

Special Olympics Pennsylvania
Young Athletes

At Home Guide



Special Olympics
Young Athletes™



Special Olympics Young Athletes™

Provides many social, cognitive, and physical benefits; however, one of the primary goals of Young Athletes™ At Home is to provide you with some tools and resources that allow you to play with your child in a non-clinical setting.

The Young Athletes™ At Home Guide has games and activities that help children learn movements they will use in sports and daily life.

There are eight skill areas in the At Home Guide. Each skill area includes activities that can be done with one child or a group of children. There are tips in the At Home Guide on how to adapt the activities to match the skills or needs of each child.

Within each skill area, activities are listed by ease and difficulty. The activities are in order of normal development, from basic skills to more complex skills. Match each activity to the ability of the child. As a child gets more comfortable with a skill, move on to a more difficult activity.

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Play with a Purpose

The Young Athletes™ curriculum was developed and evaluated by the Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts at Boston in collaboration with the Frank Porter Graham Research Institute at the University of North Carolina. Young Athletes™ can help:

- Improve gross motor skills
 - Celebrate your child's abilities
 - Improve social and language skills
 - Increase confidence and other kindergarten readiness skills
 - Develop skills for future participation in sports
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Everyone benefits from Special Olympics Young Athletes

Athletes™ At Home. Parents, siblings, friends, and young athletes can play together at home with the Young Athletes™ guide to provide ideas and suggestions for games and activities.

Young Athletes™ At School. Early childhood educators, therapists, and P.E. teachers can utilize the Young Athletes™ program in the school setting to help young athletes progress and learn sports skills at their developmental level.

Young Athletes™ in the Community. Community programs offer an opportunity for parents, siblings, friends, and young athletes to come together in a guided play experience led by Young Athletes™ coaches and volunteers.



Young Athletes At Home Equipment

Young Athletes activities use equipment to help children focus on each skill. Equipment can be substituted for materials that can be found around the house.

Activities Overview

- Foundational Skills and Body Awareness
- Walking and Running
- Balancing and Jumping
- Trapping and Catching
- Throwing
- Striking
- Kicking
- Advanced Skills for Sports

Equipment

Suggested Substitutions

Balance Beam

Tape or Rope



Small Foam Ball

Tennis ball
Any small ball



Beanbags

Small, soft toys or figures
Bags filled with rice, sand or beans
Natural items, like flowers or leaves



Sport Cones

Boxes
Plastic soda bottles filled with sand



Foundational Skills

Foundational Skills provides games and activities to help children develop fitness, strength, body awareness, spatial concepts, adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements), and visual tracking skills.

Activities in this section include:

Scarf Games

Children's Songs

I Spy

Follow The Leader

Obstacle Course

Tunnels Crawl

Yoga

Animal Exercises



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Body awareness is a foundational skill for motor and social skill development. For body awareness, activities such as the following, children's songs and scarf games, are recommended. The scarf's movement allows for children to make many adjustments in movements and postures, and still achieve success.

Scarf Games

Encourage your child to follow the movement of the scarf with his or her head and eyes. Try dropping the scarf and encourage the child to "catch" the scarf with his or her hand, head, elbow, foot, etc.

Peer Partner Play: Have your child play with a friend or sibling by tossing the scarf to one another. Each child can take turns calling out the body part with which to catch the scarf.

Pretend Play: Pretend the scarf is a bird and make it fly high in the sky or a fish that is swimming in the water.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Scarf

Children's Songs

Children's songs that associate words with actions encourage language, body awareness, and coordinated movement. Examples of activity based songs that help children associate words with actions are "Wheels on the Bus", "If You're Happy and You Know It", "Hokey Pokey", and "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes".

Piggyback Songs are also great to create your own lyrics to the melody of children's songs that are familiar to you and your child. Try incorporating "sports terminology" within the lyrics to introduce sports terms and body movements to your child. There are many websites that offer piggyback song lyrics for inspiration.



Tips and Adaptations

- **Use high energy and enthusiasm to encourage participation in all the activities.**
- **Make note of your child's ability to remember lyrics, activities and/or body parts, and reinforce those areas in other activities such as eating and dressing.**



Awareness of one's self and one's relationship to the environment along with basic health and physical fitness is important for functional mobility and motor development. These activities will help to promote your child's ability to recognize his or her body in the environment, and interact with people and objects within it.

I Spy With My Little Eye

Encourage your child to scan his or her environment to identify and differentiate between an object and their features. Ask your child to spy for certain colors, shapes, or other features. Ask him or her to crawl, walk backwards, run, etc. to the spied object.

Progress by asking children to identify colors, shapes or healthy food items. Children can work in pairs to promote social skills.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Floor markers, beanbags

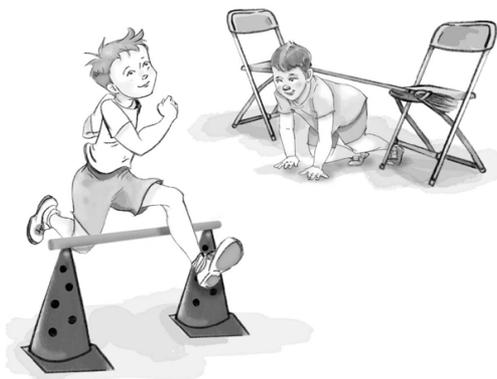
Follow The Leader

Encourage your child to play “follow the leader” as you walk in different ways (slow, fast, march, etc.), move different body parts (arms up, arms out, etc.), and perform different tasks (over/under, around/between, etc.). Sing or chant the activities you are doing.



Obstacle Course

Set up a basic obstacle course with your Young Athletes™ equipment and items in your home. Pillows are great to crawl or jump over and benches and chairs work well for crawling under. Introduce and reinforce concepts such as on/off, over/under, around/through, and fast/slow as the child completes the course. Repeating the activity to music will also help to promote rhythm and aerobic fitness.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Cones, floor markers, hoops, dowels, beams

Tips and Adaptations

- **Make note of the concepts your child has mastered and those that are still developing (knowing on/off, not up/down; identifying red, not blue).**
- **Incorporate concepts during play and other activities such as giving directions to move around stationary objects such as a couch or crawl under a table to retrieve a play toy.**
- **Observe your child's endurance for physical activity. Children with low muscle tone may tire easily. Go at your child's pace. His or her endurance will improve with time and practice.**



Strength is an important foundation for mobility and skill development. The activities presented in this section will promote strength and stability through the torso/trunk, arms and legs, and will build a good foundation for balance activities.

Tunnels Crawl



Have your child crawl through a tunnel or under a series of obstacles such as dowels supported by cones. Try crawling next to your child for encouragement. Make a game of who can get to the end first!

You can also make tunnels by touching the ground with your feet and hands, sending your hips into the air while your child crawls beneath you through the tunnel.

Yoga

Yoga positions offer many benefits such as flexibility, balance, strength, coordination, spatial awareness, sensory integration, and self-control. There are many websites, smart phone applications, and DVDs that offer yoga instruction for children. This is a wonderful activity to learn and do together as a family.

Tips and Adaptations

- **Make note of approximately how many times your child can perform each activity.**
- **Encourage more repetitions or longer duration over several weeks to develop muscular strength and endurance.**
- **Have fun counting or reciting the alphabet while you play.**
- **Add music to create a fun environment.**

Animal Exercises

Children love to pretend that they are animals and move their bodies in different ways. You can use your imagination or some of these exercises to encourage movement and expression. Use picture books or images from the computer to help your child visualize the animal and the movement.

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- **Bear Crawl:** Have your child bend down with his or her hands and feet on the ground. Encourage him or her to crawl/walk like a bear. Make sure the knees do not touch the floor. Growl for fun!



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- **Inch Worm Wiggle:** Have your child bend forward so that his or her hands and feet are on the ground. Think of the position as an upside-down V. Encourage him or her to move like an inchworm by walking the hands forward and then walking the feet up to the hands.



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- **Crab Walk:** Have your child sit on the floor with feet flat on the floor, knees bent, and hands flat on the floor, slightly behind the body. Ask him or her to lift the hips off the floor and walk his or her hands and feet backwards. Once that is mastered, ask him or her to crawl sideways or forward in the same position.

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- **Bunny Hop:** Have your child bend forward so his or her hands and feet are on the ground. Encourage him or her to hop like a bunny by moving the hands forward and then hopping the feet up to the hands.

Walking and Running

These lessons will provide games and activities to help children develop walking and running skills, fitness, strength, body awareness, spatial concepts, and adaptive skills (following instructions, imitating motor movements).

Activities in this section include:

Follow the Leader

Side Stepping

Follow The Path

Run and Carry

Running Styles

As with all gross motor skills, each child will develop at his or her own pace. Many children often begin walking between 9 and 15 months of age. Beginning walkers walk with their hands at shoulder height (also called high guard) and their feet wide apart and turned out at the toes. This offers them a wide base of support. As children feel more balanced and secure, they will drop their arms, narrow their base of support by bringing their feet closer together, and begin to rotate their trunk as they move.

Most children do not begin to run until 6 to 7 months after beginning to walk. As with beginning walkers, beginning runners will use a high guard with their arms, and a wide base until they feel more balance and secure.

Follow the Leader

Encourage your child to play “follow the leader” as you walk in different ways (slow, fast, march, etc.), move different body parts (arms up, arms out, etc.), and perform different tasks (over/under, around/between, etc.). Sing or chant the activities you are doing. Peer Partner Play: Invite a friend or sibling to play and have each child take a turn being the “leader”. Variation: To prepare your child to start and stop moving cue, as needed in sports competition, try blowing a whistle or clapping when you start or stop.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED:
Floor markers, beanbags
(option: soft toys)

Side Stepping

Set out a path marked by hoops, floor markers, cones, or household items and have your child side step to each object. Objects can be placed on markers several feet away that the child can retrieve and place on a different marker.

Tips and Adaptations

- If you notice your child is using too long or too short strides, use floor markers to trace a pattern on the floor that he or she can follow that allows for proper stride length.

Follow The Path

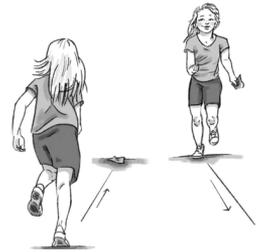
Set out a path marked by hoops, floor markers, cones, or household items for your child to follow. Change the distance between the objects to encourage proper stride length or add variety.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Beanbags, floor markers (option: cones)

Run and Carry

Place two floor markers or cones a few feet from one another. Place two to five small objects on one marker. Have your child pick up the objects one at a time and run or walk to place it on the opposite marker. Repeat until all objects are on the opposite marker. Try playing music to add to the excitement of the activity or have a race to improve aerobic fitness!



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Beanbags

Running Styles

Demonstrate different types of running (slow, fast, backwards, zig-zag, etc.). Decide on a command signal such as a whistle, clap, or hand signal. Each time you use the command signal, your child should change his or her running style.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Cones (option: stacking cups), beanbags, box

Tips and Adaptations

- Encourage your child not to crouch or make extra movements when walking or side stepping and keep the hips facing forward.
- If arms are at high guard or swinging across the body, offer your child a mid-size ball or object to carry while walking or running.
- Listen and watch for foot slapping while running and encourage your child to walk on their toes or heels to reverse flat-foot steps.
- Don't place too much emphasis on the time frame in which your child learns to walk or run. Enjoy spending time with him or her.
- Try placing a beanbag on your child's head to encourage good posture and balance.

Balance and Jumping

Balance and Jumping provides games and activities to help children develop fitness, strength, body awareness, spatial concepts, balance, jumping, hand eye coordination, and adaptive skills. Once your child has practiced some of the activities and games in this guide, take some equipment to the park or playground and invite a friend. Your goal is to apply the skills he or she is learning and show how you can use the playground equipment to support what you are working on at home.

Activities in this section include:

"Coach Says"

Step and Jump

Jumping High

Trees in the Forest/

Flowers in the Garden

Tick-Tock the Crock



"Coach Says"

Based on the game Simon Says, ask your child to copy your movement and assume different positions. Some positions that may challenge his or her balance could be:

- Standing on tiptoes or heels
- Standing with one foot directly in front of the other
- Standing on one foot
- Standing with feet together and arms out

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Balance beam (option: rope), chalk line (option: line)

Step and Jump

Encourage your child to step up onto a balance beam or step up and then jump down from it. To progress, try having your child jump further out onto a marker and jump down from higher steps or surfaces.

Tips and Adaptations

To track a child's progress in an activity, note how they do at the beginning of Young Athletes and then every four weeks to see if the child improves. Use these assessments to know when children need more practice and when they can move on to harder skill areas.



Jumping High

Encourage your child to jump over a dowel, rope, or marker or encourage your child to jump up to grab an object. If your child cannot clear his or her feet from the floor, encourage jumping up for an object while “jumping down” from a beam or step.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plastic dowel (option: rope, floor marker), cones

Trees in the Forest

Have your child pretend to be a tree or a flower by having him or her stand with his or her feet on two floor markers. Pretend to be the wind and move around your child fanning him or her with a scarf as he or she bends and sways in the breeze. Increase the difficulty by moving the floor markers closer together or having him or her put both feet on one floor marker.



Increase the difficulty by having the children put both feet on one floor marker, stand on one foot or stand up on a block.

Peer Partner Play: Invite a friend or sibling to play so there are many trees or flowers blowing in the breeze. Let each child take turns being the wind.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Floor markers, scarf



Tick-Tock the Crock



Set out floor markers and pretend they are rocks in a river. Ask your child to pretend there is a crocodile in the river and that he or she needs to get across by stepping on the “rocks” so he or she does not fall in. Increase the difficulty by placing the markers further apart. Peer Partner Play: If a friend or sibling is playing, it can be a fun challenge to help each other get across the river. Holding hands make it an even bigger challenge!

Progress the activity by having two children hold hands and work together to get across the river. Or have children cross the river using only one color of blocks or floor markers.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Blocks, floor markers*

Tips and Adaptations

- To make an activity or game involving balance easier or more difficult, consider changing the support surface (sand, grass, mat, etc.) or base of support (balance beam, floor markers, etc.)
- New jumpers will push off and/or land with one foot leading the other, rather than both feet pushing off and landing at the same time. It will take some time, but encourage your child to jump off and land with both feet at the same time.
- If your child pushes off or lands flat-footed, encourage him or her to lean forward and bend at the knees.
- If leaping is a challenge for your child, run alongside and hold his or her hand as you practice leaping over an object or marker.
- Be patient and work on balance and jumping activities often.

Trapping and Catching

Trapping and Catching provides games and activities to help children develop trapping and catching, fitness, strength, body awareness, spatial concepts, balance, hand eye coordination, motor control, and proprioception.

**Activities in
this section
include:**

Rolling and Trapping

Bubble Catching

Big Ball Catch

Bean Ball Catch

Bounce Catch

High Ball Catch

Trapping and Catching

Trapping is when a child stops or catches a ball with his or her body, rather than just with his or her hands. Trapping and catching skills are used in many sports and require:

- *Visual tracking and hand-eye coordination (Lesson 1 – Foundational Skills)*
- *Stability and strength (Lesson 1 – Foundational Skills, Lesson 3 – Balance and Jumping)*

Rolling and Trapping

Sit in front of your child and roll a ball back and forth. As your child rolls the ball, ask him or her to count, name an animal or a color. Decrease the size of the ball, increase the speed the ball is thrown, or have your child side sit or kneel to make it more challenging.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Slow motion ball (option: small foam ball, tennis ball)*

Bubble Catching

Have your child stand on a floor marker. Blow bubbles in the direction of your child. Ask him or her to catch the bubbles with one or two hands while remaining on the marker. Encourage him or her to clap or squeeze a bubble. Bubbles have slow flight characteristics that can help your child achieve early success in catching rather than trapping.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Bubbles*

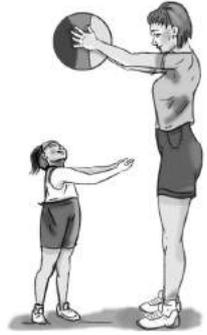
Big Ball Catch

Stand facing your child and slowly pass the ball to him or her. Repeat several times, moving more quickly each time. Next have your child grab the ball from your hands. Then, tell him or her that the ball will be let go right before it reaches his or her hands. Practice this several times before actually tossing the ball.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Slow motion ball (option: beach ball)*

Bean Bag Catch

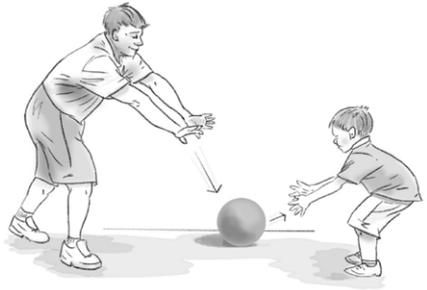
Stand facing the child and slowly bring the ball toward them, at the level of their waist. Repeat several times, moving more quickly each time. Next, drop the ball right before it reaches their hands and encourage them to catch it with one hand and not let the ball hit the ground.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Slow motion ball (option: beach ball)*

Bounce Catch

Face your child and bounce a beach ball or medium to large sized ball so that he or she can catch it without moving. To progress, try moving farther away and using a smaller ball.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Slow motion ball (option: playground ball)*



High Ball Catch

Kneel about three feet away from your child. Gently toss a beach ball or slow moving ball from chest level (higher than head height to your child) and encourage him or her to catch the ball with fingers pointing up. Be sure to throw the ball with a high arc and with fingers pointing up. To increase the challenge move farther away as you toss the ball and vary between high tosses and low tosses to your child.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Slow motion ball (option: beach ball, playground ball)*

Tips and Adaptations

- It is easier to trap and catch a mid-size or large ball than a small ball. A good sized ball will be approximately the width between the child's hands when his or her elbows are held at the sides.
- It is easier to trap or catch a rolled ball than a tossed ball.
- When beginning to practice trapping and catching with your child, do not throw the ball high up into the air.
- Catching or trapping slower moving objects is easier when first starting. Bubbles, beach balls, and lightweight balls have longer flight times than playground balls, and will help your child achieve early success in catching.
- Ask your child to bring his or her arms out in front with the palms up. When catching above the waist, fingers point up.

Throwing

This lesson provides games and activities to help children develop throwing skills, fitness, strength, body awareness, and spatial concepts.

Throwing requires strength, flexibility, balance, and coordination. Early development of grip and release begins with two-handed underhand tossing of a light weight, mid-size ball. A good rule of thumb is if the ball can easily be lifted above the head with two hands, then the ball is a good size for the child. Progression then continues to two-hand overhand throwing and then one-hand throwing.

Activities in this section include:

Rolling

Two-Handed Underhand Toss

One-Handed Underhand Toss

Two-Handed Overhand Throw

One-Handed Overhand Throw

Bowling



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Throwing



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Rolling

Sit on the ground with your legs outstretched in a straddle position. Roll a ball back and forth with your child. Progress this activity so that you're rolling the ball from kneeling or standing.

Variation: Encourage your child to roll a ball from a standing position so that it passes between two cones to score a goal

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Ball

Two-Handed Underhand Toss

Encourage your child to stand with bent knees and hold an inflatable ball or fairly large ball with two hands. Ask your child to look at your hands and toss the ball underhand to you.



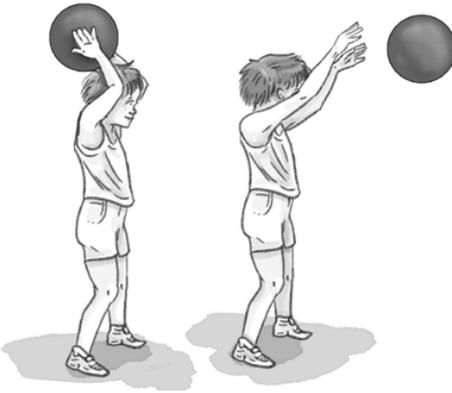
EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Slow motion ball (option: beach ball, playground ball), hoop (option: low net, basket)



One-Handed Underhand Toss

Encourage your child to stand with bent knees holding a small ball or beanbag with one hand. Ask your child to look at your hands and toss the ball into your hands. To progress, try tossing an object through a hoop or toward a target.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Small foam ball (option: beanbag, tennis ball), hoop (option: low net, basket)



Two-Handed Overhand Throw

Have your child stand with feet hip-width apart and one foot in front of the other. While facing the direction of the throw or a target, encourage your child to rock forward and back. As he or she rocks to the back foot, ask him or her to raise his or her arms up over the head. When rocking forward, encourage him or her to bring the arms forward to throw the ball.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Slow motion ball (option: beach ball, playground ball), hoop (option: low net, basket)

One-Handed Overhand Throw

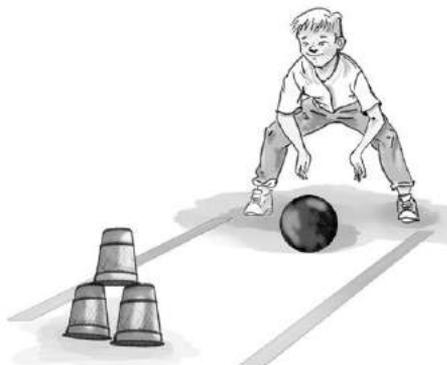
Using the same techniques as two-hand throwing, encourage your child to bring his or her arm back and forward to throw a small ball or bean bag towards your hands or a target. Variation: Encourage throwing the ball as far as possible. Set up targets at various distances so your child can focus on accuracy and distance.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Small foam ball (option: tennis ball, beanbag), hoop (option: low net, basket)

Tips and Adaptations

- When your child is ready to play throwing games with one hand, switch to a smaller ball so that it can be easily gripped and released.
- Have your child stand slightly sideways to the target at which they are throwing, with the foot opposite the throwing hand forward. This stance will allow him or her to shift weight forward as he or she releases the ball.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Stacking cups (option: plastic bowling pins, empty soda bottles), soft balance beams (option: tape, sticks), ball

Bowling

Create your own bowling lane with two balance beams and stacking cups into a pyramid formation (or other configuration) at the end of the “lane”. Have your child roll a ball towards the cups. Keep score for a math and number recognition connection!

Peer Partner Play: Invite friends and siblings to a bowling “party”. Set up one or two lanes, keep score and make a poster with the name of your very own home bowling alley.

Tips and Adaptations

- Throwing and catching are closely linked skills, so you will often find yourself working on both at the same time.
- Beginner throwers will stand with their feet even, regardless of whether they are tossing underhand or throwing overhand.
- To advance the skill of throwing, encourage your child to have his or her feet hip-width apart with one foot slightly forward so that weight shifting and trunk rotation can occur.
- Floor markers can be used to encourage correct feet position.
- As throwing skills progress, and as your child’s arm moves forward, it will bend at the elbow and then straighten when the ball is released. The wrist will also slap down as the ball releases.

Striking

This set of lessons provides games and activities to help children develop kicking skills, fitness, strength, body awareness, hand-eye coordination, and adaptive skills.

Striking is a term used to describe an action of either hitting a ball or object with one's hand, stick, bat, paddle, racket, etc. Striking or tapping a stationary ball with a fist or open hand encourages development of the skills necessary for sports such as tennis, golf, softball, volleyball, and hockey. Prerequisite skills for striking include:

- Hand-eye coordination (Lesson 1 – Foundational Skills)
 - Spatial awareness (Lesson 1 – Foundational Skills)
- Strength and flexibility (Lesson 1 – Foundational Skills)
 - Balance (Lesson 2 – Balance and Jumping)

Activities in this section include:

Side Striking

Beginning Hockey or Golf

Beginning Tennis or Softball

Handball

Ball Tapping



Side Striking

Using a sideways stance, encourage your child to strike a tossed beach ball or other ball with a racket, paddle, stick, bat, etc.



Beginning Hockey or Golf

Place a large ball on the ground and encourage your child to be positioned sideways to the ball. Have your child hold onto a dowel, hockey stick, golf club, etc. with two hands and encourage him or her to strike the ball with the club or stick. Variation: Set up two cones to be the goal and have your child shoot the ball toward the goal. Use floor markers to assist with positioning of feet. Peer Partner Play: Invite a friend or sibling to play. Have them take turns striking the ball and playing “goalie”.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Slow motion ball (option: beach ball, small foam ball, tennis ball), dowel (option: junior size floorball stick, junior size golf club), cones

Beginning Tennis or Softball

Place a large ball on a cone or tee. Encourage your child to stand sideways to the ball. Have your child hold a paddle or racket and encourage him or her to strike the ball with the paddle or racket.

Variation: Toss or bounce a beach ball or other large ball with a low and slow arc to your child rather than using the tee or cone. Peer Partner Play: Invite a friend or sibling to play and create “bases” for the children to run around after they hit the ball.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Ball, cone (option: softball tee), paddle (option: racquet, bat)

Handball

Place a beach ball on a cone or tee. Have your child hit the beach ball with a fist or open hand.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Slow motion ball (option: beach ball), cone (option: softball tee)*



Ball Tapping

Tap a beach ball toward your child and have him or her tap the ball back toward you with an open hand. To progress, have your child stand with feet hip-width apart and one foot in front of the other. While facing the direction of the target, toss the beach ball to your child and have him or her hit the ball with an open hand.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Slow motion ball (option: beach ball, balloon)*

Tips and Adaptations

- Encourage your child to keep his or her eyes on the ball.
- Encourage your child to stand sideways to the ball with good balance. Using floor markers can help your child stand in the proper position. A sideways stance, where he or she faces the ball, is important for good balance and rotation.
- Have your child twist his or her bellybutton forward when striking the ball to encourage follow through.
- Shifting your weight is important to correct striking form. If your child is not shifting his or her weight, have him or her rock forward and back while standing on floor markers.
- Large balls are easier to strike than small ones, and stationary objects are easier to strike than moving ones.
- Throw the ball slowly and with a small arc when just starting out having your child strike a moving object.
- Increase the skill level by increasing the distance between the ball and your child's body. This allows your child to progress from using a hand to strike, to striking with a paddle and then to striking with a bat, golf club, hockey stick, etc.

Kicking

Kicking provides games and activities to help children develop kicking skills, flexibility, general fitness, strength, body awareness, coordination, spatial concepts, and adaptive skills.

Most beginners will be successful in kicking if they run up to a stationary ball to kick it, because they will essentially run through the ball with one foot. Once your child masters running and kicking, have him or her stand behind a stationary ball and practice kicking it. This challenges your child to stand on one foot and disassociate one leg from the other and requires the ability to balance, at least for a moment, on one foot.

Activities in this section include:

Kicking/Passing Practice

Give and Go

Stationary Ball Kick

Run and Kick





Kicking/Passing Practice

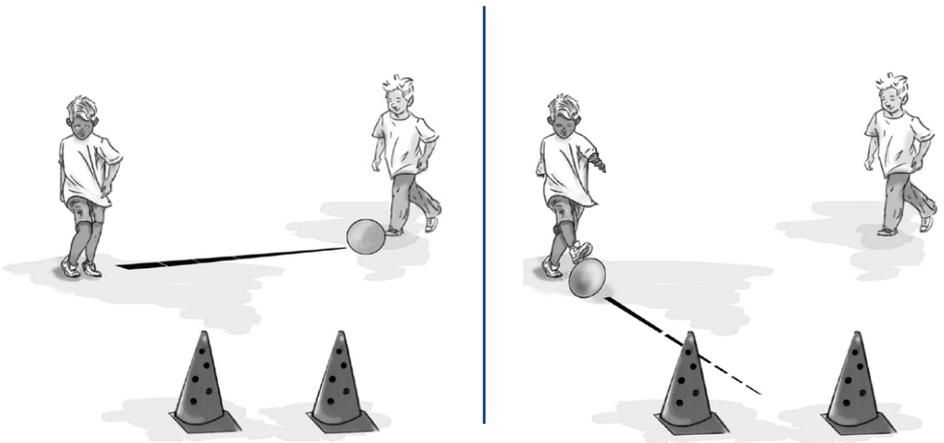
Roll or kick a ball toward your child and encourage him or her to kick the moving ball to back to you.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Slow motion ball (option: beach ball, junior football (soccer ball), playground ball)*

Give and Go

Kick a ball toward your child and encourage him or her to kick the moving ball toward a goal or between two cones.

Peer Partner Play: Invite a friend or sibling to play a game of kickball. Set out "bases" and a "home plate". Children can either kick a stationary ball from home plate or one rolled to them. After kicking the ball, encourage each child to run around the bases.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Slow motion ball (option: beach ball, junior football (soccer ball), playground ball), cones (option: goal, floor markers)*

Stationary Ball Kick

Place a ball on the ground and have your child stand behind it. Have your child kick the ball toward you with his or her preferred foot.

To progress, encourage your child to kick for distance by having him or her kick past various markers or kick the ball between two cones for accuracy.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Slow motion ball (option: beach ball, junior football (soccer ball), playground ball), floor markers (option: cones)

Run and Kick

Place a ball on the ground and have your child run up to the ball and kick it toward you.

Peer Partner Play: Invite a friend or sibling to play. One child can set up the markers for distance kicking or play “goalie” for accuracy. Take turns by switching roles.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Slow motion ball (option: beach ball, junior football (soccer ball), playground ball), cones

Tips and Adaptations

Children should focus their eyes on the ball before kicking and on the target as they kick.

Advanced Sports Skills

Advanced Skills lessons provide your child the chance to apply the skills developed over the course of the Young Athletes™ program to sports games. Advanced Skills also includes activities that promote team work and playing with rules. Enjoy the game and feel free to revisit the sub-skills from previous chapters to enhance your child's performance or enjoyment of the activities.

Activities in this section include:

Bounce and Catch

Dribble

Punting

Galloping

Skiping

Hurdles

Punting

Encourage your child to practice one-legged standing balance with the other leg forward and the arms out to the sides. Then, have your child swing the kicking leg back and forward. Next, have your child hold a beach ball, soccer ball, or playground ball in both hands, drop it, and kick it.



EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Slow motion ball (option: beach ball, playground ball)*

Galloping

In order to gallop, one foot is placed in front of the other – this is the lead foot. The lead foot takes a large step forward while the back foot stays in place. The back foot then takes a step forward, but always stays behind the lead foot. Place a series of markers on the ground in a straight line. Have your child step on the marker with his or her preferred foot. Ask your child to then bring up the back foot to the marker and hop onto it. Continue leading with the preferred foot.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Floor markers*

Skipping

Skipping is a locomotor skill that requires a child to repeatedly alternate their motion from the left side to the right side. It is essentially a combination of a hop and a gallop, all while maintaining balance, coordination, and a sense of rhythm. Place a series of markers on the ground in a straight line. Have your child step onto the marker and then perform a low hop on that same foot. As the hopping foot lands, place the other foot forward on the next marker.

Peer Partner Play: Invite a friend or sibling to play “Follow the Leader” allowing each child to take a turn leading in skipping or galloping. Each child can also take a turn laying out the floor markers in a straight or silly path. Sing or make up rhymes or stories as you skip and gallop

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: *Floor markers*

Tips and Adaptations

- Galloping usually emerges first, after a running pattern is firmly established. Children will lead with their dominant leg, and then learn to lead with their non-dominant leg.
- Skipping does not typically emerge until 4 to 7 years of age, with only 50% of children skipping by age 5.



Dribble

Stand behind your child and assist him or her in bouncing a ball with two hands, but without catching it. Provide less assistance as your child's skill improves. Change the ball size or begin to bounce with one hand.

***EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Slow motion ball (option: junior basketball, playground ball)*

Bounce and Catch

Stand behind your child and assist him or her in bouncing and catching a ball. Then, stand in front of your child and bounce the ball so he or she can catch it without moving. Encourage your child to bounce pass the ball back to you. To progress, increase the distance between players and use smaller balls.

***EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Slow motion ball (option: junior basketball, playground ball), hoop (option: basket)*

Hurdles

Set up hurdles using cones or weighted soda bottles and dowel rods, painters tape on the floor, or other safe objects to leap over. Encourage your child to run and leap over the hurdles without taking time to stop in between. Use floor markers to provide a target for your child to land on.

***EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Slow motion ball (option: junior basketball, playground ball), hoop (option: basket)*

Tips and Adaptations

- **Observe your child and try to determine which skills need further development. Preliminary and basic skills for these activities can be developed through the other activities described in this program.**
- **Early attempts to gallop, side-slide, and skip are usually awkward and stiff, and children often resort to early walking and running patterns (high guard, no arm swing, short step length).**

Congratulations!

Your child has completed the Young Athletes™ At Home program and has developed many of the fundamental skills designed to prepare him or her to take part in a variety of sports. Regardless of the level of achievement, there is a Special Olympics Pennsylvania sport for your child. Until your young athlete is eligible to train and compete in Special Olympics, we hope you will take advantage of the other opportunities and resources available to families and young athletes.

Participation in Special Olympics requires a commitment to training and learning sports that will lead to a child's success in Special Olympics, greater acceptance in the greater community, and enhanced self-esteem. Special Olympics Pennsylvania invites you to join us in a lifetime of sports!

The Young Athletes At Home Guide is just the beginning. You can find additional information and resources to help support Young Athletes by visiting:

resources.specialolympics.org/YoungAthletes





Becoming a Special Olympics Athlete

Special Olympics Pennsylvania provides year-round sports training and competition opportunities in more than 21 sports. Whether your child is interested in team or individual sports, Special Olympics Pennsylvania has something for everyone. Through traditional or Unified Sports® programs, your child can fulfill his or her dream to play sports in his or her own community.

How to transition from Young Athlete to Athlete:

- Athletes age 6 and 7 may participate in traditional or Unified Sports® training, but not competition. They may also continue to participate in Young Athletes™.
- Athletes age 8 and up may participate in traditional or Unified Sports® training and competition.
- Get in touch with your local program representatives. Local program contact information can be found at www.specialolympicspa.org. If you experience any problems, contact our Special Olympics Pennsylvania office in Norristown at 1-800-235-9058 ext. 235 for assistance in helping you make a local connection.
- From the local program representative, obtain an athlete enrollment kit which includes an Application for Participation. This application is also a medical form. Every athlete is required to have a medical exam prior to training and competition participation.
- Arrange for your family doctor or frequently seen physician to review your athlete's medical history and complete the Physical Examination section. Many physicians and Public Health Agencies will perform the necessary examination for free or at a reduced cost when asked to do so for Special Olympics. A signature from an authorized medical professional is required on the form. Authorized medical personnel include MDs, DOs, CRNPs, FNPs, and PAs.
- Upon completion of the application and medical form, return it to the local program representative who will arrange for your athlete to begin training in the sport of his/her choice.

Welcome to the Special Olympics family!



***Special
Olympics
Pennsylvania***

Contact us today to learn more:

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Toll Free 800-235-9058 | Fax 610-630-9456

www.specialolympicspa.org

www.specialolympics.org/YoungAthletes



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Young Athletes™