



Building a Practice Schedule

Below are factors to consider when planning your training season, schedule and budget.

Safety First

Venue Assessment

The Golf Course, Practice Areas or Playing Field

- ♦ Turf/Floor conditions
- ♦ Level grade
- ♦ Foreign objects
- ♦ Obstructions to practice or play area
- ♦ Inclement weather options
- ♦ Adaptations required to facility (indoor/outdoor)

Equipment

Determine your Equipment Needs

- ♦ Number of clubs and golf balls available per athlete
- ♦ Proper size and fit
- ♦ Selection available
- ♦ Maintenance
- ♦ Storage

Athletes

Focus on Ability

- ♦ Know any physical, social or medical concerns and the golf experience of each athlete.
- ♦ It is important to administer the Golf Skills Assessment early in the season. This test enables you to determine the ability range of each athlete so you can set personal goals for improvement.
- ♦ The physical preparation of the athletes is important. Following are the major fitness components to incorporate into the training process. Each athlete will perform differently in the same training process because of physical and intellectual limitations.
 - ♦ Flexibility: Stretching Routine
 - ♦ Muscular Fitness: Strength, Endurance, Power, Speed
 - ♦ Cardiovascular Endurance

Volunteers

- ♦ Golf knowledgeable
- ♦ Coaching experience
- ♦ Commitment
- ♦ Completed training and orientation
- ♦ Athlete-to-coach ratio



Transportation

Assure athletes and volunteers have transportation to and from sessions.

Proper Golf Attire (including footwear)

Confirm appropriate dress code of facility.

Essential Components of the Training Sessions

There are many ways to organize a training session for Special Olympics athletes. Because of comprehension and memory challenges for the athlete, there is considerable value in a developing a consistent training “routine” that provides familiarity, stability and comfort.

There are four essential components of a typical training session: warm-up and stretching, skills instruction, competition experience, and cool-down and stretching. (Fitness training or conditioning also can be included following competition experience and prior to cool-down.) The following techniques and tips will provide the most successful learning opportunities.

Warm-up and Stretching

- Time is precious and skills repetition vital. Warm up in a way specific to golf.
- When athletes have difficulties with balance, use stretching activities that can be done while sitting, lying down or leaning against a wall or partner.
- Involve athletes in leading the exercises; coaches are then free to circulate and directly assist others who need help.
- Teach a simple routine involving the major muscle groups, which athletes can repeat at home and at competition. Warm up by walking or jogging five minutes. Then perform the following stretches:
 - 1) calf stretch against wall;
 - 2) hamstring stretch or toe touch;
 - 3) quad stretch holding onto wall for balance (both directions);
 - 4) groin stretch while sitting or lunging to each side;
 - 5) shoulder stretch (grasping hands behind body and leaning forward; and
 - 6) triceps stretch (reaching to sky with one arm, bending elbow which points forward and pulling elbow straight back with opposite hand; perform stretch with other arm).
- Following is what to do when stretching:

Do	Prevention
Perform warm-up activity for 5 minutes (walk or run slowly).	Muscle fiber tear or strain
Perform held stretches for 10-30 seconds each.	Muscle fiber tear or strain.
Start with the large muscle groups such as the legs, then move to the shoulders, etc.	Greater energy required warming large muscle groups. Circulation and heart rate is increased immediately.
Perform each stretch to your personal point of tension.	Strain on the joints, back or neck.
Breathe while stretching.	Releases tension and increases oxygen flow to muscles
Perform stretches in a “safe” position and through range of motion.	For example, perform a sit-up crunch with back flat to ground to avoid stress on lower back.



Skills Instruction

- The key is to break skills into small basic tasks or steps; tasks are then put together to form skills. (*Addresses difficulty in performing multi-step tasks*)
- **Drills** are developed so that skills can be applied in a game situation. The result is skills performed in competition.

Communication when Teaching and Coaching

- Communicate effectively.
 - **Concise:** Use a few descriptive “keywords.”. Do not use long sentences. For example: “Reach for the sky.” (*Addresses difficulty in understanding verbal instructions and desired actions*)
 - **Consistent:** Use the same word or words for the same action. (*Addresses need for repetition and reinforcement*)
 - **Command-oriented:** Verbally reinforce the athlete immediately after a desired action. Make the reinforcement action-oriented and specific to the skill. (*Addresses need for frequent motivation and words associated with a physical action*)
- Make sure an athlete is looking at you when making a coaching point. When needed, physically prompt an athlete to look at you. (*Addresses difficulty in maintaining attention*)
- Ask athletes questions rather than always providing directions. Lead them to think for themselves. Verify athlete responses. (*Addresses independence*)

Levels of Instruction: Skills Progression

- Assess what an athlete is ready to do; build upon strengths.
- Use appropriate levels of assistance for each athlete – verbal, visual (demonstration), physical prompt, physical assistance. Gradually reduce physical assistance in favor of simple cues and, eventually, no prompting at all. (*Addresses difficulty in learning and improving*)
 - The lower the athlete’s ability level, the more assistance may be required.
 - Verbal cues should always be accompanied by demonstration.
 - Physical prompts may be needed to help the athlete get positioned properly.
 - When all else fails, move the athlete through the complete skill.
- Practice skills in situations that are related to the game or event. (*Addresses difficulty in generalizing to new situations*)
- Use drills and activities that involve many athletes at all times. (*Addresses slower rate of learning and the need for motivation and repetition*)

Competition Experience

- Provide a realistic competition experience during each practice in order to improve confidence and performance under the pressure of real competition.
- Help athletes understand game concepts by providing immediate and concrete feedback. During scrimmages or practice games, stop the play to help athletes recognize critical situations and learn how to react successfully.
- Emphasize the value of enforcing the rules during training. Rules enforcement helps prepare athletes for participation in community sports and in life.

Cool-down and Stretching

- Having athletes do light jogging and then stretching major muscle groups will prevent muscle cramps and soreness and increase flexibility.
- Review the main themes of the training session, reward athlete performance and talk about the next competition or training session.



Training Principles Summary

Law of Overload

- Body adapts to training loads—explains how training works
- Adequate training loads improve overall fitness and increase performance
- Factors impacting training load: frequency, duration and intensity

Law of Reversibility

- Training loads that increase progressively create higher fitness levels
- No increase in fitness if loading is too far apart or stays the same
- Over-training or incomplete adaptation occurs when training loads are too great or too close

Law of Specificity

- Specific training load produces specific response and adaptations
- General training prepares athletes for specific training
- The greater the volume of general training, the greater the capacity for specific training

Principle of Individualism

- Athletes bring their unique talent, capabilities and capacities to training
- Heredity determines many physiological factors that impact training
- Chronological, biological and training ages must be considered when designing a training and competition plan

Principle of Variety

- Training is a long-term process and loading and recovery can become boring
- Make it fun for the athletes
- Be creative

Principle of Active Involvement

- Athletes have to want to actively and willingly participate in their training program
- Athletes have to be committed
- All aspects of athletes' lives contribute to their athletic success



Safety Hints for Your Training Session

1. A golf club can be like a dangerous weapon. It should never be swung in a group.
2. Athletes should be taught to swing in designated “swing” areas only.
3. Always approach an athlete who has a club in the address position from the front, facing the athlete.
4. Never position yourself or a student in the target line of a person swinging the club.
5. Pair students so they share one club. One student can become the “watchdog” for the other.
6. Establish a hitting line. No student should ever be allowed to hit in front of the established line.
7. Students should hold their golf club at the club head end whenever an instructor is demonstrating or organizing. This discourages swinging the club.
8. Teach students when to use the term “FORE,” and that using the term is not a substitute for following safety procedures.
9. Athletes should be taught to use a stop-look-and-swing method prior to each swing when playing golf.
10. In situations where close supervision is difficult, allow only half-swings or to hip height.

Note: Half-swings incorporate all the fundamental movements of a full swing.