



Swimming Coaching Guide





Special Olympics Swimming Coaching Guide

Welcome to the Special Olympics Swimming Coaching Guide. This guide has been designed to provide valuable information for coaches and sports personnel of all levels and abilities to use in assisting them in their coaching of Special Olympic Swimming athletes.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the Special Olympics [Swimming Rules](#) and Special Olympics [Sports Rules Article 1](#).

Keep in mind, that this guide is just one resource which may be useful to you as you progress through your career as a coach. As you develop your own style of coaching, you will find other books, websites, magazines and coaches that will help to shape your approach to coaching. Always be curious! Always be open to new ideas! Always keep your athletes at the heart of your coaching!





Acknowledgments

Special Olympics would like to thank the following professionals, volunteers, coaches and athletes who helped in the production of the Swimming Coaching Guide and its 2020 revision.

They have helped fulfill the mission of Special Olympics: to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people 8 years of age and older with intellectual disabilities, 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.

Special Olympics is proud to acknowledge the support of [Gallagher](#), official sponsor of Special Olympics International Sport and Coaching programming.

Special Olympics athletics welcomes your ideas and comments for future revisions of this guide. We apologize if, for any reason, an acknowledgement has been inadvertently omitted.

2020 Review

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Original Guide (2004)

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The Benefits of Swimming

Swimming is one of the most popular sports in world. Unlike other sports, swimming is a life skill that is taught, first, to ensure safety and, secondly, for sports and competition purposes. This coaching guide will assist the coach in teaching skills and strategy that will allow the Special Olympics athlete to become a successful swimmer and competitor.

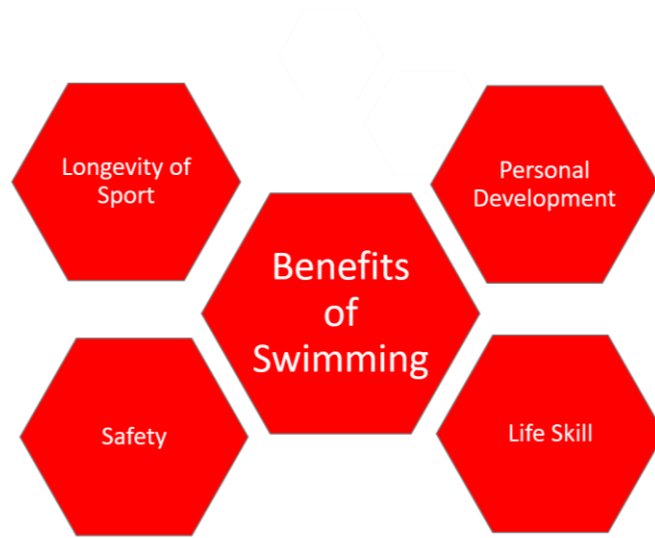


Figure 1: The benefits of Swimming

Swimming offers numerous benefits to participants from a social aspect to improving health and wellbeing. Special Olympics Swimming offers athletes the opportunity to participate and compete in a range of events while also developing new skills. Skills can progress as the athlete's interest in the sport grows. As this interest grows, some aspects of the sport may require greater attention to detail. However, the coach should always teach and coach those skills that best suit the individual's needs.





Special Olympic Events Offered

The official distances for all Special Olympics events will be conducted in a meters pool. Local competitions may be conducted over any distance. However, official times from meter pools will be seeded in first priority for international competition over any distance. Swimming events range from 25-meter to 1500-meter events in freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. Special Olympics also offers swimming events for low-ability level athletes.

Developmental Events	Individual Events	Team Events
15M Walk	25M Freestyle	4 x 25M Freestyle Relay
15M Flotation	50M Freestyle	4 x 50M Freestyle Relay
15M Kick Board	100M Freestyle	4 x 100M Freestyle Relay
25M Flotation	200M Freestyle	4 x 200M Freestyle Relay
15M Assisted Swim	400M Freestyle	4 x 25M Medley Relay
15M Unassisted Swim	800M Freestyle	4 x 50M Medley Relay
25M Assisted Swim	1500M Freestyle	4 x 100M Medley Relay
	25M Backstroke	4 x 25M Freestyle Unified Sports Relay
	50M Backstroke	4 x 50M Freestyle Unified Sports Relay
	100M Backstroke	4 x 100M Freestyle Unified Sports Relay
	200M Backstroke	4 x 200M Freestyle Unified Sports Relay
	25M Breaststroke	4 x 25M Medley Unified Sports Relay
	50M Breaststroke	4 x 50M Medley Unified Sports Relay
	100M Breaststroke	4 x 100M Medley Unified Sports Relay
	200M Breaststroke	
	25M Butterfly	
	50M Butterfly	
	100M Butterfly	
	200M Butterfly	
	100M Individual Medley	
	200M Individual Medley	
	400M Individual Medley	





Note: All SO events will be universally described in meters (m). For those that use distances other than meters (e.g. yards) please use the Swim Swam [conversion calculator](#) provided to adjust times and distances.

In addition to pool swimming, Special Olympics also offers *Open Water Swimming*, which is offered as a separate sport, Rules and Coaching Guides can be found [in the Sports and Coaching Resources section of the website.](#)





Basics of Swimming

Getting Started:

Safety

Safety is an essential component of all SO activities. This section of the guide will lay out areas of preparation that swim coaches should be aware of when preparing to run a training session for any athletes.

Before you begin your trainings, it is essential to do a *Venue Assessment* to ensure that all aspects of the venue are accessible and appropriate for the participants of your trainings.

Pool Swimming:

Accessibility includes:

- *Access and exit through doors* - entrances/exits to venue; changing rooms; toilet facilities
- *Emergency exits* - these should be clearly signed - Coaches should be familiar with the venues emergency procedures.
- *Access in and out of the pool* - ladders/steps/hoist if required

Other safety requirements:

- *Lifeguard on duty* – is there sufficient cover for the number of athletes in the pool?
- *Staff: Athlete Ratio* – is there at least one coach on the deck and one in the water to ensure the safety of the athletes?
- *Water Quality* – The facility is responsible for the maintenance of acceptable water quality, but it is essential that you, as a coach, check the quality to ensure it is safe for your athletes.
 - *Water Quality would include:*
 - Clear and chemically balanced
 - Temperature minimum 26° C (77° F) or 30°C for athletes with low muscle tone and a maximum temperature of 36° C (97° F)
- There must be good quality lighting
- The deep end (if applicable) must be identified and easily recognizable
- The pool deck must be clean and not slippery and clear of any trip hazards

Open Water Swimming:

Safety requirements:

- Water Quality and currents – is the water clear and safe to swim in?
- Lifeguards – do you have lifeguards on duty at the chosen facility?
- Sun protection – as open water swimming is outdoors, it is essential that all athletes and coaches have sufficient sun protection to protect their skin.
- Temperature checks – is the water at an adequate temperature for swimming
 - This may not be the case in winter months
- Existing dangers – are there any existing dangers within the facility vicinity that would cause danger to the athletes
 - Motorized vehicles (boats) or all watercraft
 - Winds; Currents; Water depth; and submerged debris
 - Sandbanks/slippery or steep banks





- Wildlife

Knowledge of your athletes:

- *Knowledge of their ability* - coaches should be aware of their athlete's ability and any notes of interest that may occur during a swimming session or competition
- *An idea of their abilities* - how much training they have done before; what they can/can't do; equipment they may require in order to participate

Once you have completed a Venue Assessment and are satisfied that the chosen venue meets the requirements of you athletes, you can now progress to setting a *training and competition schedule*.

The training and competition schedule allows you to communicate with interested parties and to create community awareness of your program.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ○ <i>Facility Representatives</i> | ○ <i>Local SO Program</i> |
| ○ <i>Volunteer Coaches</i> | ○ <i>Athletes</i> |
| ○ <i>Families</i> | ○ <i>Media</i> |
| ○ <i>Management Team Members</i> | ○ <i>Officials</i> |
| ○ <i>Community Awareness</i> | ○ <i>Local Government</i> |

Training and competition schedules could include (but is not exclusive to):

- | | |
|--|---|
| ○ <i>Dates</i> | ○ <i>Start and end times</i> |
| ○ <i>Registration and/or meeting areas</i> | ○ <i>Contact information for facility</i> |
| ○ <i>Coaches contact information</i> | |





Equipment

Athlete Equipment

Appropriate swimming attire is required for all trainings and competitors. As the coach, discuss the types of sport clothes that are acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition with your athletes. Using videos or photos of previous SO Games, show current or former athletes wearing the appropriate clothing during competition e.g. swimsuits, hats and goggles. You should also make reference to the [SO Swimming Rules](#) to ensure the clothing your athletes are using are in line with requirements and regulations.

Swimsuits

The swimsuit can be anything that closely resembles skin in fit and feel. For males, any brief swim suit made of smooth, quick-drying fabric, such as nylon or lycra, is fine. Sports shorts with waistbands and an inner liner that fit snugly around the waist can be substituted.

A one-piece suit is recommended for females. The suit needs to be close-fitting, and cut so as not to hinder movements. The swimsuit needs to be substantial enough to stay on the athlete's body while they train.

Racing suits, whether for men or women, will provide less drag and provide more efficiency in the water.

Refer to [SO Rules](#) to confirm the swimsuit your athlete is using is appropriate for competition. There are a number of exemptions from [Fina rules](#) in the [SO rules](#) that allow swimmers to wear alternative swimwear due to medical, religious, and modesty reasons.

Note: At National, International and World Games competitions, team managers must submit a request on behalf of their swimmer to wear alternate swimwear that does not conform to [Fina rules and regulations](#).

Cap

A tight-fitting, stretch swimmer's cap is recommended. Swim caps will prevent the hair from falling in the swimmer's face and thus provide less of a distraction. Besides keeping the swimmer's hair dry, the main reason for wearing a cap is to reduce water drag and resistance.

Goggles

Swim goggles are encouraged. Goggles allow the swimmers to comfortably put their faces in the water, thus allowing for better body position and more efficiency. There are several varieties of goggles that allow for choices, depending on each swimmer's face.

Nose Clips

Nose clips are helpful for athletes who have difficulty controlling their breathing or who have sinus problems. Such clips should be used only when necessary.





Facility Equipment

Swimming requires the use of particular sports equipment and devices that are used in training. It is important for athletes to be able to recognize and understand how equipment works and assists their performance.

Touch Pads

Touch pads are used as part of the automatic timing device system, which is located at either end of the pool during some competitions. When a swimmer touches the pad during the turn or finish of an event, the time will be recorded and displayed on a digital timing board located within the pool area.

Pace Clock

A pace clock is used within a swimmer's training program, and swimmers should be taught how to read and use the clock. Pace clocks are generally mounted on a wall within view of the swimmer. Electric pace clocks should not be placed on the pool deck but preferably mounted on a wall. Battery pace clocks may also be used.

Timing Devices

A fully automatic timing (F.A.T.) system or electric or digital stopwatches are recommended. When F.A.T. is used, times will be recorded in hundredths of a second. Most manual timing devices are equipped with buttons for start, stop and reset. All manual times will be recorded in tenths of a second.

Starting Devices

A starter's button or electronic tone starter unit with a strobe light is recommended for hearing impaired athletes. If possible, these devices can be used occasionally during training sessions to expose the athletes to the sound prior to participation in a competitive event.

During training sessions, swimmers can practice starts both in and out of the water by using the correct cues as used in formal competitive swimming but without the use of a professional starter's button.

Coaches can signal a swimmer to start the event by stepping onto the blocks or into the water by a verbal cue or blowing a whistle, verbally cueing the swimmer to take his/her marks and either verbally cue or blow a whistle to have the swimmer leave the blocks. Check with the lifeguard whether using a whistle while on the pool deck is appropriate. This is because a lifeguard may use a whistle to signal an emergency.





Starting Blocks

A Starting Block is a raised platform mounted at the end of a pool from which swimmers begin a race. It has a non-slip surface and in most modern starting blocks there will be an adjustable angled foot placement section located at the rear of the blocks.

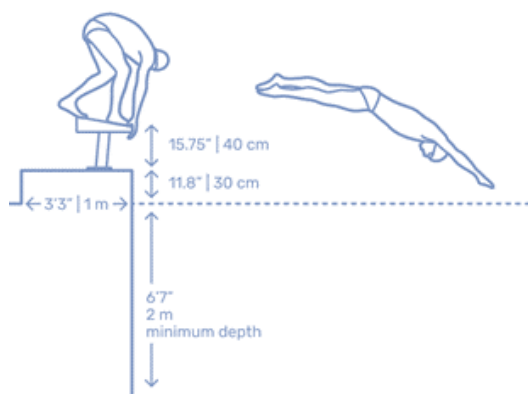


Figure 3: Starting Block



Figure 2: Starting Block

There are specific requirements that need to be considered for the placement and use of starting blocks, such as the height of the block, the width, and the depth.



Details

Height: 15.75" | 40 cm

Width: 19.7" | 50 cm

Depth: 19.7" | 50 cm

Top Angle: 10° maximum

Platform Depth: 3'3" | 1 m

Platform Height Above Water: 11.8" | 30 cm

Figure 4: Requirements for Starting Blocks

It is advised to check with your facility about what type and standard of starting block they currently have.





Backstroke Flags

Backstroke flags are used in training as well as competition. The flags hang five meters from each end of the pool and 1.18 meters above the water surface. As part of the swimmers' session they need to practice counting the number of arm strokes it takes them from the flags to the wall.



Figure 5: Backstroke Flags

Swimming Aids

The use of swimming aids such as kickboards, pull buoys and fins can be effective in greatly improving an athlete's progress. Such aids can be used in drill work programmed into the session and can help develop and maintain good stroke technique.



Figure 6: Swimming aids - Pool Noodles; Pull Buoy; Fins; Kickboard; Floatation Belt





Preparing for the Training Session

Pool Preparation

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

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

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

- Architectural barriers within and around the pool
- Entrances
- Doorways
- Restrooms and showers
- Locker or changing rooms
- Pool decks
- Water depth and condition
- Water and air temperature
- Ladder, steps, stairs and ramps
- Lighting
- Review emergency plan, and determine the specific signals that are used in identifying an emergency within the facility
- Check for slippery deck conditions and remove standing water
- Ensure there are certified lifeguards with no other duty but to guard
- Check wheelchair access
- If in a public pool, designate an adult/volunteer to act as a spotter for the group. Life guards may not be specifically watching your group/squad all the time
- Check location of safety equipment for emergency use around the pool area
- Be aware of other users within the complex





Open Water Training Area Preparation

If your swimmers are training for pool-based events in open water, such as lakes, seas, rivers or creeks, it is imperative that you assess the training area in advance to ensure it is appropriate and safe for use.

Coaches should ensure the area is accessible for their athletes, appropriate for the training they are carrying out (for example, deep enough for swimmers to safely perform their actions), and free from hazards that may cause harm or danger to athletes or coaches.

In open-water conditions, coaches should always consider:

- The changing weather conditions
- Wind chill factors
- Water quality
- Water depths
- Ground of the specific area – is it rocky, muddy, sandy, etc.
- Is there mobile phone reception in the case an emergency occurs
- Do you have emergency contact details (for services and your athlete's family) stored in your phone
- Carry out a Risk Assessment – if there is any risk of injury to athletes or coaches, you should not use the area
- Are there any watercraft permitted into the area
- Are there animals that may cause harm in the surrounding area
- Do your athletes have access to appropriate toilet facilities
- Are there shaded areas available in the event of extreme heat or rainfall
- Have you identified the designated area to your athletes so they know where they can and cannot go

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



*Table 1: Checklists for Facility and Individual Swimmer Equipment***Facility Swimming Equipment**

- | |
|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fins |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flags |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kickboards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pace Clock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pull Buoys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stop Watches |

Swimmer Equipment

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goggles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nose Clips |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swim Caps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Towels + Chamois |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swimsuit |





Fitness and Fit 5 Resources

Fit 5 + Nutrition & Hydration

Special Olympics provides a range of fantastic Fitness resources that coaches and athletes can use to educate themselves on best practice around physical activity, nutrition and hydration.

There are many health-related and performance-related benefits of fitness for SO athletes.

Benefits of Fitness for Athletes

- Enhanced sport performance through improved
 - Endurance/stamina.
 - Speed and agility.
 - Strength and power.
 - Flexibility.
 - Healthy weight.
- Increased energy level, improved focus, and better recovery after practices & games.
- Reduced risk for sport-related injuries.
- Decreased risk for illnesses and chronic diseases.
- Improved quality of life.

Physical Activity Outside of SO

It is vital that Special Olympics programs are not the only source of physical activity and exercise for athletes. As a coach, you should be encouraging your athletes to exercise every day and educate them on ways to stay active outside of organized sport practice.

There are numerous ways that athletes can exercise to stay healthy when they are at home. Walking, running, skipping are simple ways an athlete can exercise on their own and work on their cardiovascular fitness. Fitness classes like yoga, core strength, HIIT and many others are great ways for athlete to work on their fitness and physical health outside of organized sports practice.

Special Olympics offers the Fit 5 Guide for athletes and coaches to use. As a coach it is a great resource to use when educating your athletes on the benefits of physical activity to their overall health and to their sports performance.

Fit 5

The [Fit 5 Guide](#) is a plan for physical activity, nutrition and hydration that can help to improve athletes' health and fitness and make them the best athlete they can be. It provides a fantastic





collection of exercises that athletes should do to assist them to improve the skills needed for their sport. The exercises included focus on Endurance, Strength, Flexibility and Balance.



Figure 7: Fit 5 Fitness Cards

In addition to these resources, there are a number of videos available [here](#) for athletes and coaches to view and use when performing these exercises as part of their training plans.

Nutrition

Eating right is important to your health and your sports performance. Nutrition and Hydration are key points of athlete preparation and recovery for all forms of exercise. However, most athletes don't understand the connection between nutrition/hydration and sports performance. As a coach, it is important that you emphasize this connection and educate your athletes on correct habits. This is especially important for Special Olympics athletes, as they are at a higher risk for obesity.

It is vital to educate swimmers about the importance of timing their meals or snacks prior to training or competition as they run the risk of getting a cramp in the water which can be extremely dangerous to the swimmer. Inform your athletes of the risk of eating too close to the time they are entering the pool and educate them on the best times to eat and the best foods to ensure they are efficiently fuelled to perform.

It is recommended to have your last meal or snack at least 90 minutes before entering the pool. This ensures the swimmer can digest the food and it will be available as a fuel source for them when swimming.

You can utilize the nutrition and hydration section in the [Fit 5 Guide](#) to educate your athletes on basic principles. The nutrition, hydration and activity tracker can help your athletes to pay more attention to these elements at home.

Task: Consider taking 5 minutes at the end of practice to cover nutrition and hydration tips. Educate parents and carers on the information that's shared with athletes so they can help athletes eat healthy at home.





Figure 8: Nutrition Section - Fit 5 Guide





Hydration

Water is another important fuel for sports and for life. Drinking the right amount of water is important for your health and can also help your athletic performance. Coaches should be educating their athletes about the benefits of drinking enough water every day.

The [Fit 5 Guide](#) has a hydration section which provides information for coaches about quantities of water that athletes should be consuming, signs of dehydration in athletes, and the best choice athletes can make when looking for a drink.

Coaches should encourage athletes to take responsibility for their own hydration before arriving at training, and after leaving training. Follow this simple guide below on how you and your athletes can keep hydrated before, during and after training sessions.

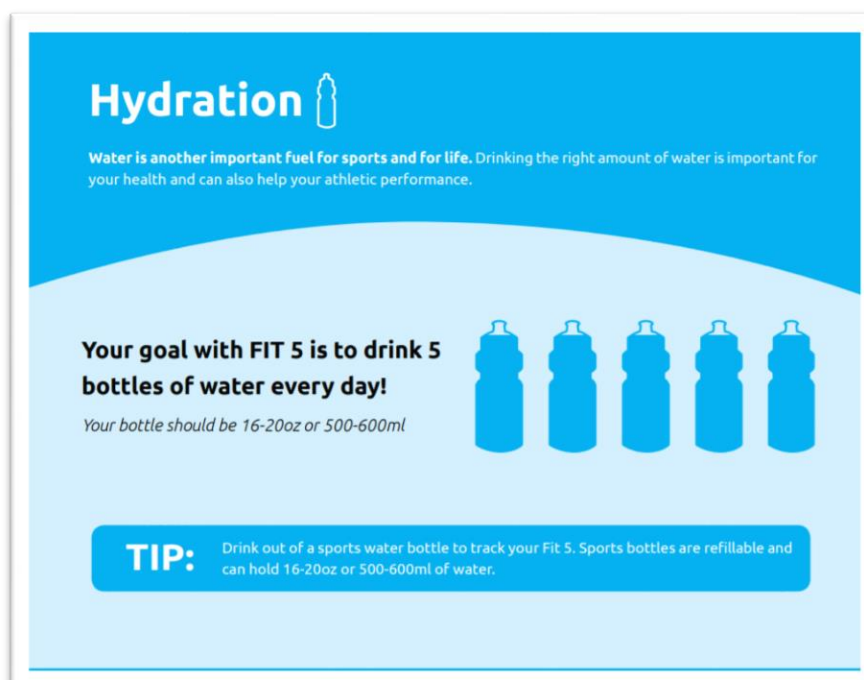


Figure 9: Hydration Section - Fit 5 Guide

Swimmers often don't notice they are becoming dehydrated because they don't feel sweat on their skin or an increase in body temperature. As a swimming coach it is so important to help you athletes keep on track with their hydration. Encourage athletes to drink one bottle of water (16-20oz/500-600ml) an hour or two before practice so they show up fully hydrated. Remember to pause for drinks breaks during a training session. We would recommend **pausing every 15-20 minutes** to give your athletes the chance to rehydrate as they are losing water while exercising. Encourage your **athletes to drink one bottle of water** (16-20oz/500-600ml) during a training session to make sure they do not get dehydrated. When drinking, athletes should take many small sips of water instead of gulping it down as this can sit in their stomachs and cause discomfort when exercising! Finally encourage athletes to drink water after practice to help them recover from their workout.





Swimming Warm-Ups/Cool-Downs (Injury Prevention)

Warm-Up

Before beginning any form of physical activity you should always carry out a warm-up. A warm-up should be designed to prepare the body and mind for physical activity and reduces the risk of injuries occurring.

Purpose of a warm-up

- Gradual increase in body temperature
- Gradual increase in heart rate
- Gradual increase in breathing rate
- Increase in blood flow to working muscles
- Increase in range of motion of primary muscle groups for their sport
- Mental preparation

As you can see, warm-ups are extremely important for athletes' preparation for physical activity. Increasing body temperature and blood flow to working muscles is key for athletes to prevent them sustaining injuries while exercising. A gradual increase in body temperature reduces the chance of an athlete sustaining muscle and tendon injuries while an increase in blood flow to working muscles ensures a delivery of import fuels that are required for energy production. In addition to this, warming up helps athletes increase the range of motion they have in their muscles. This adequately prepares athletes' working muscles for the movements they will be performing (stretching, generating power, stabilizing the body, etc.). Finally, an adequate warm-up will mentally prepare the athlete for exercise, this includes increased focus at practice or in competition, positive self-talk, or improved motivation knowing they are physically prepared to exercise.

It is recommended to carry out a **comprehensive, sport specific** warm-up for **at-least 10 minutes** prior to starting training activities or competition.

Comprehensive would involve warming up all parts of the body. Focus especially on the main muscle groups involved in swimming. Try starting from the top and working your way down!

Sport Specific would involve performing movements your athlete will carry out during performance. For swimming, you might include arm circles, leg swings/kicks, and shoulder rotations with some breathing work.

Warm-ups should include three specific components:

1. Aerobic activity to raise heart rate
 - This can be walking, jogging, cycling or skipping.





2. Dynamic Stretching

- Dynamic stretching involves active, controlled movements that bring the body-parts through a full range of motion.

3. Sport Specific Movements

- Skills or movements which are core to your sport.
- Movements that the athlete will complete in training or competition.

See our [Warm-Up and Cool-Down Supplement](#) to see more information on the components of a warm-up.

On-Land (Out of Water) Warm Ups:

Note: If conducting a warm-up on the pool deck, you first must ensure it is clear of any trip hazards, pools of water, and is not slippery underfoot. Ensure athletes are several feet/meters away from the pool.

Sample Warm-Up 1:

Aerobic Activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jog in Place (Endurance Level 2 – Fitness Cards) ○ Quick Punches (Endurance Level 1 – Fitness Cards) ○ High Knees Jog in Place (Endurance Level 4 – Fitness Cards)
Dynamic Stretching:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Side Stretch (Flexibility level 4 – Fitness Cards) ○ Hamstring Kicks (keep balance against the wall or partner) (Strength Level 1 – Fitness Cards) ○ Shoulder + Arm Swings (Single arm + Double arm) ○ Chest Hugs
Sport Specific Movements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flutter kicks (lying on your back) ○ Arm strokes with emphasis on breathing

Sample Warm-Up 2:

Aerobic Activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skipping (Jump Rope)/Shadow Skipping (Without Rope) ○ High Knees + Butt Kicks
Dynamic Stretching:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lateral reaches ○ Leg swings ○ Arm Circles ○ Arm Swings
Sport Specific Movements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sumo Squats – Slow down – Explode back up ○ Arm strokes with emphasis on breathing





In-Water Warm Ups:

Sample Warm-Up 1:	
Aerobic Activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Jogging on the spot (in-water) o High knees o Butt Kicks (keep balance against the pool wall)
Dynamic Stretching:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Side Stretch (Flexibility Level 4 – Fitness Cards) o Hamstring Kicks (keep balance against the pool wall) o Shoulder + Arm Swings
Sport Specific Movements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Kicking (holding the wall) o Kicking using kickboard o Easy swim 100m-200m

Sample Warm-Up 2:	
Aerobic Activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o High knees o Frog hops (out and back 5m) o Sprinting on the spot (as fast as you can for 10 seconds)
Dynamic Stretching:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Lateral reaches o Leg swings o Arm Circles o Arm Swings
Sport Specific Movements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Kicking (holding the wall) – try to be specific to the stroke you are practicing for. o Kicking using pull buoy/pool noodle o Easy swim 100m-200m

Cool-Down

When your training, practice or sport session is complete, you should always cool-down. It is just as important to have a good cool-down as it is to have a good warm-up. A good cool-down allows the body to gradually return to a state of rest.

Purpose of a cool-down:

- Decrease heart rate.
- Decrease breathing rate.
- Decrease body and muscle temperature.
- Returns rate of blood flow from the active muscles to resting level.
- Decrease muscle soreness.
- Improve flexibility.
- Increases the rate of recovery from exercise.
- Promote relaxation.





A typical cool-down includes light aerobic activity followed by stretching. The aerobic activity should gradually decrease in intensity/difficulty. It could be a few laps at 50% intensity with a kickboard or pull buoy, or a freestyle swim.

The cool-down can be carried out in or out of the pool to bring the heart rate down, but we do recommend to perform the stretching exercises out of the pool.

Cool-downs are perfect opportunities for coaches to carry-out a debrief session with their athletes and review the session they have just had. Ask your athletes some **open, informative** questions that will make them think about the session and what they would have learned. In addition to the athletes reinforcing the coaching points you have given them, it also gives you, as a coach, the opportunity to see what works for each athlete as an individual.

Open Questions – Questions that cannot be answered with ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, for example:

“What part of the training session did you find challenging today?”

Informative Questions – Questions that provide useful information for you, as a coach, and for the athlete.

Sample Cool-Down 1:

Low Intensity Swim:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swim 200m slowly while alternative strokes. Strokes and Glide (Drill 1.4)
Stretching:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Side Stretch Calf Stretch (Flexibility Level 1 – Fitness Cards) Child’s Pose (Flexibility Level 1 – Fitness Cards) Quadriceps Stretch (Flexibility Level 2 – Fitness Cards) Modified Hurdler’s Stretch (Flexibility Level 2 – Fitness Cards) Butterfly Stretch (Flexibility Level 3 – Fitness Cards) Tricep Stretch (Flexibility Level 3 – Fitness Cards) Seated Rotation Stretch (Flexibility Level 5 – Fitness Cards) Shoulder Rotation Stretch (Flexibility Level 5 – Fitness Cards)

Sample Cool-Down 2:

Low Intensity Swim:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swim 200m slowly while alternating strokes. Catch Up (Drill 1.2) Floating Exercises
Stretching:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Side Stretch Calf Stretch (Flexibility Level 1 – Fitness Cards) Child’s Pose (Flexibility Level 1 – Fitness Cards) Quadriceps Stretch (Flexibility Level 2 – Fitness Cards) Modified Hurdler’s Stretch (Flexibility Level 2 – Fitness Cards) Butterfly Stretch (Flexibility Level 3 – Fitness Cards) Tricep Stretch (Flexibility Level 3 – Fitness Cards) Seated Rotation Stretch (Flexibility Level 5 – Fitness Cards) Shoulder Rotation Stretch (Flexibility Level 5 – Fitness Cards)



Common Injuries in Swimming

Injuries are problems for athletes in all sports, at all levels. It is beneficial for coaches to be aware of common injuries that athletes could experience in their sport.

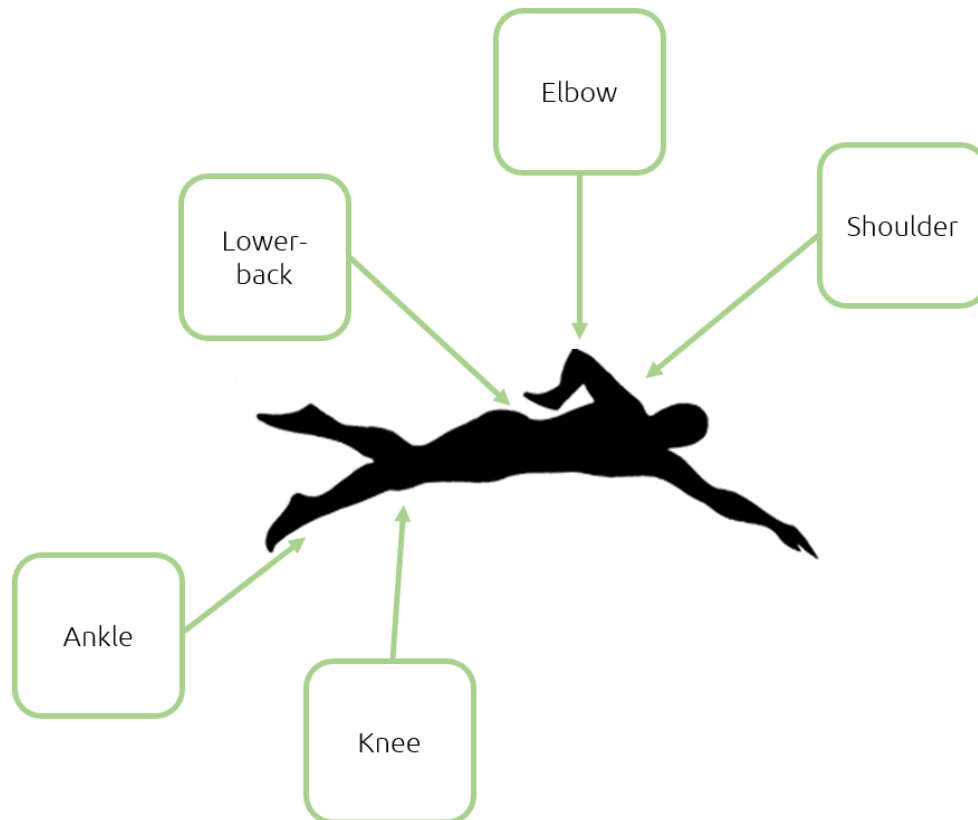


Figure 10: Common Swimming Injuries

The graphic above highlights five of the most common injury sites for swimmers. Of these injury sites, the shoulder is likely to be the most common site. **Any injuries that athletes happen to obtain during SO training should be immediately tended to by a healthcare professional** (doctor, nurse, and physiotherapist). If an athlete reports to you with signs or symptoms of any form of injury it is recommended to send them to a healthcare professional.

Appropriate warm-ups and cool-downs can help to reduce the risk of both acute and overuse injuries specific to swimming. Additionally, strength and flexibility training either in practice or at home can further prevent injuries and improve performance. Specifically, shoulder strength and flexibility should be a main focus when trying to prevent injuries.



Swimming Specific Physical Conditioning

Physical conditioning is the improvement of physical health through programmed exercises. Swimming specific conditioning is the use of exercises specifically related to the movements used by swimmers to develop swimming specific fitness. The main components of physical conditioning are cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and skill development. Conditioning training can be completed using just the athlete's bodyweight or by adding additional resistance through bands, weights, or any other resistance-based equipment.

In swimming, these components can be developed **in-water** or **on-land** through various exercises, activities and drills. In the past, coaches would have focused on the in-water conditioning in an effort to improve their swimmer's performance through long durations or various intensities. We now know that a combination of in-water and on-land conditioning is optimal for swimmers' performance.

In-Water Conditioning:

In-water conditioning will be the most sport-specific for swimmers as it replicates what they will do in competition. Examples of in-water conditioning are:

- Timed intervals
- Restricted lengths (e.g. swim just using upper body, no leg kick)
- Swimming with added resistance (e.g. using a belt attached to a band or cone)

On-land Conditioning:

On-land conditioning involves building up strength, endurance and flexibility in the muscles that will be used the most while swimming. This can be done through a variety of methods using either bodyweight exercises or those with added resistance. Examples of on-land conditioning are:

- Resistance band exercises
 - Straight arm raises/pulldowns
 - Tricep extensions
 - Reverse fly
- Core strength exercise
 - Front plank/side plank
 - Leg raises
 - Medicine ball twists
- Bodyweight strength exercises
 - Pull ups
 - Push ups
 - Squats





Fitness Resources

Fitness for coaches [link](#).

In addition to the [Fit 5 Guide](#) and content available online, Special Olympics also offers online Fitness specific courses where coaches can learn more about Fitness, SO athletes, and how the two work together!

The courses include:

- Fitness Coach Online Training
- Fitness for the Sport Coach
- Inclusive Fitness Online Training

Head coaches could consider bringing in a coach to work specifically on fitness relevant to their sport (fitness coach), or they could utilize their assistant coach and have them trained up on the online courses to gain a greater knowledge of fitness and take the lead on fitness training for their athletes. Either way, we would encourage head coaches to use the online learning modules as a way of improving their knowledge and understanding of fitness.

Check out learn.specialolympics.org to find these courses, along with many other available courses, and get learning today!



The Role of the Coach

The role of the coach is multidimensional, complex and challenging. It is also one of the most rewarding aspects of being involved in sport. The coach facilitates the athletes to engage in sport, with peers, opponents, supporters, and to encourage themselves to improve. Coaches must take on numerous roles as they engage with athletes, family members, officials and stakeholders. Roles can range from teacher to advisor or, mentor to motivator. All of which are important

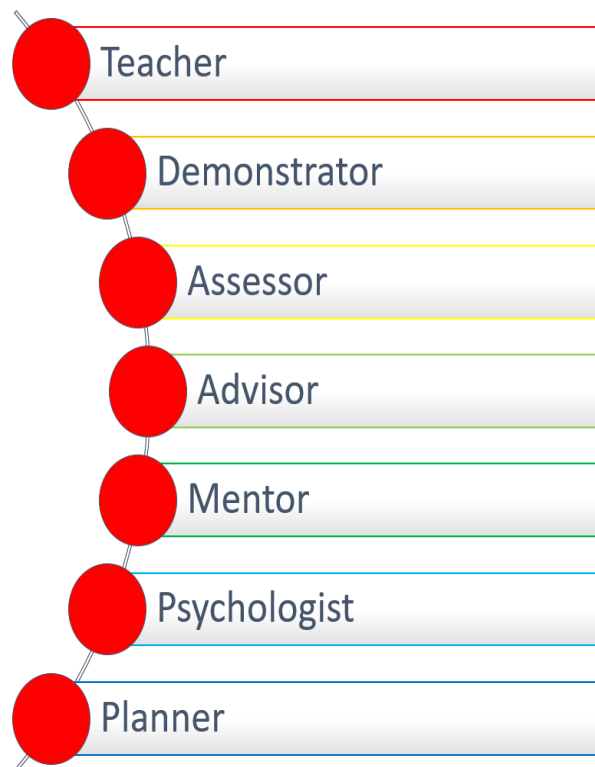


Figure 11: Some roles of a coach



McKensie (2013) described coaching as “A constant rollercoaster”, but Horton (2014) feels it is more of ‘fun fair’ full of rides – some scary, some exciting and many rather ordinary.




Figure 12: Coaches continuum framework

COACHES CONTINUUM FRAMEWORK:

The Coaches Continuum Framework (CCF) shows the constructive coaching process that SO encourages coaches to use. The CCF focuses on 4 key components of coaching that will assist coaches in carrying-out best practice while ensuring the athletes are at the center of their coaching.

Coaching should be *athlete-centered*; this means coaches should prioritise their athlete's needs when preparing for a training session or competition. The framework above demonstrates an example of the coaching process and how coaches could approach the planning of their athlete's training.


 **PREPARE** – All training sessions should be planned prior to arrival. This reduces on the spot pressure on the coach, results in a better training session for the athletes, and allows for better progressions of trainings as sessions go on.

How?

- Set out a strategy (for your next session and upcoming block/season - Periodization);
- The topic of the session;
- Determine what you will deliver to your athletes;
- The key deliverables (points);
- Potential progressions and regressions (if necessary for groups of individuals).






 **FACILITATE ATHLETES** – All sessions should be *athlete-centred* and should consider the individual needs of each athlete when it comes to progressions.


How?

- Identify and cater for the individual needs and differences of your athletes;
- Build relationships with your athletes;
- Go at each athlete's own pace;
- Match/Pair them up with athletes of a similar ability level;
- Praise efforts;

 **ADAPT** – Session structure should **not** be rigidly followed. Coaching is dynamic, meaning that it must be adjustable in the case of something unplanned happening. This means that your plans should always include several options. You should be prepared with a back-up activity, a progression or a simplified activity if you find it is simply not working as planned. That is ok! It happens to all coaches, the difference is that, effective coaches, are prepared for it!

How?

- Observe how athletes are performing the designated task;
- Demonstrate best practice/technique;
- If required, adapt/change components of the session to suit the athletes;
- Assist athletes with difficult components when needed;
- Offer feedback to assist athletes;

 **REFLECT** – Reflection is a key component of the coaching process. It presents coaches with the opportunity to self-analyse and self-improve after a training session.

How?

- Evaluate how the session went;
 - Time management; Content; How you spoke to athletes; The delivery of key points;
 - Were you *Clear, Concise* and *Consistent*? (3 C's)
 - What went well? What could improve?
- Reflect at multiple points during your training block/season





- Are you meeting your set strategy?
 - What has been going well?; What could improve going forward?
- Adjust
 - Post-reflection, identify what you would change to improve your next session.
- Be critical, constructive and honest with yourself.
- Use a 'critical friend'
 - Ask another coach, sport assistant or a friend to observe your session and to give honest feedback.
 - Have an open-mindset; be open to other people's ideas.

Remember: your athletes will always learn skills at different rates, whether or not they have an intellectual disability. The skill of coaching is to provide activities and challenges that meet the needs of all your athletes.





HOW TO INCLUDE PEOPLE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN YOUR COACHING SESSIONS

-
- The level of support an athlete requires may vary depending on their ability level.

-
- Use a range of coaching styles, including lots of visual demonstrations and visual cues.

-
- Praise when success is achieved, encourage when not.

(As you get to know your athletes, learn what coaching styles and approaches help them to learn best. Each person is unique!)

-
- Build routine and familiarity into your sessions.

(This can be especially helpful for athletes with autism spectrum disorder and they can feel prepared for what is to come. Changes to schedules, plans and expectations can be especially challenging)

-
- Plan and allow for additional time to offer support or to adjust the plans as needed.

-
- Give clear, concise and consistent instructions and repeat them frequently.

-
- Demonstrate specific coaching drills one element at a time, and progress at a pace that your athletes can manage.

-
- Use trigger words to condense instruction and be consistent with terminology.

-
- Communicate directly with your athletes. Use those who support them to gain an understanding of how to best communicate directly with the athlete.

(They will help you to understand their best way to communicate with them)

-
- Where relevant, provide accessible and easy-to-read information, and consider other non-verbal communication techniques such as videos, pictures and demonstrations.

-
- Where applicable pair up your participant with a supportive fellow participant who has the ability to explain concepts clearly, concisely, and patiently.
-





<i>Impairment</i>	<i>Supports</i>
<i>Hearing Impaired</i>	<p><i>If swimmer signs then the coach having the ability to sign is an advantage</i></p> <p><i>Practice "Touch Starts" with your swimmer.</i></p> <p><i>If available practice starts using and electronic strobe light.</i></p>
<i>Sight impaired</i>	<i>Assist swimmers with moving around the pool deck, feeling edges/walls/lane ropes/entries/exits ladders. Use of equipment/shape of a kick board etc- low sight or wears glasses- wearing prescription goggles could greatly assist but these can be expensive.</i>
<i>Non ambulant</i>	<i>May require a wheel chair and assistance into the water, may need a pool chair or pool hoist. Low muscle tone, balance in water may be compromised.</i>
<i>Non Verbal</i>	<i>Use communication boards/signing</i>
<i>Physical</i>	<i>Supports</i>
<i>Low Muscle Tone</i>	<i>Changes centre of buoyancy in the water, swimmers balance compromised. Movement may be inhibited.</i>
<i>Cerebral Palsy</i>	<i>Do not assume swimmers with this disability cannot understand what you say. Sometimes they may have compromised speech or even non-verbal, low muscle tone, unable to demonstrate specific skills in strokes etc.</i>
<i>Down Syndrome</i>	<i>Often decreased or poor muscle tone with a shortened neck. May take longer to reach physical activity milestones, but will eventually meet all or many of them.</i>
<i>Spinal Cord Damage</i>	<i>Quadriplegia (Loss of four limbs) or Paraplegia (Loss of two limbs): May require increased or alternative assistance on entry and exit to water, as well as when in the water.</i>

In any instance it is important for the Coach to seek out and obtain from others/professionals information on the best way to assist a swimmer with a physical disability to achieve.





Coaching SO Athletes

Special Olympics offers a number of resources to assist new and current coaches with improving their knowledge of coaching SO athletes. Coaches can use these proven and effective strategies to improve athletes' learning as well as their overall experience in Special Olympics sports. Remember, our athletes are unique individuals with unique interests, likes and dislikes, and varying ways of expression. Being flexible and open to new insights will ensure that, working together, everyone has a valuable and rewarding experience. This SO [Quick Reference Guide](#) to Coaching SO Athletes is one of many resources available to coaches on our website containing [Special Olympics Resources](#).



Figure 13: Characteristics of a Successful Swimming Coach





Your role as a S.O swimming coach is to create a fun, friendly, facilitating environment for all athletes that wish to attend. The characteristics of a successful swimming coach are all athlete focused. Important things to note as a coach in any sport are:

- Create a relationship with your athlete – the coach-athlete relationship is essential in obtaining buy-in from athletes, gaining trust, and creating a relationship that will last long in your athlete's (and your) mind.
- Start from the beginning – It is so important to teach your athletes the foundations of swimming first. Once these have been mastered then you can begin to introduce progressions (remember – not all athletes will progress the same).
- Repetition is essential in learning new skills – what is essential in teaching new skills is to have varying ways of coaching/training/educating athletes. This keeps things fresh, exciting and fun for the athletes.
- Know your destination before you start the journey – before starting to help an athlete you must know where you want to get them, be that with a small helpful tip on their arm movement, or the breakdown of a flip turn, it is so important to know what the point you are trying to make is instead of 'freewheeling' it.
- When giving instructions/feedback, follow the 3 C's – Be clear (in your phrasing), be concise (keep it short and simple) and be consistent (don't give mixed messages).

Recommendations for a SO Swim Coach

To be involved as a coach in a Special Olympics program there are a number of minimum standards recommendations. These standards help to achieve best practice in each sport, club and region and helps us to deliver the best standard of coaching to our athletes and to make their SO journey as enjoyable as possible.

We would recommend that an SO Swimming Coach has:

- The ability to safely and comfortably swim
- A knowledge and understanding of water safety requirements and protocols
- An up-to-date First Aid and/or CPR certification
- A valid Safeguarding certificate (or a relevant alternative; Protective Behaviors [available on learn.specialolympics.org]; Child Safety)





- A knowledge of their athlete's disability
- Completed the minimum required coaching qualification (Sport – Coaching: Level 1 Sport Assistant on [Special Olympics online learning portal](#)) and your local governing body required formal qualification (e.g. Level 1 Assistant Swimming Teacher)

In meeting these recommendations it will assist Special Olympics in continually improving coaching standards and delivering high-quality coaching to all athletes.

If you do not currently meet any of the recommendations above it is advised that you begin to fulfill them at your earliest possible convenience.

If you are unsure about how to go about commencing any of the above please contact your local governing body for swimming or Special Olympics Program for assistance.

Qualities and Skills of an inclusive coach

Patience: Recognizing some participants will take longer to develop skills or make progress than others

Respect: Acknowledging difference and treating all participants as individuals

Adaptability: Having a flexible approach to coaching and communication that recognizes individual differences

Organisation: Recognizing the importance of preparation and planning

Safe practices: Ensuring every session, whether with groups or individuals, is carried out with the participants' safety in mind

Knowledge: Utilizing knowledge of training activities and how to modify them in order to maximize the potential of every participant

The Special Olympics Coach Development Framework outlines the coaching resources and qualifications available to all coaches through our online learning portal, learn.specialolympics.org, and our resources page.

We currently offer three levels of coaching qualifications:

Level 1 – Sport Assistant: Pre-Coach level, tailored for volunteers interested in assisting at Sport Training who may/may not wish to progress to coaching.





Level 2 – Introductory – Coach Assistant: Certifies volunteer to assist a coach at SO Training and competition.

Level 3 – Coach: Second coaching stage, prepares coaches to lead their athletes both at training and competition.

In addition to these coaching certifications, we offer additional supports for coaches in supplementary topics such as Competition, Fitness, Sport Specific Content (such as Coaching Guides) and many other resourceful pieces.

The online learning portal also provides some pre-requisites that any sport assistants, coach assistants, and coaches require before becoming involved with a group of Special Olympics Athletes (CDC Heads Up concussion awareness training and Protective Behaviors which involves safeguarding information for all those involved in a sports program).

For more information on the role of the coach, check out our new The Role of the Coach document on the [Special Olympics Coaching Resources Page](#).





* = Required before Coaching

SPECIAL OLYMPICS COACH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

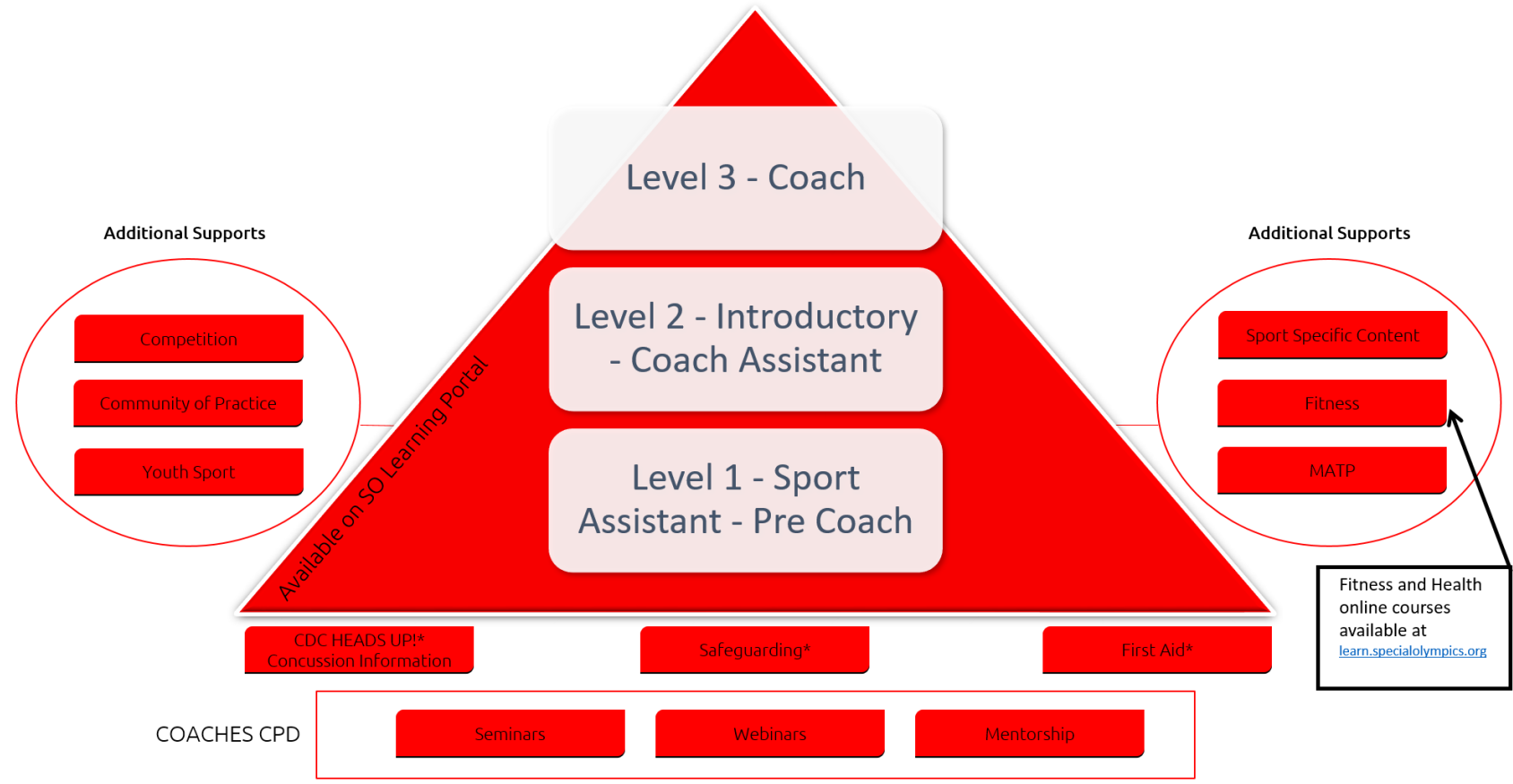


Figure 14: Special Olympics Coaching Pathway

The Special Olympics Coach Development Framework outlines the coaching resources and qualifications available to all coaches through our online learning portal, learn.specialolympics.org, and our [resources page](#).

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Sports Psychology

Understanding and Utilizing Sport Psychology

Psychological Considerations

Coaching goes well beyond teaching fundamental skills. Once the athlete has learned the basic skills of the game, they must then learn how to apply their skills, knowledge of the rules and etiquette of the sport in preparation for competition.

Before any of that can happen, the athlete must enjoy the sport and want to play it. Establishing that from the outset will give the coach an immediate platform for learning. When the going gets tough, the coach can remind athletes that it is meant to be challenging and that sport is an activity they really want to be able to do. Without setting that groundwork, the concept of quitting becomes an option—the worst possible scenario in sport.

Tasks → Skills → Application → Competition

Special Olympics athletes have been given the tasks or elements required to perform a skill. Skills are the fundamental abilities required for application to sport. They have developed a combination of skills to apply in preparation for competition. They are now ready for competition according to the rules and guidelines of the sport.

Athletes will develop sport confidence by following a simple to more complex skills training progression that allows the athlete to experience successful athletic achievement through repetition in settings similar to the competitive environment.

Athlete Readiness

Readiness of the athlete means being focused and it must be determined in preparation for competition.

- **Mental Readiness:** Being a contender in the event, showing confidence and understanding strategy
- **Physical Readiness:** Being physically conditioned and trained in the skills required for competition

Physical Readiness + Mental Readiness = Competition Readiness

For example in Swimming, Special Olympics offers many disciplines – Developmental events, Individual events and Team events with ranging distances and competitive levels. Athletes must not only be placed in a level of competition that will challenge their skills and keep them motivated to continue their effort to surpass their personal bests, but they must also be placed in events that they like and enjoy. Positive motivation and participation can inspire the athlete to excel and gain sport confidence.





Positive Reinforcement and Rewards

When used appropriately, reinforcement is one of the primary communication tools of a successful coach.

Reinforcement is used to praise an athlete when he/she does well or to get an athlete to stop undesirable behavior. Reinforcement is relative and not absolute. For reinforcement to work, a coach must be consistent and systematic in its use. If you are not consistent, your athletes will behave erratically, like the coach. If you are not systematic, you will send confusing messages to your athletes.

Communicating and Correcting Errors

1. **One skill at a time.** Correct only one behavior or movement at a time.
2. **Ask before giving correction.** Allow the chance to explain what they believe they did. This lets them feel they are a part of the process.
3. **Find the cause.** The cause of an error may be something that you may not see. Again, ask the athlete what they believe they are doing.
4. **Provide constructive instruction.** Avoid too much of “what’s not right” by focusing on “how to do it right.” Always build up the athlete; do not tear them down.
5. **Praise before correction.** Begin with a positive comment about something that the athlete does well. Now they are attuned to you. You have gained their attention and trust. Follow up with constructive instruction. Be concise and to the point. Remember to send another message of praise and encouragement.

The “Sandwich approach” is an effective way to provide both positive reinforcement and corrective feedback. Start off with a compliment such as “Great effort on the starting dive and then identify what they need to improve on such as, “but when entering the water, try and stay as streamlined as possible” followed by encouragement and a positive outcome, “Staying streamlined will help your water entry and will improve your overall time”

Using Rewards

Coaches should observe and know their athletes to determine why they participate in Special Olympics and reward them accordingly. Rewarding athletes is not always as easy as it sounds. Below are a few tips on rewarding athletes.

- Reward the performance, not the outcome.
- Reward athletes just as much for their effort as you do for the desired outcome.
- Reward little accomplishments on the way to learning an entire skill.
- Reward the learning and performance of desired emotional and social skills too.
- Reward frequently, especially when new skills are being learned.
- Reward as soon as possible when new skills are learned.
- Reward an athlete when they have earned it.

Types of Rewards





- **Intrinsic:** Athlete competes for the thrill and joy of the sport
- **Extrinsic:** Athlete competes for the reward

Motivation

According to Burton, Damon and Thomas Raedeke in *Sport Psychology for Coaches* (2008), motivation is reflected in three behaviors:

- **Choice:** Motivation shows in the choices athletes make—choosing to play sport, to practice, to set challenging goals, and to train even in the off-season.
- **Effort:** Motivation is also reflected in how much effort athletes give—how intensely they train, compete, and strive to achieve their goals.
- **Persistence:** Motivation level can be seen in how long athletes persist at striving to attain their goals, even in the face of adversity and obstacles

Motivation is better understood by debunking some myths.

Motivation Myth 1: Athletes are either motivated or not motivated

Some coaches believe that motivation is simply a personality trait, a static internal characteristic. They believe that an athlete either has motivation or doesn't. They don't believe motivation is something coaches can develop. For these coaches, the key to having a motivated team is to find and recruit athletes who have the right personality. However, while some athletes are, in fact, more motivated than others, this view does not provide any direction or guidance on how coaches can help develop and sustain athletes' motivation. The fact is, coaches can help athletes develop motivation.

Motivation Myth 2: Coaches give athletes motivation

Other coaches view motivation as something they can inject into their athletes on demand, like a flu shot, by means of inspirational pep talks or gimmicks. They may use slogans, posters, and bulletin board quotes from upcoming opponents. These strategies may be helpful, but they are only a small piece of the motivation puzzle. There is much more to the story—motivation is not something coaches can simply give their athletes.

Motivation Myth 3: Motivation means sticks and carrots

Some experts suggest that effective motivation means using carrots (rewards) and sticks (punishments) to drive athletes to do things they would not do on their own. This may seem innocuous, but think about it on a deeper level. It assumes that athletes don't want to do something, so the coach will provide motivation to make them do it through punishments or rewards. Coaches who emphasize the stick, in the form of chastising, criticizing, yelling, coercing, and creating guilt, often find themselves swimming upstream. No matter what they try, they meet resistance and negative attitudes. Not only is this approach ineffective, it saps the enjoyment out of sport. Coaches must understand athletes' needs in order to create a team culture that naturally motivates them.





Athletes' needs and intrinsic motivation

According to Burton and Raedeke in *Sport Psychology for Coaches* (2008), great coaches know that they don't give athletes motivation. Rather, they create the conditions or team climate in which athletes motivate themselves. Coaches do this by recognizing the importance of **intrinsic motivation**, which stems from the sheer pleasure and inner satisfaction athletes experience from participating in sport. Intrinsically motivated athletes participate for the love of the sport. They enjoy the process of learning and mastering difficult sport skills and play for the pride they feel when working hard toward accomplishing a challenging goal. They also find sport stimulating and feel exhilarated when engaged in it.

The secret to cultivate athletes' intrinsic motivation is to understand what athletes need from the sport. Structuring sport in a way that meets athletes' needs fosters intrinsic motivation, and failure to meet athletes' needs lowers it. What do athletes need from sport? Evidence from a variety of sources suggests that athletes seek to fulfill four primary needs

1. The need for fun and stimulation

In a survey done to 10,000 former athletes (Ewing & Seefeldt 1990; Seefeldt, Ewing, & Walk 1992), was found that having fun and developing skills were the most common reason why athletes participate in sports, even more important than winning

When they were asked why they quit, they typically answered something along these lines:

- "I found other activities more interesting."
- "I would rather do other things than play sport."
- "Sport was no longer fun."
- "I burnt out on sport."

It was found that the connection between the reasons athletes play sport and the reasons they drop out was motivation, which comes naturally and easily when athletes are having fun. Lack of fun makes sport seem like a boring job, lowers motivation, and even causes athletes to drop out. If sport is not fun, coaches find that motivating athletes is difficult, if not impossible. Sport is much more enjoyable when athletes find practice activities stimulating, challenging, and exciting.

One of the greatest challenges as a coach is to avoid destroying the athletes' intrinsic motivation to participate in sport. Some coaches erroneously believe that fun means easy workouts, frivolous games, and countless team parties. But challenging practices, intense workouts, and focusing on skill development can be fun. In fact, fun is maximized when athletes experience optimal stimulation and excitement. No one finds it fun to lose or fail constantly, so build in some success. Most athletes are also bored by being under-challenged while performing tedious drills. Thus coaches should strive to fit the difficulty of the skill to the ability of the athletes. Coached this way, athletes feel challenged but not overwhelmed, because they have the ability to meet the challenge.





Coaching Tips

Coaches must understand athletes' needs in order to create a team culture that naturally motivates them.

Wise coaches have long known that meeting athletes' need for fun enhances motivation. Yet they also know that athletes must practice to learn and improve skills. The creative coach can find ways to facilitate skill development in a way that is fun for athletes. Here are a few examples:

- Use developmental progressions to create an optimal skill–challenge balance.
- Keep practices stimulating by varying the activities.
- Teach fundamentals by means of action-packed, game-like activities that use the targeted skills.
- Keep everyone active. Don't give swimmers time to get bored by having them stand in long lines
- Set aside time in each practice when athletes can just play the game, without receiving evaluation or feedback from the coach.

Structuring sport to be fun is key not only to motivation but also to helping athletes develop their skills. If athletes enjoy sport, they become more motivated and are less likely to drop out. If they are more motivated, they improve. As they improve, they enjoy sport more. And so it goes. Athletes who are motivated primarily by their need to have fun may present discipline problems for coaches who have sapped the fun out of sport. As these athletes try to find creative ways to have fun, they may be seen as lazy or having discipline problems. Some coaches assume that athletes are not motivated when they hesitate at doing everything the coach's way. In reality, such athletes are often highly motivated to participate — just not according to the structure and methods dictated by the coach.

2. The need for acceptance and belonging

The second basic need athletes strive to fill through sport is for acceptance and belonging. This need can be met if athletes feel they fit in and are accepted by others on the team. In fact, some athletes participate in sport primarily because they enjoy being with their friends and being part of a team, and coaches can use this need as a powerful motivator. Here are some guidelines: Many children with various disabilities are often teased or ignored. Being a member of team that includes similar other peers can be a tremendously gratifying social experience. Hence coaches should not underestimate the value of the social benefits that the athletes will derive from their sport experience. In fact being with their friends may be a more powerful motivation than playing the sport.

- Recognize that these athletes are usually responsive to team goals. Although performing well and winning may not be as significant to them as is identifying with the team, they will internalize team goals because of their desire to be part of the group.





- Arrange activities that allow athletes to get to know each other and spend time together. Social activities are a good way to help fulfill the need for acceptance and belonging.
- Include team building activities to help build cohesion. By working together toward a common goal that is not directly related to sport, athletes can learn to appreciate previously overlooked strengths in themselves and their teammates.
- Create an atmosphere on the team where athletes feel they are playing with each other rather than against one another.
- Have returning athletes serve as mentors to new athletes
- Ensure that all athletes feel they are important members of the team and that their roles are important and valued.

3. The need for control and autonomy.

This need is important but easily overlooked. In fact, one of the most basic human needs is to develop autonomy, and this is especially true among adolescents on their journey to adulthood. Filling this need requires that athletes have control over their own lives and determine their own course of behavior. Once they choose to participate in a sport, they need to have ownership and feel they have a say in decisions affecting their involvement. Otherwise, they feel pressured or obligated to act, think, or feel a certain way. High autonomy encourages wanting to participate, whereas low autonomy means having to participate.

You can use several strategies to help athletes develop a sense of ownership and responsibility. When appropriate, involve athletes in decision making, provide choice, and request their input. You can do this, for example, by giving them a say in their training regimen. You can teach athletes how to develop their own training program, giving them more and more responsibility as they learn more about effective training principles. Encourage athletes to take as much responsibility as you judge they have the maturity to handle. Provide structure and guidance, giving more control as athletes demonstrate the wise use of responsibility. When athletes are reluctant in using their responsibility, constructively help them better understand how to act responsibly. Athletes should neither expect nor be given free rein, but they should be given choices within a structured environment.

The coach who facilitates this type of graduated responsibility development is not necessarily a democratic coach in every respect. Not all decisions are voted on—many are the sole responsibility of the coach. But by shifting some control to athletes, it is possible to develop a disciplined team where athletes feel a strong sense of ownership.

In summary, to meet athletes' need for control and autonomy, you should make sure they feel a sense of ownership over their sport involvement. Ways to do this include the following:

- Provide a rationale for your decisions.
- Ensure that athletes feel they are responsible for their own fate and are not merely pawns.
- Solicit athletes' input and provide choices whenever possible.





- Involve athletes in developing practice plans and game strategies, evaluating practices and competitions, developing team rules and a team covenant or mission, and selecting captains.

4. The need to feel competent and successful

The need to feel competent is one of the most important components of motivation. Perceived competence means having positive perceptions of one's skills and abilities and feeling capable of succeeding in sport. It is doubtful that athletes will work hard, or even stay in sport, if they feel like failures. Athletes use many sources to judge their skill and success at sport. Even the simple act of choosing up sides can influence athletes' feelings of competence. Always getting picked first by one's peers contributes to feeling competent, thus enhancing motivation, whereas routinely getting picked last may cause an athlete to feel incompetent and walk away from sport.

Athletes' perceived competence can be raised through success at challenging tasks, positive feedback from a coach, and approval from parents. Effective coaches spend a lot of time and energy structuring sport in a way that makes each athlete feel competent. Although experiencing success is central to feeling competent, experiencing failure is inevitable in the sport world, as in life. All athletes, no matter how talented, experience failure, adversity, and setbacks at some point. How athletes respond to failure has a huge effect on long-term motivation.

Many athletes will equate winning and losing with success and failure. This is often a self-defeating perspective as athletes only partly control the outcome of competition and often winning is unrealistic.

Coaches should almost always focus on individual effort, self-improvement and learning as barometers of success.

Developing Sport Confidence

Sport confidence is gained through experiencing success, time and time again, in the same or similar situation. Sport confidence is one of the most important predictors of athletic achievement. Your coaching strategies should be devised around repetition in settings similar to the competitive environment.

1. Developing sport confidence in athletes helps to make participation fun and is critical to the athlete's motivation.
2. A considerable amount of anxiety is eliminated when athletes know what is expected of them and when they have to be prepared.
3. Mental preparation is just as important as skills training.
4. Progressing to more difficult skills increases the challenge.
5. Dropping back into easier skills increases one's confidence.

Place emphasis on the importance of improving a personal best and giving maximum effort at all times during training and competition.





- Reward the athletes when goals are achieved (verbal, nonverbal, and tangible).
- Motivate and challenge the athlete through well-planned training sessions.
- Establish guidelines for acceptable behavior and expectations by creating positive cues and reinforcements.

Coaching Tips

The only things an athlete can control are: Attitude and Effort

Developing Self-Confidence through Goal Setting

Realistic yet challenging goals for each athlete are important to the motivation of the athlete both at training and during competition. Accomplishing goals at practice through repetition in settings similar to the competition environment will instill confidence. Sport confidence in athletes helps make participation fun and is critical to the athlete's motivation. Setting goals is a joint effort between athletes and coaches.

The main features of goal setting are:

1. Goals need to be structured as short-term, intermediate and long-term.
2. Goals need to be viewed as stepping stones to success.
3. Goals must be accepted by the athlete.
4. Goals need to vary in difficulty— from easily attainable to challenging.
5. Goals must be measurable.
6. Goals need to be used to establish the athlete's training and competition plan.
7. Goals need to be flexible
8. Goals need to be written down
9. Goals need to be identified as either performance goals or practice goals
10. Sometimes athletes will need to seek support to accomplish their goals

Athletes with or without an intellectual disability may be more motivated by accomplishing short-term goals than long-term goals; however, do not be afraid to challenge athletes. Include athletes in setting their personal goals. For example, ask the swimmer, "How far do you want to swim today? Let's see how far you swam at the last practice. What is your personal best? What do YOU think you can do?" Awareness of why the athlete is participating is also important when setting goals. There are participation factors, which may influence motivation and goal setting:

Age appropriateness	Ability level
Readiness level	Athlete performance
Family influence	Peer influence
Athlete preference	





Performance Goals versus Outcome Goals

Effective goals focus on performance, not outcome. Performance is what the athlete controls. Outcomes are frequently controlled by others. An athlete may have an outstanding performance and not win a contest because other athletes have performed even better. Conversely, an athlete may perform poorly and still win if all other athletes perform at a lower level. If a swimmer's goal is to swim 90 seconds in the 100m, the swimmer has greater control in achieving this goal than winning. However, the athlete has even greater control of achieving a goal if the goal is to swim using the correct technique, focusing on correct breathing throughout the race. This performance goal ultimately gives the swimmer more control over their performance.

Performance Goal	Outcome Goal
Swim in your lane the entire race	Swim while keeping the planned pace

Motivation through Goal Setting

Goal setting has proved to be one of the most simple and effective motivational devices developed for sports. . While the concept is not new, today the techniques for effective goal setting have been refined and clarified. Motivation is all about having needs and striving to have those needs met. How can you enhance an athlete's motivation?

1. Provide more time and attention to an athlete when he/she is having difficulty learning a skill.
2. Reward small gains of achievement in skill level
3. Develop other measures of achievement outside of winning
4. Show your athletes that they are important to you
5. Show your athletes that you are proud of them and excited about what they are doing
6. Fill your athletes with self-worth

Goals give direction. They tell us what needs to be accomplished. They increase effort, persistence and the quality of performance. Establishing goals also requires that the athlete and coach determine techniques for how to achieve those goals.

Measurable and Specific

Effective goals are very specific and measurable. Goals stated in the form of "I want to be the best that I can be!" or "I want to improve my performance!" are vague and difficult to measure. It is positive sounding but difficult, if not impossible, to assess whether they have been reached. Measurable goals must establish a baseline of performance recorded during the past one or two weeks for them to be realistic.





Difficult, but Realistic

Effective goals are perceived as challenging, not threatening. A challenging goal is one perceived as difficult but attainable within a reasonable amount of time and with a reasonable amount of effort or ability. A threatening goal is one perceived as being beyond one's current capacity. Realistic implies that judgment is involved. Goals based upon a baseline of performance recorded during the past one or two weeks are likely to be realistic.

Long- versus Short-Term Goals

Both long and short-term goals provide direction, but short-term goals appear to have the greatest motivational effects. Short-term goals are more readily attainable and are stepping stones to more distant long-term goals. Unrealistic short-term goals are easier to recognize than unrealistic long-term goals. Unrealistic goals can then be modified before valuable practice time has been lost.

Positive versus Negative Goal Setting

Positive goals direct what to do rather than what not to do. Negative goals direct our attention to the errors we wish to avoid or eliminate. Positive goals also require coaches and athletes to decide how they will reach those specific goals. Once the goal is decided, the athlete and coach must determine specific strategies and techniques which allow that goal to be successfully attained.

Set Priorities

Effective goals are limited in number and meaningful to the athlete. Setting a limited number of goals requires that athletes and coaches decide what is important and fundamental for continued development. Establishing a few, carefully selected goals also allow athletes and coaches to keep accurate records without becoming overwhelmed with record keeping.

Mutual Goal Setting

Goal setting becomes an effective motivational device when athletes are committed to achieving those goals. When goals are imposed or established without significant input from the athletes, motivation is unlikely to be enhanced.

Set Specific Time Lines

Target dates provide urgency to an athlete's efforts. Specific target dates tend to eliminate wishful thinking and clarify what goals are realistic and which are not. Timelines are especially valuable in high-risk sports where fear often promotes procrastination in learning new skills.

Formal versus Informal Goal Setting

Some coaches and athletes think that goals must be set in formal meetings outside of practice and require long periods of thoughtful evaluation before they are decided upon. Goals are





literally progressions which coaches have been using for years but are now expressed in measurable, performance terms rather than as vague, generalized outcomes.

Goal Setting Domains

When asked to set goals, athletes typically focus on the learning of new skills or performances in competitions. A major role of the coach is to broaden the athlete's perception of those areas, and goal setting can be an effective tool. Goals can be set to enhance fitness, improve attendance, increase intensity, promote sportsmanship, develop team spirit, find more free time, or establish consistency.

Coaching Tips

Ask yourself "What motivates me to be the best coach that I can be."

Winning and Losing

Many coaches face the issue of winning when developing their coaching objectives. Society clearly places alike build character and develop leadership skills. The balance is in not evaluating yourself or your athletes on the win-loss record. You, the coach, must resist trying to win and encouraging your athletes to win at all costs. How do you overcome this temptation? Place your athletes first—athletes first at practice; athletes first at competition.

Striving to Win

Placing athletes first does not mean that winning is not important. Striving to win within the rules of sport and the competition is an important objective for both athlete and coach. Striving to win is essential for an enjoyable competition. The emphasis should not be on winning itself but on striving to win. It is the pursuit of victory, the dream of achieving the goal that matters most.

Keeping Winning in Perspective

Striving to win is important in sport. The process of winning can bring out the best in people—performance, attitude and approach to life. As coach, it is imperative that you not lose sight of the long-term objectives: helping athletes to develop and improve sports skills, have fun, and do well in sport competition—to win. Winning or striving to win is never more important than your athletes' well-being. Keep winning in perspective - there is room for fun too.

Coaches and athletes must remind themselves that winning is measured by how well they apply all their effort and maintain self-control in pressure situations. Winning means more than where you place at the finish line. An athlete is never a loser if he/she gives maximum effort.

To that end, the first question a coach needs to ask before a competition is

- "Are you ready to give it everything you've got?"





The first questions after a competition needs to be

- “How did that feel?”
- “Do you feel like you did your best?”

Coaching Tips

Remember, positive thoughts yield positive results.

Well-prepared athletes will handle their performance and the performance of their competitors in a positive and sportsmanlike manner in accordance to the Athlete’s Code of Conduct and the [Official Sports Rules](#) for your sport. A losing outcome does not negatively impact the athletes’ confidence if the coach and athletes have been successful in developing a winning attitude.

The athlete’s effort, attitude and personal skills attainment must be rewarded and positively reinforced.

It is also important to remind athletes that the point of competing in Special Olympics is to prove to themselves and the rest of the world what they can do. The award ceremony is a chance for the world to see a group of skilled athletes celebrating their sport skills and enjoyment of competition.

Athletes of all ages, regardless of intellectual ability, enter competitions to do their best and hopefully to win. Is it all right to be disappointed when you do not win? Of course it is. But also, it is a chance to evaluate your performance and make a training commitment that will help you perform better next time.

Handling Grief

Communication strategies by the coach, fellow athletes, families and friends will help an athlete handle grief or disappointment. Listen to what the athlete says and why they may be experiencing the grief. Offer positive switches – positive comment – correction – positive comment to take the athlete’s attention away from his/her disappointment. Again, the athlete’s effort, attitude and preparation should be emphasized, not the result of the competition.

It is important to not discount feelings of disappointment. It is appropriate to be disappointed when we lose a game or match. The challenge of the coach is to redirect that disappointment into a renewed commitment to training for the next competition or season. Becoming obsessed with losing is not a healthy or natural reaction for anyone.

Anxiety and Stress Management

Anxiety and stress can be controlled through proper preparation. A winning attitude and confidence will equip an athlete with coping skills to handle his/her emotions when





confronted with a stressful or anxious moment. Below are a few hints a well-prepared coach might consider to better prepare his athlete for competition.

- Repetition in a familiar environment can help alleviate a lot of stress when preparing the athlete for competition. Include mini meets in practice that simulate the competition.
- Provide athletes with additional competition opportunities at as many local-level meets as possible.
- Have athletes perform in front of spectators and peers.
- Make sure athletes are in proper events that they like and can display their talents and skills.
- Also, to reinterpret “arousal” as excitement and not anxiety.
- Visit the track or stadium prior to competition. When possible, practice on the track or in the stadium before competition.
- Teach your athletes visual imagery to help them practice the event in their mind before competition.
- Review the rules of competition and event calls and strategies with your athletes.

Positive self-talk and imagery

Self-talk represents the things you say in your head about yourself and is often negative (e.g., that team is much better than ours). Positive self-talk involves repeating a helpful and positive word or phrase such as

“I am fit and ready to play” Imagery or visualization is using the “mind’s eye” to recreate a past great performance or to create a future correct play or movement. Imagery is also much more than seeing yourself as it also involves “feeling” a correct movement and incorporating all of the senses (i.e., smell, sound, even taste) to most accurately capture reality in your head.

Positive self-talk and imagery can promote confidence and success. Hence, coaches can help educate their athletes on the value of positive self-talk and imagery. One thing coaches can do is help athletes set up a pre-performance routine. At the start of a competition athletes can very briefly (10-15 seconds) do four helpful behaviors: Close their eyes, take a few deep calming breathes, repeat a positive phrase “I am ready” and picture themselves successfully making a perfect start, or finishing strongly.

Taking Athletes to Competition

It is the coach’s responsibility to have the athletes prepared physically and mentally for the competition. This involves ensuring that all uniforms are ready, all athletes have proper swimwear, all equipment is present, meals and transportation are available and all entries are correct.

Athlete Flow at Competitions

Coaches do not determine flow of athletes. Coaches have to know the athlete flow of a specific competition to ensure that athletes are where they need to be at the time that they need to be there.





Coaching Tips

Athlete flow process is designed to make the athlete experience as smooth as possible from arriving at the competition to receiving awards to leaving the competition

Before the Meet

- Make final check of all equipment and athlete needs.
- Be confident and relaxed.
- Be sure your swimmers are warmed up, stretched and ready to compete.
- Be sure to have the proper equipment for each event.
- Be positive and upbeat but do not over excite.
- Make sure that the athletes have plenty of fluids.

At the Meet

- Encourage and support your athletes, but do not yell and scream. Keep calm and offer positive reinforcement at the competition.
- Restrict coaching from the bench to positive comments that athletes can use at the time of competition.
- Tell parents to be supportive but not to coach athletes.
- Keep substitutions simple. Have substitutes ready in case of injuries or no-shows.
- Commit yourself to equal participation throughout the season.
- Give different athletes the chance to compete in new events for which they have trained. Be a coach who allows the athlete to progress to new levels.
- Make sure that the athletes have plenty of fluids.

After the Meet

- Say “well done” or “good effort” to all your athletes when appropriate and reference the action that you are praising.
 - “Good effort on your finish, it was really strong”.
- Feedback is usually best (not always) done right after the behavior.
- Be sure to collect all the equipment from each athlete.
- Cool down after competition to prevent soreness.
- Spend time reviewing the athletes’ performances and prepare some useful comments for the beginning of the next practice.
- Somewhere a mention of keeping a training log for a: to build confidence by revisiting good workouts and b) to know what workouts were effective at getting athletes in really good condition.
- Make sure that the athletes have plenty of fluids.





In the Water

Water Entries

Water Entry from Sitting Position - Assisted (Shoulder Method)

1. Athlete sits on edge of pool with feet in water. Coach stands in front of athlete in the water.
2. Athlete places hands on coach's shoulders, keeping eye contact with coach.
3. Athlete leans forward. Coach places hands on athlete's upper arms and slowly walks backward
4. Athlete slides into the water to a standing position

Water Entry – Slide in Entry

This is the safest way for a swimmer to enter the water and can be practiced during each session. Swimmers who perform a “water start” should use this method of entering the water.



1. Sit on the edge of the pool with legs in the water



2. Place palms down on the deck and rotate body 180 degrees



3. Athlete will end up facing the pool wall, arms and chest supporting the body

Water Entry – Using a ladder

1. Athlete faces toward pool wall.
2. Grips the top of the ladder with thumbs on the inside and fingers on the outside of ladder railing.
3. Place feet on first step of ladder.
4. Continue down ladder one step at a time until both feet are on the bottom.





Water Exits

Water Exit from Pool Edge - Independent

This exit can be accomplished with or without coach assistance. If a swimmer cannot exit via the pool edge then they should use a ladder or beach exit.



1. *Face the edge of the pool and put hands on the deck (palms down)*



2. *With feet pushing off the pool bottom, using good leg strength, the athlete lifts up while rotating his/her buttocks onto the pool edge*



3. *From this position, the athlete rolls over to finish in a sitting position on the edge of the pool*

Water Exit - Ladder Method

1. *Face ladder.*
2. *Grip sides of the ladder with thumbs on inside and fingers on the outside of ladder rail.*
3. *Place foot on bottom step.*
4. *Continue up ladder, one step at a time, until top step is reached.*
5. *Step onto pool deck.*

Refer to facility guidelines and policies in relation to Entry/Exit equipment available (including pool depth; ladders – built in or overhang; hoists).





Wheelchair Entries/Exits

Hoist/Water Chair Entry/Exit

Swimmers who are unable to enter or exit the pool unaided will require assistance. To ensure the safety of the swimmer and those assisting them the use of a pool hoist is strongly recommended. **Those operating the hoist will require training in the operation of the hoist.**

Before operating the hoist an *individual risk assessment* should be completed on the use of the hoist for each swimmer. This assessment should consider the safety of the swimmer and the level of support required when they enter and exit the pool using the hoist.

Those operating the hoist must ensure the swimmer is comfortable and securely seated in the hoist chair before they enter or exit the pool. It is also recommended that the operator maintains as much eye contact as possible with the swimmer, guides and reassures them throughout the procedure.

If using a pool hoist/chair it is important that the swimmer feels comfortable in entering the water, using a hoist/chair and does not feel embarrassed.

Once the swimmer is safely in the pool, consideration must be given to the removal of the chair from the water. Chairs left in the water can cause safety hazards to others within the pool. In addition to this, the replacement of the chair back into the water should be taken into account. When removing and replacing the chair, safety should be the priority of those involved.

Beach/Zero Depth Entries/Exits

A beach/zero depth entry in a pool can best be explained as an area located in the shallow end of a pool where the top part of the entry point is even with the pool deck. There will be a gradual slope transitioning into deeper water. A beach/zero depth entry provides safe access for wheelchairs and swimmers who are unable to access a pool via steps.

Walking

When using a walking aide (walker or cane) and need assistance entering the pool by a ramp, swimmers should leave their aide at the entrance of the ramp and take hold of the railings on both sides of the ramp and slowly walk down the ramp facing forward to the bottom of the ramp.

When exiting, hold on to the railings on both sides, facing forward, and slowly walk up the ramp to your walking aide.

Open water entries (Lake, stream, ocean or river):

- Always enter the water feet first.
- Enter unknown or shallow water cautiously.
- Make certain you are supervised.
- NEVER swim alone.
- Be careful when standing.
- Stand with a wider stance to keep your body stable by currents and waves.

Steps:

Facing forward and holding onto the railing(s). Take each step down slowly into the pool. When exiting hold onto railing(s) and take each step up until you are on the pool deck.





In the Water – Basics

The Four Bs



1. Breath Control

Demonstrate inhale through mouth and exhale through nose. This is different than most breathing patterns used during exercise. Use humming as a helpful reference.

Controlled Bobbing:

1. Teacher's Hold
2. Wall Hold
3. Unassisted push off from bottom, no hesitation
4. Body rotation hold

Floor push-offs or vertical floats into:

1. Back Float
2. Front float
3. 3 Strokes Free and roll to back
4. 3 Strokes Back and roll to front

2. Buoyancy

Understand how buoyancy affects people differently. It is important to know and understand what natural buoyancy is and how to affect and make changes to buoyancy.

- Positive buoyancy
- Neutral buoyancy
- Negative buoyancy

Be able to explain verbally and demonstrate buoyancy positions and good body position in the water.

- Vertical buoyancy test
- Prone position face down (front float)
- Prone position face up (back float)





Understand the relationship between buoyancy, balance, body position and breath control.

- Good inhale
- Relaxed body

3. Balance

Demonstrate dryland exercises and drills to be used in teaching various balance and swimming skills in the water.

- Standing balance
- Use of center of gravity shift

Demonstrate in water drills:

- Front balance
- Back balance (5 points: ears, chin, chest, ribs/belly, hips)
- Side balances
- Roll overs

Understand the relationship between **breath control, buoyancy, balance, and body position.**

- Head position
- Purge through nose
- Shift of center of gravity
- Maintaining body position

4. Body Position

Demonstrate dryland Front Streamline:

- Lower body superman
- Head position facing the floor





Demonstrate in water Front Streamline:

- Head position facing the bottom of the pool
 - Ears submerged
 - Arms extended
 - Legs extended together
 - Kick (look for dropped knees which will throw the body out of the streamlined position)
-
- Push-offs from seated position or standing on steps:
 - Arms up behind ears
 - Face in water fist
 - Then push
 - Push-offs from wall in water:
 - Feet on wall
 - Drop down
 - Hand over
 - Push
 - Streamlined

Demonstrate dryland Back Streamline

- Back hip lift
- Face facing ceiling

Demonstrate in water Back Streamline:

- 5 point back float w/ arms extended (5 points: ears, chin, chest, ribs/belly, hips)
- Face facing ceiling
- Ears submerged
- Legs together extended





Demonstrate dryland Side Balance with kick:

- On land positioning
- Front quad
- Side - front - side maintaining body position

Demonstrate in water Side Balance with kick:

- Positioning
- Front quad
- Side – front - side maintaining body position

Understand the relationship between **breath control**, **buoyancy**, **balance**, and **body position**.





Swimming Basics

Streamlining

Streamlining is an important skill that is taught to create the most efficient body position in the water. It creates the least amount of resistance.

Streamlining occurs in all strokes on start (regardless of water and dive) and on turns/changeovers in medleys.

Teaching Points:

- Start in waist deep water, back against the wall, leaning forward
- Arms straight, above the head, elbows locked, squeezing the ears, hands on top of each other
- Leaning forwards, bending from the waist until the ears are submerged
- Give a very slight push off the wall

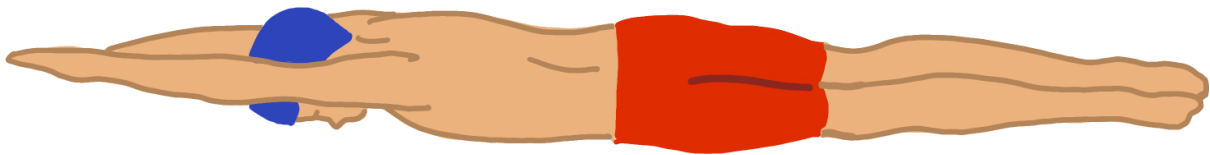


Figure 15: Streamlining Position

SCULLING

Sculling water is a basic swimming technique where you use quick horizontal movements of the hands in the water to maintain your head above the water surface.

Teaching Points:

- Float on the surface with your arms in a streamline and doing no kick.
- Start kicking as fast as possible.
- Feel how the kick should originate from the hips all the way down to your feet.
- After 5-seconds add arms and swim to the other side, still kicking as fast as possible.

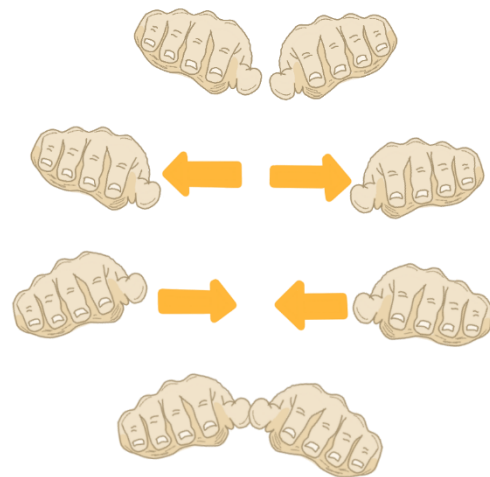


Figure 16: Sculling - Hand Positioning





SURVIVAL FLOAT

Floating is an important survival skill to master however some swimmers may find it difficult to do due to their body composition.

Have your swimmer practice floating both prone and supine.

Check your swimmer centre of buoyancy.

If a swimmer is floating on their back (supine) and they start dropping at their hips and their legs move toward the bottom of the pool try and have them bend at the knees- this will change their centre of buoyancy and will assist them in maintain a float.

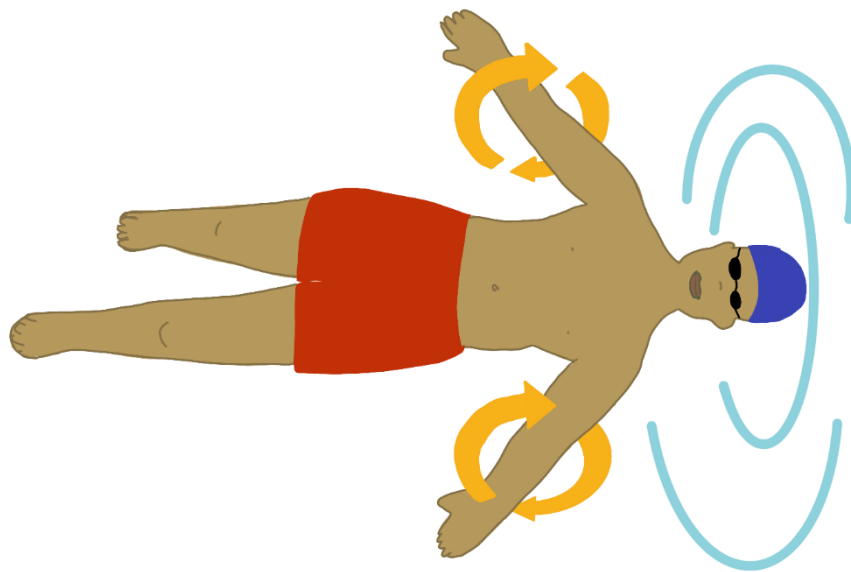


Figure 17: Survival Float Position

PRONE FLOAT

Horizontal position in the water with your face down, floating on the chest.

Teaching Points

- Standing in waist-deep water and bending forward at the waist, place arms straight in front of body, no wider than shoulder width.
- Lower the head until face is well into the water.
- Leaning forward, give a very slight push on toes until the feet leave the bottom and float to the surface.



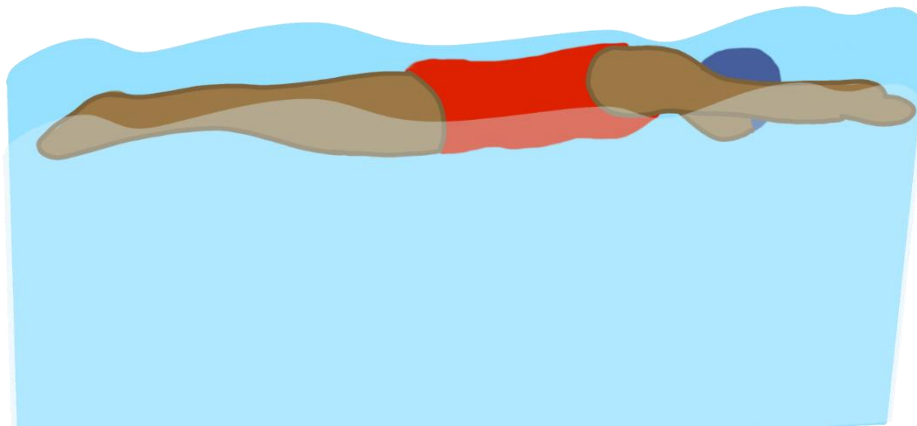


Figure 18: Prone Float Position

SUPINE FLOAT

Horizontal position in the water with your face up, floating on the back.

Teaching Points

- Start with the swimmer lying back with either their head on the instructor's shoulder or the head is supported by the instructor's hand. The other hand is supporting the back to keep the chest up.
- Make certain your ears are in the water with chin up. This will also help the swimmer naturally keep their chest up.
- Have the swimmer to continue to relax and spread legs slightly and put arms out to the side with palms up forming a "T".
- As the swimmer gets more comfortable move their head off your shoulder or remove your hand from the back of their head, but continue to gently support their back with a hand.
- As the swimmer becomes more and more comfortable on their back start removing hands and/or fingers to get them to independent floating.

Key reminder: Not everybody can float naturally the first time they jump in the water. In fact, it's actually harder for some people than others. It takes practice.

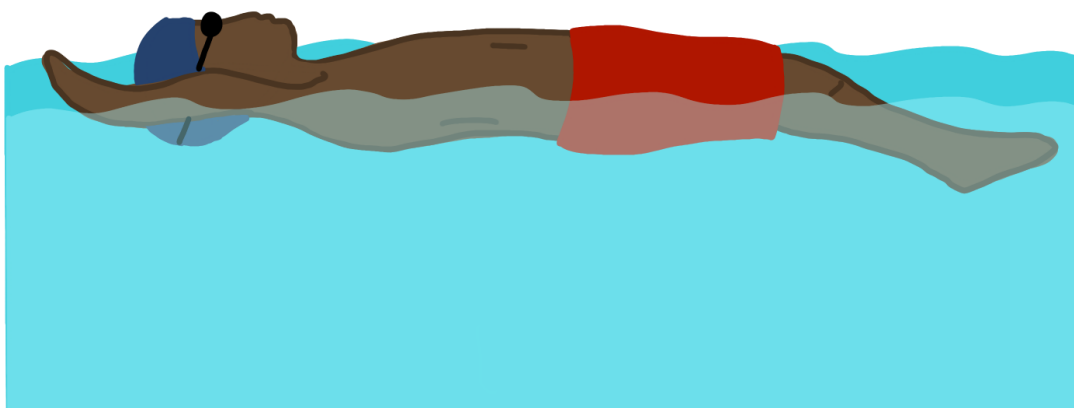


Figure 19: Supine Float Position

FRONT AND BACK FLOAT RECOVERY

Aim is to return to a safe standing position

- Lift the head forward
- Bend knees while using hands to scull push legs down to the bottom of the pool to regain balance.
- Use hands to scull to regain balance

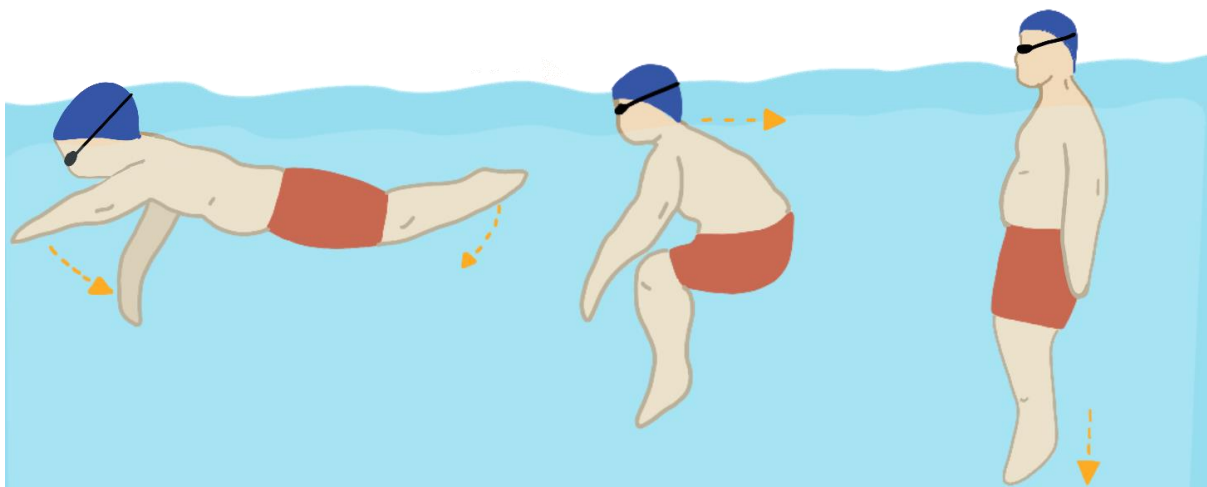


Figure 20: Front Float Recovery

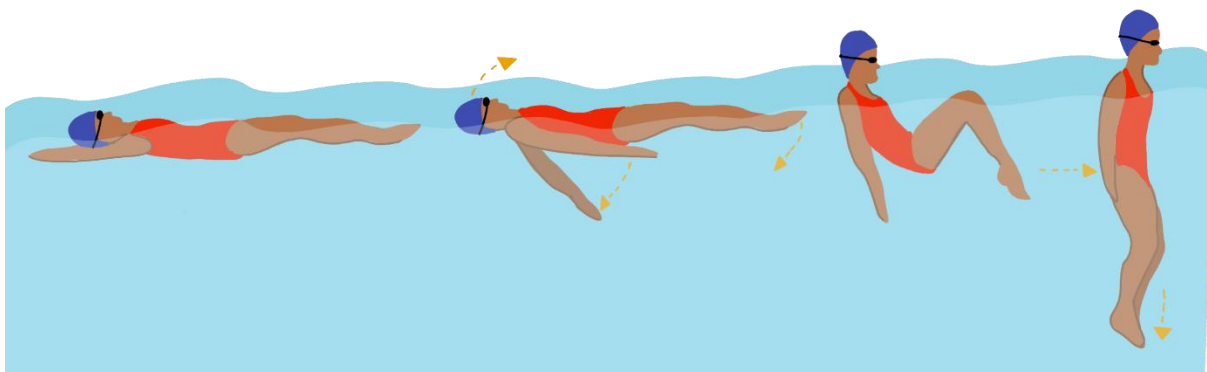


Figure 21: Back Float Recovery



EGG BEATER KICK

The Egg-Beater Kick, also known as “threading water” is an important survival skill to learn how to perform and master. The whole “threading water” skill will incorporate a sculling action.

The best way to teach this skill (or any technique is to “Break down the skill” and tell the swimmer WHY they are learning the skill” Correct demonstration is very important.

Points to consider when teaching an egg beater kick action.

- Correct demonstration- coach can demonstrate skill in and out of the water.
- Swimmer sits on the edge of the pool legs/feet in water
- Swimmer kicks in a circular motion pressing feet on water- swimmers should be encouraged to “feel the water with the bottom of their feet”
- Practice this skill in the water using 2 kickboards under each arm or a noodle for support.
- Once the swimmer has demonstrated that they can demonstrate an efficient eggbeater kick then introduce the arm action.

Introduce Arm action

- On land demonstrate the arm action required- this will be a sculling action
- Inward Scull action- Use such cue as: “Push the water inward with hands – thumbs upwards”- Rotate hands ready for outward scull
- Outward Scull action- Use such cue as “Push the water outward with hands- thumbs pointing downwards- rotate and repeat

Introduce Full Treading water skill

- Swimmer sitting on edge of pool have the swimmer demonstrating their leg action then introduce arm action- some swimmers may find it difficult to co-ordinate
- Swimmer can enter the water using a noodle practicing using both arm and leg action- when demonstrating good technique remove the noodle and have the swimmer practice the full skill close to edge of pool



Figure 22: Egg Beater Kick (Threading Water)



Learn to Swim Skills

The goal of a swimming program is to produce comfortable and confident swimmers. That goal is accomplished by studying how swimmers learn and grow, where they are in their emotional journey, how well they know their bodies and how their bodies react in the water.





FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL:

Objectives: Participants to become familiar with the water.

Key Points:

- This level is designed to support athletes to become familiar with water.
- Some athletes may never gain the skills to progress to Level 1, the Fundamental Level can support ongoing participation for these athletes.

Recommended session duration: 30 mins

While sessions are progressive, and participants should be exposed to each skill, understand that mastering the skill may not be possible immediately. Swimmers will learn and improve as they go along. To move on to *Level 1* swimmers must comfortably, confidently and consistently demonstrate these skills:

- Follow coach's directions
- Demonstrate the ability to safely enter and exit the water
- Comfortable walking in chest deep water
- Blowing bubbles
- Comfortable with a variety of buoyancy aids (for example, kickboards, noodles and dumbbells)
- Be comfortable floating with assistance
- Get their face wet

Building Skills and Confidence @ Fundamental Level

At this level, a coach's focus should be on supporting athletes to master the following skills:

- Follow coach's directions
- Entry/Exit into the water
- Walking in water at various depths
- Walking and blow bubbles
- Floatation (with/without assistance)
- Arm action (with/without assistance)
- Swishing (feeling water movement)
- Basic leg movements (with/without assistance)





1. Demonstrate Safe Entry and Exit into and out of the Water.

*Water entry and exit will vary depending the abilities of the swimmer

- I. The coach should assist the athlete into the water using the most appropriate means available to them. For example, using a pool hoist for an athlete in a wheelchair.
- II. Once in the water, the coach must ensure the athlete is supported and comfortable.
 - i) It is recommended to keep the water level just below chest height of the athlete.
- III. Coaches should assist athletes in a similar method to how they entered the water, when exiting.

2. Floatation Drills

*Coaches should break down the skill to assist athlete's understanding.

- I. With assistance swimmer encouraged to lay on their back with their head supported on coaches shoulder.
- II. Swimmer holds a kickboard or noodle demonstrating an independent back float.
- III. Introduce leg kick action while floating on back.
- IV. Introduce hand sculling action while on back – swimmer is then demonstrating basic movement.

3. Getting Your Face Wet

- I. Practice washing the face/placing water onto the face.
- II. Place face into the water while blowing bubbles - no deeper than hairline.

4. Arm Action

- I. Start by walking and demonstrating a paddle action.
- II. Progress to walking + paddle action + blowing bubbles.

Fundamental Level

Objectives:

For the participants to become familiar with the water.

Key Points:

- This level is designed to support athletes to become familiar with water.
- Some athletes may never gain the skills to progress to Level 1, the Fundamental Level can support ongoing participation for these athletes.

Recommended Time for Session:

30 minutes





Level 1

Objectives

For a participant to become comfortable in the water and to be able to totally submerge without hesitation.

Key Points

- *Level 1* is for beginning swimmers
- Some swimmers may progress rapidly, while others may need to repeat this level multiple times
- Safety is the top priority

Recommended Session Duration: 30mins

While sessions are progressive, and participants should be exposed to each skill, understand that mastering the skill may not be possible immediately. Swimmers will learn and improve as they go along. To move on to *Level 2* swimmers must comfortably, confidently and consistently demonstrate these skills:

- Follow coach's directions
- Entry/Exit into the water
- Blow bubbles
- Front float and glide (a small amount of assistance is OK)
- Submerge with ease

Building Skills and Confidence @ Level 1

Athlete Progression

- Follows coach's directions
- Relaxes in the pool
- Jumps from the side to instructor in deep water and jumps from the side into chest-deep water unassisted
- Walks through chest-deep water

Objectives:

Level 1

For the participant to become comfortable in the water and to totally submerge without hesitation.

Key Points:

- Level 1 is for beginner swimmers (those unfamiliar or uncomfortable in the water).
- Some swimmers may progress faster than others. It is important as a coach to identify each athlete's capabilities.
- Safety is top priority.

Recommended Time for Session:

30 minutes





- Sits on the pool steps, lies back with his or her head on a step, and enjoys the feeling of floating up in the water
- Rests head on instructor's shoulder and gets in a relaxed position with an arched back, looking back and up at the ceiling
- Using consistent cues (e.g. 1,2,3, bubbles, the coach assists the swimmer to submerge to the bottom of the pool to pick up a sinking toy.
- Swishes arms and hands through the water with some splashing
- Has the "feel" for buoyancy and is comfortable on a noodle





Level 2

Objectives

Participants learn to swim freestyle in a relaxed manner, demonstrate side breathing, swim a relaxed backstroke, and demonstrate water safety skills.

Key Points

- *Level 2* is for comfortable swimmers
- Some swimmers need to repeat this level multiple times. Safety is the top priority

Recommended Session Duration: 30 mins

While the sessions are progressive, and participants should be exposed to each skill, understand that mastering the skill may not be possible immediately. The swimmers will learn and improve as they go along.

Coordinated side breathing does not need to be mastered; however, participants must understand and be able to demonstrate the ability to breathe out when their mouths are in the water and breathe in when their mouths are out of the water.

In order to move on to *Level 3*, swimmers must comfortably, confidently and consistently demonstrate the following skills:

Progression

- Front float and recovery
- Back float and recovery
- Tread water for several minutes
- Freestyle stroke with rhythmic breathing
- Backstroke
- Sitting dive

Objectives:

Level 2

Participants learn to swim freestyle in a relaxed manner, demonstrate ability to rotate and breath, and swim relaxed backstroke.

Key Points:

- Swimmers must be comfortable in the water (advanced from level 1).
- Some swimmers need to more time to progress (or never progress) from this level. It is important to know an athlete's abilities before you try to advance.
- Safety is top priority.

Recommended Time for Session:

30 minutes





Building Skills and Confidence @ Level 2

In determining whether a swimmer is ready to progress to *Level 3*, coaches should look for the following:

- Displays comfort in water
- Demonstrate submerging and blowing bubbles
- Goes underwater without puffy cheeks
- Bobs 10 times while performing rhythmic breathing
- Front floats, front glides in a streamlined position, and recovers to a vertical position
- Back floats, back glides in a streamlined position, and recovers to a vertical position
- Treads water (using sculling and egg-beater kick) and does a relaxed survival float
- Swims underwater
- Demonstrate sitting/kneeling dive with or without assistance
- Swims to a wall, turns around, and swims away
- Performs a freestyle
- Performs a freestyle with breathing
- Performs a backstroke
- Uses a kickboard and maintains a high body position while kicking





Level 3

Objectives

Swimmers can:

- Swim in deep water with a competent freestyle for 25 metres (including smooth rhythmic breathing)
- Swim backstroke for 25 metres
- Take care of themselves in the water

Key Points

- *Get Strong* is for swimmers who passed the *Water Safety Review*
- Safety is the top priority

In order to complete *Level 3*, swimmers must comfortably, confidently and consistently demonstrate the following skills:

- Perform a competent front dive using a streamlined body position and swim underwater for at least two body lengths
- Swim 25m freestyle with coordinated side breathing (breathing should be well integrated into the stroke)
- Swim 25m backstroke demonstrating a good rotation of the shoulders
- Using a continuous kick action Demonstrate freestyle kick for 25m using a kickboard
- Demonstrate backstroke kick with streamlined body position for 25m, with or without kickboard.
- Jump into deep water, level off, swim 10 metres, tread water for 10 seconds, change direction, and swim back to the side

Objectives:

Level 3

Swimmers can:

- Swim in deep water with a competent freestyle (including side breathing).
- Competently swim backstroke in a competition setting (e.g. 25metres).
- Be confident and safe by themselves in water.

Key Points:

- Level 3 is for swimmers who will compete at S.O. competitions.
- Safety is top priority.

Recommended Time for Session:

30 minutes





Building Skills and Confidence @ Level 3

In determining whether a swimmer is ready to complete to *Level 3*, instructors should look for the following:

- Demonstrate correct freestyle/backstroke technique for a short distance and gradually extend to 25m
- Pushes off wall streamlined
- Pushes off streamline for a few seconds, starts kick, and then starts arms
- Rotates as they take their side breath
- Consistently demonstrate high elbow recovery arm action in freestyle
- Demonstrates correct hand entry into the water (i.e. Catch the water and pushes it back, completing the arm stroke underwater)
- Kicks on front and back for 25m
- "Rotates the shoulders" and kicks on back
- Demonstrate a straight arm recovery, with correct hand entry while doing backstroke
- Performs standing dive and holds the streamlined position
Swims slowly and calmly





Water Safety Review

Objectives

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

Key Points

- SAFETY is the number one priority.
- Always know where each participant is during a review.

The *Water Safety Review* has been developed to ensure that a swimmer is ready to learn deep-water skills. Swimmers must demonstrate the minimum ability required for safe swimming in a confined area, in which shallow water, sides, or other support is less than 10m from any point in the water.

In order to pass the *Water Safety Review*, a swimmer must comfortably and confidently demonstrate the following skills:

- Jump feet first into deep water, gain control, turn around, and swim back to the side.
- Swim 25m of freestyle and backstroke.
- Tread water for 90 seconds straight.
- Demonstrate survival float.
- Demonstrate use of personal flotation device.





Identifying Athlete Level

We have simplified the criteria to determine a new athlete's swim level. We start by asking six critical questions to direct the participant to the appropriate level:

1. Have you been in the water?
2. Can you go under the water completely (whole face, head, and body)?
3. Can you float with your face in the water?
4. Can you swim in the deep water?
5. Can you swim, take a breath and keep swimming?
6. Can you swim backstroke?

If the participant answers NO to questions 1, 2 or 3, they are typically placed in ***Fundamental Level or Level 1***

If the participant answers YES to questions 1, 2 and 3, they are typically placed in ***Level 2***

If the participant answers YES to all questions, they are typically placed in ***Level 3***

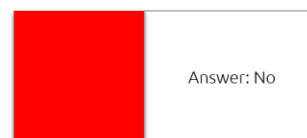
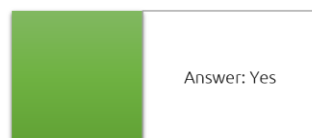
Once lessons have started, participants will be further evaluated and could be directed to a different level based on their comfort in the water. All sessions are eight weeks long and designed to promote skills that make participants more comfortable and confident in the water. All participants are encouraged to progress through the levels at their own pace and many require more than the prescribed 8 weeks to complete their level's requirements.

We feel that all participants, even the most proficient swimmers, will benefit from the *Get Strong* session. Even if the participant is able to complete the *Water Safety Skills Review* before taking the *Get Strong* session, the participant can gain valuable knowledge and further experience in *Get Strong*, enabling greater preparation for the *Water Safety Skills Review*.





1. Have you been in the water?	2. Can you go under the water completely?	3. Can you float with your face in the water?	1. Have you been in the water?	2. Can you go under the water completely?	3. Can you float with your face in the water?	1. Have you been in the water?	2. Can you go under the water completely?	3. Can you float with your face in the water?
4. Can you swim in deep water?	5. Can you swim, take a breath and keep swimming?	6. Can you swim backstroke?	4. Can you swim in deep water?	5. Can you swim, take a breath and keep swimming?	6. Can you swim backstroke?	4. Can you swim in deep water?	5. Can you swim, take a breath and keep swimming?	6. Can you swim backstroke?
Fundamental Level			Level 1			Level 2		
						Level 3		



This chart allows coaches and swimmers to identify what level currently best suits them to take part in.

Each level shows six questions we want swimmers or their coaches to ask.

If you answer the question with 'Yes', it is highlighted in green.

If you answer the question with 'No', it is highlighted in red.

If the question does not apply to that level it is highlighted in grey.

As can be seen for the Fundamental Level and Level 1, questions 1 to 3 are answered 'No', and questions 4 to 6 do not apply.

For Level 2, questions 1 to 3 are answered 'Yes', while questions 4 to 6 are answered 'No'.

As you can see from the chart, swimmers should answer 'Yes' to all the questions to be placed in Level 3. As well as answering 'Yes' to the questions, swimmers should be able to demonstrate that they can carry out what is required, for example, the backstroke.

**It is important to note that this is just a guide for coaches and athletes and that athletes can move in and out of the levels as they desire/need.*





Stroke Development

Freestyle

Freestyle is regarded as the fastest of all competitive swim strokes and one of the first taught to the beginning swimmer. The stroke action involves the arms moving forward alternately with the legs kicking continuously throughout the stroke. The swimmer's body remains horizontal, streamlined and balanced in the water with the swimmer's head turning to one side to breathe after each full arm cycle. The teaching and development of the stroke can be achieved by breaking down the skill into its various components.

Stroke Coaching Points

Body Position

The body position is horizontal and streamlined in the water.

Key Points

- Horizontal with a slight slope down to hips. The waterline is between the eyebrows and hairline.
- Slight head adjustments change the position of the legs. If the head is held high out of the water, the legs will drop and if submerged, the legs will rise out of the water.
- Eyes look downward.
- Shoulders rotate into the stroke.

Leg Action

The freestyle leg action helps the body stay in the horizontal position and balances the arm action. It contributes to the propulsion within the stroke.

Note: A common fault is when a swimmer during the pull phase will cross over the centerline of their body, thus causing over-rotation.

Key Points

- Leg action starts at the hips.
- The legs work almost within the body depth. This creates the least resistance to forward motion.
- Alternating action is required.
- There is a slight bend in the knees.
- Ankles are relaxed to allow toes to point and give a natural in-toeing effect.
- The number of leg kicks may vary for each arm cycle.
- Usually there are six leg kicks in one arm cycle.





Arm Action

The continuous, alternating arm action is the strength within the stroke and enables constant propulsion.

Key Points – Entry

- Hand entry is fingertip first.
- Hand enters gently between the head and shoulder line with a slight bend in the arm.
- Hand then reaches forward under the surface. Note: this is a natural stretch, not overreaching.

Pull

After entering the water, the arms should perform a 3 sweep motion. With your elbow slightly bent, sweep forward, then back towards the centre of the body then out towards the thighs, imitating an hourglass shape.

Recovery

- This movement is relaxed and uses the momentum from the pull.
- Elbow will exit first and is kept higher than the hand.
- Hand passes as close to body as possible. Once the hand passes shoulder level, the arm will reach forwards to the entry position.

Breathing

Integrating a relaxed, side-breathing pattern is one of the most important elements of the freestyle stroke. It not only ensures the swimmer's body can provide adequate oxygen to the active muscles but also allows the swimmer to maintain an efficient body position.

- Head is turned smoothly (not lifted) in time with the natural roll of the body.
- The breath is taken when the breathing arm is completing the pull phase.
- The non-breathing arm enters the water when the breath is taken.
- Head is turned back to the center in a smooth action as soon as the breath is taken.
- The breath is released gradually.
- Breathing occurs every two arm pulls (one stroke cycle). This is called unilateral breathing. It may also be taken after every three arm pulls. This is called bilateral breathing.

Note: When teaching breathing in freestyle, it is recommended to start with the swimmer breathing to their preferred side.



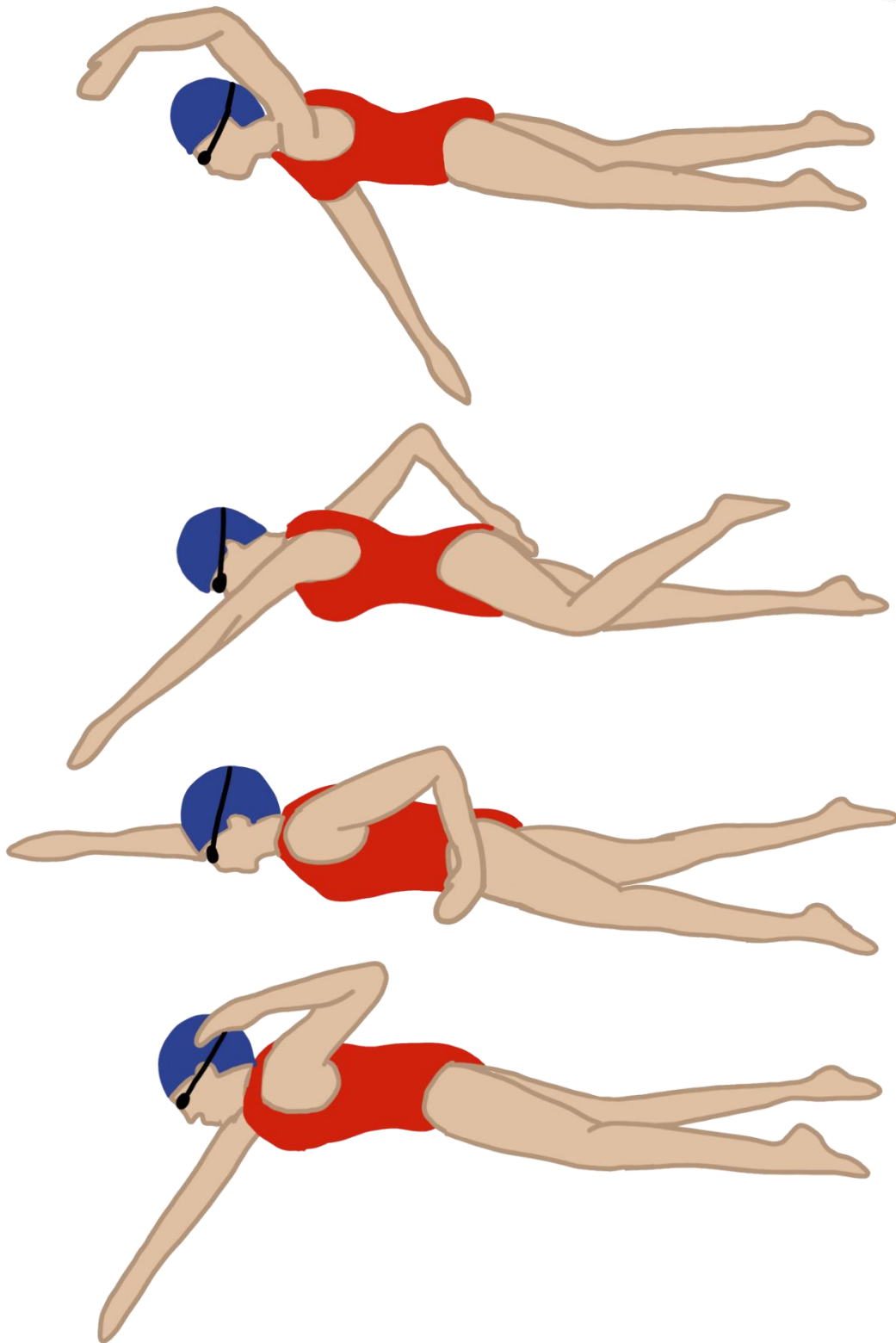


Figure 23: Freestyle Stroke





Progressions

- Practice breathing to one side:
 - Holding onto edge
 - With Kickboard using kick action
 - With kickboard- introduce arm action/breathing
 - Full stroke (no kickboard) using catch up- breathing to side short distance – could use fins to assist stroke and breathing short distance
 - Full stroke with/without fins short distance then extend

Drills

- With fins- Right side lateral breathing every 6 kicks- swimmers right arm should be extended, left shoulder should be pointing to ceiling- left arm/hand should be placed on swimmers thigh, head relaxed and laying on extended right arm. Swimmer will do 6 kicks then gently place face in water with eyes looking to bottom of pool. Swimmers should be encouraged not to roll onto their front and the only movement (apart from the leg kick) will be moving the head from breathing to side to exhaling with face in.
- With fins- Left side lateral breathing every 6 kicks
- Same as above but the swimmer will have their left arm extended.

Starts

All starts are signaled by the starter who will whistle the swimmers to their start position. The starter will then command the swimmers to “Take your marks.” The swimmers leave the block or end of the pool when the starting signals sounds.

Starting is a very important aspect of competitive swimming, and, in accordance with [Fina rules](#), a one start rule will be enforced; therefore, it is important that the swimmer is given regular instruction in this skill. Be aware of certain medical conditions, which may restrict swimmers from practicing out of water starts. Coaches should be familiar with and comply with both [Fina](#) and Facility rules and regulations regarding diving starts. Remember, when teaching starting, to break down the skill and make it fun.

There are three types of starts permitted in Special Olympics Competition

- Standing
 - a) Block Start
 - b) Standing on Concourse/ Pool Edge
- Sitting (on Concourse/ Pool Edge)
- In Water (W)

Standing Starts





Standing Starts may be performed from the concourse or on a starting block.

Teaching Points

1. Stand on the starting block or concourse and curl the toes over the front edge
2. Swimmer should take up the starting position
3. On the starter's signal, push off the block/concourse
4. Enter the water in a streamline position
5. Freestyle/Butterfly – Kick to the surface
6. Breaststroke – Swimmers may do a breaststroke pull out or glide to the surface of the water
7. Begin the appropriate stroke once they break the water on resurfacing



Figure 24: Block Start Position

Sitting Start - Freestyle

1. Sit on the Pool concourse
2. On the starter's signal, push off from the wall into the prone streamline body position, kicking, where appropriate.
3. Begin the appropriate stroke as soon as the body is fully extended.



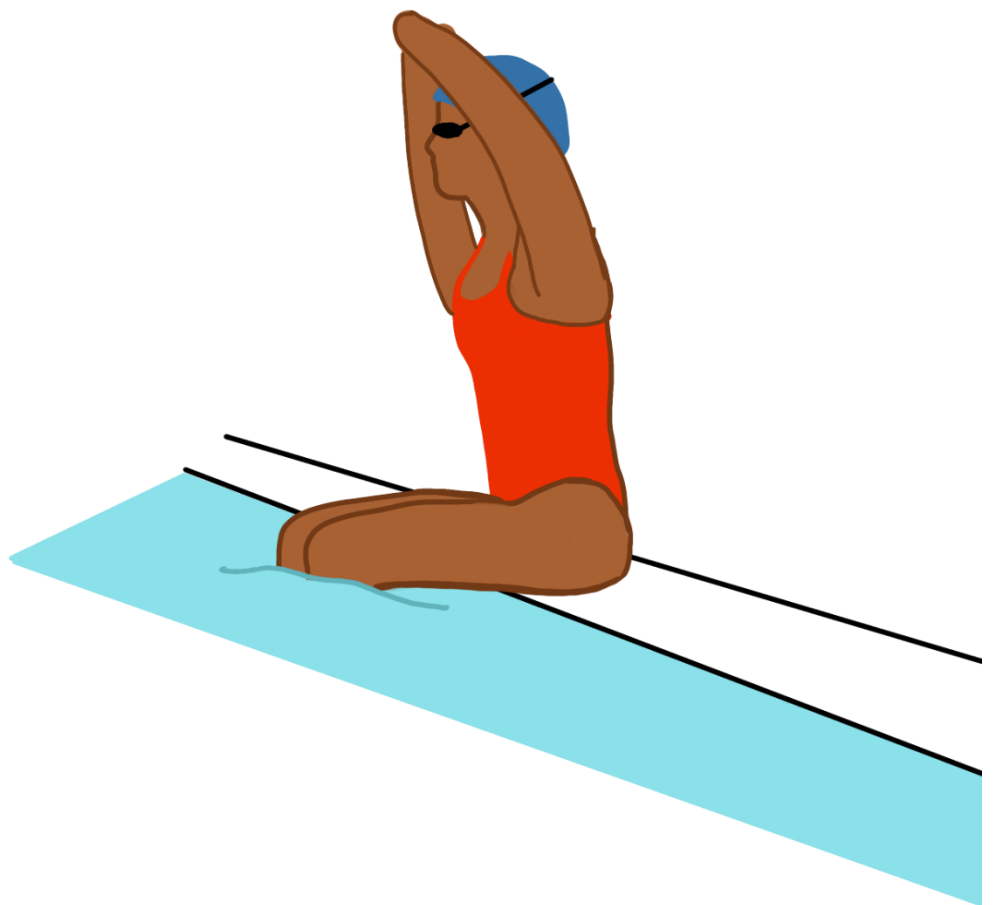
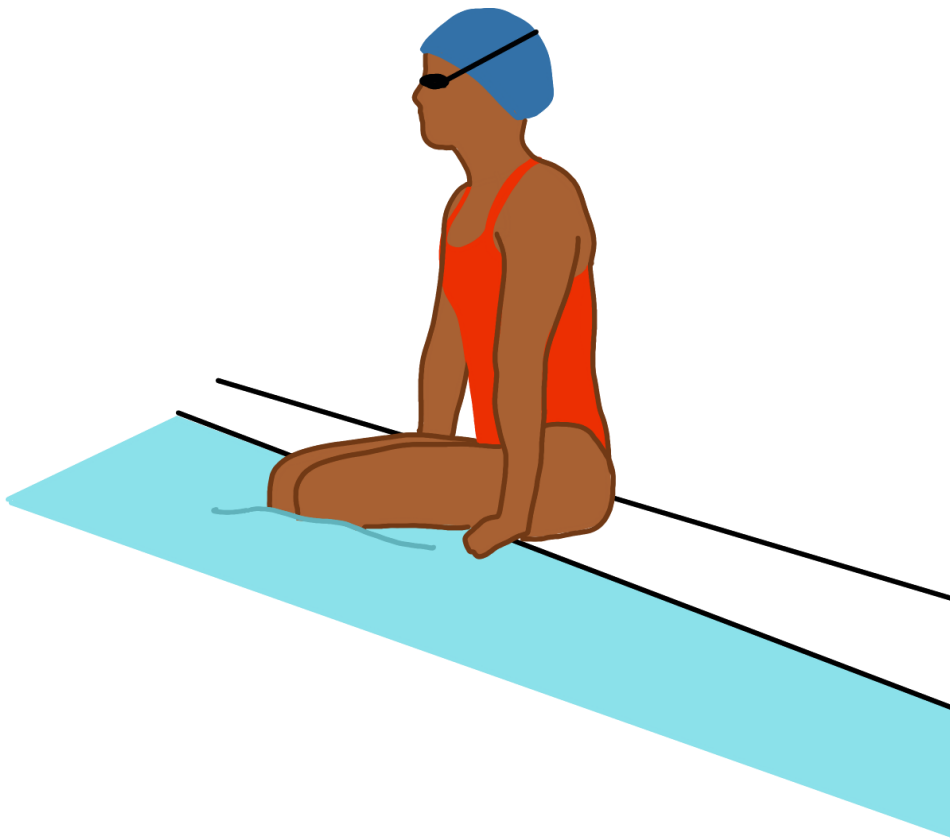


Figure 25: Sitting Concourse Start Position





In-Water Starts

The freestyle, breaststroke and butterfly in-water starts are similar. The teaching points below can be applied to each of these strokes.

Teaching Points

1. Hold onto side of pool while in the water with either hand.
2. Place both feet on the wall.
3. Bend both knees slightly.
4. Extend the other hand in the water in the direction of travel or to the other end of the pool.
5. Ensure the swimmer is looking forward to the other end of the pool.
6. On the start signal, Push off the side into the prone streamline body position, kicking, where appropriate.
7. Begin the appropriate stroke as soon as the body is fully extended.

Swimming Turns

Turns are a critical skill for any competitive race which is longer than one length of the pool. A turn describes how an athlete changes direction at the end of a length. [Fina rules](#) clearly state the requirements for turns for each of the 4 competitive strokes.

Freestyle Turns

In a freestyle turn, some part of the body must touch the wall on completion of each length. (SW5.2 Fina Rule). There are two types of turns commonly used in Freestyle: Pivot and Roll Over Turn

Pivot Turn

1. Swim freestyle to the wall and touch or grab the wall
2. Pull legs under body and begin to turn.
3. Take a breath and complete turn.
4. Extend both hands over head, returning to a prone, streamlined position.
5. Resume freestyle stroke.

Roll Over Turn

1. Swim Freestyle towards the wall.
2. Approximately one stroke away from the wall, begin the turn



3. Tuck the chin, kick one last hard kick and finish your arm pull with your arms ending by your side
4. Pull knees to the chest and begin to roll over or somersault the body
5. Push off the wall forcefully with the both feet
6. Extend the arms and resume a prone, streamlined position, until you break the surface and then resume freestyle stroke

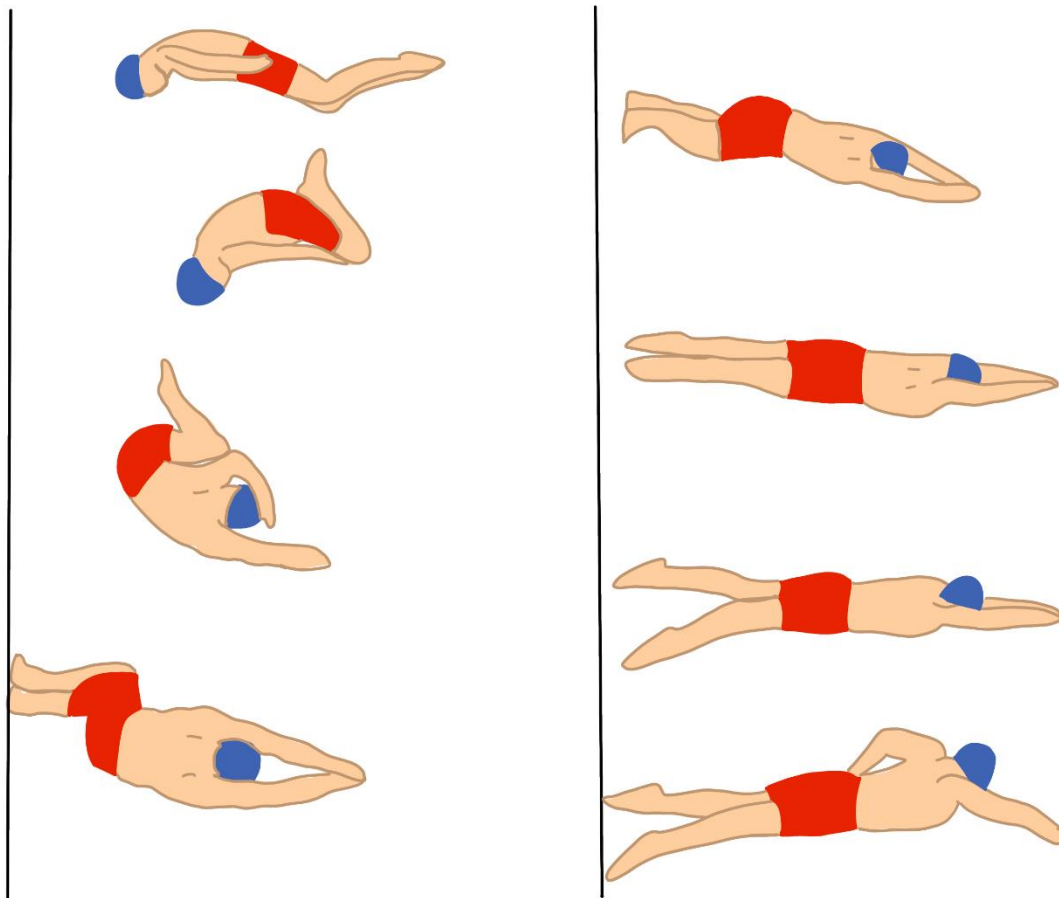


Figure 26: Roll Over Turn

Finishes

[Fina rules](#) clearly state the requirements for finishes for each of the 4 competitive strokes.

Finish Freestyle

- Reach forward and Drive decisively to the wall without slowing down the down the kick.

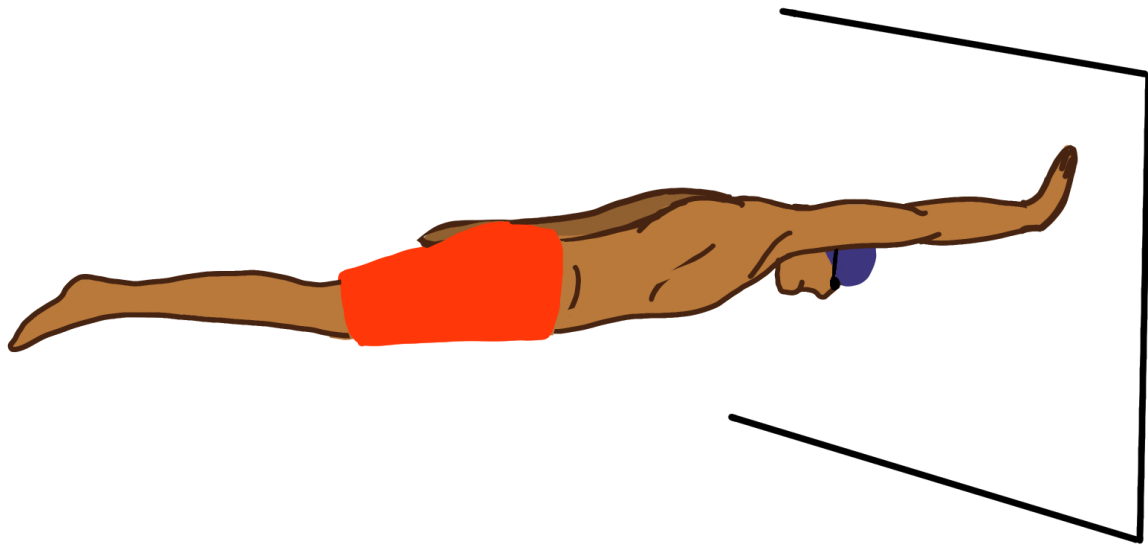


Figure 27: One Hand Finish

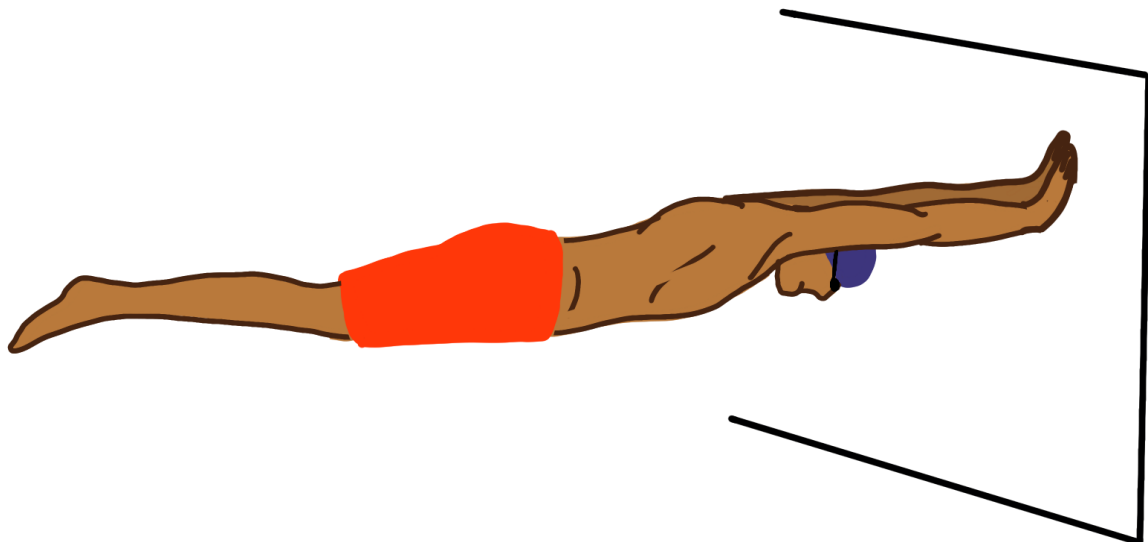


Figure 28: Two Hand Finish



Rules and DQs

Refer to [SO](#) and [Fina rules](#).

Rules that apply to freestyle will be:

1. Freestyle means that in an event so designated the swimmer may swim any style, except that in individual medley or medley relay events, freestyle means any style other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly.
2. Some part of the swimmer must touch the wall upon completion of each length and at the finish.
3. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of not more than 15 metres after the start of each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface.

DQ Codes can be found in [Rules and Regulations section](#).





Backstroke

Stroke Coaching Points

Many people like to swim on their back to keep their face dry. The major keys to backstroke are balanced and steady head position, small and high kick tempo and alternate arm action (one arm entering the water as the other one exits). It is important that the swimmer maintains appropriate breathing technique throughout every stroke cycle.

Body Position

- Streamlined – high body position - head remaining still - rotation from shoulders.
- Swimmer should try to keep chest high to ensure water is not causing drag.

Key Points

- Streamlined supine body position, with a slight slope down to the hips.
- Ears are submerged just below the water surface.
- Head remains still, eyes look upward while performing the stroke.
- Hips are kept close to the surface.
- Shoulders rotate along with the stroke.
- Toes pointed and relaxed
- Bent arm accelerated under water

Arm Action

The arm action is continuous and alternating. The arm action provides constant propulsion. Bent-arm pull is more efficient than straight-arm pull. The straight-arm pull may be preferred in the early stages of development.

Key Points

Maintain a good body position, balanced, eyes looking up, straight arm recovery-little finger enters the water first to enable correct catch. Swimmer will need to maintain a continuous kick action.

Entry

The arm should pass by the ear before entering the water, little finger first, between the shoulder line and the centre line of the head.





Pull

- The arm sweeps downward and outward to the catch. This is assisted by a natural shoulder rotation
- The hand is pitched downward and outward by the palm.
- The arm is bent at a 90-degree angle at the elbow.
- The arm pushes through to the thigh, fingers are pointing sideways and the palms are downward.
- The shape of the whole arm action is in the form of an S-Shape.

Recovery

- The hand comes out of the water following the natural rotation of the shoulder
- The arm turns gradually to ensure that the little finger is ready for entry.
- Arm remains straight and relaxed throughout.

Leg Action

The leg action assists in maintaining a horizontal body position and balancing the arm action. It also is an important part of backstroke propulsion.

Key Points

- The continuous up and down alternating action is started from the hips.
- Legs are kept close together and almost straight.
- The knees remain below the surface.
- Relaxed ankles allow the toes to point.
- Feet break the surface
- Six leg kicks to one stroke cycle.

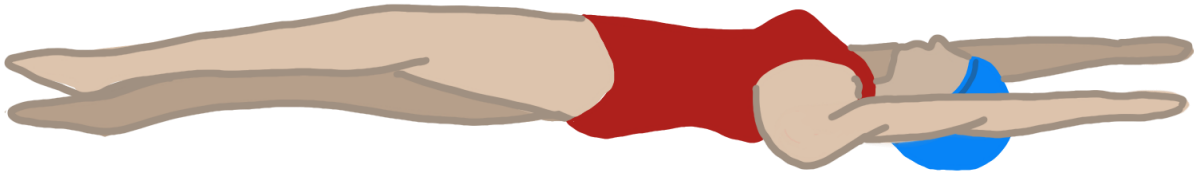
Breathing

- Breathing is natural.
- As a rule, breathe every stroke cycle.

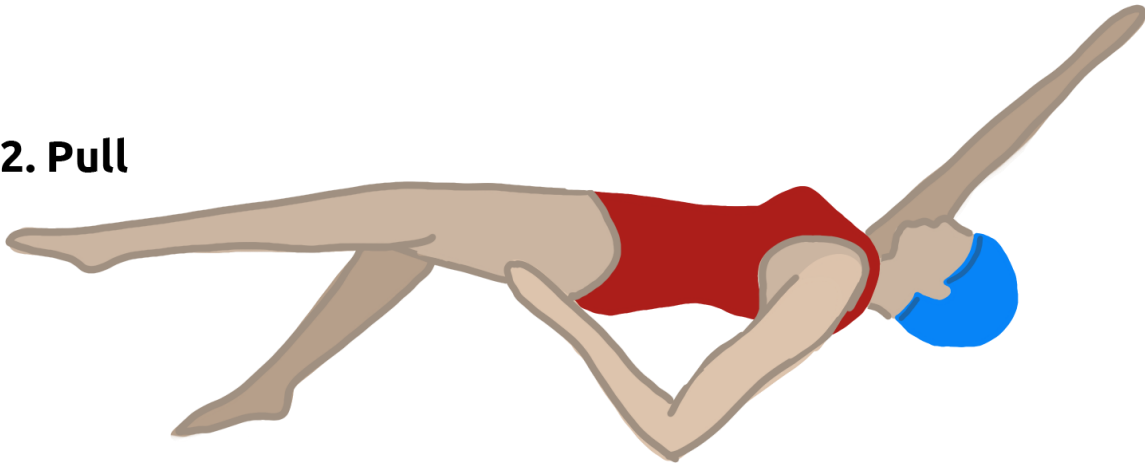




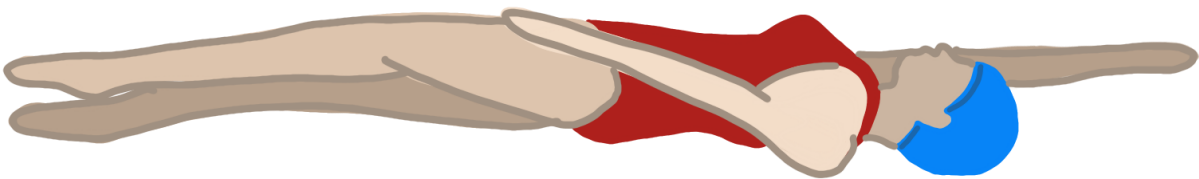
1. Entry



2. Pull



3. Release



4. Recovery

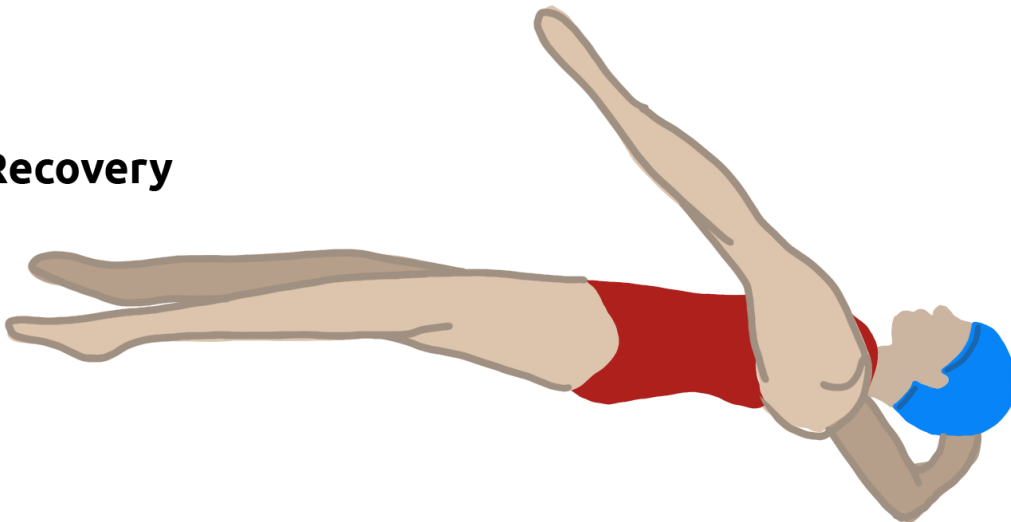


Figure 29: Backstroke

Progressions

- Kick on back with kickboard stretched over knees- (this will assist in reducing bent knee kick action)





- Kick on back without kickboard- hands can initially be at swimmers side then progress to a streamlined position maintaining a high body position. The use of fins may assist in helping the swimmer to understand body position/balance.
- Kickboard- introduce arm action
- Full stroke over a short distance then extend once the swimmer is demonstrating the skill competently

Drills

- With fins - backstroke streamlined kick
- With/without fins- ONE ARM PULL-with one arm at swimmers side – swimmer will stroke using one arm the alternate using the other
- Full stroke over short distance then extend.

Starts

All starts are signaled by the starter who will whistle the swimmers to their start position. The starter will then command the swimmers to “Take your marks.” The swimmers leave the block or end of the pool when the starting signals sounds.

Starting is a very important aspect of competitive swimming, and, in accordance with [Fina rules](#), a one start rule will be enforced; therefore, it is important that the swimmer is given regular instruction in this skill. Be aware of certain medical conditions, which may restrict swimmers from practicing out of water starts. Coaches should be familiar with and comply with both [Fina](#) and Facility rules and regulations regarding diving starts. Remember, when teaching starting, to break down the skill and make it fun.

There is only one type of start permitted in Backstroke in Special Olympics Competition

- In Water (W)

In-Water Start - Backstroke

Practice the backstroke while in the water.

Teaching Points





1. Facing the starting end of the pool.
2. Hold onto the pool edge or end of starting block with both hands (or one hand in the case of a limb absence).
3. Bring both feet up on the wall and bend the knees
4. On the starter's signal, push off with the legs.
5. Extend the arms over the head and kick, using a flutter kick or butterfly kick until the body is streamlined.
6. Swimmer kicks hard until the body is fully extended. The swimmer maintains a constant kick throughout the start and swim.
7. Begin the backstroke once the hands have broken the water surface.



Figure 30: Backstroke Start





Swimming Turns

Backstroke Turns

In a backstroke turn, some part of the body must touch the wall on completion of each length. There are two types of turns commonly used in Backstroke: Pivot and Roll Over Turn. In a pivot turn, swimmers must remain on their back at all times. For safety reasons, Backstroke flags are placed a regulation 5m from the end of the pool. The flags enable the swimmer to identify the distance to finish their race.

Backstroke Pivot Turn

1. Swim backstroke to the wall and touch or grab the wall
2. Bring the knees to the chest and begin to rotate the body.
3. Bring feet to the wall
4. Push off the wall forcefully with both feet
5. Extend both hands over head, returning to a supine, streamlined position.
6. Resume backstroke.

Backstroke Rollover Turn

1. Swim Backstroke towards the wall.
2. Approximately one stroke away from the wall, begin the turn
3. Using a continuous single or simultaneous double arm pull, roll into a prone position
4. Pull knees to the chest and begin to roll over or somersault the body
5. Push off the wall forcefully with the both feet into the supine, streamlined position.

Note: A Backstroke Rollover turn should only be performed when turning from backstroke to backstroke (Not in IM).



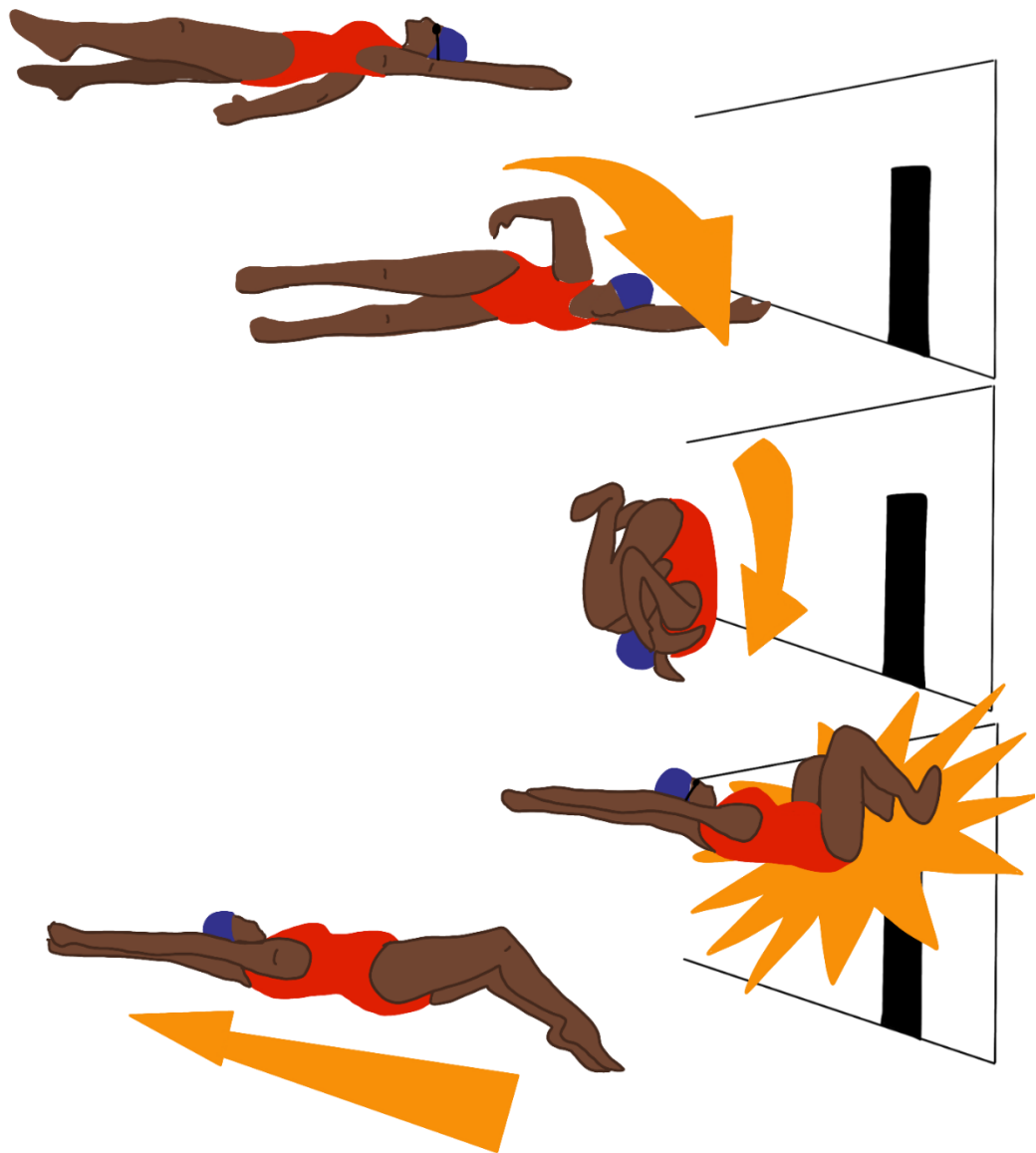


Figure 31: Backstroke Rollover Turn



Finishes

Finish Backstroke

1. For safety reasons, Backstroke flags are placed a regulation 5m from the end of the pool.
2. The flags enable the swimmer to identify the distance to finish their race.
3. Reach backward and drive decisively to the wall without slowing down the down the kick.

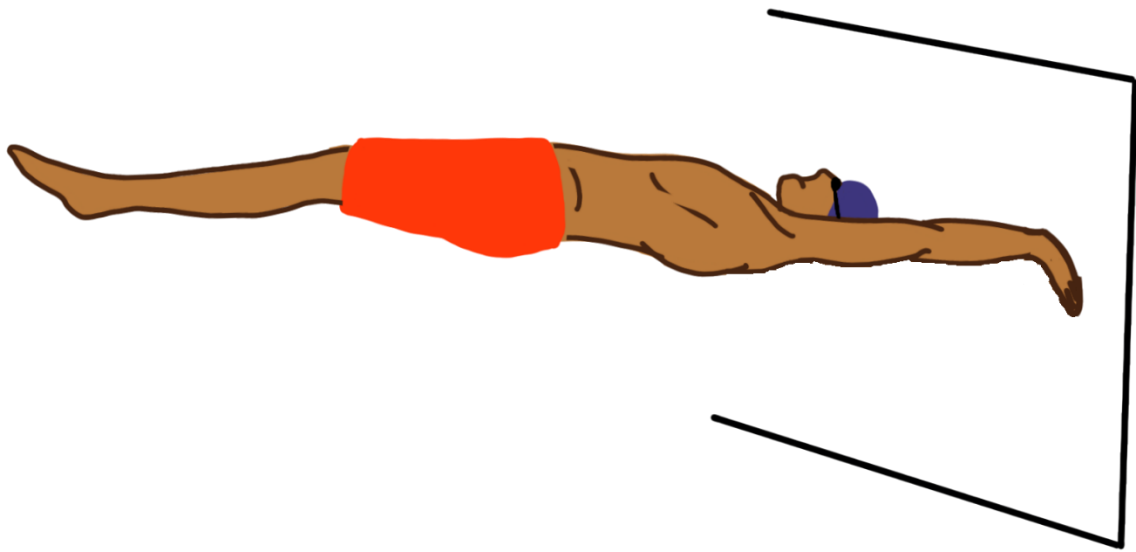


Figure 32: Backstroke Finish

Rules and DQs

Refer to [SO](#) and [Fina rules](#).

Rules that apply to backstroke will be:

1. Prior to the starting signal, swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands holding the starting grips. Standing in or on the gutter or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter is prohibited. When using a backstroke ledge at the start, the toes of both feet must be in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad. Bending the toes over the top of the touchpad is prohibited.
2. At the signal for starting and after turning the swimmer shall push off and swim upon his back throughout the race except when executing a turn as set forth in SW 6.5. The normal position on the back can include a roll movement of the body up to, but not including 90 degrees from horizontal. The position of the head is not relevant.



3. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race. It is permissible for the swimmer to be completely sub-merged during the turn, and for a distance of not more than 15 metres after the start and each turn. By that point the head must have broken the surface.
4. When executing the turn there must be a touch of the wall with some part of the swimmer's body in his/her respective lane. During the turn the shoulders may be turned over the vertical to the breast after which an immediate continuous single arm pull or immediate continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. The swimmer must have returned to the position on the back upon leaving the wall.
5. Upon the finish of the race the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back in his/her respective lane.

DQ Codes can be found in [Rules and Regulations section](#).





Breaststroke

Stroke Coaching Points

- Breaststroke is a valuable survival stroke.
- The arm and leg actions are symmetrical
- The pull facilitates the kick

Body Position

- The swimmer is in a prone, streamlined position in the water.

Arm Action

The arm action in breaststroke is simultaneous with an underwater recovery.

Key Points

- From a front glide position (streamlined), the hands should be pitched down and out.
- Keep elbows high as you scull your hands out and round.
- Hands should sweep back into the body to meet at the upper chest, keeping elbows close to the side of the body
- The arm stroke supports the propulsion from the legs.
- Hands can recover under or over the water, but elbows must remain below the water.
- Arms then stretch forward returning to a streamline position.

Leg Action

The majority of the propulsion comes from the leg kick. The leg kick in breaststroke is probably the most difficult of all kicks for swimmers to master and may take some time. The leg action is simultaneous and is sometimes described as a “whip kick”.

Key Points

- Knees should be slightly more than hip width apart.
- Recover the heels close to the hips.
- Keep knees close together and turn the feet slightly out (dorsi-flexion)
- Sweep out and backwards in a circular action, keep feet flexed rather than loose.
- Feet inside hip line during foot recovery





- Finish kick with the legs fully extended, knees and ankles together and toes turned out and down.
- Feet inside hip line during foot recovery.
- The body should now be in a streamlined position.

Breathing

- Inhaling occurs during the in-sweep or pulling phase of the stroke, which will lift you upwards in order to take a breath through the mouth.
- Exhale under the water through the glide.

Progressions

- Breaststroke kick drill on edge of pool
- Breaststroke kick – supine-demonstrating correct action
- Breaststroke kick- prone- demonstrating correct action
- Breaststroke arm action using fins and a gentle butterfly kick
- Full stroke

Drills

- Breaststroke kick using kickboard prone for short distance then extend
- Breaststroke kick using kickboard in a supine position- kickboard over knees
- Breaststroke arm action using fins and a gentle butterfly kick action short distance
- 2 x Breaststroke kicks – 1 x full stroke- swimmer maintains a good streamlined body position
- Full stroke demonstrating correct timing – breathing/arm pull/kick action
- Correct breathing/timing at the start of the inward scull action.



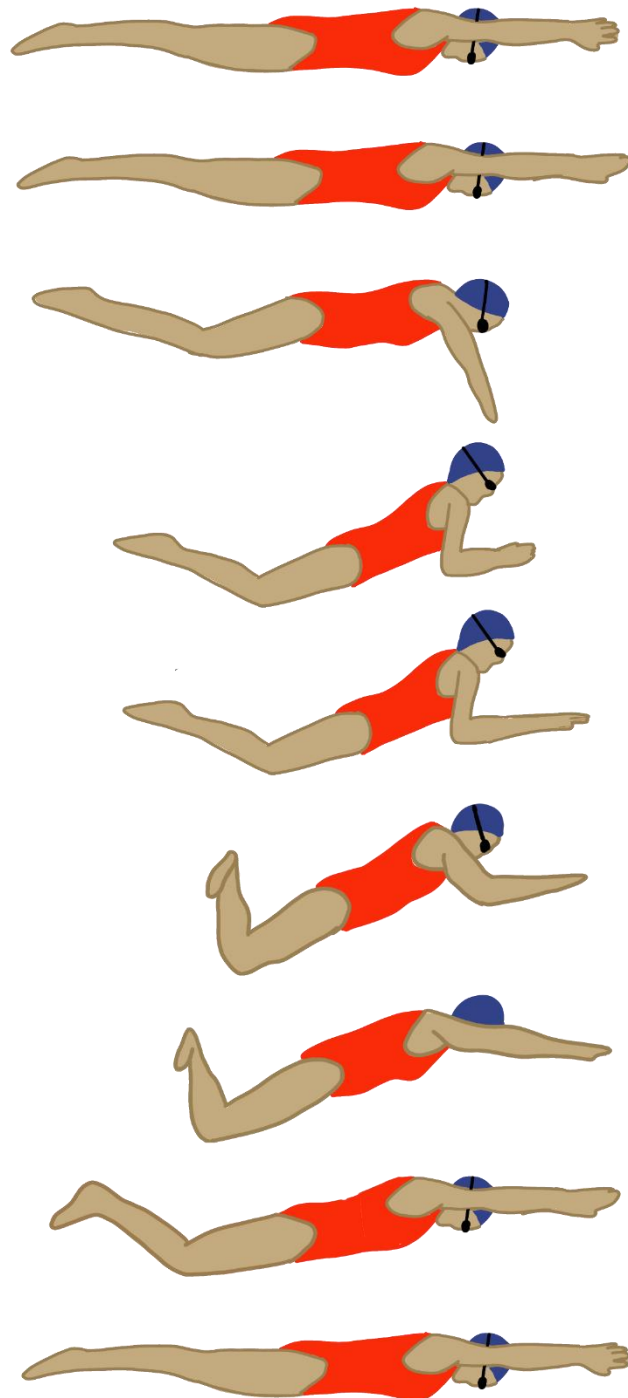


Figure 33: Breaststroke





Starts

All starts are signaled by the starter who will whistle the swimmers to their start position. The starter will then command the swimmers to “Take your marks.” The swimmers leave the block or end of the pool when the starting signals sounds.

Starting is a very important aspect of competitive swimming, and, in accordance with [Fina rules](#), a one start rule will be enforced; therefore, it is important that the swimmer is given regular instruction in this skill. Be aware of certain medical conditions, which may restrict swimmers from practicing out of water starts. Coaches should be familiar with and comply with both [Fina](#) and Facility rules and regulations regarding diving starts. Remember, when teaching starting, to break down the skill and make it fun.

There are three types of starts permitted in Special Olympics Competition

- Standing
- Sitting
- In Water (W)

Standing Starts

Standing Starts may be performed from the concourse or a starting block.

Teaching Points

1. Stand on the starting block or concourse and curl the toes over the front edge
2. Swimmer should take up the starting position
3. On the starter’s signal, push off the block/concourse
4. Enter the water in a streamline position
5. Freestyle/Butterfly – Kick to the surface
6. Breaststroke – Swimmers may do a breaststroke pull out or glide to the surface of the water
7. Begin the appropriate stroke once they break the water on resurfacing

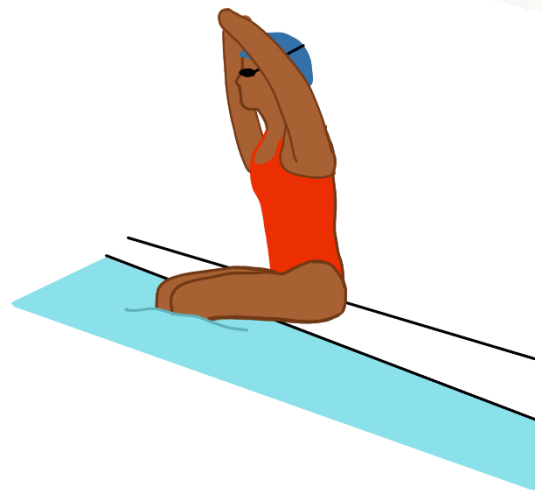




Sitting Start

Teaching Points

1. Sit on the Pool concourse
2. On the starter's signal, push off from the wall into the prone streamline body position, kicking, where appropriate.
3. Begin the appropriate stroke as soon as the body is fully extended.



In-Water Starts

The freestyle, breaststroke and butterfly in-water starts are similar. The teaching points below can be applied to each of these strokes.

Teaching Points

1. Hold onto side of pool while in the water with either hand.
2. Place both feet on the wall.
3. Bend both knees slightly.
4. Extend the other hand in the water toward the other end of the pool.
5. Ensure the swimmer is looking forward to the other end of the pool.
6. On the start signal, Push off the side into the prone streamline body position, kicking, where appropriate.
7. Begin the appropriate stroke as soon as the body is fully extended.

Swimming Turns

Breaststroke Turn

The breaststroke turn must be executed with a simultaneous two-hand touch

Teaching Points

1. Swim breaststroke towards the wall
2. Touch the wall simultaneously with both hands
3. Begin to rotate the body
4. Bring the knees to the chest and plant the feet on the wall



5. Push off forcefully with both feet and assume a prone, streamlined position
6. Resume the breaststroke.

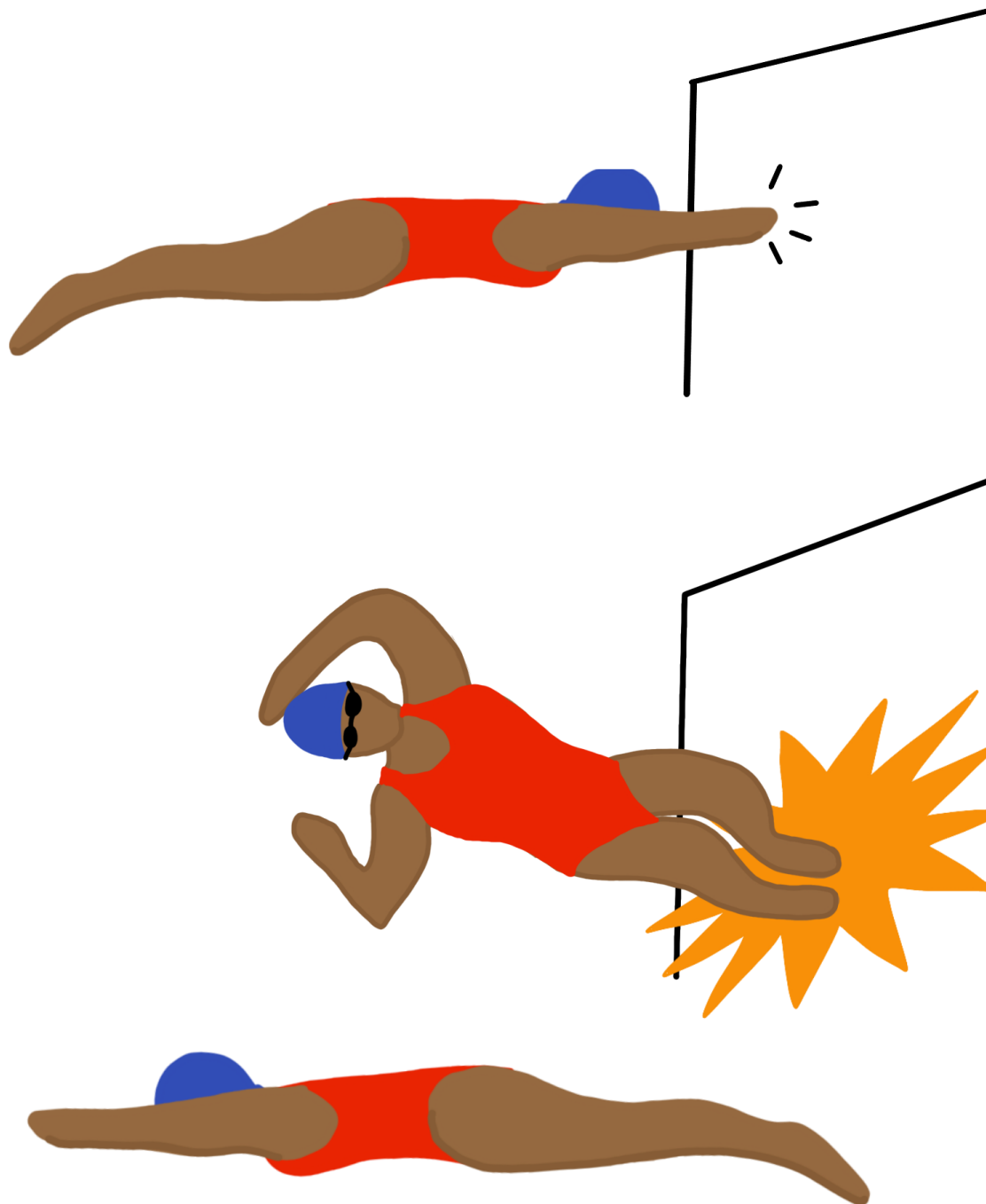


Figure 34: Breaststroke Turn

Finishes

Finish Breaststroke

1. Reach forward and touch the wall with both hands simultaneously
2. The shoulders must be at the same level.

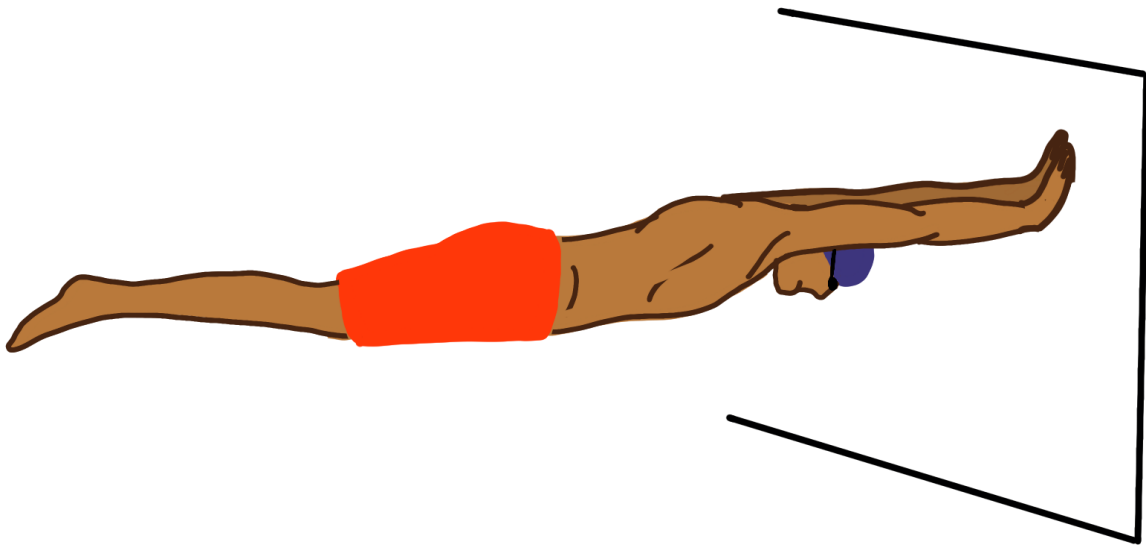


Figure 35: Two Hand Finish

Rules and DQs

Refer to [SO](#) and [Fina rules](#).

Rules that apply to breaststroke will be:

1. After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs during which the swimmer may be submerged. At any time prior to the first Breaststroke kick after the start and after each turn a single butterfly kick is permitted. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.
2. From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body shall be on the breast. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time except at the turn after the touch of the wall where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast when leaving the wall. From the start and throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order. All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and on the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.
3. The hands shall be pushed forward together from the breast on, under, or over the water. The elbows shall be under water except for the final stroke before the turn, during the turn and for the final stroke at the finish. The hands shall be brought back on or under the



surface of the water. The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hip line, except during the first stroke after the start and each turn.

4. During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer's head must break the surface of the water. All movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and on the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.
5. The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. Alternating movements or downward butterfly kicks are not permitted except as in Rule 1. Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.
6. At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water level. At the last stroke before the turn and at the finish an arm stroke not followed by a leg kick is permitted. The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the surface of the water at some point during the last complete or incomplete cycle preceding the touch.

DQ Codes can be found in [Rules and Regulations section](#).





Butterfly

Stroke Coaching Points

The butterfly stroke is generally taught after the swimmer has established basic skills in the other three competitive strokes. The butterfly stroke relies on good timing and simultaneous arm and leg actions. The stroke is best taught by breaking it down into three phases: kick, arm action and breathing.

Body Position

- The body is in a prone, streamlined position.
- Move the body in a dolphin like action.

Arm Action

Pull

- Starting in a streamlined position,
- pulling your hands down towards your body in a semicircular motion
- Palms facing outwards, elbow higher than your palms

Push

- Begin pushing your palms backwards through the water along your sides and past your hips

Recovery

- Sweep both arms out of the water
- Throw them forward into the starting position
- Palms should be out and the thumbs should be entering the water first

Leg Action

- Legs should be pushed together and moving simultaneously
- Feet and ankles should break the surface of the water with the knees slightly bent.
- Two kicks per each arm stroke cycle (small kick on the pull, big kick on the recovery phase)



Breathing

The correct time to take a breath is at the beginning of the recovery phase of the arm action and during the last part of the push.

Key Points

- Breathing takes place on every second arm stroke
- Breathing in and out should be through the nose and mouth
- As the recovery finishes, the body should return to a streamline position.

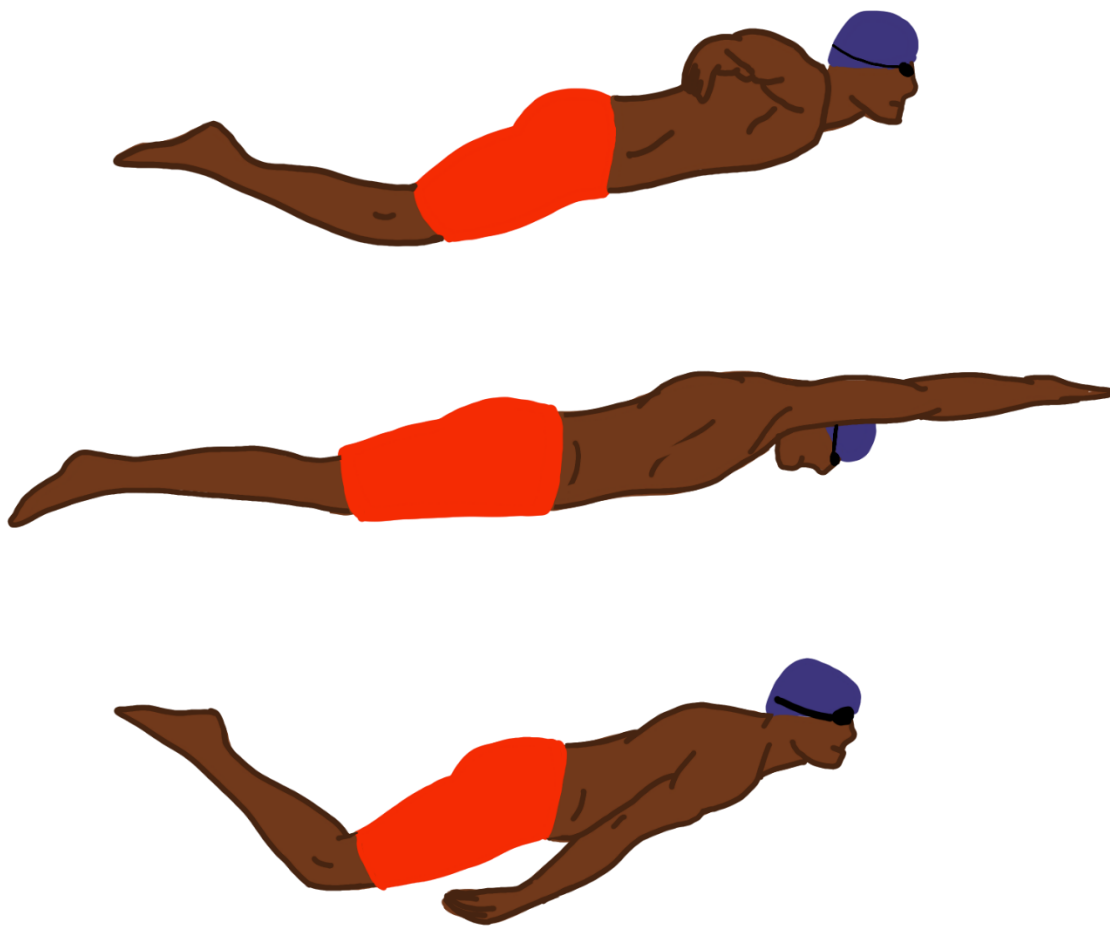


Figure 36: Butterfly Stroke Technique

Progressions

- Swimmer should demonstrate correct head position
- Simultaneous kick action
- Simultaneous arm recovery



- Correct timing of breathing/head/arms
- Correct placement of hands during catch phase
- High streamlined body position

Drills

Progression 1

- Streamlining/butterfly kick prone and supine
- 4 x kicks/breath- demonstration correct leg action
- 4 x kicks- double arm pull-timing

Progression 2

- right arm pulls breathing to side- fins can be used in this drill as assists with stroke development- would suggest do this drill to 25m then swim out 25m freestyle
- left arm pulls breathing to side- fins can be use in this drill as it assists with stroke development – would suggest to do this drill to 25m then swim out 25m freestyle
- 2 right arm-2 left arm- breathing can be to the side – use of fins help with this drill
- 2 right arm- 2 x full arm- 2 left arm- again using fins does assist with this drill.

Starts

All starts are signaled by the starter who will whistle the swimmers to their start position. The starter will then command the swimmers to “Take your marks.” The swimmers leave the block or end of the pool when the starting signals sounds.

Starting is a very important aspect of competitive swimming, and, in accordance with [Fina rules](#), a one start rule will be enforced; therefore, it is important that the swimmer is given regular instruction in this skill. Be aware of certain medical conditions, which may restrict swimmers from practicing out of water starts. Coaches should be familiar with and comply with both [Fina](#) and Facility rules and regulations regarding diving starts. Remember, when teaching starting, to break down the skill and make it fun.

There are three types of starts permitted in Special Olympics Competition

- Standing





- Sitting
- In Water (W)

Standing Starts

Standing Starts may be performed from the concourse or a starting block.



Figure 37: Block Start Position

Teaching Points

1. Stand on the starting block or concourse and curl the toes over the front edge
2. Swimmer should take up the starting position
3. On the starter's signal, push off the block/concourse
4. Enter the water in a streamline position
5. Freestyle/Butterfly – Kick to the surface
6. Breaststroke – Swimmers may do a breaststroke pull out or glide to the surface of the water
7. Begin the appropriate stroke once they break the water on resurfacing

Sitting Start

1. Sit on the Pool concourse
2. On the starter's signal, push off from the wall into the prone streamline body position, kicking, where appropriate.





3. Begin the appropriate stroke as soon as the body is fully extended.

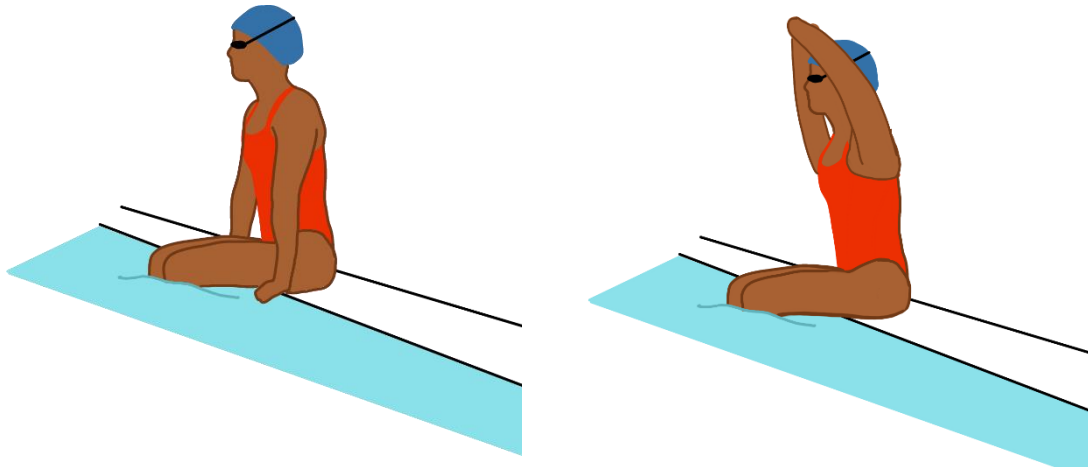


Figure 38: Sitting Concourse Start Position

In-Water Starts

The freestyle, breaststroke and butterfly in-water starts are similar. The teaching points below can be applied to each of these strokes.

Teaching Points

1. Hold onto side of pool while in the water with either hand.
2. Place both feet on the wall.
3. Bend both knees slightly.
4. Extend the other hand in the water toward the other end of the pool.
5. Ensure the swimmer is looking forward to the other end of the pool.
6. On the start signal, Push off the side into the prone streamline body position, kicking, where appropriate.
7. Begin the appropriate stroke as soon as the body is fully extended.



Swimming Turns

Butterfly Turn

The butterfly turn must be executed with a simultaneous two-hand touch

1. Swim butterfly towards the wall
2. Touch the wall simultaneously with both hands
3. Begin to rotate the body
4. Bring the knees to the chest and plant the feet on the wall
5. Push off forcefully with both feet and assume a prone, streamlined position
6. Resume the butterfly stroke.

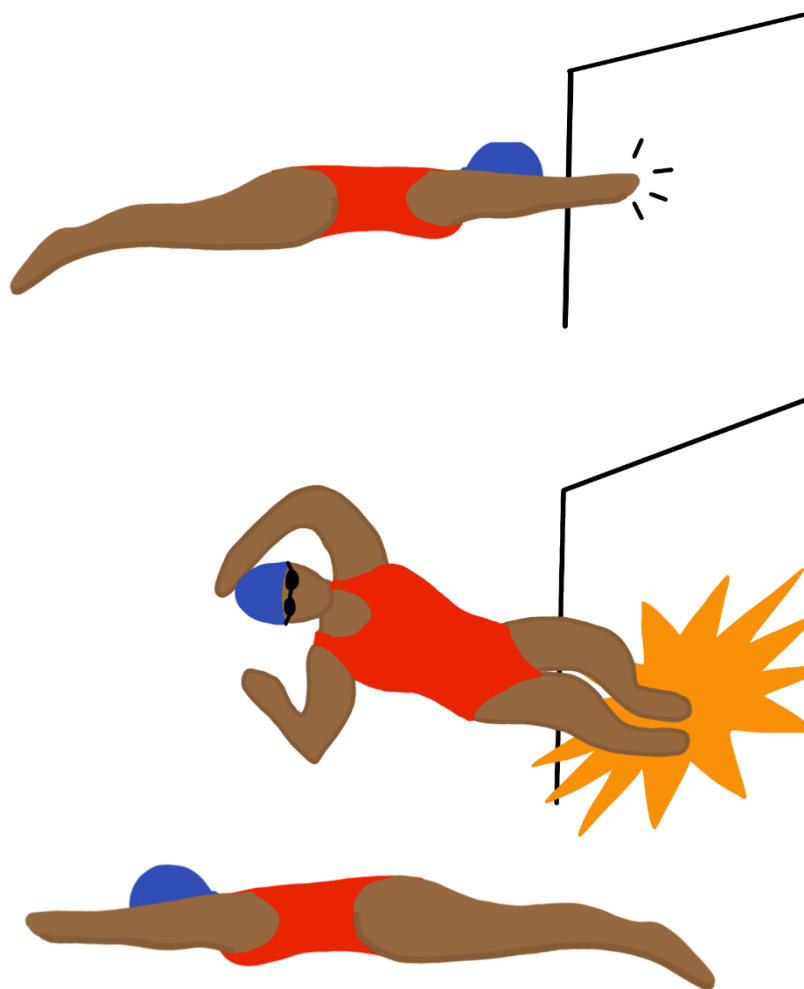


Figure 39: Butterfly Turn

Finishes

Finish Butterfly

1. Reach forward and touch the wall with both hands simultaneously
2. The shoulders must be at the same level.

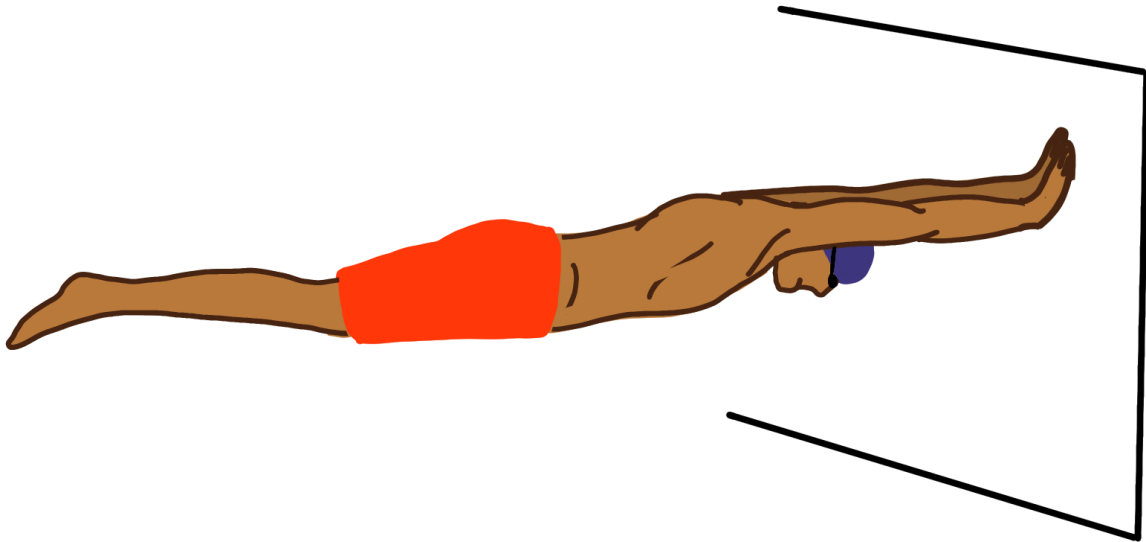


Figure 40: Two Hand Finish

Rules and DQ's

Refer to [SO](#) and [Fina rules](#).

Rules that apply to butterfly will be:

1. From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time, except at the turn after the touch of the wall where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast when leaving the wall.
2. Both arms shall be brought forward simultaneously over the water and brought backward simultaneously under the water through-out the race, subject to Rule 5.
3. All up and down movements of the legs must be simultaneous. The legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. A breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted.
4. At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously, at, above or below the water surface.
5. At the start and at turns, a swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks and one arm pull under the water, which must bring him to the surface. It shall be permissible for a swimmer to be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 metres after the start and



after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface. The swimmer must remain on the surface until the next turn or finish.

DQ Codes can be found in [Rules and Regulations section](#).





Individual Medley (IM)

The individual medley is one of the most challenging of all swimming events. However, it can also be one of the most fun for the swimmer. The swimmer must change strokes throughout the race using the correct turns for each of the strokes. Regardless of the distance of the individual medley event, the swimmer must swim the race using the four competitive strokes in the correct order. The athlete swims each stroke for one-fourth of the race. The swimmer begins the race from a standing or in-water start in the order of:

- Butterfly
- Backstroke
- Breaststroke
- Freestyle

To train for individual medley events, the coach must teach all four strokes and appropriate turns. To better prepare for a race, focus more attention on the athlete's weakest stroke.

Swimming Turns

IM Turns

Butterfly to Backstroke

The butterfly to backstroke turn must be executed with a simultaneous two-hand touch

1. Swim butterfly towards the wall
2. Touch the wall simultaneously with both hands
3. Bring the knees to the chest and plant the feet on the wall
4. Push off forcefully with both feet and in a supine, streamlined position
5. Go into backstroke.

Backstroke to Breaststroke

For safety reasons, Backstroke flags are placed a regulation 5m from the end of the pool. The flags enable the swimmer to identify the distance to finish their race.

1. Swim backstroke to the wall and touch the wall with one hand while on the back
2. Bring the knees to the chest and drive the feet towards the wall
3. As the feet reach the wall, reach forward with one arm
4. Push off the wall forcefully with both feet
5. Extend both hands over head, moving to a prone, streamlined position.
6. Begin breaststroke





Breaststroke to Freestyle

The breaststroke to freestyle turn must be executed with a simultaneous two-hand touch

1. Swim breaststroke towards the wall
2. Touch the wall simultaneously with both hands
3. Begin to rotate the body
4. Bring the knees to the chest and plant the feet on the wall
5. Push off forcefully with both feet and assume a prone, streamlined position
6. Resume freestyle.

Rules and DQ's

Refer to [SO](#) and [Fina rules](#).

Rules that apply to Breaststroke will be:

1. In individual medley events, the swimmer covers the four swimming strokes in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle. Each of the strokes must cover one quarter (1/4) of the distance.
2. In Freestyle the swimmer must be on the breast except when executing a turn. The swimmer must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.
3. In Medley relay events, swimmers will cover the four swimming strokes in the following order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Freestyle. Each of the strokes must cover one quarter (1/4) of the distance.
4. Each section must be finished in accordance with the rule which applies to the stroke concerned.

DQ Codes can be found in [Rules and Regulations section](#).





Rules and Regulations

All [Special Olympics Swimming rules](#) and regulations can be found online or from your local SO swimming club. In addition to this it is recommended that all SO swimming coaches familiarize themselves with [Fina rules and regulations](#).

Disqualification (DQ) Codes:

START

SW 4.4	<input type="checkbox"/> Started before signal being given
--------	--

FREESTYLE

SW 5.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to touch wall at the turn / at the finish
SW 5.3.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Head did not break surface by the 15m mark at the start / at the turn
SW 5.3.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Failed to break the surface of the water throughout the race

BACKSTROKE

SW 6.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Left a position on the back during the race
SW 6.3.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Head did not break surface by the 15m mark at the start / at the turn
SW 6.3.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Failed to break the surface of the water throughout the race
SW 6.4.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Failed to touch the wall at turn in their respective lane
SW 6.4.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Left the position on the back and did not initiate turn
SW 6.4.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Not on back when leaving the wall at the turn
SW 6.5.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimmer did not touch the wall at the finish of the race while on the back
SW 6.5.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Touch at finish not made in swimmer's respective lane

BREASTSTROKE

SW 7.1.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly kick not completed during first arm stroke at start / turn
SW 7.1.2	<input type="checkbox"/> More than one butterfly kick at the start / at the turn
SW 7.2.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Not on the breast at the beginning of the first armstroke after the start / the turn
SW 7.2.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Left position on breast during race
SW 7.2.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorrect stroke cycle
SW 7.2.4	<input type="checkbox"/> Arms not simultaneous / in same horizontal plane
SW 7.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Hands brought back beyond hipline except during first stroke at start / turn
SW 7.4.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Leg movement not simultaneous / in the same horizontal plane
SW 7.4.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Head failed to break the surface before the inward movement of the second armstroke after the start / after the turn
SW 7.4.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Head failed to break surface during each complete stroke cycle
SW 7.5.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Feet not turned out during propulsive part of kick
SW 7.5.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Scissor kick / flutter kick / downward butterfly kick other than permitted in SW7.1
SW 7.6	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-simultaneous touch of the hands at the turn / at the finish

BUTTERFLY

SW 8.1.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Not on Breast at the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start / after the turn
SW 8.1.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Left a position on the breast during the race
SW 8.2.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Arms not brought forward over the water
SW 8.2.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Non simultaneous movement of the arms
SW 8.3.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Non simultaneous movement of the legs
SW 8.3.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Breaststroke movement of the legs
SW 8.4	<input type="checkbox"/> Non simultaneous touch at the turn / at the finish
SW 8.5.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Head did not break the surface by the 15m mark at the start / at the turn
SW 8.5.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Submerged during the race other than at start / turn

MEDLEY

SW 9.1.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly/backstroke/breaststroke in the freestyle leg
SW 9.1.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorrect Individual Medley stroke order
SW 9.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorrect Medley Relay stroke order
SW 9.3.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Did not touch the wall while on the back at the finish of the backstroke section
SW 9.3.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Failed to touch the wall in swimmer's respective lane at the finish of the backstroke section
SW 9.3.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-simultaneous touch of hands at the finish of the breaststroke section
SW 9.3.4	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-simultaneous touch of hands at the finish of the butterfly section

AQ DQ Notification August 2012

THE RACE

SW 10.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Failed to finish the whole distance
SW 10.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Failed to remain in / finish in the lane the swimmer started in
SW 10.4.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Failed to make physical contact with the end of the pool at the turn
SW 10.4.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Took a stride / step on the bottom of the pool
SW 10.4.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Failed to make physical contact with the end of the pool at the turn
SW 10.5	<input type="checkbox"/> Walking on the bottom of the pool
SW 10.6	<input type="checkbox"/> Pulling on the lane rope
SW 10.7	<input type="checkbox"/> Obstructed / interfered with another swimmer during the race
SW 10.9	<input type="checkbox"/> Entered the water during a race not entered in
SW 10.11	<input type="checkbox"/> Feet not in contact with starting platform before preceding team member touched the wall
SW 10.13.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Failed to swim in the order nominated before the race
SW 10.13.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Swam more than once in his / her relay team

SPECIAL OLYMPICS AQUATICS (Swimming) SPORT RULES

SO 1.f	<input type="checkbox"/> Walked / jumped during the flotation / assisted / unassisted event
SO 4.b.1	<input type="checkbox"/> At least one foot not touching bottom of the pool at all times (walking event)
SO 5.a	<input type="checkbox"/> Received physical assistance (unassisted event)
SO 6.a.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Received support / assistance with forward movement (assisted event)
SO 6.a.2	<input type="checkbox"/> Used a flotation Device (assisted event) that does not comply with Rule B 20

DATE: _____ EVENT: _____ DIV: _____ LANE: _____ ID No. : _____

Other

SW / SOSR No. _____

Official's Name: _____

☐ Stroke Judge ☐ Turn Judge ☐ Starter

Official's Signature: _____

Referee's Name: _____

Referee's Signature: _____

Official Use

Swimmer's Name: _____

Program/Club: _____

Time Announced: _____

DQ Entered in GMS by: _____





DQ codes are used in official SO competitions and World Games. Each code relates to the operational definition beside it which explains to swimmers and their coaches why the swimmer was disqualified from competition.

Common Violations

- Touching wall with one hand in both Breaststroke/Butterfly turn and finish
- Moving onto front when turning and finishing in Backstroke
- Incorrect Breaststroke kick action- swimmer does not demonstrate turning feet out during kick
- Breaststroke and Butterfly kick action not simultaneous
- Arms do not extend out of water during recovery phase in Butterfly
- Arms extending below hip line in Breaststroke
- Pulling on Lane rope during swim
- False starts
- Freestyle kick action at start of Breaststroke /Butterfly.





Drills

DRILL 1 (A)

NAME: SCULLING

OBJECTIVE:

- Improve hand speed.
- Learn to catch more water
- Improve bodyline position.

EQUIPMENT:

N/A

STROKE KEY:

Freestyle and/or Walking

COACHING POINTS:

- Doing a fast kick is essential while swimming sprints.
- To do this drill float on the surface with your arms in a streamline and doing no kick, then start by kicking as fast as possible.
- Feel how the kick should originate from the hips all the way down to your feet.
- Then after 5-seconds add arms and swim to the other side.
- Still kicking with as fast as possible.

VARIATIONS:

Just like the original drill, however, do the drill FAST! (Sprinting)

DRILL 1 (B)

NAME: FIST SPRINTS

OBJECTIVE:

- Help you rotate (spin) faster for freestyle sprinting.
 - Catch the water faster and how important it is to such with the entire arm.
-





DRILL 2

NAME: ONE ARM STROKE

OBJECTIVE:

- Improve balance.
- Help with rotation.
- Focus on one arm at a time.

EQUIPMENT:

N/A

STROKE KEY:

Freestyle

COACHING POINTS:

- Swim freestyle with only one arm, your non-working arm should be extended resting on your side or out in front for balance.
- Breathe to the opposite side of the arm doing the stroke.
- When you stretch your arm forward breathe and rotate to get your shoulder out of the water.

VARIATIONS:

Like the one-arm drill, but keep the non-working arm in front. This time you will breathe to the side of the arm doing the stroke and provide good body balance

OBJECTIVE:

- Improving your reach
-





DRILL 3

NAME: CATCH UP

OBJECTIVE:

- Help your distance per stroke.
- Improve hand entry so it does not cross over.
- Have a better glide.
- Helps develop a balanced body position.

EQUIPMENT:

Pull Buoy or 'other' item as a tool to keep arm extended and release to opposite arm at the catch-up.

STROKE KEY:

Freestyle

COACHING POINTS:

- Do one normal arm stroke; keep the other arm still in the front waiting for the arm doing the stroke to catch-up.
 - Once the arm doing the stroke reaches the arm in the front, do a stroke with the opposite arm.
-





DRILL 4(A)

NAME: CLOSED FIST

OBJECTIVE:

- Help you use the whole arm to improve pull.
- Get a better feeling for the water.
- Increase your distance per stroke.

EQUIPMENT:

Tennis Ball

STROKE KEY:

Freestyle

COACHING POINTS:

- Closed fist freestyle, but swim with fists closed using a tennis ball and/or just simply holding a clinched fist on each hand.
- The swimmer will feel like they are not pulling any water at this point.
- Focus on grabbing water with forearms and upper part of arms. By doing this the swimmer will improve their catch and will feel how important the entire arm is to pull effectively.

A swimmer will increase their strokes per length when having their fists closed, but once the hands are opened, the power of the pull that is initiated with the hands will be felt. This will eventually help increase the distance per stroke.

VARIATIONS:

Just like the original drill, however, do the drill FAST! (Sprinting)

DRILL 4(B)

NAME: FIST SPRINTS

OBJECTIVE:

- Help you rotate (spin) faster for freestyle sprinting.
- Catch the water faster and how important it is to such with the entire arm.





DRILL 5(A)

NAME: ZERO KICK/FAST KICK

OBJECTIVE:

- Improve your kick reaction.
- Kick speed & explosiveness.
- Have a more efficient kick.

EQUIPMENT:

N/A

STROKE KEY:

Freestyle

COACHING POINTS:

- Doing a fast kick is essential while swimming sprints.
- To do this drill float on the surface with your arms in a streamline and doing no kick, then start by kicking as fast as possible.
- Feel how the kick should originate from the hips all the way down to your feet.
- Then after 5-seconds add arms and swim to the other side, still kicking as fast as possible.

VARIATIONS:

Another way to improve the speed of a kick is to get it out of the water and kick as fast as possible without worrying about traction or bending knees too much. Focus on moving legs fast – see drill 5(b).

DRILL 5(B)

NAME: OUTKICK

OBJECTIVE:

- Kick speed and explosiveness.





DRILL 6

NAME: STROKES AND GLIDES

OBJECTIVE:

- Bilateral breathing with freestyle.
- Improved rotation
- Make a stroke more effective.

EQUIPMENT:

N/A

STROKE KEY:

Freestyle

COACHING POINTS:

- Gliding is an important part of a stroke, especially in distance over a 100m.
 - Doing 3 strokes and gliding for about 6 kicks will help improve gliding technique and the gliding position.
 - The position of hands and head adjust when there is frontal drag.
-





DRILL 7

NAME: THREE STROKES SWITCH DRILL

OBJECTIVE:

- Working on better balance.
- Strong kick.
- Develops bi-lateral breathing.

EQUIPMENT:

N/A

STROKE KEY:

Freestyle, Backstroke, and Butterfly

COACHING POINTS:

- Extend left arm straight out in front of and hold it there.
- Take three strokes with the right arm.
- Roll hips, and then extend the right arm straight out and take 3 strokes with the left.
- Repeat.

This freestyle, backstroke, or butterfly drill helps with balance, and in the case of freestyle, bilateral breathing.

Concentrate on a steady, strong kick doing this drill.





DRILL 8

NAME: BREASTSTROKE KICK DRILL

OBJECTIVE:

- Encourages a narrow, propulsion kick.

EQUIPMENT:

N/A

STROKE KEY:

Breaststroke

COACHING POINTS:

- Push off the wall and pull your arms to your side.
- Leave arms at your side and kick the length of the pool, touching your fingertips during the recovery.

Tip: A wide breaststroke kick may feel stronger because legs will then encounter more resistance than with a narrower kick which focuses more energy on propelling the body forward.





DRILL 9

NAME: BREASTSTROKE DRILL

OBJECTIVE:

- Encourages flexibility in kick.
- Work to keep knees parallel with the rest of the body.

EQUIPMENT:

N/A

STROKE KEY:

Breaststroke

COACHING POINTS:

- Float on your back with hands under rear end and practice doing breaststroke kicks.
- On each kick, try to bring your feet back so they touch your hands, keep knees from breaking the surface of the water.

Not all swimmers will have flexible knees and ankles. The key to having an effective breaststroke kick is less about flexibility and more about positioning.

VARIATIONS:

- A dryland drill is to practice lying flat on the ground on your stomach with arms stretched out in front of your head in a streamline position.
- Now try to do a breaststroke kick. Notice that the knees are forced to stay parallel with the rest of the body because the ground is in the way.
- This is a very important point, because, many breaststroker's "drop their knees down" on each kick, which is natural, but if knees are not forming a 90-degree angle with the rest of the body, the knees are then essentially acting as a wall of resistance on every kick.





DRILL 10

NAME: ONE-ARM FLY DRILL

OBJECTIVE:

- Timing on 'fly' kick to create less stroke stress.

EQUIPMENT:

N/A

STROKE KEY:

Butterfly

COACHING POINTS: This drill is good at working 'fly' kick timing and allows the swimmer to get the feeling of the 'fly' stroke with relatively little stress.

- Leave the left arm extended in front.
- Pull butterfly with the right arm.
- Do a dolphin kick as the right arm is finishing the stroke and another as it enters the water
- Now leave the right arm extended and pull with the left arm.
- Continue the alternating pattern.
- Breathe to either or both sides as in freestyle.

VARIATIONS:

- Two right-two left
 - Two right-two left-two full
-





DRILL 11

NAME: BACK DOLPHIN DRILL

OBJECTIVE:

- Working abdominal muscles by avoiding over bending knees.

EQUIPMENT:

Fins (if required)

STROKE KEY:

Butterfly

COACHING POINTS:

- Push off wall on back, arms at sides.
- Begin gentle dolphin action, high in the body and allow it to gather force as it travels down to feet.
- Try to kick the water upward enough to make a small boiling effect over feet.
- Drop legs down and then up again.
- Create a rhythmic up and down motion with legs that extends a little more than a foot deep.
- Use the entire length of legs and trunk for dolphin on back.
- Head should be almost still as the core and legs move.
- Keep head from bouncing so face submerges (make sure knees are not coming out of the water too much. This will produce a wave of water over face).
- Sweep the water upward and downward, rather than closer to the body than father away.

VARIATIONS:

- Extend arms overhead.
-





Games

Games are fun activities that can be included in your program. Ensure games are suitable for the ability of the swimmer.

Games can be an extension part of the skills you are having your swimmer practice in their session and usually conducted at the end of the session.

- Kick relays- develop kick action in all strokes
- Relays - all strokes
- Water polo - this will encourage treading water/using sculling actions
- Tunnel ball - helps develop submersion - exhaling





Planning a Training Session

Before planning a session it is important that the Coach understands the needs of their swimmer/s, their abilities, preferred strokes and aims.

Coaches need to program sessions appropriate to their swimmer and be prepared to make unexpected changes in sometimes very short notice.

A Coach should consider the following:

- Swimmers medical requirements
- Ability level
- Pool space/depths/access/egress
- Timing of the session
- Number of swimmers per lane and session
- Preferred stroke/s – also called Form Stroke- that is their preferred stroke other than Freestyle
- What their aims are- recreational training (being part of a SO group for social connection) or Competition
- Coaches availability, accreditation and knowledge on various medical requirements

Depending on which season the training takes place will determine how the session is designed.

Table 2: Components of a training session per stage of the season

Pre-Season	Competition Season	Post Season
Warm Up	Warm Up	This is where the swimmer will have the opportunity to reflect on their achievements - it provides swimmers time to rest and do low level activities.
Set work	Set work- sprints/Endurance/Stamina- training specific for the events being competed	Encouraging good nutrition and sleep is important not only in both Pre/Competition Season but also during the Post Competition season
Drills	Starts/Finishes/turns	
Starts/Finishes/turns	Recovery - Cool down	
Endurance	Competition meal planning	
Recovery- "cool down"		
Working on the main strokes the swimmer will be competing in in the Competition Season		
Tapering of the sessions closer to competition		
Talk about nutrition/hydration etc		





Structure:

It is vital to structure your training session to ensure there is a process that you will follow throughout the time you have with your athletes. Having a structured session plan will keep you, as a coach, on track with the activities you have planned for your swimmers.

Step 1: Identify your training session's *topic*.

A Session Topic is the theme of your training session.

This should guide you on what activities to include in your training session and what the primary focus of the session is.

Within your session topic you should identify the aims and objectives of your training session.

For example: If your session topic is Fundamentals of Freestyle, the aims and objectives of the session should be focused around developing the fundamental movements needed to complete a freestyle swim.

Aims vs. Objectives

- An aim is the WHAT of the training session i.e. what skills you desire your athletes to learn/master.
- An objective is the HOW i.e. how you are going to facilitate your athletes so they can learn/master the skills.

Step 2: Outline what you want to cover in the session and the *time* you have to cover it.

Your session content are the activities you are covering in the training session i.e. warm-ups, drills, free-play, cool-downs.

In order to cover all of the content you want to in a training session, time management is essential.

Poor time management results in sections of a session being left out, overlooked, or rushed and not conducted correctly.

When planning a session set out how much time you are allocating to each section of the training session.

For example: for a 60 minute session:

- Warm-Up - 10 mins
- Drills - 20 mins
- Free-Swim - 20 mins
- Cool-Down - 10 mins





Step 3: Lay out activities in the training session.

Once you have your session content layout and time allocated, you can become more specific with the details of each section of your training session. This will involve including specific activities that relate to each section in the training plan.

For example: for a 60 minute session:

- **Warm-Up** - Warm Up 1 (from Fitness Section) - 10 mins
- **Drills** - Drill 1(a) [15 mins] + Drill 1(b)[5 mins] One arm stroke - 20 mins
- **Free-Swim** - Freestyle swim; give feedback on turns between lengths [9 mins x2 + 2 mins rest] - 20 mins
- **Cool-Down** - Cool down 1 (from Fitness Section) - 10 mins

Step 4: Revise your training plan to ensure it all aligns with your session topic.

Games:

The majority of swimmers attend training sessions to enjoy themselves as well as learn and improve. Games are fun activities that can be included in your program that meet these requirements. Although it is important to ensure that games are suitable for the ability of the swimmer.

Games can be an extension part of the skills you are having your swimmer practice in their session and usually conducted at the end of the session.

Here are some examples of games you can use with your swimmers in a training session:

- Kick relays - develop kick action in all strokes.
- Relays - all strokes.
- Water polo - this will encourage treading water/using sculling actions.
- Tunnel ball - helps develop submersion - exhaling.

See our sample session planner below:





Swimming Session Planner

In association with SO Fitness



Special Olympics

Health

MADE
POSSIBLE BY **Golisano** FOUNDATION

Date: _____

Practice Length: _____ mins

Practice focus:

Warm Up: _____ mins

Aerobic

Dynamic Stretches

Basics and Conditioning

Transition Activity: _____

Drills/Skill Building: _____ mins

Notes: _____

Transition Activity: _____





Swimming Session Planner

In association with SO Fitness



Special Olympics
Health

MADE
POSSIBLE BY **Golisano**
FOUNDATION

Stroke Work:

_____ mins

Notes: _____

Cool Down:

_____ mins

Fitness Lesson of the Day: _____

Tips/Reminders for Athletes: _____

Coach's Reflection:





Planning a Swimming Season

The length of the competition season will vary from program to program and will be impacted by the resources available to the program, the availability of facilities, and athletes competing in other sports.

You can break the season up into three main phases:

- Pre-Season
- In-Season
- Post-Season

Pre-Season

The pre-season or preparation phase is the section of the season directly prior to competition phase commencing. Pre-season involves optimally preparing your athletes for the coming competition season. This involves gradually building an aerobic base, building muscle and strength, improving flexibility and mobility, and mastering fundamental sport-specific skills and tactics that will be used during the competition phase.

Pre-season allows coaches to gradually increase the loading (*Training load/loading refers to the impact of training on athletes. Harder training like conditioning would represent a high training load, while a lighter or recovery session would represent a low training load. Spikes or rapid increases in training load can lead to injuries in athletes. An example of a spike in training load would be an athlete returning to training after the off-season. As this athlete was not training for an extended period of time, by returning to training at a high-intensity would put that athlete at a greater risk of sustaining an injury*) on their athletes to best prepare them for competition. It is vital that you do not prescribe too much activity for your athletes too early in the pre-season phase as their bodies will not be used to this loading following the off-season (*The off-season is the time off an athlete has between their post-season training sessions and the start of the next pre-season*). By gradually increasing the training load, athletes are able to fully recover from the previous session, thus allowing for supercompensation (*Supercompensation is a process the body goes through after a period of training where it recovers in a way that subsequent performance is greater than it was previously. For example: If an athlete lifts a 25kg weight in the gym, this will cause fatigue in the athlete's muscles and would require time to recover. With supercompensation, the recovery would allow the athletes to return at a level slightly above where they were prior to lifting the 25kg weight. This supercompensation effect will now allow the athlete to lift a slightly higher weight*) to take effect.

For swimming, coaches can divide their season preparation into two categories.

- On-Land Preparation
- In-Water Preparation





1. ON-LAND PREPARATION

On-land preparation will aim to increase flexibility, strength, and muscle endurance through body weight and resistance based exercise. In addition to this, building an athlete's aerobic and anaerobic capacity can be done on-land through running, cycling and skipping variations.

Important: All resistance-based and aerobic/anaerobic exercise should be carried out safely, in an appropriate environment and using correct technique. As a coach, if you are not competent in demonstrating or correcting an exercise it is best to not prescribe this exercise to your athletes unless you have a trained fitness or strengths and conditioning coach to offer their expertise in this area.

The Special Olympics Online Learning Portal offers a variety of fitness courses which will educate coaches and fitness professionals on best-practice in these areas.

2. IN-WATER PREPARATION

In-water preparation will focus on the sport specific movements for your swimmer. This allows swimmers to work on and develop technique, endurance and speed in the water. In-water activities should be varied and include drills that work on freestyle and form strokes. Pre-season is a great time for coaches to work on fundamentals of swimming (*Fundamentals are the core competencies that an athlete should have in their sport. For swimming this would include: Pool Entry and Exit (Entry may include starts, be that standing or sitting on the concourse or blocks); Starting and Finishing; Streamlining; Stroke Technique (Can athletes identify the difference between strokes and the reasons why the strokes require different technique?)*) while optimally preparing their swimmers for the coming competition season.

Remember: Each athlete is different and will require a different focus in their pre-season program. Athletes could be competing in a different sport during their swimming off-season and may require some swimming specific conditioning work to get back into the swimming 'mode'. Others may have had a relatively inactive off-season if they do not compete in other sports. This swimmer would require a more general return to swimming program where they will have to re-build their aerobic capacity and remind themselves of the fundamentals of swimming. It is the role of the coach to identify the individual needs of their athletes and cater their program specifically to meet those needs.

In-Season

In-season or the competition season is the stage of the swimming season when swimmers will compete regularly in competitions, swim meets, or World Games. Training in this section of the season will focus on in-competition performance, corrections of errors, and fitness maintenance. An important part of in-season training is to allow your athletes to recover (*Recovery from exercise comes from multiple sources, all as important as the other. Three key sources of recovery are: Sleep (Rest); Nutrition + Hydration; Continuous stretching + functional movements for the muscles*) fully from their competition and training to ensure optimal subsequent performance.





Competition seasons vary from program to program depending on how their season is structured. Some may have one big competition at the end of the season, while others may have competitions every few weeks over an extended period. Your plan should be adjusted to suit the layout of your season and to get the best out of your swimmers.

Similar to pre-season, in-season can be broken down into two categories:

1. On-Land Training
2. In-Water Training

1. ON-LAND TRAINING

In-season on-land training will be reduced in comparison to pre-season. In replacement, a coach may want to use on-land training sessions to work on athlete mobility, flexibility, or some tactical work.

2. IN-WATER TRAINING

In-water training will be based around error correction from previous performance, preparation for next performance, or recovery post-performance. In-season training can resemble competition but will be adjusted to allow swimmers sufficient time to recover between drills, races, or long-distance swims.

Coaching Tip: Three things to work on in-season

1. Work at 'race pace' or slightly faster but ensure swimmer has a full recovery.
2. Practice pre-race warm ups.
3. Psychological preparation, motivation in preparation for competition.

Post-Season

The post-season is the period of time after the competition season has ended. This provides the swimmer and coach with time to reflect on the season just gone and identify what they want to improve, opportunities they were grateful to experience, and to rest up and recover in preparation for their next sporting adventure.

The post-season and off-season are different in that a post-season still involves training sessions for the athletes in a structured way, although a different structure to what we would have seen in the pre-season and in-season phases. Post-season training sessions are usually reduced in load, more proactive, and focus solely on creating a fun and enjoyable environment for athletes to unwind from the season that has just passed.

Coaching Tip: Drills and error corrections are usually replaced with games or free swims to allow the swimmers to relax and interact in a stress-free environment with their training partners or teammates.





Three tips for post-season trainings are:

1. Reduce the number of sessions conducted per week
2. Maintain healthy eating and out of water exercise (mobility and flexibility)
3. Rest and recovery period





Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Backstroke	Where the swimmer remains on his/her back from the start or push off from the wall to the turn through to the completion of the race.
Backstroke Start	Swimmer starts in water, both hands hold onto block, both feet under waterline.
Breaststroke	Stroke done completely on the horizontal plane with the swimmer's chest horizontal to the bottom of the pool. From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast. The arm and leg action is simultaneous. The kick takes place below the waterline.
Buoyancy	This is the upward supportive force of water, counteracting the downward force of gravity. The force of buoyancy is determined by the density of the water; the greater the density the greater the buoyancy. Factors which affect a swimmer's buoyancy and floating position are: age, body build and bone size, muscular development and weight distribution, amount of fatty tissue, lung capacity and water density.
Butterfly	Stroke performed completely on the horizontal plane. After the start and after each turn, the swimmer must remain on the breast and is permitted no more than two leg kicks per stroke cycle. Arm action is forward and simultaneous. Leg kick is simultaneous.
Catch	Occurs with hand entry into water. The hand "catches" or "grabs" water.
Drill	Skill used to develop and maintain stroke technique.
Fina	Fédération Internationale De Natation
Freestyle	Stroke other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly.
Horizontal	Parallel with the surface of the water.





In-Water Start	Swimmer starts in water, holds onto block with one hand, points the other in the direction of swim and pushes off wall with two feet.
Individual Medley	Event where the swimmer shall swim the prescribed distance and strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle.
Lateral	Swimmer is on his/her side.
Length	Extent of the course from one end to the other.
Concourse (Pool Deck)	Area immediately around pool.
PFD	Personal Floatation Device
Prone Position	Swimmers lay on their front.
Propulsion	This is the force that drives the swimmer forward and is created by the swimmer's arms and legs.
Rotate/Rotation	Moving in one line of the body's axis.
Sculling	Sculling is a basic action that is used in all strokes and survival swimming- it is the action of the hands/arms
Simultaneous	Moving at the same time.
Streamline - Streamlining	Body shape in the water which offers the least possible resistance.
Supine	Swimmer lays on their back.





Unified Sports Team Refers to a proportionate number of athletes and partners.

Warm-Up Series of exercises/drills used to prepare the body. On-land warm-up can consist of jogging and stretching. In-water warm-ups include slow, easy swims.





10 Tips to be a better swimmer from SO World Games Head Coach and Michael Phelps Foundation IM Ambassador Dian Christensen Hillis.

1. Do swim frequently

If you don't average about three swims a week you will lose your feel for the water and your technique will begin to deteriorate. No feel, no technique, no speed. If the option is between one or two long workouts or three or four shorter workouts, swimmers seem to do better when they swim more frequently as opposed to only doing a few longer workouts each week

2. Do swim with good technique

Maintain the best possible technique at all speeds during a workout. If you try to go fast with bad technique, you are wasting energy. If you can teach yourself to go fast while using good technique, you will make bigger gains.

3. Do drills as every part of every swim workout

Early in your workout, in the middle of your workout, or at the end of your workout (or any combination of the three!) do some specific technique work to reinforce good swimming skills. There are many drills you can do to stay tuned up, or to help you develop better technique.

4. Do challenging workouts

One or two times a week (depending upon how frequently you swim) do part of your workout with oomph - push the effort, go hard, whatever you want to call it. If all of your workouts are focused on technique, your technique will improve. But what will happen when you try to go faster? You will get tired, your technique will deteriorate, and you might as well stop for the day. If you are doing some hard or challenging workouts - mixed in with technique work - as different workouts or as part of the same workout - you will learn how to hold good technique while going faster.

5. Do easy workouts

Depending upon your swimming goals, there may be no reason to do more than one or two tough workout sets a week, as long as you do one or two easier workouts, too. Work hard on the hard things, and easy on the easy things, and each kind of work will give better results.





6. Do streamlines

It might be a start, a push-off, or a turn, but you should always do things the same way - streamline, then into the transition between the streamline and swimming. But first, always a streamline.

7. Do leave the wall the same way every time

Always push off the walls the way you would if you were coming out of a turn. When you start a set, you should push off the wall exactly the same way that you would be pushing off the wall if you were coming out of a turn. TIGHT STREAMLINE! Most races have more turns than starts, and getting some extra practice with any part of a turn is a bonus each and every time!

8. Do wear a swimsuit made for competitive swimming

This doesn't mean spend \$300 on the latest and greatest high-tech slicker than skin piece of swim wear. It means don't wear baggy beach shorts if you are trying to improve your technique or go learn how to hold technique when going faster. There are times to wear a swimsuit that gives you some extra drag, but not before you have mastered good technique.

9. Do ask someone to watch your swimming

Better yet, get someone to video you. Getting some eyes to watch what you do (or using your own via a video review) while you are moving through the pool can yield some great feedback on your swimming technique that you may have not realized.

10. Do use flippers occasionally

Among other benefits, swim fins or flippers can help you achieve (artificially) a better body position and you will learn what that position feels like while moving. Then, when the flippers are off, you can try to recreate that position by feel, since you will already have a better idea what it will feel like when you get there.



Figure 41: Dian Christensen Hillis (right) with Michael Phelps at a SO Swimmers clinic in association with the Michael Phelps Foundation

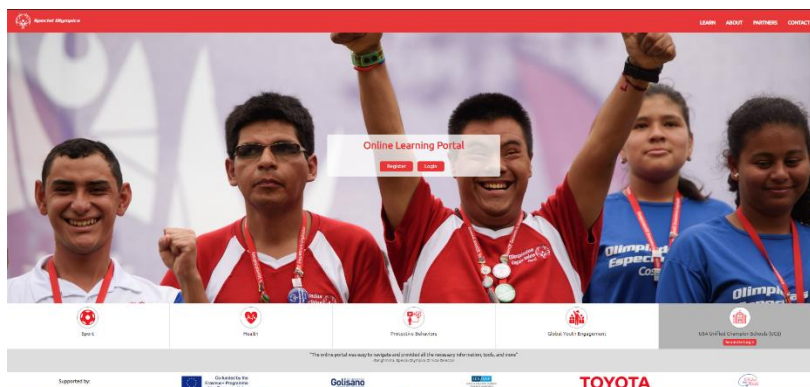




Michael Phelps Foundation - <https://michaelphelpsfoundation.org/>



Special Olympics Swimming Resources - <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/sports-and-coaching/swimming>



Special Olympics Learning Portal - <https://learn.specialolympics.org/>



SO Swimming Rules 2020 -
https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/sports-rules/Sports-Essentials-Swimming-Rules-2020.pdf?_ga=2.129239562.74650030.1594035136-878802789.1564561385

