strokes or serving an imaginary ball.

## **STRETCHING**

**(Use same text and diagrams as tennis SSP.)**

## **BASIC SKILLS AND TEACHING PROGRESSIONS**

Assessment of Each Athlete's Current Skill Level

Steps to Teaching Basic Skills

Suggestions for the Coach/Teacher, Including Adaptations and Modifications

Drills/Activities

- Low Ability Level
- Intermediate Ability Level

Teaching Basic Event/Game Rules, Tactics, and Strategies

Suggestions for the Coach/Teacher, Including Adaptations and Modifications

Drills/Activities

- Low Ability Level
- Intermediate Ability Level

## **BASIC SKILLS AND PROGRESSION**

Table tennis is a complex game with ever-changing conditions. The ball is constantly in motion and therefore the athlete must learn to adapt to the ball's changing speed and direction.

**Eight Basic Skills necessary to prepare a Special Olympics Table Tennis player are:**

1. Hand-eye coordination
2. Racquet (paddle) handling skills
3. Timing of contact for individual strokes
4. Forehand

5. Backhand
6. Serve
7. Serve return
8. Proper footwork and movement

### **General Teaching Suggestions**

- Go through the basic components of each skill.
- Provide clear, visual demonstrations on how to properly perform the skill.
- Keep it simple! Use verbal cues and “**Key Words**” that simplify the new skill(s).
- Be aware of some of the common errors made by athletes with average or lower ability.
- Remember the importance of **repetition** and **reinforcement** in the training of Special Olympics athletes.

### **Basic Skill 1 – HAND-EYE COORDINATION**

Hand-eye coordination is the foundation for striking a table tennis ball. Without developing this skill, the athlete will become frustrated because he/she will not be able to make regular contact with the ball. This is an important aspect of developing table tennis skills.

#### **Accessing the athlete’s readiness**

-- The beginner has difficulty recognizing the spatial relationship between the racquet (paddle) and the ball and will occasionally miss the ball or hit it off center.

-- The intermediate knows the relationship between the distance of his racquet (paddle) and the oncoming ball and is proficient at making contact without mis-hits or misses.

#### **Teaching the skill**

- The athlete should begin practicing with just a table tennis ball and his hand (no racquet (paddle)).
- Encourage athletes to watch the ball.
- Encourage athletes to keep their heads steady when making contact.

#### **Drills:**

1. Hand bounce drill
  - Gently bounce the table tennis ball on the table with the palm of the racquet (paddle) hand.
  - Attempt to keep the ball bouncing in a controlled manner.
  - Perform hand bounce as many times as possible in 15-30 seconds.
2. Tossing and catching drill
  - Working in pairs or with a coach, catch the ball with racquet (paddle) hand at table level.
  - After completing catch, throw the ball back to your partner and repeat.
3. Hand ball drill
  - Drop the ball onto the table and, with a forehand stroke, hit the ball with the racquet (paddle) hand.
  - After several repetitions, have a partner toss the ball gently and hit the ball with a forehand stroke.
4. Cup catches
  - Hold a large cup in your racquet (paddle) hand, and try to catch a tossed ball in the cup.
  - Count consecutive catches.

#### **Suggestions for Coach**

Encourage the athletes to stay in control and concentrate on consistent repetitions rather than speed. If athlete loses control of the ball, start over and stress repetitions. Athletes who are experiencing difficulties may be better suited using balloons or foam balls – these objects slow down the speed of the ball and allow athletes the opportunity for greater success in newly introduced drills.

#### **Key Words: WATCH THE BALL**



**KEEP YOUR HEAD STILL  
KEEP A FIRM WRIST**

**SKILL 2: Racquet (paddle) Control - GRIPPING THE RACQUET (PADDLE)**

*Controlling the racquet (paddle) is an imperative building block for learning the strokes in table tennis.*

**Assessing players readiness**

-- A beginner has difficulty in timing his/her swing to the approaching ball. A beginner often swats at ball rather than hitting with a controlled swing.

-- An intermediate has developed racquet (paddle) control to a level where he/she rarely mis-hits a ball he/she was in proper position to strike. The strokes are relatively smooth and in control.

**Teaching the skill**

Two basic racquet (paddle) grips are used in table tennis: the shakehand grip and the penhold grip. The shakehand grip is the most popular and the grip generally recommended for beginners. However, the athletes can be introduced to both grips and choose the grip which feels most comfortable to them.

The Shakehand Grip

- Grip the top of the racquet (paddle) handle between your index finger and thumb. This forms the primary grip on the racquet (paddle). Comfortably grip the racquet (paddle) handle with your remaining three fingers.
- When performing a forehand stroke, you should be able to feel the impact of the ball with your forefinger (index finger). For the backhand, the thumb will have most of the feel.
- When switching from forehand to backhand, there should be minimal movement of the grip.
- Using this grip, practice strokes and drills, which increase the ability to control the racquet (paddle).

The Penhold Grip

- Called the “penhold” grip because you hold the racquet (paddle) handle just like a pen. The index finger and thumb hold the handle. The third finger rests sideways on the backside of the racquet (paddle), with the remaining two fingers resting on the third finger.
- Relax the wrist for good range of motion.
- The penhold forehand stroke is very similar to the shakehand but may be slightly better because the penhold grip allows more freedom of motion with the wrist. This extra wrist motion can be converted into more spin and speed.
- An advantage of the penhold grip is that since you strike the ball with the same side of the racquet (paddle) for both forehand and backhand, it is very easy to make the adjustment during a rally. The disadvantage of the penhold grip is that a powerful backhand shot is very difficult because of the limited motion available.
- The touch for the penhold forehand comes mainly from the third finger, and for the backhand, it comes from the thumb and third finger.
- Using this grip, practice strokes and drills, which increase the ability to control the racquet (paddle).

**DRILLS FOR RACQUET (PADDLE) HANDLING:**

1. **Racquet (paddle) Bounce “Ups”**

- Using the shakehand or penhold grip, hold the racquet (paddle) at waist level.
- Drop a ball onto the face of the racquet (paddle) with the non-racquet (paddle) hand.
- Gently bounce the ball into the air in a controlled manner.
- Perform as many “ups” as possible in 30 seconds.

2. **“Downs”**

- Using the shakehand or penhold grip, hold the racquet (paddle) just above the height of the table.
- Gently bounce the ball downward with the face of the racquet (paddle).
- Perform as many “downs” as possible in 30 seconds.
- As players advance, challenge them to dribble the ball while moving around the table.

### **Basic Skill 3 – BASIC FOREHAND / BACKHAND STROKES**

The basic forehand and backhand strokes are the fundamental rallying strokes in table tennis. A key to success in table tennis is developing consistency with one's shots. This is done through working on proper stroke technique and improving concentration.

#### **Accessing the athlete's readiness**

-- The beginner has difficulty recognizing the spatial relationship between the racquet (paddle) and the ball and will occasionally miss the ball or hit it off center.

-- The intermediate knows the relationship between the distance of his racquet (paddle) and the oncoming ball and is proficient at making contact without mis-hits or misses.

#### **Teaching the skill**

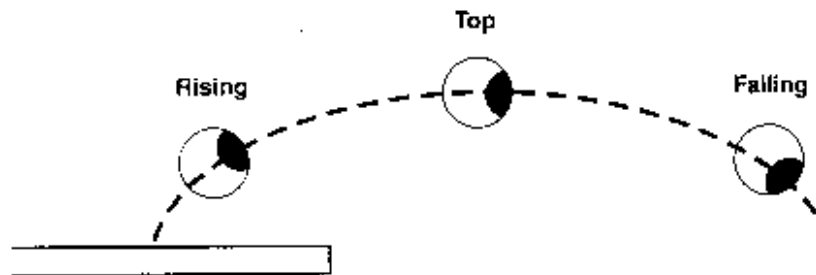
- The athlete should begin practicing with just a table tennis ball and his hand (no racquet (paddle)).
- Encourage athletes to watch the ball, and to keep their heads steady when making contact.

#### **Timing**

In order to understand and perform the basic strokes within table tennis, the player must learn the basics of the trajectory of the ball and where to contact the ball. **Figure 4.1** show the path the ball takes after it strikes the table and comes towards the athlete. The diagram also shows the "front" of the ball as it moves towards the player. The "front" of the ball is the part of the ball which should be struck. **Table 4.1** lists several strokes and the best timing for each.

**Table 4.1:** Timing for Various Strokes

Stroke	Time for Contact
Forehand counter	Top of bounce
Backhand counter	Top of bounce
Forehand push	Top of bounce
Backhand push	Top of bounce
Forehand block	Rising
Backhand block	Rising
Forehand loop	Falling
Backhand loop	Falling
Forehand chop	Falling
Backhand chop	Falling
Hitting against lob	Eye level or just below



**Figure 4.1**  
Trajectory of the ball.

### Forehand Counter

The most important stroke in table tennis is the forehand (also called the forehand counter). From the ready position, the player should try to have his/her upper arm near their side and with the elbow bent at a 90° angle. When your opponent strikes the ball, you begin to backswing. From the ready position, let your arm relax to a position below the height of the ball and, at the same time, twist your waist so that your racquet (paddle) arm moves away from the ball and put your weight on your back leg. (The back leg is the one farthest from the table. For a right-handed player hitting a forehand, the right leg is the back leg.)

Remember to keep the elbow near the side of your body. The speed of the backswing should match the speed of the approaching ball: for a fast shot, backswing quickly; for a slow shot, backswing slowly. From this position, start the upward stroke without hesitating at the back of the backswing. (The stroke will end near your forehead, above your right eye.) Bend your elbow so that your forearm moves upward and, at the same time, twist your waist so your racquet (paddle) arm moves towards your opponent, bringing your weight forward. You should contact the ball at the top of its bounce, striking the center of the ball. When making contact with the ball, the racquet (paddle) face should be angled slightly down (we call this a closed racquet (paddle)). You should contact the ball just below the center of your racquet (paddle) and slightly in front of the side of your body. Remember to follow through to a saluting position, near your forehead. After the stroke, relax, dropping your racquet (paddle) to the ready position.

You will need to practice this stroke in order to know how to position your feet and body properly. You should not have to reach out or lean sideways to hit the ball if your feet are in the right place.

**Spin is an important part of modern table tennis.** The forehand stroke creates a slight topspin. Topspin occurs when the ball is spinning so that the top rotates in the same direction the ball is moving (see figure 4.3). The topspin affects the ball's flight. A ball with topspin will drop towards the table rapidly after it reaches its peak.

When the ball hits the table, it will bounce forward because of the friction with the table. When your opponent's shot has topspin, the ball will tend to bounce up off the racquet (paddle). To adjust for this, you should angle your racquet (paddle) face farther downward (close it more) and contact the ball near its top.

To hit against backspin (or underspin), the reverse of topspin, the angle of your racquet (paddle) must be open (angled slightly upward), and you should contact the ball near its bottom.

### **Backhand Counter**

Although most players have very strong forehand strokes, proper backhand technique is essential. If the ball is coming to the left side of your body, you should prepare for a backhand stroke. From the ready position, the stance at the beginning of a stroke, twist the upper body so that your racquet (paddle) moves away from the ball and bring your racquet (paddle) back and slightly down to the left of your stomach.

As you backswing, shift most of your weight to your left foot (for a left-handed player, the right foot). Your elbow should be in front of your racquet (paddle). Keep your elbow still and bring your racquet up and forward, contacting the ball at the top of its bounce and at the center of the ball. The contact point on the racquet should be below the center of the racquet. Extend your arm and shift your weight so it is centered on both feet. Finish the stroke by pointing where you want the ball to go. At the finish of the stroke, the backhand face of the racquet (paddle) should be angled down and the elbow should not have moved. Relax and return to the ready position.

### **Backhand Push**

The backhand push is one of the most commonly used shots in table tennis. The backhand push creates backspin and is often used to control the pace of the game. The placement and spin of the shot make it difficult for your opponent to attack.

With your feet a shoulder's width apart and the right foot slightly farther away from the table than the left (reverse if you are left-handed), backswing to a point in front of your chest with the racquet (paddle) angle open. Your elbow should be closer to the net than your racquet, and your weight should be on your back foot.

Move your racquet forward, using only your forearm. You should contact the ball as it rises from the table or at the top of its bounce. The contact point on your racquet should be near the bottom edge in the center of the racquet. The stroke should be smooth--not a stabbing motion. You must adjust your stroke depending on the spin of the ball as it comes to you. If the ball has a lot of backspin, you should open your racquet more (almost parallel with the table) and stroke more quickly.

If the ball has little or no backspin, the racquet (paddle) should be more upright and you should stroke more slowly. If the ball has topspin, don't push--block it. After a short follow-through, spring back to a ready position, straightening your upper body and bringing your racquet (paddle) back to a neutral position.

### **Forehand Push**

The forehand push is most commonly used when returning short backspin balls on the forehand side. This stroke is most effective when used to return short backspin returns. Since it is easy for most players to attack the long ball with the forehand, the forehand push is rarely used when the ball comes deep. Because this stroke is used when the ball is short, you must stand close to the table to perform it properly. Step forward with your right foot, holding your racquet with your palm up and faced slightly toward your opponent. Keep your elbow near your body--ready with your feet, not your upper arm. You may need to bend your knees, to lean your upper body nearer to the ball.

The backswing should be a small, relaxed stroke made while cocking your wrist. Your forearm should stay near the table. You should contact the ball as it rises from the table or at the top of its bounce. The contact point on your racquet (paddle) should be near the outer edge. Follow through towards the net. After the stroke, spring back into the ready position, relaxing your arms.

### **Beginner Drills:**

1. Hand bounce drill
  - Gently bounce the table tennis ball on the table with the palm of the racquet (paddle) hand.
  - Attempt to keep the ball bouncing in a controlled manner.
  - Perform hand bounce as many times as possible in 15-30 seconds.

2. Tossing and catching drill
  - Working in pairs or with a coach, catch the ball with racquet (paddle) hand at table level.
  - After completing catch, throw the ball back to your partner and repeat.
3. Hand ball drill
  - Drop the ball onto the table and, with a forehand stroke, hit the ball with the racquet (paddle) hand.
  - After several repetitions, have a partner toss the ball gently and hit the ball with a forehand stroke.
4. Cup catches
  - Hold a large cup in your racquet (paddle) hand, and try to catch a tossed ball in the cup.
  - Count consecutive catches.
5. Racquet Bounce
  - Using a forehand grip, hold the racquet about 12 inches (**metric**) above the table.
  - Gently bounce the ball downward to the table.
  - Perform as many “downs” as possible in 30 seconds.
  - As players advance, challenge them to dribble ball while moving around the table.

### **Intermediate Drills**

#### 1. Shadow drills:

*These drills are done without a ball and are an excellent way to check for proper stroke execution. Examples of common game formats:*

- “Follow the leader:” athlete or coach leads group, and instructors check technique.
  - “Simon says:” athlete must follow leader’s instructions only when he says “Simon says, hit a forehand.”
  - “Statues:” In statues, the coach calls out a command for the athletes to simulate a forehand or backhand and then calls out “freeze”. Athletes remain still, and the coach checks for proper grip and form.
2. Hit the forehand and backhands with a self drop
    - Hold the racquet (paddle) with the proper grip and position the body in either the forehand or backhand position.
    - Drop the ball from the non-racquet (paddle) hand onto the table to the front of the body.
    - Stroke the ball over the net onto the opposite side of the table.
    - Record the number of successful drop hits and note improvement as season progresses.
    - Adaptation is to have the coach stand at the side of the table and drop the ball.
  3. Hit tossed balls
    - A partner or coach tosses a ball over the net to the athlete.
    - Make contact after the first bounce and hit the ball over the net.
    - Count consecutive hits, aim for targets, and keep score between players. Be creative and keep the athletes interested.
    - Have the line of athletes shadow the hitter. The hitter stands at the table and the other athletes follow the movements of the hitter.
  4. Basket feeding drills
    - Coach feeds balls from a hopper or basket to athletes.
    - Line up athletes on one side of the table, one or two lines depending on the number of athletes.
    - Coach gently hits the ball to player’s forehand or backhand.
    - The athletes hit a designated number of shots and return to the back of the line.
    - Coaches can make the feeds easier or more difficult as appropriate.
    - Place targets to aim at and keep score.
  5. Hitting between two players (or player and coach)

- Begin with basic forehand or backhand strokes.
- The key is improving the consistency of your shots.
- The goal of drills is to continually increase the number of consecutive shots hit by the athlete.
- Emphasize follow through on the stroke and proper footwork / positioning.
- Players can advance to hitting crosscourt counter-drives (forehand or backhand), and alternate hitting one backhand and one forehand from your backhand corner to your partner's backhand corner. These drills will greatly improve the players footwork.
- Remind the athletes, it is the intent during these drills to maintain a steady rally, not "win the point".

### **Suggestions for Coach**

Encourage the athletes to stay in control and concentrate on consistent repetitions rather than speed. If athlete loses control of the ball, start over and stress repetitions. The key is developing the consistency of your strokes.

Athletes who are experiencing difficulties may be better suited using balloons or foam balls – these objects slow down the speed of the ball and allow athletes the opportunity for greater success in newly introduced drills.

Always stress to the athlete to follow through and to come back to a relaxed position before hitting their next shot. When feeding balls, give a variety of heights and speeds so the athletes learn not all balls are at racquet (paddle) level. Initially, athletes should be given verbal cues as to where and at what speed the ball will be in order to help them react.

**Key Words: WATCH THE BALL  
KEEP YOUR HEAD STILL  
KEEP A FIRM WRIST**

### **Basic Skill 4– SERVE**

Every point in a match starts with a serve. In competition, players are only allowed one attempt to successfully serve the ball. (Refer to the official rules for the definition of "a good service".)

#### **Accessing the athlete's readiness**

- The serve can be one of the most difficult strokes for beginners to master. Because the proper technique must be developed through repetition, the beginning player will need some time to develop this skill.
- Modifications such as using a self drop forehand stroke and allowing the player to have more than one attempt on the serve can be used to allow beginners to hit the ball in play. (These modifications are not appropriate for competition, but will help athletes to serve the ball into play and allow them to play a game of table tennis.)

#### **Teaching the skill**

- The ball must be held in the palm of the hand that does not hold the racquet (paddle). The hand must be flat before tossing the ball vertically in the air a minimum of six inches (**metric**). The ball must be struck as it descends. The ball should hit the server's side of the table first, then the opponent's.
- When striking the ball on the serve, the wrist is more relaxed than usual, allowing for better range of motion, which can create more spin.
- Encourage athletes to watch the ball, and to keep their heads steady when making contact.
- Using the basic forehand stroke, demonstrate the basic serving technique and have the athletes copy or "mirror" this technique. Develop technique through regular practice.
- You don't have to take a long backswing – the best serve is one that is short and has control. The serve can be slow; the idea is to set up your next shot, which will be an offensive shot.
- Your weight should be on the left foot when contacting the ball. After contact, the weight should be even on both feet so you may be ready to execute a backhand or forehand stroke.
- If the player's serve is bouncing too high, the ball should be contacted lower on its decent. Have the player try to strike the ball slightly above the height of the top of the net.
- Two things to remind the player to do after they toss the ball: Relax the arm that tossed the ball, and move the racquet (paddle) and arm quickly when striking the ball.
- Intermediate players can be taught a backspin, topspin, or no-spin serve as their games develop.

- Finally, teach your players to vary the spin, speed, and placement of the serve. This keeps the opponent from anticipating what the player will do next.

### **Drills for serves:**

1. Beginners serve
  - Develop proper technique for forehand stroke through repetition.
  - As the beginner's serve improves more attention should be placed on observing the service rules.
2. Forehand serve
  - Keep your wrist relaxed with the index finger and thumb controlling the grip when serving.
  - With the racquet (paddle) face open, contact the ball at a point on the racquet (paddle) far from the handle by using a short backswing.
  - The wrist will have a snapping motion, and the ball will graze the rubber surface of the racquet (paddle).
3. Backhand serve
  - When serving a backhand serve, it is best to serve from the backhand side of the table. This will allow you to use your forehand on the next shot most of the time.
  - The wrist is the key to creating control and spin on the backhand serve. A player with a good push stroke usually can produce a good backhand backspin serve.
4. Backspin (short) serve
  - A backspin serve is usually a short serve that will keep your opponent from attacking.
  - To practice a short serve, place a small object 6 to 12 inches on the other side of the net. You can use a broken ball, a plastic cup, or a wallet. This will be your target. Try to hit the target ten times, and then place your target in a different location.
5. Topspin serve
  - Most topspin serves are deep serves.
  - Contact the ball with a forward motion with the racquet (paddle) slightly closed.
  - To get more spin on the ball, contact the ball with the part of the racquet (paddle) farthest from the handle. To get less spin, contact the ball near the handle of the racquet (paddle).
  - Practice the topspin serve by placing the target a few inches in front of the far end of the table. Try hitting the target when it is near each corner of the table and at the center of the far end.

### **Suggestions for Coach**

The serve is one of the most overlooked parts of table tennis. Most beginning players do not concentrate on their serve technique, and as a result lose points due to mis-hitting serves and/or are penalized for illegal serves. This can cause frustration and ruin a player's concentration for the rest of the match.

### **Basic Skill 5– RETURN OF SERVE**

#### **Assessing the player readiness**

- The athlete must constantly be reminded to watch the server and the oncoming serve. It is often necessary for the athlete to move quickly and re-position themselves to properly strike the ball. These may be difficult concepts for athletes to master, but are **essential** concepts for the athletes to understand.

#### **Teaching the skill**

- The athlete should establish themselves in a ready position as they wait for their opponent to stroke the ball. The athlete should be ready to quickly position themselves to hit a forehand or backhand return shot.
- The ready position is very similar to the standard defensive position used in basketball. Your feet should be about 2 feet (**metric**) apart with the left foot about 4 inches (**metric**) forward of the right. (For a left-hander, the left foot should be 4 inches (**metric**) behind the right foot.) Your legs should be slightly bent (**figure**). Your weight must be evenly distributed so you can move to your left or right very quickly. You should also

keep most of your weight on the balls of your feet. This will give you the best traction and allow for quick movement.

- In table tennis, like tennis, the forehand is usually the most powerful shot. Therefore, it is important to allow as much space as possible for it. Once you are in the ready position, reach forward a racquet (paddle)'s length. Your racquet (paddle) should barely touch the table. From the distance, you will not be too close nor too far away from the table.

**Key words: RELAX  
LOOK FOR THE BALL  
BE READY**

### **Basic Skill 6- HITTING WITH MOVEMENT**

For many Special Olympics table tennis players, moving to the ball and then executing a stroke can be difficult. It is important for coaches to inform athletes that the ball is not going to come directly to them in a match. **THEY MUST GO TO THE BALL.** Movement to the ball is critical for competition. Practices should be structured to prepare athletes for match play.

#### **Assessing player readiness**

- Beginners typically do not like to run to the ball. They would rather reach from the waist, extend their arms and then flick their wrist at the ball rather than move their feet.
- The intermediate player will move more readily to the ball but may not always be in the best position, resulting in instances of reaching for a ball that is too far away or getting “jammed” with a ball which is too close.

#### **Teaching the skill**

There are 6 steps to effective movement:

1. Preparation – Set in a relaxed ready position on the balls of your feet.
2. Proper and quick side to side movement to be in position to strike the ball.
3. Seeing and following the direction and speed/spin of the ball.
4. Being balanced and in proper position (squarely facing your opponent) to stroke the ball.
5. Making contact with the ball and remaining on balance at finish of stroke.
6. Returning to a neutral position after the stroke so you are ready for the next shot.

#### **Drills for movement:**

- Demonstrate the proper technique to move to the ball. Teach the jump-step as the most effective method for quick side to side movement.
- Show the result of reaching for a ball and playing it off-balance.
- “Shadow” drill – coach calls out “running forehand/backhand” and player moves to hit imaginary ball.
- Tossing /hitting drill – toss or hit balls to alternating sides of table and have players hit and move.

#### **Agility drills:**

- Have one player stand in the ready position on one side of the table and another on the opposite side. One player is the leader. He will move quickly from side to side using small jump-steps, never moving more than 3 feet (**metric**) outside the table. His partners job is to follow the movements, trying to keep his shoulders even with the leader. This drill can be performed in alternating 10 second intervals.

A number of agility drills commonly used in such sports as basketball and tennis can be adapted to table tennis training.

- Carolinas or suicides: The lines of a basketball or tennis court can be used to run this agility/endurance sprint drill.
- Run the lines: This drill can be modified to include an emphasis on side to side movement using jump-steps.
- Line jumps: Athletes stand on one side of any line on a court. As fast as possible, jump back and forth over the line.
- Jump roping: A great way to increase agility. Do various skipping and hopping routines. Go for speed and endurance.



## ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

After mastering the basic strokes already discussed, you may wish to work with your athletes on more advanced techniques that will be important in actual competition. These strokes will require more accurate timing and better footwork. Remember—the athletes should have a solid grasp of the basic strokes before attempting the following advanced techniques.

### 1. Backhand Block

- The block is a defensive shot used mostly against topspin or the loop shot. The backhand block is similar to the backhand counterhit but is a much shorter stroke.
- This stroke uses the power of the opponent's shot and needs little extra power. Well-placed blocks can be devastating to an attacking opponent, who may be slightly unbalanced after making a strong shot.
- Starting from the ready position, use a short backswing and contact the ball as it rises from the table. Bend your upper body slightly forward and keep a relaxed grip on the racquet (paddle).
- Depending on the spin and speed of the opponent's shot, the player will need to adjust the racquet (paddle) angle. If the shot has a lot of spin, close the blade more (cover the ball with your racquet (paddle)).
- When blocking, it is important that the forearm is slightly forward. Make sure the player is not reaching too far from the body when attempting a block.

### 2. Forehand Block

- The technique of blocking with the forehand is a little different from the backhand block. The paddle angles will be the same, but the ball will be contacted much further away from the middle of the body.
- Footwork is critical for a good forehand block. The right foot should be slightly forward of the left and the body in a normal upright position.
- The forearm moves from the ready position to the right side by rotating the upper arm. Adjust the angle of the paddle to account for the spin and speed of the opponent's shot. There should be almost no backswing and almost no body movement. After the ball bounces up, the player should gently adjust the angle and grip to contact the ball. When the block is completed, the arm should be relaxed and returned to the ready position.

### 3. Forehand Loop

- The loop stroke is the most popular shot in the sport of table tennis. The loop creates a tremendous amount of spin on the ball, causing it to arch and then fall faster forward and downward to the table. In order to perform a loop shot properly, the player must learn how much power and spin to apply. The power comes from the forward motion of the racquet (paddle) and the body, and the spin comes from grazing (or skimming) the surface of the ball.
- The forehand loop stroke is similar to the forehand counter. As the ball approaches, the racquet (paddle) should be brought down near the thigh, extending the forearm to the right. The racquet (paddle) should be lower than for the counterhit. The right foot is slightly farther back than for the counterhit. In the backswing, the waist should turn to the right, and your weight should be transferred to the right leg. The racquet (paddle) should be to the right of the body, not behind the leg. Make sure the player is not reaching too far from the body to contact the ball. Swing the forearm upward and forward by bending the elbow. At the same time, the wrist should snap upward in the same direction the forearm is moving. The ball should be contacted as the player is moving their forearm and wrist, grazing the outer surface of the ball with the racquet (paddle), providing the spin on the ball.
- The player's body weight should transfer to the left foot during the follow through. The player may need to step forward with the right foot due to the force of the stroke.
- The forehand loop can be used in many situations, and the stroke must be adjusted depending on the opponent's shot. If the opponent hits a counterdrive to the forehand, the ball should be contacted at the top of the bounce or as it starts to fall. The racquet (paddle) angle should be slightly more closed than for a forehand counterhit.
- If an opponent loops to the forehand, the ball should be contacted at the top of its bounce and a much more closed racquet (paddle) angle should be used.
- For a heavy backspin (chopped) ball, contact should be made as the ball is falling, using an open racquet (paddle) angle and an upward stroke. If the backspin is light, the racquet (paddle) angle should not be as

great. Again, regular practice will allow the player to learn to adjust the racquet (paddle) angle and stroke based on the speed and spin of the ball.

#### 4. Backhand Loop

- The backhand loop is often used in order to take the offensive. It is commonly used against deep serves to the backhand corner. A spinning backhand loop can be an effective way to return serve. For most people, it is more effective to develop a consistent, slow, spinning backhand than a powerful one.
- As with the forehand loop, positioning is a key factor. When the ball is crossing the net towards the player, they should have their body in position so that the ball will be just to the left of the stomach area. The waist should be turned slightly and the wrist and paddle are held slightly downward. The weight should be on the balls of the feet and the body should be lifted as the ball is contacted. The racquet (paddle) is brought forward by pivoting at the elbow, as you would when throwing a Frisbee. The upper arm should be held near the side with the elbow stationary.
- Spin is produced by snapping the wrist and forearm and grazing the ball during the stroke. As the player strikes the ball, they should turn to face their opponent and lift upward, extending the arm up and forward.

When finishing the stroke, the elbow should not be higher than shoulder level. This stroke should be attempted as the ball falls from the top of its bounce. As in the forehand loop, regular practice will allow the player to learn to adjust the racquet (paddle) angle and stroke based on the speed and spin of the ball.

#### 5. Chopping

- The chop stroke is used primarily in defensive situations.
- For a forehand chop, the weight should be on the right foot, with the right knee bent. The stroke is similar to a forehand push but with a much larger backswing. During the backswing, the waist is turned to the right. The ball should be contacted as it falls, using an open racquet (paddle), and followed through forward, using the wrist and forearm. The follow-through should be finished in front of the body but not across the body. Remind the player to change the racquet (paddle) angle and follow through to adjust for an opponent's spin.

#### 6. Hitting Against a Lob

- The lob is a defensive stroke that travels in a high arc. It is generally struck from well behind the table. A well-executed lob can reach a height of 25 feet (**metric**), and when the ball descends from this height and strikes the table, it will often bounce to a height well above the reach of the player.
- Although the lob looks like an easy ball to hit, many top players still have difficulty in smashing the lob. The key to success in playing the lob is proper footwork and technique. Some lobs have sidespin, so it is important to anticipate the direction of the ball once it land on the table. Many players wait too long to move their feet into the correct position. When the ball is in the air, the player should move their feet in small steps to get the body as close to the ball as possible to smash the ball correctly. An overhead tennis-like stroke is not a correct stroke. Instead of contacting the ball above the head, the player should wait for the ball to fall after the bounce to eye level, then smash the ball. After contacting the ball, weight should be shifted forward. The player should not take their eye off the ball, and must remain ready to quickly adjust their position to react to the movement of the ball.

## SCORING

### Scoring and its terminology

- Table tennis scoring is divided into points, games, and match.
- A player wins a point if his/her opponent does not return the ball safely at any time during the rally or if he/she fails to make a good service.
- A game shall be won by the player or partners first scoring 21 points unless both players or partners have scored 20 points, when the winner shall be the player or partners first scoring 2 points more than the opposing player or partners.
- A match shall consist of the best of three games or the best of five games. Doubles matches, regardless of format of the competition or the position of the match in the draws (semifinal, final, etc.) shall be two of three games.
- The choice of ends and the right to serve or receive first in a match is decided by a coin toss.

- In singles, the change of service follows: after five points, the receiver shall become the server, and so on, until the end of the game, or the score 20-20. For information on the doubles change of service, the Rule of the Game.

### **MATCH PLAY**

Participate in conventional point play with a coach/partner.

- Begin each point with the serve as the rules dictate.
- Return the serve and complete the point.
- Keep the ball within the table boundaries as many times as possible, forcing the opponent into errors.
- Upon conclusion of the point, recover any errant balls and continue the change of service pattern.

### **Understand and execute basic singles strategy.**

- Get the service in, emphasizing proper technique, control, and placement over power.
- Return the ball safely over the net and on to your opponent's side of the table.
- Strive for forehand/backhand stroke consistency by placing the ball near the middle of the table.
- Focus on the trajectory of the ball and the proper stroke technique.
- Concentrate on proper and effective movement and footwork.

### **Play a singles match.**

- Determine the server of the first game with a coin toss. The winner can choose to serve or receive, or offer the choice to the opponent.
- Follow the change of service and change of ends rules.
- Encourage the athletes to recite the score before and after each point.
- Remind the athletes where balls land when they are "in" or "out". Explain to the athlete that a ball is "in" if it land on the line (including the top edges of the table). Remind the players that the ball must bounce twice on their half of the table.
- Supervise play, reminding the athletes to assume the ready point for each point. Encourage the athletes to strive for consistency during each point.
- Remind your players to display good sportsmanship and congratulate both players after the match.

### **DOUBLES**

**(NEED ADDITIONAL MATERIALS.)**

### **DOUBLES AND UNIFIED SPORTS® DOUBLES**

#### **Assessment and Selecting an Appropriate Position for each Athlete**

- Athletes who play doubles must have the same development level of skills as a singles player. It is important to have mastered the serve and basic rallying (volley). Doubles positioning requires the athlete to play effectively from both the forehand and backhand positions. Personality is also important in selecting an athlete for doubles and choosing partners. Partners should be compatible and able to work together as a team.
- For a game of doubles to proceed smoothly, all participants must know how to keep score, follow the change of service rules, etc., and how to position themselves for each point. Repetition is the key to having athletes understand their role and positioning on the court.

#### **Definition of Unified Sports®**

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is a pioneer sports program that combines individuals with mental retardation (*Athletes*) and without mental retardation (*Partners*) on the same team for sports training and competition. The program is designed to help break barriers by enabling Athletes and Partners to participate as TEAMMATES. Unified Sports® is most successful when Athletes and Partners are matched according to ability and age.

### **INDIVIDUAL SKILLS COMPETITION (ISC) EVENTS**

1. Hand Bounce
  - a. Athlete uses one or both hands to bounce the ball on the table for a period of 30 seconds. The athlete may catch or slap the ball and is awarded one point each time the ball hits his/her hand. If the athlete loses control of the ball, give him or her another ball and continue the count.
2. Racquet (paddle) Bounce
  - a. Athlete scores one point for each time he/she uses the racquet to bounce the ball upwards in the air over the course of 30 seconds. If the athlete loses control of the ball, hand him/her another ball and continue the count.
3. Forehand Volley
  - a. Athlete stands on his/her side of the table with another player (feeder) on the other side. Using a total of five balls, the feeder tosses each ball to the athlete's forehand side. The athlete scores one point for hitting the ball back to the feeder's side of the table. The ball must hit the table to count as a point. The athlete scores five points for hitting into either service box.
4. Backhand Volley
  - a. Same as forehand volley except the feeder sends the ball to the athlete's backhand side.
5. Serve
  - a. The athlete shall serve five balls from the right side of the table and five balls from the left side of the table. A ball landing in the correct service box will count as one point.
6. Final Score
  - a. A player's final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of the five events which comprise the Individual Skills Competition (ISC).

### **COMBINING COMPONENT SKILLS INTO COMPLETE EVENTS**

Many of the basic level drills outlined earlier are excellent practice for the skills which make up the Individual Skills Competition. If athletes are preparing for the ISC, they should be practicing the actual tests used in this event. During each practice your coaches should run through the event with the athletes. Keep score and follow the rules. Their goal is to work to master the basic strokes of the game. With proper training and experience, many athletes can advance from the ISC to traditional singles or doubles play.

### **SPORTSMANSHIP IN TABLE TENNIS**

The coach should train the athletes to exhibit sportsmanship with teammates and opponents at all times. By showing sportsmanship, the athletes, coaches and spectators will enjoy the game of table tennis much more. The athlete should exhibit the following qualities:

1. Exhibit competitive effort 100% of the time.
  - Put forth maximum effort during each match.
  - Always keep trying; never give up.
  - Pay full attention to the game.
2. Exhibit fair play at all times.
  - Do not consistently infringe upon the rules of the game.
  - Make any and all line calls promptly and fairly.
  - Demonstrate sportsmanship at all times.
  - Always shake hands with your opponent and umpire at the conclusion of a match.

3. Cooperate with the opponent throughout the match.
  - When serving, announce the game score before each point.
  - If you see that a point has been mis-played and your opponent fails to see it, call the point in his/her favor.
  - Keep the play continuous.
  - Do not break your opponent's concentration.
  - Do not let parents or spectators become involved in coaching or officiating the match.
4. Cooperate with players on other tables during the match.
  - Wait until the players on another table have completed a point before retrieving a loose ball.
  - If a ball comes into your court, the rules state that the umpire may stop play. If there are no umpires and the loose ball distracts you, you should call a let (an interrupted rally with no point given) immediately and return the ball.
  - Return errant balls from adjacent courts promptly and courteously.

#### **Suggestions for coach/teacher**

- Discuss the importance of never giving up; the match is never over until the final point is won.
- Discuss table tennis etiquette: compliment the opponent on a good shot, do not disturb other players during an ongoing match.
- Always commend athletes when they demonstrate good sportsmanship.
- Give periodic awards or tokens for good sportsmanship.

## **SECTION IV – IMPROVING ATHLETE PERFORMANCE**

### **STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING ACTIVITIES**

#### **STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING ACTIVITIES**

Overall fitness is necessary to be a good table tennis player. It is important for athletes to work on fitness in the pre-season and throughout the season. Beyond general fitness here are five main areas to concentrate on:

#### **1. Endurance**

To play a full table tennis match it is necessary to expand energy over a period of up to 30 minutes. A regular schedule of running two to four miles at a relaxed pace three days a week is an excellent way to build up good endurance. In addition, running wind sprints one day a week can simulate the same type of energy used during a match.

#### **2. Agility**

Moving to meet the ball is essential to playing good table tennis. Athletes can practice various agility drills both at the table and in any open training area. These drills can include activities focusing on hand-eye coordination and footwork technique to traditional agility drills such as “running the lines” or “suicides”. By conducting these drills as relay races they can be made a fun part of practice and not drudgery. In addition, off the court athletes can improve their agility by jumping rope, dancing, or any other activity that uses light foot movements.

#### **3. Upper Body Strength**

Table tennis players should concentrate on strengthening their shoulders, forearm and wrist. Strengthening these areas with weight training is important in order to avoid overuse of certain muscles, which can cause fatigue and injury. In the pre-season, it may be beneficial to have athletes do light free weights, better known as dumbbells, with several repetitions. Other good exercises for the upper body are pushups, wrist curls, biceps curls, and pull-ups.

#### 4. Lower Body Strength

Strengthening the legs is very important to maintaining overall match fitness. Strong legs carry athletes through long points. Doing leg extensions and hamstring flexion curls with light weights and high repetitions will translate to higher performance during competition.

#### 5. Flexibility

Strength is important in table tennis, but flexibility is even more important. Proper stretching technique is a key to developing the flexibility to effectively move and safely play the game. Stretching will bring more blood to different muscles of the body, allowing for better lubrication and thus preventing injury.

### HOME FITNESS

The sport is much easier and more enjoyable to learn if the athlete is aerobically fit, strong, and can use proper technique. All three of these aspects can be greatly improved during all times of the year. The objective of a home fitness program is to teach each athlete a series of strength and conditioning exercises and supervise the sessions until he/she can perform them on his/her own.

Begin with shorter and easier practices and increase the amount of time and challenge as the athletes become comfortable with the exercises. Do the same sequence each session and have athletes repeat it three times a week. Technique practice can be incorporated into the strength and conditioning program; however, athletes must be supervised to ensure that they are performing the techniques properly. A sample Home Training Program is provided at the end of this section.

### MENTAL PREPARATION

Mental training is important for the athlete, whether striving to do his or her personal best or competing against others. Mental imagery, what Bruce D. Hale of Penn State University calls “No Sweat Practice,” is very effective. The mind cannot tell the difference between what is real and what is imagined. Practice is practice, regardless of whether it is mental or physical.

Ask the athlete to sit in a relaxed position, in a quiet place with few distractions. Tell the athlete to close his/her eyes and picture himself/herself performing a particular skill. Each athlete is seeing himself/herself on a large movie screen. Walk them through the skill step by step. Use as much detail as possible, using words to elicit all the senses (sight, hearing, touch, and smell). Ask the athlete to repeat the image, to picture himself/herself rehearsing the skill successfully.

(CITE WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE FOR YOUR SPORT AND BEGINNER ATHLETES)

Beginner athletes may see themselves...

Some athletes will need help beginning the process. Others will learn to practice this way on their own. The link between performing the skills in the mind and performing the skills in actuality may be hard to explain. However, the athlete who repeatedly imagines himself/herself correctly completing the skill and **believing it to be true** is more likely to make it happen. Whatever goes into one’s mind and one’s heart comes out in his/her actions.

### CROSS TRAINING SUGGESTIONS

Cross training is an excellent idea for all athletes – including table tennis players. There are several sports that use some of the same skills and muscle groups as table tennis. Fun activities such as bicycling, running, skating, and even walking can improve your overall fitness and thereby help your table tennis game. Sports that use hand-eye coordination can be a great asset to improving table tennis skills. Examples are tennis, badminton, softball, and volleyball.

The purpose of cross training is to take part in activities that place similar demands on the body as table tennis. These sports are different, challenging, and fun. However, training is specific. The advantage of cross training activities is enhancing overall fitness, not improving specific table tennis skills.

## **NUTRITION BASICS**

Nutrition influences performance. Athletes need the following nutrients.

**CARBOHYDRATES** – are the primary energy sources and 50-60% of the daily diet (examples are bread, cereal, rice, pasta, potatoes, etc.). Simple carbohydrates are high in calories but empty in nutritional value like sugar, candy, syrup, etc.

**FATS** – are secondary energy sources and 20-30% of the daily diet. They should come from primarily polyunsaturated (vegetable) sources.

**PROTEIN** – repairs and replaces cells, helps in regulating blood fluids, and are 10-20% of the daily diet (examples are lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and dairy products).

**VITAMINS** – regulate growth and development and should come from a well-balanced diet.

**MINERALS** – regulate fluid exchange and should come from a well-balanced diet.

**WATER** – is one of the most essential of all nutrients. Drinking water before, during, and after events or training sessions helps to produce energy from the food we eat.

Athletes should eat a meal no closer than 1.5 hours prior to a competition. This meal should be high in complex carbohydrates yet low in proteins and fats. Baked potato, spaghetti, rice and cereal all make good choices. A proper diet for improved athletic performance includes:

- Eating a variety of wholesome foods
- Eating a good breakfast
- Chewing each bit of food thoroughly
- Avoiding high sugar foods such as cakes, cookies, and soft drinks
- Limiting the intake of red meat
- Avoiding between-meal and late-night snacks
- Eating balanced meals regularly
- Drinking at least four glasses of water daily
- Getting plenty of sleep
- Drinking plenty of water after heavy training
- Taking food supplements such as vitamins, minerals and proteins may not be necessary if proper eating habits and diet are followed.

## **CARE FOR COMMON MINOR INJURIES**

It is the coach's responsibility to maintain as safe an environment as possible. It is strongly recommended that coaches have certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid, or volunteers should already have first aid, medical athletic training or emergency care certification. Athlete medical forms should be reviewed prior to the start of practice and on hand at all training sessions and competition. There should be a plan for emergencies. Using the "Coach's Safety Checklist" will help to prevent injury by assuring adequate supervision, equipment, facility, warm-up and stretching.

When an injury does occur, *STAY CALM, and administer only basic first aid.* When in doubt or when more care is needed, consult the athlete's family and a physician.

### **Treating Floor Burns, Strains, Contusions, Minor Bumps and Bruises (RICE)**

**Rest;** stop any pain-causing activity.

**Ice** for 24-36 hours after the injury.

Compress the area with elastic bandage if the area is swollen.  
Elevate to avoid edema and subsequent swelling.

#### **Conditions Requiring Medical Attention**

- Significant swelling or dislocation of an extremity
- Obvious deformity of an arm or leg
- Severe pain
- Inability to bear weight on a lower extremity
- Lacerations with or without fractures
- Significant swelling of a joint, such as elbow, wrist, knee, ankle
- Loss of sensation in an extremity

#### **CONDITIONS MANDATING THAT ONLY EXPERIENCED MEDICAL PERSONNEL MOVE THE ATHLETE**

Loss of consciousness

- Neck or back injury with loss of sensation or motor power in arms or legs
- Head injury with disorientation and/or visual changes

Always have someone familiar with basic life support and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) at every training session. Even though the possibility of cardiac arrest is much greater in the spectators than with athletes, it is always possible. Initial measures include:

- Establishing unresponsiveness
- Calling out for assistance
- Positioning the victim

#### **ABCs OF CPR FOR THOSE WHO HAVE HAD CPR TRAINING:**

**Airway:**

- Open airway (tilt head and chin).
- Establish breathlessness (look, listen, feel),

**Breathing:**

- Check for foreign body (airway obstruction).
- Provide mouth to mouth breathing.

**Circulation**

- Check for pulse.
- Start chest compression (if no pulse is felt).

#### **REHABILITATION AND TREATMENT FOR CHRONIC INJURIES**

1) Blisters

- Keep pressure off new blisters using a felt “doughnut”.
- Where the skin is torn, use extreme care.
- Keep it clean and cut skin halfway around the perimeter without removing the skin.
- Apply antiseptic ointment and a sterile dressing.
- When underlying tissue toughens, cut away the remaining flap of skin.

1) Abrasions and contusions (floor burns and deeper bruises)

- Keep them clean.
- Expose them to the air when possible.
- Keep them dry.
- Encourage gentle activity.



- 3) Chronic knee pain, thigh muscle overload, tendonitis, stress fractures, and ligament strain. Follow the doctor's directions, which will generally include:
- Rest for five to seven days.
  - Ice for pain.
  - Stretch related muscles to strengthen them.
  - Move gently, stopping at point of pain.
  - Exercise to strengthen afflicted area as it heals.

### **FROSTBITE**

Be aware of the cold factors that may lead to frostbite. Signs to watch for are white spots on cheeks, nose, fingers, or toes. If signs appear, bring the athlete indoors immediately for treatment.

### **HEAT EMERGENCIES**

These problems often occur when athletes play too long and hard or stay too long in the sun. People do not always realize how the sun can affect them.

Because sunlight reflects off shiny surfaces such as bodies of water, being around water can increase your exposure. Sunburn can occur on overcast days as well as on sunny days. When athletes are in the sun, they should wear a water-resistant sunscreen lotion, which provides maximum protection. Sunglasses and a hat provide added protection.

The following information tells how to recognize and initiate treatment for heat stroke, heat exhaustion, and heat cramps.

#### **Heat Stroke**

##### *Signs and symptoms*

- Hot, red skin
- Very high body temperature
- Shock or unconsciousness

##### *What to do*

- Treat heat stroke as life-threatening emergency and call the paramedics.
- Cool the victim by immersing in a cool bath or wrapping in wet sheets and fanning.
- Care for shock by laying the victim down and elevating the feet.
- Give nothing by mouth.

#### **Heat Exhaustion**

##### *Signs and symptoms*

- Cool, pale, moist skin
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Weakness and dizziness
- Nausea and vomiting

##### *What to do*

- Treat heat exhaustion as an emergency and call the paramedics.
- Get the victim into the coolest place available.
- Place the victim on the back with the feet elevated.
- Cool victim by applying wet sheets or towels to the body and by fanning.
- Give a half-glass of water to drink every 15 minutes if the victim is fully conscious and can tolerate it.

#### **Heat Cramps**

##### *Signs and symptoms*

- Muscular pains and spasms, usually in the legs or abdomen

##### *What to do*

- Get the victim into the coolest place available.
- Give a half-glass of water to drink every 15 minutes and for an hour.

*Prevention*

- Seek protection from the sun and extreme heat
- Replace fluids by drinking water, sports drinks, or fruit juices.

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS MEDICAL EMERGENCY AWARENESS**

1. Are coaches and chaperones aware of athletes' **pre-existing medical problems**, such as diabetes, epilepsy, or allergic reaction to bee sting?
2. Do coaches and chaperones have ready access to the **Athlete/Parent Release Forms** that give permission for medical treatment in case of emergency?
3. Do coaches and chaperones have these **waivers on hand** at each of the training sessions and competitions?
4. Is a well-stocked **first-aid kit** also on hand at the training sessions and competitions?
5. Have coaches been **instructed in how to use the first-aid materials**?
6. Should a medical emergency occur at a training site, do coaches know **the location of the nearest telephone**? Do they know the emergency phone number? If that phone is in a locked room, do they have a key? Is a custodian on duty and easily found? If it is a switchboard phone, do they know how to get an outside line?
7. Should a medical emergency occur at an event or training site, are there adequate **assistant coaches or chaperones available to stay with other team members** while medical emergency procedures are taken?
8. **If the phone is out of order**, do they know the location of the next available phone?
9. Should a medical emergency occur at a competition or event, does each coach and competition management member know the emergency action plan: **who to contact, where to contact them, how to communicate with others, and what procedures to follow-up**?
10. If paramedics are called, will they find **locked gates** blocking access to the injured athlete? If so, do coaches or competition management personnel have a key for those gates or a way to get one quickly?
11. Do coaches or competition management personnel have a **list of names and phone numbers of the parents or caregivers** to call in the event of a serious injury?
12. Where is the **nearest hospital** to the training or competition site? Is that where an ambulance will most likely take the injured athlete?

If the answer to ANY of these questions is "NO," coaches or competition management personnel are not prepared to deal with a medical emergency at a training site or event.

Create an emergency action plan; orient coaches and competition management personnel on effective procedures; set up a simulated medical emergency and practice the plan.

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS RECOMMENDED EMERGENCY MEDICAL PROCEDURES**

1. **DO NOT MOVE** an athlete who is believed to be seriously injured...especially when a head, neck, or back injury is suspected.

2. A responsible person **MUST STAY WITH THE INJURED ATHLETE** at all times and have the Special Olympics Application for Participation (medical form) and the Athlete/Parent Release form available. They must also provide appropriate emergency support.
3. Another responsible person should **CALL THE EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE NUMBER (911)** and meet them. This will enable paramedics to come as quickly as possible and to enter the area at the designated place.

**Information to give the operator:**

- Caller's name (and number if available)
  - Name of site & location of intersecting streets
  - Injured athlete's location at the site
  - Type of injury and care being given
1. The rest of the coaches should be with other athletes, moving them to another area and assuring them that appropriate emergency procedures are being followed. It is also a good opportunity to answer their questions and concerns about their teammate.
  5. Contact the parent and caregiver as soon as possible.

## **SECTION V – GETTING READY FOR COMPETITION**

### **TAKING AN ATHLETE OR TEAM TO COMPETITION**

Now that your athletes have been practicing for several weeks, it's time for them to go on to a competition. Such a competition will provide the athletes with a chance to demonstrate and test their skills against other trained individuals of similar ability.

#### **Before the competition**

- Clearly inform athletes and parents of the date, time, and location of the event.
- Build excitement for the event and focus the practices on the competition.
- Organize transportation to and from the event.
- Prepare a checklist for athletes and for coaches. Examples for athletes: table tennis racquet (paddle), water bottle, snack, and equipment bag. Examples for coaches: registration materials and medical forms, emergency contacts/phone numbers, list of participants with phone numbers, extra racquet (paddle)s/balls, and a first-aid kit.

#### **At the competition**

- Check-in with the tournament coordinator.
- Have athletes stretch just as if they were at their own practice session.
- Brief warm-up at tables (10-15 min.)
- Follow directions of tournament coordinator regarding competition schedule and table assignments.
- Compete according to SOI table tennis rules.
- Watch athletes compete and offer encouragement and praise good play.
- Make sure athletes shake opponents hand after each match and display good sportsmanship – win or lose.
- Participate in awards presentation following the conclusion of the competition.
- Make a point of saying something positive and concrete to each athlete from their matches have finished.
- Encourage your athletes and coaches to thank event hosts, organizers, and volunteers for their efforts.
- Thank parents and other supporters who came to watch.
- Announce the time and location of the next practice session.

#### **After the competition**

- Record the results of your individual team members.
- Evaluate their performance.
- Inform parents of athletes results.
- Set goals for the next competition based on performance.
- Work with your coaches, parents, and community supporters to plan and host a local competition.

### **CHOOSING APPROPRIATE COMPETITION: SINGLES, DOUBLES, OR INDIVIDUAL SKILLS**

Assessment is critical for the athletes to have a positive experience in competition. Coaches should ask themselves and their athletes several questions when deciding a player's readiness for competition:

- Has the athlete mastered the basic skills enabling him to put the ball in play?
- Will the athlete be able to keep track of the score?
- Does the athlete know the service rotation?
- Would the athlete enjoy the camaraderie of doubles rather than singles?
- Would the athlete be better served by competing in the skills competition?

Athletes who have not learned to rally the ball and put serves consistently into play should probably consider competing in the individual skills competition. By knowing the athletes on a personal level and having evaluated their current level of play, a coach can accurately place athletes in the correct event.

### **COMBINING COMPONENT SKILLS INTO COMPLETE EVENTS**

One of the complicated things about the game of table tennis is putting all the individual strokes together and having the practice player evolve into a match player. In other words, how well does your practice translate into a match situation? For this reason, whenever possible make practice very similar to match situations. The goal of practice time should be preparation for matches. As a coach, it is often easy to get caught up in stroke technique and other specific aspects of the game. It is important to always remember the game itself:

- The serve starts play! Practicing the serve should be a major portion of each practice.
- Proper footwork technique and movement to the ball must be emphasized.
- Table tennis matches are won by the person who makes the fewest errors. Stress consistency in your drills.
- Practice positioning for doubles play.

#### **Drills:**

The best drill for competition is competition. Try to simulate the conditions in which your athletes will be playing their matches. Devise fun games such as playing “shadow table tennis” without a ball or turning drills into team relays.

#### Low Ability Level

If athletes are preparing for the individual skills competition, they should be practicing the actual tests. Coaches should repeatedly run through the tests with the athletes to develop a level of comfort and familiarity. By periodically keeping scores, both coach and athlete can measure improvements. They should try to master the basic strokes of the game. Emphasize the proper rules right from the start.

#### Intermediate Ability Level

Intermediate players should play practice games with their teammates and against coaches or other individuals of similar ability. The more the athletes practice proper stroke technique, the more natural they will become. Have a “spotter” move from table to table to observe and correct improper service/stroke technique, positioning, etc.

#### High Ability Level

Advanced players should be able to play a regulation match with little outside supervision. Again it may be beneficial to have a coach monitor the games to observe and correct advanced stroke techniques, positioning, footwork, etc.

Special Olympics athletes do very well with regular, systematic routines. A fun, yet structured practice will encourage the athletes to participate and learn, and hopefully develop a true love of the sport.

### **DIVISIONING IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS (SPORT)**

In Special Olympics, every athlete must have a reasonable chance to win. Whenever possible, athletes are divided into specific age groups and segregated by gender before being placed in competitive divisions. However, that is not always possible.

The following order has been shown to be effective for divisioning in this sport:

- 1.

### **MANAGING A SMALL COMPETITION**

#### **CONDUCTING AND MANAGING A SMALL LOCAL COMPETITION**

You may be fortunate enough to have several competitions for Special Olympics table tennis players in your area. If not, it is often necessary for coaches to create opportunities for their athletes to compete against other

individuals. It may be best to organize a small competition with other area table tennis teams. Here are some guidelines for running a quality competition.

### **Volunteers and Officials Needed:**

If possible recruit volunteers with basic understanding of table tennis rules and scorekeeping.

- Competition Director  
Responsible for the overall organization of the event. Usually serves as host facility contact person and volunteer coordinator. Holds the final word on all protests. Recruits the teams to participate and sets the competition format and schedule.
- Registrar:  
Responsible for on-site check-in of participants, keeps results and organizes medals.
- Individual Skills Contest (ISC) Officials:
  1. Group leader: Keeps the group together and rotates with the group to the next station, records scores.
  2. Station leader: Describes skill to be tested and runs the station. Awards points and makes necessary judgment calls.
- Competition Officials:
  1. Umpire and Assistant Umpire: These officials may or may not be used for smaller, local competitions depending on availability. However, they should be recruited for higher level competitions.
  2. Scorekeeper: (1 per table) Monitors the table, keep score, and turns in scores to registrar.
  3. Court managers: Help athletes who are waiting for the table to be prepared to play when it is their turn. Assist with ball retrieval and directing athletes to appropriate positions.
- Medical Personnel:  
Responsible for treating any on-site injuries. Should be a certified athletic trainer, EMT, nurse or doctor.

### **Equipment Checklist:**

- Table tennis balls: At least 3 per table for match play and a basket for each station of the Individual Skills Contest (ISC).
- Extra table tennis racquets (paddles)
- Towels
- Water coolers and cups
- Signs to clearly mark stations for Individual Skills Contest
- Scoreboard(s)

### **Facility Checklist:**

- Regulation tables and nets
- Barriers between tables (rope/ribbons)
- Spectator and Awards area
- Volunteer check-in area
- Restroom / Locker room facilities

## **SAMPLE COMPETITION SCRIPT 1**

### **Opening Ceremonies**

MC:

“All Special Olympics athletes and special guests, please report to the athlete- parade staging area. The parade of athletes will begin in a few minutes.

If a band is used, MC introduces band as they enter and take their places.

MC:

“Good morning/afternoon/evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Opening Ceremonies of the (year) (facility or community) Special Olympics Competition. Let’s give a big hand to the athletes as we begin our ceremonies.”

Music begins and the parade of Special Olympics athletes commences.

If there is a banner, athletes carrying the banner will lead, followed by the other athletes and coaches.

The final individuals in the march will be the athlete and special guest chosen to recite the Special Olympics oath and open the event.”

MC:

“Name of athlete from class/school/program) and our special guest (name of honored guest) will now lead us in reciting the Special Olympics oath.”

Special Olympics athlete:

“Fellow athletes, please stand; repeat after me...

Let me win (pause as others repeat)...

But if I cannot win (pause as others repeat)...

Let me be brave in the attempt (pause as others repeat)...

MC:

(Name of sport official) will now recite the officials’ oath:

Official:

“In the name of all judges and officials, I promise that we shall officiate this Special Olympics competition with complete impartiality, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them, in the spirit of sportsmanship.” \*

Honored Guest:

“I declare the (year) facility or community) Special Olympics Competition open.”

MC:

“That concludes the Opening Ceremonies of the (year) (facility or community) Special Olympics Competition. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in saluting our Special Olympics athletes and coaches as they begin the competition.”

*\* If a torch is used, the designated athlete should be introduced and will carry in the torch symbolizing the Flame of Hope at this point.*

## **SAMPLE COMPETITION SCRIPT 2**

### **Awards Ceremony**

Volunteers each division of athletes to the awards area as soon after competition as possible. They are in specific order of finish within each division that represents their placements on the awards stands.

The order of participants follows: 8<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup>.

Start the music as athletes move from the awards staging area to the presentation area.

MC:

“Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to announce the results in the division of the (age and gender group) (event). In eighth place, with a time/score of (time/score), (name) ... (pause for award presentation). In seventh place, with a time score of, etc.”

For a competition, the Awards area should be large enough to hold the largest division or heat. If a Special Olympics banner is available, it is an appropriate backdrop. An awards stand with enough placement boxes for an entire division is also an option, but not required for a small contest.

INSERT GRAPHIC DIAGRAM OF AWARDS AREA

### **SAMPLE COMPETITION SCRIPT 3**

#### **Closing Ceremonies**

MC:

“Special Olympics athletes and coaches, please assemble for the Closing Ceremonies. And now, after a hard day of competition and in a spirit of friendship, we will begin the parade forming a friendship circle.”

Introduce the participating athletes or Programs as they form the circle.

MC:

“This Special Olympics Competition would not have been possible without the efforts and dedication of the volunteers and officials under the leadership of (competition organizer’s name). The (facility or community) Special Olympics Competition has come to an end, but the memory of this wonderful competition will remain with us for many days to come.”

MC:

“Athletes, you should be proud of your accomplishments and of your hours of hard work and training. You are all winners. Now, as the competition come to a close, let us join hands in the circle of friendship.”\*

MC or Honored Guest:

“I declare the (year) (facility or community) Special Olympics Competition closed.”

*\* If a torch is used, the designated athlete should be introduced and will carry the torch out at this point.*

### **SAMPLE SCRIPT COMPETITION SCRIPT 4**

#### **During a Competition**



## SECTION VI – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### GLOSSARY OF (SPORT) TERMS

**Antispin Rubber**

An inverted rubber that does not create spin. “Anti” rubber is used mostly as a defensive weapon against spin.

**Assistant Umpire**

Person appointed to assist the umpire. His/her duties include calling “fault” when he/she sees an illegal serve; calling “side” when the ball touches the side of the table facing them; calling “let” when needed.

**Backhand**

A stroke from the left side of a right-handed player.

**Backspin**

Also called underspin. A ball has backspin if the top of the ball is rotating in the direction opposite to the direction of flight. Also called chop.

**Blade**

The hitting surface of the racquet.

**Block**

A quick, short stroke primarily used against topspin.

**Chopping**

A defensive technique that uses backspin strokes.

**Closed racquet**

A racquet is closed when the striking face of the racquet points downward. If you are instructed to close the racquet more, you should move it toward a more closed, or downward, position.

**Counterhitting**

Offensive hitting with a little topspin.

**Deep**

A ball is said to land deep when it goes over the net and bounces near the end line of the table.

**Free Hand**

The player’s hand not carrying the racquet.

**Footwork**

How a player moves his feet and body to execute a shot.

**Forehand**

A stroke from the right side of a right-handed player.

**Forehand Loop**

A heavy topspin stroke from the forehand side.

**Grip**

The way a player holds the racquet.

**Inverted pips**

Smooth rubber with the pimples facing the inside of the racquet.

**ITTF**

The International Table Tennis Federation. The international governing body for table tennis throughout the world.

**Let**

A rally of which the result is not scored.

**Lob**

A high arcing shot used for defense when far away from the table.

**Long pips-out rubber**

A type of rubber that has long soft pimples on the surface to create a different kind of spin when contacting the ball. It behaves similarly to antispin rubber.

**Loop**

A heavy topspin offensive shot that is the most used shot in modern table tennis.

**No spin serve**

A serve that has little or no spin.

**Open racquet**

A racquet is open when its striking face points upward. If you are instructed to open your racquet (paddle) more, you should move it toward a more open, or upward, position.

**Paddle**

A commonly used term for the racquet. See Racquet.

**Penhold Grip**

Also called the Asian or Chinese grip. Created by holding the racquet as if it were a pen.

**Pips-out**

A type of rubber with pimples on the outer surface.

**Point**

A rally of which the result is scored.

**Push**

A short backspin shot used against a backspin shot. Primarily defensive.

**Racquet (or racquet (paddle))**

The instrument used to hit the table tennis ball.

**Racquet face**

The side of the racquet with which the ball is struck.

**Racquet Hand**

The hand carrying the racquet.

**Rally**

The period during which the ball is in play.

**Ready position**

A neutral position from which each stroke starts. Similar to the basic defensive position in basketball.

**Receiver**

The player due to strike the ball second in a rally.

**Server**

The player due to strike the ball first in a rally.

**Service**

The first shot in each point.

**Shakehand Grip**

Also called the western grip. Created by shaking hands with the racquet.

**Short**

A ball is said to land short when it goes over the net and bounces very near the net. Often, a short ball will bounce twice on the table if it is not hit. This makes attacking a short ball difficult.

**Sidespin**

A ball has sidespin if, when viewed from above, the ball is rotating in a circular direction.

**Smash**

A strong offensive shot used against a lob or any other high ball.

**Spin**

The rotation of the ball.

**Sponge**

The layer beneath the surface of most modern rubber racquet faces is a sponge rubber. The thicker the sponge, the faster the reaction of the ball on the rubber.

**Topspin**

A ball has topspin if the top of the ball is rotating in the same direction as the direction of flight.

**Umpire**

The person appointed to decide the results of each rally and control the match.

**Underspin**

See backspin.

**USTTA**

The United States Table Tennis Association. The governing body of table tennis in the United States.

**Volley**

A ball struck by a player which has not touched his court since last being struck by his opponent.

**LIFE BENEFITS OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

Special Olympics can provide opportunities to develop other skill areas in addition to sports and fitness skills. These areas include life, social, vocational, and transitioning skills. Coaches can play an important role in the development of these important skills.

**LIFE SKILLS****Money management –**

At a Special Olympics event, give athletes the opportunity to buy a meal, T-shirt, etc. Involve them in choosing and purchasing of uniforms and equipment.

**Personal grooming habits –**

Establish team guidelines. Encourage athletes to wear clean clothes, groom their hair, brush their teeth, shower after practice, wash their own uniforms, etc.

**Transportation access –**

Teach athletes how to ride a bus, use the subway, and ride a bicycle. Enable athletes to get out and interact with the community.

**SOCIAL SKILLS**

**Negotiation –**

Enable athletes to negotiate with parents and employers for changes in the family and work schedules in order to participate in a Special Olympics event.

**Relationship building –**

Provide opportunities for athletes to interact with volunteers, peer coaches, and teammates, to get along with others, and to make new friends.

**Self-esteem and worth –**

Provide opportunities and reinforcement for each athlete to contribute to the group as well as to improve individual skills.

**VOCATIONAL SKILLS**

**Commitment and dedication –**

Ask athletes to make a commitment to themselves and the team in attending practices and competitions. Employers value reliability and dependability.

**Focus and concentration –**

Focusing on a specific skill in a sport relates to performing a specific skill and learning a new task on the job.

**Working with others –**

Teamwork learned through team sports relates to working with others in the job setting.

**Stamina and fine gross motor skills –**

Sports participation can improve stamina and complement fine and gross motor skills required to be successful on the job.

**TRANSITIONING SKILLS**

**Change –**

Sports training improves athletes' abilities and allows them to progress to higher levels of sport participation. This often means adjusting to changes in training and competition sites, teammates, and rules. Athletes who play more than one sport also must make these same adjustments from sport to sport. Learning to adapt to change prepares the athlete for similar changes when moving from school to school and from student to adult.

## INFUSION CHART

The Infusion Chart offers examples of life, social, vocational, and transitioning skills that the athlete can also acquire while mastering the sport-specific skills described in this Guide. There are numerous possibilities for expanding and improving each athlete's overall quality of life. Coaches should work closely with the athlete's teachers and counselors to incorporate the athlete's sport-specific skills into his/her overall learning experience. When an instructor wants to teach the athlete functional skills, the instructor can use examples relative to the athlete's sport experience. For example, recognition of numbers in scoring relates to mathematics. By using the Infusion Chart, the coach can assist the athlete in learning more meaningful life, social, vocational, and transitioning skills that will assist full inclusion in the community.

### ARTS:

- Chooses and designs team insignia and mascot
- Makes team banners
- Makes felt figures used on a flannel board
- Coordinates table tennis clothing.
- Understands differences in racquet (paddle) face colors.

### SCIENCE:

- Judges speed and recognizes the power of gravity
- Judges the distance to the goal
- Identifies the body parts used primarily in sports
- Understanding relationship between racquet (paddle) and ball.
- Understands spin, trajectory, and speed of the ball.
- Understands the space relationship between himself/herself and the bouncing ball.
- Understands the use of different stroke techniques to produce backspin and topspin.
- Identifies the parts of the body used in different tennis skills.

### INDUSTRIAL ARTS

- Constructs a simple results board
- Constructs an easel to display team name
- Learn to replace racquet face covering.
- Construct a simple scorecard.

### MATHEMATICS

- Keeps track of times
- Remembers starting position
- Recognizes the difference between two times or scores
- Learns to keep score.
- Learns to change ends at odd-numbered games.
- Understands time and length of practice.
- Learns and understands the Expedite System.
- Gauges the cost of purchasing table tennis balls and racquets (paddles).

### HOME ECONOMICS

- Dresses appropriately for sports in different weather conditions
- Mends and hems clothing
- Washes and cleans equipment
- Dresses appropriately for practice.
- Learns the importance of being on time for practice and competition.
- Remembers all of the equipment.

#### HEALTH:

- Knows the basic first aid for minor injuries (bruises, muscle aches, sunburn)
- Uses sunscreen when outdoors
- Trains and competes safely and remains under control
- Dresses in layers according to weather conditions
- Selects appropriate foods before competition and understands the relationship between a balanced diet and athletic performance.
- Knows basic first-aid procedures for minor injuries.
- Learns the importance of drinking water or other fluids to keep hydrated during hot days.
- Practices basic safety precautions during play, clearing stray balls and swing the racquet in opening spaces.

#### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Performs warm-up exercises
- Demonstrates basic sport-specific skills
- Works with others – shows teamwork and team spirit
- Stays active on own, outside organized activity
- Demonstrates the skills to play table tennis.
- Knows and abides by the rules of table tennis.
- Knows the basic strategy of table tennis.
- Cooperates with a partner in a doubles match.
- Develops a basic knowledge of conditioning and its relationship to performance.
- Develops hand-eye coordination skills.

#### READING/LANGUAGE

- Uses sport-specific terminology
- Listens to instructions and follows directions; reads the scoreboard
- Expresses himself/herself during practice
- Reads sport-specific articles in newspapers or books
- Reads a scoreboard.
- Listens to and follows instructions.
- Learns table tennis terms and correctly calls the score and the lines.
- Reads table tennis publications and follows table tennis results in the media.

#### SOCIAL STUDIES:

- Identifies local sport areas
- Participates on teams
- Abides by the sport and team codes of conduct
- Makes new friends.
- Interacts with opponent and shakes hands after the completion of the match.
- Able to congratulate opponent or teammate after a match.
- Interacts with volunteers and competition officials.
- Identifies community facilities where he/she can practice.
- Develops social and functional skills through competition-related travel, hotel stay, and dining.
- Understands the reasons behind team and safety rules.
- Learns from coaches.

#### **DAILY PERFORMANCE RECORD**

## **Purpose**

The Daily Performance Record is designed for the teacher/coach to prepare and record lower ability athletes' daily performances as he/she learns the sport skills described in this guide. There are several reasons why the Daily Performance Record is valuable to the instructor. The record becomes a permanent document of the athlete's progress and helps the teacher/coach establish measurable consistency in the athlete's curriculum. This is extremely important when more than one instructor works with the athlete.

In addition, the record allows the instructor to be flexible during the actual instructional session. He/she can break down the skills into tasks that are more specific than those indicated in this Guide and thus, meet the athlete's individual needs. Lastly, the record helps the instructor choose proper skills and tasks, viable conditions and criteria for mastering the skills and tasks, and correct levels of instruction to suit the athlete's learning abilities in future sessions. These reasons make the Daily Performance Record an important aspect of an individualized educational program (IEP).

## **Using the Daily Performance Record**

At the top of the record, the instructor enters his/her name, the athlete's name, the sport, and the sport skill level from which the skills are taken. If more than one instructor works with the athlete, they should enter the dates that they work next to their names.

## **Skills and Task Analyses**

Before the instructional session begins, the instructor decides what skill(s) will be taught. The instructor makes this decision based on the athlete's age, the athlete's interests, and his/her mental and physical abilities. The skill should be a statement or description of the specific outcome behavior that the athlete must perform, for example: "make a bounce pass to an intended target." The instructor enters the skill on the top line of the left-hand column.

On the second line, the instructor enters the first task from the task analysis that describes teaching the skill. Each subsequent task is entered after the athlete masters the previous task. Of course, more than one sheet may be used to record all of the tasks involved in one skill. Also, if the athlete cannot perform a prescribed task, the instructor may break down the skill into even more specific tasks that will allow for the athlete's success.

## **Conditions and Criteria for Mastering**

After the instructor enters the skill and the first task on the record, he/she then decides on the conditions and criteria by which the athlete must master the skill and the task. *Conditions* are special circumstances, which define the manner in which the athlete must perform a skill, for example: "given a demonstration, and with assistance." The instructor should always assume that the ultimate conditions in which the athlete masters a skill are: "upon command and without assistance." Therefore, the instructor should not feel obligated to enter these conditions in the record next to the skill entry. However, the instructor should enter conditions next to the task entry, and must select conditions that suit the task being performed and the individual abilities of the athlete. The instructor should arrange the task and conditions in a particular way. As the athlete learns to perform the skill, task by task, he/she also gradually learns to perform it upon command and without assistance.

*Criteria* are the standards that determine how well the skill or task must be performed. A non-impaired athlete should be able to perform a skill "upon command and without assistance, 90% of the time" for the instructor to consider that the athlete has mastered it. But in the case of the Special Olympics athlete, the instructor should determine a standard that more realistically suits the athlete's mental and physical abilities, for example: "into a wider than normal target, six out of ten times." Given the varied nature of tasks and skills, the criteria may involve many different types of standards, such as amount of time, number of repetitions, accuracy, distance, or speed.

## **Dates of Sessions and Levels of Instruction Use**

The instructor may work on one task for a couple of days, and may use several levels of instruction during that time to progress to the point where the athlete performs the task upon command and without assistance. To establish a consistent curriculum for the athlete, the instructor must record the dates he/she works on particular tasks, and must enter the levels of instruction that were used on those dates.

The levels of instruction include Physical Assistance (PA), Physical Prompt (PP), Demonstration (D), Verbal Cue (VeC), and Visual Cue (ViC).

1. *Physical Assistance* refers to the instructor giving total manual assistance to the athlete for the entire task.
2. *Physical Prompt* refers to the instructor giving partial manual assistance to the athlete at a certain stage of the task.
3. *Demonstration* involves the instructor demonstrating the entire task for the athlete.
4. *Verbal Cue* is a partial verbal prompt where the instructor uses **Key Words** or phrases to elicit motor responses from the athlete.
5. *Visual Cue* is a partial visual prompt where the teacher/coach points out the key elements of the task to elicit movements from the athlete.

### **Date Mastered**

When the athlete performs the task according to the pre-set conditions and criteria, the instructor enters the date the task was mastered and proceeds to a new task. Once all of the tasks are mastered and the athlete performs the entire skill upon command and without assistance, the instructor enters that date in the right-hand column, across from the skill entry.

## **SPORTS SKILLS ASSESSMENT RECORD SHEET**

### **Purpose**

The Sports Skills Assessment Record Sheet is designed for the instructor to record the athlete's pre-assessment and post-assessment scores. The instructor can use the record sheet as a master list, which indicates several things:

- 1) Each athlete's overall development in the sport
- 2) Current ability levels of all the athletes
- 3) Comparable progress between athletes in the same ability level
- 4) Determination of the athlete's placement on teams or future skills classes.

Together the Sports Skills Assessment Record Sheet and the Daily Performance Record are effective training devices, especially for athletes with lower ability.

### **Using the Sport Skills Assessment Record Sheet for a Specific Sport**

The instructor evaluates the athlete with the sport skills assessment before the athlete begins training. He/she enters the pre-training assessment score in the proper column on the sheet. After the athlete has trained in the sport skill of that particular level, the instructor re-evaluates the athlete and enters the post-training assessment score in the proper column on the sheet. After each skill/task, the instructor also enters the post-training assessment score in the corresponding achievement column. Of course, the instructor may allow the athlete to fill in the record sheet or post the result so the athlete may see what progress he/she is making and take pride in his/her achievement. The instructor can also acknowledge each athlete's improvement at an end-of-the-season team party.

INSERT ACTUAL DAILY PERFORMANCE RECORD FORM

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CREATE SPORT-SPECIFIC ATHLETE SKILLS ASSESSMENT RECORD (INSERT ON NEXT PAGE)

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INSERT SAMPLE TRAINING SESSION TEMPLATE ON FOLLOWING PAGE

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## **OTHER FORMS**