Coach Education Program

Online Swimming Sport Certification

Special Olympics Kentucky
Coach Education Program

*If you have not already done so, please complete the following Class A Certification Process at: http://soky.org/coachcertification/ prior to completing this Sport Certification Training

- Become a Class A Volunteer
- Complete and Submit Class “A” Volunteer Application.  *Required every three years*
- Complete the online Volunteer Orientation Training and submit its quiz.  *Only required once during continued involvement with SOKY*
- Complete the online Special Olympics International Protective Behaviors course.  *Required every three years for those over the age of 18*
- Complete the online CDC’s “Heads Up” Concussion Training for SOKY and submit its quiz.  *Required every three years for those over the age of 18*
Swimming Sport Certification

• This training will cover Special Olympics Kentucky swimming events, rules, competitions, the divisioning and registration process, along with any additional swimming resources and other general information.

• The online Swimming Sport Certification training is required for SOKY coaches who like to become sport certified and is part of the criteria to be eligible to attend both USA and World Games. The training is also for those coaches and/or volunteers that would just like to learn more information about Special Olympics Kentucky as a whole and specifically its Swimming program.
Coaching Special Olympics Athletes prepares Special Olympics coaches to use their sport-specific knowledge in coaching athletes with intellectual disabilities. This course meets the Special Olympics standards and competencies for coach certification. For veteran Special Olympics coaches, this course serves as a reminder of the essentials sometimes forgotten after years of coaching. For new Special Olympics coaches, this course will help prepare you for your first role in coaching Special Olympics athletes.
Coaching Special Olympics Athletes (Cont.)

The better the coach …

the better the experiences …

the better the athlete!
Please take a minute to watch this “I Coach Because Clip” created by Special Olympics New Jersey

I COACH BECAUSE CLIP
Course Overview

Unit 1: The Athlete
Unit 2: Teaching & Training
Unit 3: Preparing & Coaching During Competition
Unit 4: Managing the Program
Unit 5: Additional Coach Information
Unit 6: SOKY Swimming Specifics
Unit 1 – The Athlete Overview

- Psychological Issues or Learning Issues
- Medical Issues
- Social Issues
Motivation – helping athletes maintain interest
- May have shorter attention span; harder to keep independently “on task”.
- May be motivated more by short-term rather than long-term goals.
- May learn better with more frequent positive reinforcement

Perception – helping athletes understand the sport in which they are participating
- May have difficulty focusing attention on the appropriate object or task
- May have impairments in sight or hearing
Unit 1 – Psychological Issues & Considerations (Cont.)

**Comprehension** – helping athletes remember and perform the skill they have learned (understanding)

- May find it difficult to understand verbal explanations of new skills. Often find it easier to learn through visual demonstrations and physical prompts.
- May have difficulty in understanding complex, multi-part actions or explanations.
- Often take a longer time between learning one piece of information and the next (learning plateau).
- Less able to generalize skills learned in one situation to a different situation.

**Memory**

- May need frequent repetition and reminders in order to remember concept or skill
Unit 1 – Psychological Challenges

*Each psychological item has its challenge and action:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Item</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>Easily distracted by noise</td>
<td>Control surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>History of neglect &amp; negative reinforcement, feeling of failure</td>
<td>Focus on positive, appropriate reinforcement, catch the athlete doing well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>Difficulty applying skills in different environments</td>
<td>Practice in different settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Difficulty learning through verbal explanation only</td>
<td>Add demonstrations and/or physical manipulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Down Syndrome**

- Approximately 10% of individuals with Down Syndrome have a condition called atlanto-axial instability, which is a mal-alignment of the cervical vertebrae C-1 and C-2 in the neck. This condition may cause possible injury if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or radically flex the neck or upper spine.

- Prohibited sports – equestrian, gymnastics, diving, pentathlon, butterfly and dive starts in swimming, high jump, alpine/snowboarding, squat lift and soccer.

**Medications**

- Understand the physical side effects of an athlete’s medication

- Very important to know the medications athletes are taking
Seizures

• Incidence tends to be higher with Special Olympics athletes
• Athlete safety to minimize the adverse effects of a seizure

Physical Disabilities

• Some athletes also have physical disabilities which may affect the sports they can participate in or the methods of teaching a coach must use. Special Olympics has events for individuals who use wheelchairs, walkers or other assistance.
• Muscle strength may be needed for particular sports and some athletes may not have the strength for those sports. This is often due to lack of use rather than a permanent disability.
**Autism**

- 20% of athletes exhibit one or more of the autism spectrum disorders
- Over stimulate

**Fetal Alcohol Syndrome**

- These athletes consistently function better on performance tasks compared with verbal tasks. The more concrete the task, the better the performance.
- Tend to have more verbal comprehension skills, despite being comfortable and chatty around people. These athletes will also tend to have attention and memory deficits and often display poor judgement in distinguishing right from wrong.
## Unit 1 – Medical Considerations for each action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>See the challenge that correlates with the appropriate action.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Down Syndrome</td>
<td>Ensure the athlete is screened for atlanto-axial instability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Seizures</td>
<td>Be prepared to protect the athlete and minimize adverse affects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Autism spectrum disorders</td>
<td>Control and/or block self-stimulatory behavior and set up a behavior support plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Attention deficit/hyperactivity</td>
<td>Shorten drills and provide one-to-one assistance when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Fetal alcohol syndrome</td>
<td>Provide concrete performance tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit 1 – Social Considerations

**Social Skills**
- May lack basic social/adaptive skills due to a lack of opportunity or training
- May also lack communication skills and positive interaction with others

**Recreation at Home**
- Lack of physical activity
- Lack of encouragement

**Economic Status**
- May lack financial means
- May not have access to independent transportation
All of the following social consideration(s) may impact an athlete’s participation in Special Olympics:

- Inappropriate responses to social situations
- Physical inactivity being modeled
- Lack of endurance
- Lack of access to transportation

Our challenge as coaches is to develop a full understanding of our athletes and the strengths and weaknesses they bring with them to a Special Olympics program. By doing so we can begin to develop a training and competition program that they will benefit from and enjoy.
Unit 2 – Teaching & Training the Athlete
There are many ways to organize a training session for Special Olympics athletes. Because of some of the things previously identified concerning comprehension and memory, there is considerable value in developing a consistent training routine that provides familiarity, stability, and comfort.
Unit 2 – Organizing a Safe Training Session

Sport Specific Tips: Swimming

- Establish clear rules for behavior at your first practice and enforce them.
- Teach athletes that when you hear the whistle, "stop, look, and listen."
- Athletes should ask the coach before they leave the pool deck.
- Always rope off the swimming areas so that athletes do not obstruct other swimmers.
- Make sure athletes bring water to every practice, especially in hotter climates.
- Check your first-aid kit. Restock supplies as necessary.
- Identify the nearest phone that is accessible during practice.
- Ensure that the locker rooms and/or rest rooms are available and clean during practice.
Sport Specific Tips: Swimming (Cont.)

- Train all athletes and coaches on emergency procedures.
- Do not allow athletes to swim while wearing watches, bracelets or jewelry, including earrings.
- Provide proper stretching exercises after warming up at the beginning of each practice.
- Swimming aids and all other pool equipment should be in a designated place.
- Check for slippery deck conditions and remove standing water.
- Ensure that the correct number of certified lifeguards are present.
## Unit 2 – Organizing a Training Session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component and Details</th>
<th>Layout of Drill or Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up &amp; Stretching</td>
<td>Specific to the sport, repetitive and involve athletes in leading activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Construction</td>
<td>Break skills into smaller tasks, involve many athletes at a time and practice skills related to event situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition Experience</td>
<td>Simulate swim meet situations and work towards what the competition will look like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool-Down, Stretch, &amp; Reward</td>
<td>Specific to the sport – play a game in the pool or end with a healthy post-training snack.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit 2 – Organizing a Training Session: Warm-Up

**Warm-Up**

- A warm-up should be the first physical activity in every training session or competition. It helps prepare the body and mind for the activity we are about to do. Warm-ups should begin at a slow pace and gradually become a little faster and more difficult.

- A warm-up helps us to reach a state of physical and mental readiness. When we prepare both the body and the mind, we are less likely to suffer an injury and will perform better at each practice, training and competition.
Unit 2 – Organizing a Training Session: Warm-Up (Cont.)

- **Physical Benefits:** A warm-up prepares the body for sport or exercise and helps to prevent injury by:
  - Increasing heart rate
  - Increasing breathing rate
  - Increasing blood flow to the active muscles
  - Increasing body and muscle temperature

- **Mental Benefits:** Warm-ups prepare the mind to focus on the sport or exercise by:
  - Helping athletes shift focus from life to sport
  - Mentally reviewing skills previously learned
  - Connecting the mind and the body (linking hand and eye coordination)
Unit 2 – Organizing a Training Session: Warm-Up (Cont.)

• Every sport is different and each sport has specific skills and movements. The warm-up should be personalized to the sport and the ability levels of all of the athletes.

• However there are some general components that should be included in all warm-ups regardless of the sport in which includes the following:

  • Aerobic activity to raise heart rate
  • Dynamic stretches
  • Sport specific movements
Aerobic activities are whole body movements that will increase the heart rate that may include:

- Light swim for five minutes
- Team Dance
- Team Game (i.e. – tag or sport specific game)
- Build an obstacle course using the equipment and space you have for practice

Aerobic activities should start at a slow pace and gradually increase in intensity/difficulty and last at least five minutes.
Now that the body is warm it is time to focus on stretching the muscles you will use during your sport.

Dynamic stretches consist of active, controlled movements that take body parts through a full range of motion.

Swimming warm-ups may include:
- Swimming laps
- Stroke specific drills

General dynamic stretches include:
- Torso twists
- Arm circles
Unit 2 – Organizing a Training Session: Cool-Down

**Cool-Down**

- When your training, practice or sport session is complete you should always cool down. It is 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.

- There are many purposes of a cool-down including:
  - Decrease heart rate
  - Decrease breathing rate
  - Decrease body and muscle temperature
  - Decrease muscle soreness
  - Improve flexibility
  - Promote relaxation
Cool-Down

- The cool-down is also a great chance for coaches to review the session, to tell athletes what to expect at the next session, and to ask for feedback from athletes. Remind your athletes they need to drink water and have a healthy snack to help recover from practice. The Fit 5 Guide has suggestions for healthy snacks and recommendations for proper hydration.

- Cool-down activities may include: static stretching, controlled breathing intervals and some light aerobic activity.
Unit 2 – Training Sequence

- The key is to break down skills into small tasks or steps; tasks are then put together to form skills. Use drills and activities that involve many athletes at all times. Practice skills in situations that are related to the game or event. Break skills down into small steps.

Task → Skill → Application → Competition
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Sequence Element</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Acquire ability to repeatedly demonstrate sport competencies in different situations &amp; environments</td>
<td>Provide meet like drills or situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Acquire ability to perform series of sport competencies effectively and necessary to perform a sport</td>
<td>Work on essential sport competencies to perform the sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Acquire ability to put essential sport competencies into practice</td>
<td>Provide race opportunities in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td>Acquire ability to perform essential sport competencies</td>
<td>Break essential sport competencies down into individual parts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Communication is key to immediately reinforcing desired behavior. There are several key words that begin with a “C” which address what a coach should say:

- CONCISE
- CONSISTENT
- CLEAR
- COMMAND-ORIENTED
- CONCRETE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sport Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concise</td>
<td>Use a few key words that cue a desired action</td>
<td>&quot;Go to the free throw line&quot; Showing an athlete where to stand on defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Use the same word or phrase for the same action</td>
<td>Coach constantly say &quot;Breathe&quot; – teaching an athlete when to take a breath in swimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Use easy to understand words that have one meaning</td>
<td>&quot;Swing the bat&quot; teaching how/when to swing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command-Oriented</td>
<td>Use words that elicit or reinforce a desired action</td>
<td>&quot;On your mark. Set. Go.&quot; Using this phrase for starts in athletics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Connect words to something defined or tangible</td>
<td>&quot;Jump forward&quot; when coaching an athlete in the long jump.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is important to use the appropriate level of instruction and assistance.

- A lower ability athlete may require more assistance
- Verbal cues should always be accompanied by demonstration
- Partial physical assistance may be needed to properly position the athlete
- When all else fails take the athlete through the complete motion
# Unit 2 – Levels of Assistance or Instruction (Cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Instruction or Assistance</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sport Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full Physical Assistance</strong></td>
<td>Help the athlete through the entire motion of the skill</td>
<td>Softball: coach makes an adjustment to the athlete’s arm motion when throwing the ball by moving the athlete’s arm through the entire throwing movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal</strong></td>
<td>Tell the athlete what to do</td>
<td>Footwork: “run forward to the line; then return, running backward”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstration</strong></td>
<td>Show the athlete the proper technique</td>
<td>Soccer: one athlete shoots on goal while another watches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partial Physical Assistance</strong></td>
<td>Place the athlete’s hands in the proper position</td>
<td>Golf: coach physically adjusts the athlete’s hands on the golf club with the correct grip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- The goal is for coaches to meet each athlete where he/she is and treat him/her accordingly.

- However, a coach may often have certain expectations of an athlete that may not be realistic … not because the coach does not care, but because the coach does not understand or appreciate the differences that may exist.

- When an athlete exhibits what is generally perceived as inappropriate behavior, the inappropriate behavior may not be defiance, acting out or silliness. These behaviors may simply be a reflection or part of the person and/or what is operating in the moment.
### Unit 2 – Managing Athlete Behavior (Cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athlete Behavior Characteristics</th>
<th>Strategies to Improve Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Swimmer has a short attention span | 1. Dwell on a stroke or activity for short periods of time; provide numerous activities focusing on same task  
2. Provide different opportunities for repetition and review, which is the key to gaining new skill  
3. Work one-on-one to gain full attention. |
| Basketball athlete yells if he/she misses a shot | 1. Emphasize the other aspects of the game besides shooting  
2. Work on shooting drills without a hoop  
3. Begin to shoot at a hoop but in a non-game setting with a one-on-one coach |
| Bowler doesn’t wait their turn | 1. Have a coach at the lane help with the order of bowlers, explain whose turn it is  
2. Have the bowler wait with a coach behind the bowling area until their turn is up  
3. Emphasize the order and that the bowler will always follow the same individual |
- A key goal of Special Olympics is to provide an opportunity for all athletes to experience success in competitions.

- A Special Olympics athlete can benefit from many aspects of a competition (including meeting new people, participating in the festivities of Opening Ceremonies and other social events, the excitement of traveling to new places and staying away from home, etc.). None of these things, however, should be as important to the coach as the focus on the participation in the competition itself.

- This section highlights ways to improve the quality of an athlete’s competition experience.
Unit 3 – Preparing for Competition

Registration and Key Pre-Season Items

- Provide accurate entry and team roster information along with accurate qualifying times in which all are provided to SOKY State Office in a timely manner and by the requested due date.

- Help the specific Program Director prepare a successful competition for your athletes by meeting the registration deadlines and by turning in accurate and up to date information.

- As a coach, know and understand all of the rules in which can then be properly taught to your athletes

- Hold preseason meeting with athletes, coaches & family members to discuss expectations of the season – set the standard and any guidelines needed.
Supervision

Discuss the challenges associated with participating in competition away from home, and why adequate, non-coaching additional support personnel are needed (other persons).

Transportation

Lodging (need for same-sex supervision) [SOKY Housing Policy]

Social activities

Coaches meetings (Who will supervise athletes during these?)
Travel and Overnight

- Discuss overnight concerns with parents or group-home supervisors
- Write up a simple checklist of items to bring and distribute to athletes and parents
- Make sure that all special medication needs are understood. Coaches may have to assist with handling medications. Have all medical forms and information readily available at all times.
- Work with most effective rooming arrangements, taking into account athlete choice, behavioral and personality clashes, etc.
It is imperative that athlete training is done in a way to prepare athletes for competition. Several suggestions to aid in preparedness are:

• Prepare athletes by conducting your own practice meet. Include all elements such as staging to simulate a real meet as closely as possible.

• Make sure that you practice the Whistle Start and commands so your athletes will recognize them at a meet.

• Include a competition style warm-up at your practices.

• Prior to a meet, advise each athlete on what events they are competing in.
Guidelines for Success

- **Teach responsibility & independence:** Assist athletes in dressing appropriately, understanding what is happening at competition site, maintaining a focused attitude and appropriate behavior.

- **Arrive Early:** Allow time for putting on proper swimwear, warm-up and stretching routines and time to focus on the competition.

  Encourage maximum effort no matter your specific division or opponents throughout the entire competition!
Unit 3 – Competition-Day Coaching (Cont.)

Guidelines for Success
- Help athletes learn from winning & losing
  *Deal graciously and realistically with winning and losing. Focus on effort made, recognize accomplishments and new skills that were performed and taking something positive away from the experience.
- Let athletes compete without direct supervision (depending on ability)

IF YOU MUST PROTEST A RESULT OR OUTCOME OF AN EVENT, PLEASE DO SO IN A CALM & RESPECTFUL MANNER!
The coach can be the key person who makes any competition experience a good one.

*Please, take the time to adequately prepare for competition and plan for on-site supervision and make sure your time coaching is time well spent.*
Unit 4 – Managing the Program

The successful Special Olympics Kentucky coach:

Is sports and coaching knowledgeable:

- Special Olympics Kentucky is a sport organization
- Technical knowledge of the sport and how to teach it is essential if coaches are to effectively help athletes improve their sport skills and truly benefit from Special Olympics.
- Successful coaches are constantly looking for opportunities to learn more about the sport.

Is Special Olympics Kentucky knowledgeable:

- Special Olympics Kentucky offered sports and modified rules to each sport
- Special Olympics Kentucky Mission Statement
- Special Olympics Kentucky Athlete and Coach Oath
- Special Olympics Kentucky Coaching Requirements (Coach Certification Process)

A better understanding of these will benefit your athletes!
The successful Special Olympics Kentucky coach:

**Recruits and trains assistant coaches:**

- Individualized coach-athlete teaching is key to successful training in Special Olympics.
- Assistant coaches can be recruited to help provide individualized attention.
- Assistant coaches are useful only if they are trained and coordinated at practice.
- Invites fellow co-workers or friends out to see a game or a practice in hopes they will become involved.

**Recruit and trains athletes:**

- A coach is also a promoter and recruiter; always tries to expand participation
Unit 4 – The Successful Special Olympics Coach (Cont.)

- Places athletes in correct division or ability level every season
- Puts a priority on safety
- Puts a priority on Health and Fitness & overall well-being of athletes
- Conducts high-quality training and competition
- Involves and educates families of participants
- Assists with community inclusion to improve social and communication skills of participants
- Understands the proper and preferred method for wanting to communicate any feedback, suggestions, or complaints to the SOKY state office.

  - NONE OF THE LISTED ITEMS ABOVE SHOULD TAKE PLACE AT OR DURING AN EVENT
  - THE ITEMS ABOVE SHOULD BE ADDRESSED VIA EMAIL OR PHONE CALL BY THE HEAD COACH AND ONLY THAT PARTICULAR COACH (EMAILS SHOULD BE SHORT AND TO THE POINT)
  - THE HEAD COACH SHOULD FUNNEL ALL COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE TEAM, PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, ETC. THROUGH THEM PRIOR TO BRINGING IT UP TO SOKY STATE OFFICE

We understand that every coach deserves to be heard, but in order to communicate most effectively, every coach should also understand the proper methods listed above!
A Positive Sport Experience Starts With The Coach

- Coaches have the greatest opportunity to create positive change in Special Olympics athletes, because they are the ones who work with athletes on a consistent basis. Good coaches know that learning to play a sport is more than just mastering skills associated with the sport – it takes teamwork, commitment, sacrifice, and dedication. These are qualities that Special Olympics coaches work to instill in their athletes, with the understanding that these lessons can have a positive impact on the athletes’ lives outside of sports. The second reason is that it is a requirement.

- You as a Special Olympics coach are role models and character builders. Coaches help our athletes discover their physical skills, their self-worth, their human courage, and their capacity to grow. Being a Special Olympics coach is one of the most important and rewarding volunteer roles.
Responsibilities of the Special Olympics Coach

- Assist athletes in learning sports skills and applying them in competitions.
- Encourage confidence and self-esteem through sport.
- Obtain equipment for athletic training.
- Help to recruit athletes and assistant coaches.
- Register athletes for competitions.
- Know and share the mission of Special Olympics in your community
- Most importantly HAVE FUN!
Coach Resources

- **Coach Code of Conduct**: Special Olympics Coaches are role models whose behavior should serve as a positive example for their athletes.

- **Athlete Code of Conduct**: Special Olympics Kentucky is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all athletes to honor sports and Special Olympics.

- **Family Member Code of Conduct**: This should be emphasized during training, competition, and special events at any level.

- **Volunteer Code of Conduct**: For SOKY volunteers.

  - [Volunteer Code of Conduct](#)
  - [Family Code of Conduct](#)
  - [Athlete Code of Conduct](#)
  - [Coach Code of Conduct](#)
Unit 5 – Additional Information
Coaches Corner (Cont.)

Key Coaching Forms

• Accident/Incident Form: [Online Version]
• Certificate of Insurance: [Online Version]
• Athlete Medical Form: [Online Version]
• Class A Volunteer and Unified Partner App: [Online Version]
• Local Program Contact List: [Online Version]
• Special Olympics Logo Usage Guidelines: [Online Version]

All can be found on the SOKY COACHES CORNER PAGE
Special Olympics Coach Oath – “In the name of all coaches, we shall follow written and verbal instructions of Special Olympics officials at all times, have our athletes at the appropriate events and activities at the proper time and abide by the rules and policies, in the spirit of sportsmanship.”
The Benefits of Swimming

Physical Benefits:
- Improves posture, flexibility, muscular endurance, strength and balance
- Stimulates circulation
- Promotes proper breathing
- Rehabilitates under-used or healing muscles
- Improves one’s ability to control and maintain a healthy weight
- Provides a great cardiovascular workout (potential of burning 350-420 calories per hour)

Social Benefits:
- A sport that is safe for all ages, at all fitness levels
- Lots of laughs and fun while getting a great workout
- Enjoyable even when working hard
- Provides social interaction opportunities at practices and meets

Psychological Benefits:
- Encourages a positive attitude, through physical and skill progression
- Heightened sense of well-being
- Increased energy level
- Participation in competitive swimming helps set high expectations for achievement
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

Important General Information

- **Main Point of Contact:** SOKY Individual Sports Program Manager
- **Spring Sport:** Season runs from February – June
- **Season Timeline:**
  - **January – February:** Teams form and begin training for the season
  - **March – April – May:** Swim Meets – Season consist of six (6) meets
  - **June:** State Swim Meet at Summer Games (Eastern Kentucky University)

**DURING THE SEASON, ATHLETES MUST ATTEND AND COMPETE IN AT LEAST TWO (2) MEETS TO QUALIFY FOR THE STATE MEET – ATHLETES CAN REGISTER FOR UP TO TWO (2) INDIVIDUAL EVENTS AND ONE (1) RELAY EVENT AT EACH COMPETITION.**

_SOKY Swimming Sports Manual_
SOKY SWIMMING

• The National Governing Body of Rules for SOKY Swimming are: International Swimming Federation (FINA) United States Swimming (USA)

• Coaches are responsible for knowing and understanding the rules of our governing bodies as well as any SOKY modified/adaptive rules. USA rules shall be employed except when they conflict with the Special Olympics Sport Rules.

• To obtain a copy of the USA Swimming Rules please click below: USA SWIMMING RULE BOOK
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

Short Course Events

- 25 Freestyle
- 50 Freestyle
- 100 Freestyle
- 200 Freestyle
- 25 Breaststroke
- 50 Breaststroke
- 100 Breaststroke
- 200 Breaststroke
- 25 Backstroke
- 50 Backstroke
- 100 Backstroke
- 200 Backstroke
- 25 Butterfly
- 50 Butterfly
- 100 Butterfly
- 200 Butterfly

4x25 Individual Medley
4x50 Individual Medley

Short Course Relays

- 4 x 25 Freestyle Relay
- 4 x 50 Freestyle Relay
- 4 x 100 Freestyle Relay
- 4 x 25 Medley Relay
- 4 x 50 Medley Relay
- 4 x 25 UNIFIED Freestyle Relay
- 4 x 50 UNIFIED Freestyle Relay
# Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

## Developmental Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Flotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Kickboard Flotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Kickboard Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Assisted Freestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Assisted Backstroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Unassisted Freestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Unassisted Backstroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Transitional Freestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Transitional Backstroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Flotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Assisted Swim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Developmental Relays

- 2 x 25 Flotation Relay
- 2 x 25 Kickboard Relay
  
- 2 x 25 Relay**
- 2 x 25 UNIFIED Relay**

** Any combination of developmental events
Divisioning

ABILITY is the primary divisioning factor in Special Olympics.

• An entry score (in this case a time) from a prior competition or a preliminary event determines the ability of an athlete or team. Other factors which are significant in establishing divisions are age and sex.

• Times from practice are used for the first few meets
  • Please submit current times.

• After the first few meets times from those meets will be used to division for future meets
One Person Heats

- It is sometimes necessary to division an athlete into a one person heat.

- The athlete must compete within 15% of his/her qualifying time in order to receive 1st place in a one person heat.

- For example, the qualifying time turned in at registration is 10 seconds. The athlete must swim the event at 11.5 seconds or faster in order to win first place.
Special Olympics International states that these events are intended for athletes of lower ability level.

- **MALES:**
  - Must have a qualifying time of 25.01 seconds and over to enter these events.
  - Any male with a qualifying time of 25 seconds and under may not be considered for these events.

- **FEMALES:**
  - Must have a qualifying time of 30.01 seconds and over to enter these events.
  - Any female with a qualifying time of 30 seconds and under may not enter these events.

- **RELAYS:**
  - Athletes who swim too fast to participate in the 25 free/back may still compete in the 4x25 free relay as the performance is measured by the teams overall time.
25 Free/Back Limitations Continued...

Penalty:

• Males who swim the 25 free and/or 25 back in 25 seconds and under will receive a participation ribbon

• Females who swim the 25 free and/or back in 30 seconds or under will receive a participation ribbon

• The athlete will not be allowed to enter the event(s) for the rest of the season
25 Free/Back Limitations Continued...

- If you have an athlete who is very close to the cut off time (consistently within 2 seconds) it is recommended that you do not enter them in these events.

- Athletes almost always swim faster in meets therefore if an athlete is on the time bubble more than likely they will swim too fast at the meet.

- This time limit WILL NOT apply at State. We always encourage our athletes to swim their best especially at State. If State is the first time an athlete swims faster than the time limit they will not be disqualified.
General Rules

The technical rules of competition are noted in the USA Rule Book. The USA Rule Book will be used for all events. Some exceptions to these rules are listed below.

• The Meet Referee shall have the authority to adjust these rules on a case by case basis for the safety and well being of an athlete. The referee may intervene in the competition at any stage to ensure that the appropriate regulations are observed.

• The Meet Referee shall have the discretion to allow for certain modifications/interpretations of the current technical rules based upon a physical disability characteristic. Such interpretation shall not give advantage over another swimmer. Stroke interpretations will be concerned with the action a limb is performing. The stroke judge shall be concerned with what action the arm or leg action constitutes.

• The Referee shall have full control and authority over all officials, approve their assignments and instruct them regarding all Special Olympics regulations related to competition. He/she shall enforce all rules and decisions of the Official Special Olympics Rules book and USA rules and shall decide all questions to the actual conduct of the meet.
General Rules (Cont.)
The technical rules of competition are noted in the USA Rule Book. The USA Rule Book will be used for all events. Some exceptions to these rules are listed below.

- During freestyle events, athletes may use any stroke and may change that stroke during the course of the race should they choose to do so. The only exception is during the individual medley or medley relay. In those events, athletes may use any stroke EXCEPT backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly during the freestyle portion.

- Standing on the bottom during freestyle events or during the freestyle portion of the medley events shall not disqualify a competitor BUT the swimmer shall not be allowed to walk making forward progress. Standing on the bottom is allowed only for the purpose of resting. Walking on or jumping from the bottom is cause for disqualification.

- A coach may guide the swimmer by voice only. A coach is not allowed to touch the swimmer from the time of the starting signal until all swimmers have completed the race.

- Assistant starters may be used to assist athletes in maintaining their positions at the starting line.
General Rules (Cont.)
The technical rules of competition are noted in the USA Rule Book. The USA Rule Book will be used for all events. Some exceptions to these rules are listed below.

- No competitor shall be permitted to use or wear any device that may aid his speed, buoyancy or endurance during a competition such as; webbed gloves, flippers, etc. Goggles may be worn.

- Swimmers may be assisted from the water if needed. Athletes are not to be pulled out of the water by their arms.

- During competition, athletes who finish their race should remain in their lane until everyone finishes except during relay races.

- If your athlete has a physical restraint/disability that affects their stroke technique, you should submit a Stroke Difficulty Form to the state office before the first meet.

- An athlete is NOT allowed to grasp lane lines to assist in forward motion.

- Breaststroke and butterfly turns are initiated by touching the wall with a two hand simultaneous touch at or above the water surface.
Stroke Difficulty Forms

- If your athlete has a physical disability that affects their stroke techniques you should submit a Stroke Difficulty Form to the state office before the first meet.

Stroke Difficulty Form

Name: ____________________________________
Team: ________________________________

Left Arm  Left Leg  Right Leg  Right Arm  Other

Physical Restraint: _______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

[ ] Visually Impaired  [ ] Hearing Impaired

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Event: __________________                 Heat: ___________  Lane: _____
Event: __________________                 Heat: ___________  Lane: _____
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

**Developmental General Rules**

- Athletes will start on the wall and swim to the opposite end of the pool.
  - This will help reinforce starts and finishes.

- Timers will be positioned to clock times at the 15 yard mark as the athletes swim past.

- Athletes start the race at the sound of the whistle or horn.

- All starts are in water starts.

- Athletes must stay in his/her designated lane for the entire race.

- An assistant may be allowed to guide the athlete, but may not assist with the athlete’s forward movements.

- Athletes may touch the lane rope, or may hang on the lane rope to rest as long as there is no advantage gained.
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

Developmental General Rules (Cont.)

• Athletes may stop and stand on the bottom to rest, but may not walk (step forward) or push off the bottom so as to gain an advantage.

• Athletes may not pull on lane ropes in an effort to obtain forward movement.

• In 25 yard events and relays, athletes must touch the wall at the finish. In the flotation race, the flotation may touch the wall at the finish. In the kickboard, the board must touch the wall as the athlete must keep 2 hands on the board at all times. All other events, any body part may touch the wall to finish.

• Relays consist of 2 athletes/or partner, with assistants.

• In relays, the same rules apply as to individual events.

• In relays, one athlete must touch the wall before the other athlete may start. The second athlete must touch the wall to finish.
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

Event/Facility Equipment Needed

• Starting device, (whistle, horn, gun). A visual start may be used for the hearing impaired. A strobe light in accordance with USA rules is recommended.
• Lanes Lines.
• Electronic Timing System and/or Stopwatches – at least one per lane
• Backstroke Flags.
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

**Relay Events**

- **There shall be four (4) swimmers on each relay team.**

- **Individual stroke relay teams (4x25 Free, 4x50 Free and 4x100 Free) are allowed to have one (1) alternate. This alternate must be listed on the registration form, cannot be registered for any other relays (as a member or as an alternate), and must be the slowest leg of the relay team.**

- **Each swimmer shall swim ¼ the distance of the total relay. No swimmer shall swim more than one leg of any relay.**

- **A relay team that combines genders to include both male and female athletes shall compete as a co-ed relay.**

- **Relay swimmers should exit the pool as soon as possible following the completion of their relay leg.**

- **Unified Relays** – teams shall consist of two (2) athletes and two (2) partners and the swimmers may be assigned in any order.

- **Unified Partners are allowed to enter one (1) short course relay event and one (1) developmental relay event per meet.**
Developmental Events

• Athletes participating in developmental events cannot enter short course events at the same meet.

• All athletes entering the 15 unassisted swim, the 25 transitional freestyle or the 25 transitional backstroke must possess recovery skills. A recovery skill is the method of recovering from a prone (horizontal) position to a standing (vertical position) without assistance or difficulty. Every attempt should be made to train the athlete to complete the distance with assistance only at the start. The athlete needs to possess the endurance to move 15-25 yards.

• FLOTION DEVICES are those that encircle the body. Water wings are not acceptable. Flotations that may be used are: 1) Head floats 2) Life Jackets/belts.

• Flotations must fit the athlete securely. KICKBOARDS CANNOT BE USED AS FLOTATIONS. Coaches are to provide all flotation devices and kickboards. Floatation does not have to be a Coast Guard approval device.
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

Developmental Events (Cont.)

• Coaches are responsible for obtaining assistants for lifting athletes in and out of the pool. Please follow good lifting techniques, ensure all safety and make sure all wheelchair brakes are in the lock position. (i.e. feet planted, weight evenly distributed, bend knees, lift with legs and not back, etc.) With the exception of the unassisted swim and the transitional swim, it is **required** that an assistant accompany the athlete into the water.

• Assistants’ hands must be visible at all times (out of the water is preferred). Any sculling or underwater hand movements may move the athlete forward, causing disqualification. Persons assisting athletes in an event are to guide or direct the athlete **without** assisting in forward movement.

• A touch cue may be necessary to communicate with the athlete. This can be done with a tap to the back, shoulder, arm, leg, etc. Immediately following the cue, the hands MUST be visible.

• Standing on the bottom in the racing course is allowed in flotation events, assisted events and the 15 M unassisted event for the purpose of resting. Walking on or jumping from the bottom must disqualify the competitor. This rule will not apply for the 15 M walk.
Swim Meet Information
(Times are estimations and are subject to change from meet to meet)

Meet requirements – All athletes must swim in two (2) swim meets during the regular swimming season to qualify for the state meet. If an athlete receives a participation ribbon at a meet, that meet will count as one of the two required.

Delegation check-in will begin 1 ½ hours before the scheduled start time of the meet and conclude 30 minutes prior to the start of the meet.

Scratches must be turned in at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the meet.

Warm-ups – Athletes will have a 15 to 30-minute period in the water to warm-up. The warm-up will conclude 15 minutes prior to the start of the meet.

Coaches Meeting – 15-30 minutes prior to the start of the event there will be a brief coaches meeting conducted by SOKY staff and meet directors. All head coaches are required to attend the coaches meeting.
Swim Meet Information (Cont.)

Adequate # of coaches / chaperones – Teams need to have enough personnel available at meets to supervise team members who are awaiting or finished competition.

Staging – Coaches and chaperones will listen for the clerk of course to call for events. The staging of athletes will stay three (3) to four (4) events ahead of the current event. When an athlete’s event is called, a coach / chaperone will bring him or her to the staging area. The athlete should be checked in using their wristband and seated. Athletes will be seated in lane order. They will also receive a sponge that has their lane assignment on it. Escorts will lead the athletes to the starting blocks in a single file line, wait for the completion of the event and then lead the athletes back to their designated team area.

Getting athletes to staging is the coach’s responsibility. Announcements will not be made for individual swimmers. It is imperative that coaches and chaperones actively listen for events to be called. They must look ahead in the event program to ensure that each athlete is ready to go to staging. Athletes must bring everything they need for the event to staging: goggles, swim cap, water, and towel.
Order of Events for ALL MEETS

100 Free
25 Back
25 Fly
50 Breast
200 Free
50 Back
100 Breast
100 Fly
25 Breast
25 Free
200 (ALL 200 events)**
100 Back
50 Free
100 IM
50 Fly

Relays
4 x 25 Free Relay
4 x 25 Medley Relay
4 x 25 Unified Free Relay
4 x 50 Free Relay

** Athletes may only swim one 200 event per meet**
USA Rule Concerning Whistle Starts

All Special Olympics Kentucky sanctioned swim meets will use this rule. **Coaches, please train your athletes using the whistle start!**

**THE RULE STATES:**
“At the commencement of each heat, the Referee shall signal to the swimmers by a short series of whistles, to remove all clothing except for swim wear and to stand ready at least one foot distance from the block area. Next, swimmers will hear a long whistle indicating that they should take one of the following positions and remain there:

- On the platform (if diving from the block)
- pool edge (if diving from the side of the pool)
- or in the water (if performing an in water start)

- When the swimmers and officials are ready, the Referee shall signal with an outstretched arm to the Starter that the swimmers are under the Starter’s control.

- On the Starter’s command “take you mark”, the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position with at least one foot at the front of the block, on the side or holding the wall with an outstretched arm in the water. When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.”
Important Clarification on False Starts

Under USA Swimming, there is No “Recall” for false starts.

Under the no recall starting procedure, the penalty for a false start is imposed on the offender after the completion of the swim. Races will not be called back, even if the entire division false starts. The first start generally is the swimmer’s best effort. Therefore, swimmers should not be penalized for a good start by having a race recalled due to someone false starting. The starter may recall a heat for unusual circumstances, such as a lane line break, sudden noise interfering with the start signal, or anything that may affect fair conduct of the race.
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

**General Safety Considerations and Rules**

- There shall be at least one certified lifeguard on duty for every 25 swimmers in the water. (includes everyone in the pool)
- The sole function of the lifeguard shall be to guard. If no relief lifeguard is available, the pool must be emptied even for short durations when a lifeguard must leave the pool side.
- The head coach and assistants will review the emergency action plan.
- Athlete medical forms shall be on site for all practice sessions and meets.
- Pool depth must be marked and visible.
- Water depth **should** be 6 feet deep before **beginning to teach** the dive start from the deck. At competition or practice, the minimum depth of the pool shall be 1.52 meters (5 ft) for racing starts from a starting block. A swimmer may dive from the side of the pool without a starting block if the depth is at least 1.22 meters (4 ft).
General Safety Considerations and Rules (Cont.)

- Safety lines must be in place to divide shallow and deep-water areas during recreational aquatic activities.
- A pool facility shall not be used unless a satisfactory inspection rating is received prior to any Special Olympics athlete entering the water.
- All rescue and first aid equipment should be inspected on a regular basis and should be easily accessible.
- An athlete with Down Syndrome who has been diagnosed with Atlanto-axial instability may not participate in the butterfly stroke and/or dive starts.
- Coaches need to keep important medical devices and medications with them during practices and meets (including nebulizers, inhalers, and vagal nerve stimulators.)
Attire and Equipment

• **Appropriate** swimming attire is required for all competitors. Clothing must be suited to the activities involved. Few sports require less equipment than swimming. Although equipment such as goggles and caps are recommended, a Special Olympics athlete only needs a swimsuit to participate.

• Athletes and Unified Partners will not be allowed to compete wearing ANY jewelry. This includes necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings, watches, etc.
Attire and Equipment (Cont.): 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.

• A one-piece, full coverage suit is required 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. Also be sure that the suit does not become transparent when wet.

• Racing suits, whether for men or women, will provide less drag and provide more efficiency in the water. Suits with flotation devices built in are only allowed in flotation events.
Attire and Equipment (Cont.): Cap, Goggles & Nose Clips

• 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 cap also reduces water drag and resistance.

• 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 must be careful adherence safety with the use of this equipment. There are several varieties of goggles that allow for differences in each swimmer's facial structure.

• 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.
Attire and Equipment (Cont.): Other & Coaches Apparel

• Other attire/equipment that might be needed includes towels, flip-flops/water shoes, and event equipment (including flotation devices, kickboards, etc.)

• Coaches should be presentably dressed and preferably wearing a shirt with a collar. Coaches should also be prepared to get into the water if necessary. This sometimes means wearing a swimsuit under clothing
Stroke & Relay Information

• All stroke and relay information can be found in the USA Swimming Rulebook or in the SOKY Swimming Sports Manual on pages 15-18.

• The four swimming strokes are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly.

• To provide more of a visual we will next cover four (4) common strokes with diagrams: the crawl stroke (freestyle), backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly with diagrams.
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

Crawl Stroke (freestyle) Diagram

1. As one arm begins the pull with the elbow straight, the other arm begins its recovery by bending and lifting the elbow upward. The legs kick up and down in a flutter kick.

2. The pulling arm bends at the elbow. As it is pulled under the body the elbow is held high.

3. The pulling arm reaches maximum elbow bend as it passes under shoulder and chest. Recovering arm enters the water directly in front of the shoulder.
4. As the arm pulls nears completion, the head is rotated to the side for breathing.

5. Breath is taken as arm leaves water. Inhalation is through the mouth.
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

**Backstroke Diagram**

1. The arm has just entered the water at a point directly over the shoulder. The legs are kicked up and downward in the flutter kick.

2. The left arm sinks downward as the pull begins and the right arm starts its recovery directly upward.
3. The elbow of the pulling arm continues to bend as it is pulled backward. The recovering arm recovers directly upward.

4. The pulling arm pushes back and downward, while the legs continue their flutter kick.

5. The pull ends with the palms pressing water toward the bottom of the pool, while the recovering arm enters the water in a line directly over the shoulder.
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

**Breaststroke Diagram**

1. The stroke begins from a stretched-out horizontal position, palms facing diagonally outward.

2. Arms are pulled outward, downward and back. The head is lifted up by flexion of the neck.

3. The breath is taken as arms and the pull and legs start to recover by bending at the knees.
4. After the breath is taken, the face is placed back into the water and the heels are brought up toward the buttocks. The arms are pressed forward.

5. The leg kick is made as the arms are extended and the head is dropped slightly so eyes are underwater (but not the top of the head). The swimmer now goes into the glide position.
Unit 6 – SOKY Swimming Specifics

Butterfly Diagram

1. The arms enter the water at shoulder width with the elbows straight. The feet kick downward in the first kick.

2. The hands press in an outward and downward direction with the elbows held high and kept bent.

3. The hands almost come together under the chest and the elbows are bent at right angles.
4. As the arms finish the pull, the second kick is made and the breath is taken.

5. The arms are recovered over the water and the head is lowered so the face is down.
This online coaching guide covers planning a season, teaching skills, teaching rules, and includes a quick start guide. It also includes virtual training/learning videos in which can offer you a more hands-on experience when learning about the sport of Swimming.

Online Special Olympics Swimming Coaching Guide
Thank you for finishing the SOKY Swimming Sport Certification Training Presentation! In order to complete and receive credit for entire training, please take the following quiz:

**Note: Please review the SOKY Swimming Manual and the USA Swimming Rulebook. Some quiz questions will cover material from both rule books.

[CLICK HERE: SOKY Swimming Sport Certification Quiz]