



Coaches and Volunteers

# Activity Guide



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COACHES AND VOLUNTEERS

# Activity Guide





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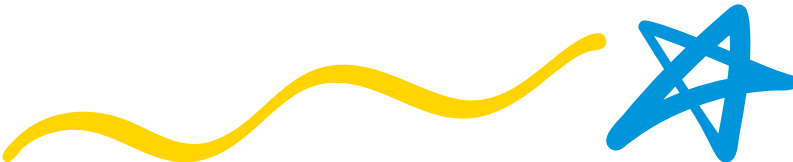
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# Overview of the Young Athletes Programme

## Need for the Programme

The Young Athletes programme was first introduced to Special Olympics Ireland in 2016, to address the need to provide children with intellectual disabilities an opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity, prior to turning six years old, the eligible age to join a Special Olympics Ireland sports club.

The **aims** and **objectives** of the Young Athletes programme align with the All-Island Physical Literacy Consensus Statement (2022) which emphasises the importance of lifelong physical literacy and physical activity for all and in which each person can benefit from a better quality of life. Through participation in the Young Athletes programme, children are provided with a strong start on their lifelong journey of physical literacy.

“

Physical literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding that enables a person to value and participate in physical activity throughout life!”

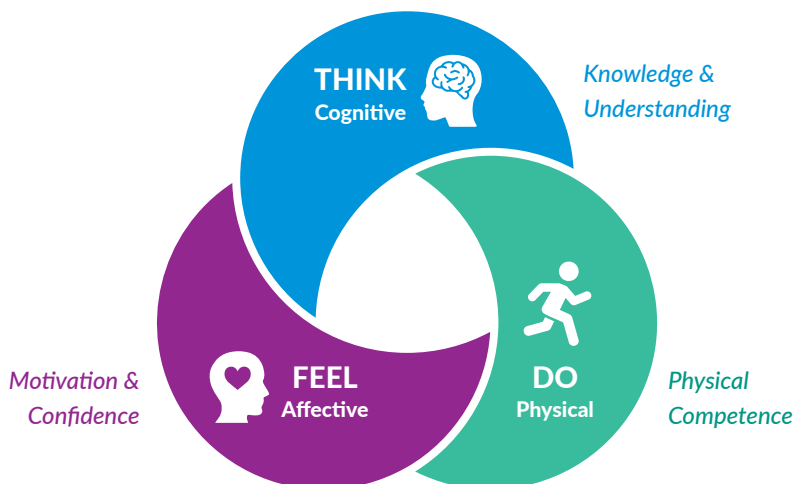
All Island Physical Literacy

Consensus Statement





Physical literacy necessitates the development of  
3 inter-connected learning domains:



### Cognitive Domain

The cognitive domain is the “thinking” aspect of physical literacy and is denoted by **knowledge** and **understanding** in the definition.



### Affective Domain

The affective domain is the “feeling” aspect of physical literacy and is denoted by **motivation** and **confidence** in the definition.



### Physical Domain

The physical domain is the “doing” aspect of physical literacy and is denoted by **physical competence** in the definition.

*Adapted*



## Programme Aim

The Young Athletes programme is a play and sports activity programme for children with intellectual disabilities aged **4-12 years**.

The **aim of the programme** is to develop and improve the fundamental movement skills of children with intellectual disabilities to encourage lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity.

Fundamental movement skills are known as the building blocks required for taking part in sport and physical activity. Fundamental movement skills are defined as **'gross motor skills that involve the large force producing muscles of the trunk, arms and legs'** (Clark, 2005, p. 245).

They do not develop naturally so it is vital that children are provided with opportunities to learn, practice and reinforce the skills over time. Fundamental movement skills are the gateway to more advanced movement skills required for participation in games, sports and physical activity (Kavanagh et al., 2023).

Key skills developed through participation in the programme encompass the **three categories** of fundamental movement skills.

### 1. Locomotor

(e.g., running, jumping, hopping, skipping)

### 2. Object manipulation

(e.g., throwing, catching, kicking, striking)

### 3. Balance

(e.g. static or dynamic)

It introduces children to a wide variety of play activities in a familiar, supportive and fun environment where everyone can succeed.

Coaches and volunteers supporting the delivery of the Young Athletes programme have received the 'Coaching Young Athletes' qualification. This is an introductory level Coaching qualification on the Coaching Development Programme for Ireland (CDPI) accredited by Sport Ireland. This qualification equips coaches and volunteers working with children with intellectual disabilities, with the skills they need to develop athletes who have a love of sport, movement and are physically literate.



## Programme Objectives

### 1 Develop Young Athletes who have a love of sport, movement and who are physically literate.

Engaging Young Athletes through **age and stage appropriate play and sport activities** that **involve fundamental movement skills** to develop children's competence and confidence. By engaging children with intellectual disabilities in activities from the Young Athletes programme which are **designed to foster physical competence, confidence, social and emotional development** we are **helping athletes to develop their physical literacy**. Physical literacy is a lifelong journey and those who are physically literate are more likely to stay involved in sport and physical activity throughout their lives.



We have become part of a new 'family' which is a great support and source of advice and encouragement."

Parent of a Young Athlete



2

## Introduce Young Athletes to the Special Olympics programme and their family members to a network of support

Families benefit from the Young Athletes programme in a number of ways, including helping parents understand the **intellectual disability diagnosis**, **raising parent expectations** of their child, **fostering support networks** and **creating opportunities** for **family engagement**.

“

I think the biggest thing that maybe that goes under the radar with the Young Athletes programme is the parents' connection and the parents' connection with each other. ... it's a great resource for parents"

Coach John





3

### Prepare Young Athletes for future membership into sports specific Special Olympics clubs

Involvement in the Young Athletes programme teaches children with intellectual disabilities important skills such as **turn taking**, **waiting in line**, **how to play with others**, all of which will foster their future involvement in Special Olympics sports programmes. Additionally, children benefit from participation in the programme by **enhancing their fundamental movement skill proficiency**, developing their **confidence** and increasing their **readiness to participate in the wider Special Olympics programme**.





## Programme Delivery



The whole point of the Young Athletes programme is that it is done in the sporting environment with a coach, it's done at home with the parents, and it's done at school with school teachers. And that it's adapted to be able to be in each of the environments..

Coach Lorraine



## Young Athletes in the Community

Young Athletes provides an opportunity for all children with intellectual disabilities to come and learn from a coach within a local community sports club. Family members can share in the fun with their child, when registered as a volunteer with the club.



## Young Athletes at Home

Parents, caregivers, grandparents, siblings and friends play together at home with children using Young Athletes for activities and ideas to further support the development of their fundamental movement skills.



## Young Athletes in Schools

Teachers and Special Needs Assistants can use Young Athletes in the classroom and PE class to support children in developing important motor, communication and learning skills.



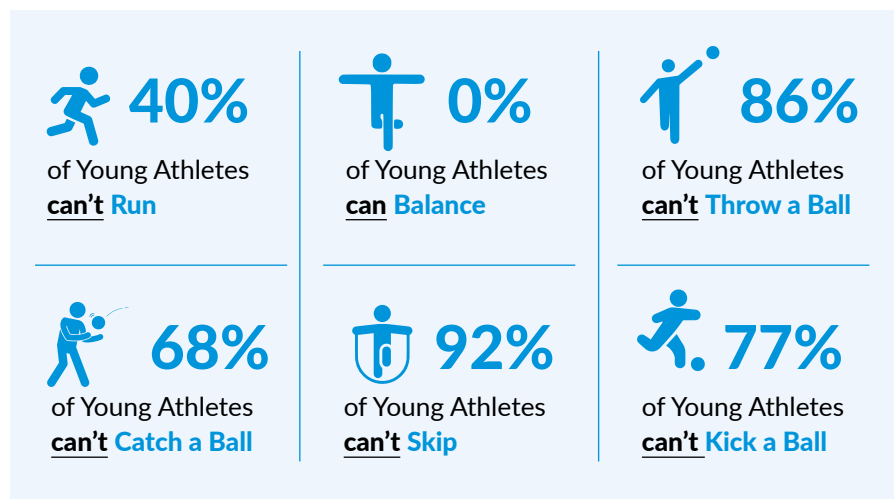


## Young Athletes Research

A focus of the Special Olympics Ireland 2021-2025 Strategic Plan is to continue to attract younger athletes to the programme and further develop the athletes' levels of physical literacy through a Young Athletes pathway, that leads athletes towards participation in one or more sports. Moreover, the strategy emphasises evidence-based decision making, leading to the investment in a collaborative three-year PhD research project with Dublin City University (DCU) from 2020-2023. This project focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the Young Athletes programme, reflecting Special Olympic's Ireland commitment to informed and impactful initiatives.

The outcomes of the 'SO Fun' research project are demonstrated in this infographic.

Based on the Test of Gross Motor Development (TGMD-3) and Bruininks-Oseretsky Test of Motor Proficiency (BOT-2) assessments, we found that...



### Key Finding:

Young Athletes are currently demonstrating extremely low levels of motor competence.



of Young Athletes **have not** achieved mastery in any of the key fundamental movement skills.



**Action Point**

SOI are developing a new Coach Education course, an updated Coaches Toolkit and equipment pack to target specific skill weaknesses and help to improve overall motor skill proficiency levels amongst Young Athletes.



100% of Young Athletes coaches interviewed, agreed that overall they had a **positive experience** coaching on the Young Athletes programme.

However, coaches identified two key areas for improvement including a:

- 1 New coach Education Model
- 2 Development of a Juvenile Pathway

Currently SOI are working with **Sport Ireland Coaching Unit** to accredit the newly created 'Coaching Young Athletes' course designed with input from Young Athletes Coaches and Tutors.



Young Athletes Coaches are currently overestimating the children's ability to perform locomotor skills by 21.5% and object manipulation skills by 33.8%.

This has a direct impact on their ability to develop, progress and improve the motor skill proficiency levels of the children that they coach.



A **Continuous Professional Development** course for Young Athletes coaches is currently being developed to upskill coaches to be able to **assess, detect** and **correct errors** in children's fundamental movement skill performance.



As a result of these findings, **key action points** were set to address the current challenges within the programme as follows:

## Objective 1

Improve **motor skill proficiency** of Young Athletes using a **targeted, holistic approach**

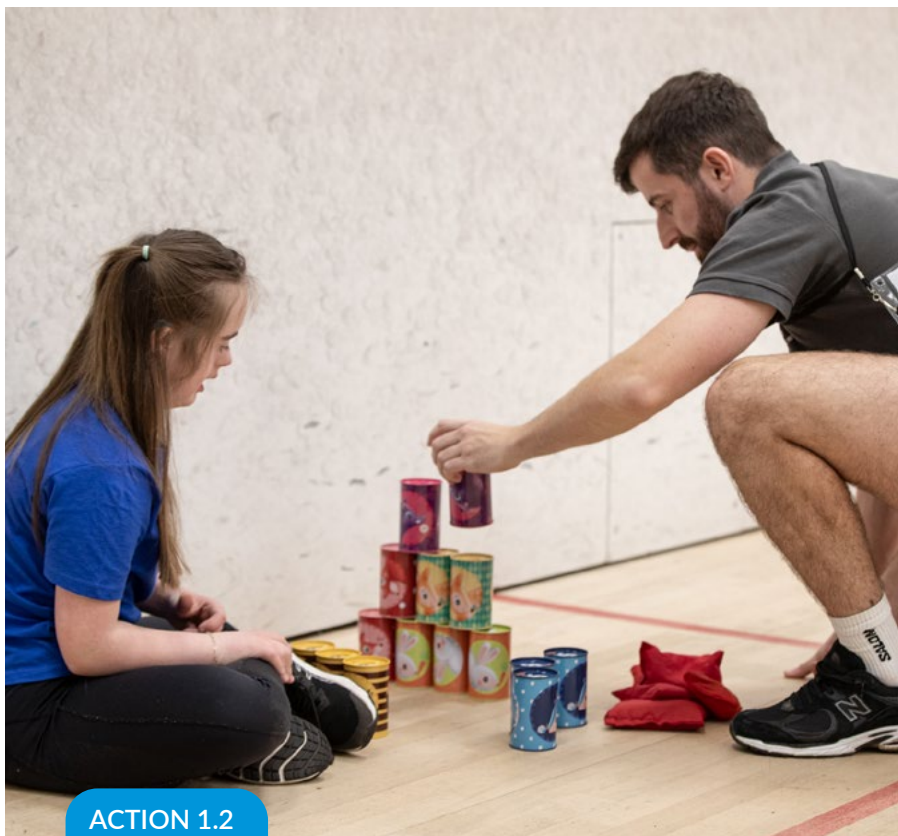


### ACTION 1.1

Deliver a multi-component fundamental movement skill intervention that is delivered by coaches and includes parental involvement

- ✓ 8 Young Athletes clubs (82 Young Athletes) participated in an eight-week; coach led fundamental movement skill intervention from February to May 2024. Evidence based session plans were created in collaboration with Dublin City University. Young Athletes skills were assessed before and after the eight-week intervention to monitor progression. Coaches and volunteers received training to ensure knowledge and confidence in delivery.
- ✓ 37 parents from two clubs participated in 'PLAYshop', a physical literacy workshop for parents adapted in collaboration with the University of Alberta, Canada and Dublin City University, Ireland.





### ACTION 1.2

Produce a new Young Athletes Activity Guide (including session plans and at home activities) and equipment bag for the Young Athletes programme

- ✓ A new Activity Guide has been created with particular focus on games and activities targeting weaker skills identified during the research project.
- ✓ Video demonstrations of how to correctly perform each fundamental movement skill are included in the guide ensure standardisation of demonstrations throughout Young Athletes clubs across the island of Ireland.
- ✓ Equipment provided to new Young Athletes clubs is under revision to ensure that equipment is specific to the development of fundamental movement skills across the categories of locomotor, object manipulation and balance.



## Objective 2

Enhance the **quality** and **effectiveness** of coach education for Young Athletes coaches and volunteers



**Develop a new coach education course using a 'bottom up' approach to ensure the voice of the coach is incorporated into the content and delivery style.**

- ✓ A new 'Coaching Young Athletes' course has been developed in collaboration with Sport Ireland Coaching, to address the gaps in coach and volunteer education as identified through focus groups with Young Athletes coaches.
- ✓ 'Coaching Young Athletes' received accreditation on the Coaching Development Programme for Ireland (CDPI) in March 2024 after undergoing a rigorous process. The 'Coaching Young Athletes' course is recognised on the Coach Framework (Level 0 Coach) as an introductory level award to coaching. The Coach Frameworks facilitate recognition and accreditation of coaching awards against national and international standards as well as providing transparency across sports in Ireland.
- ✓ The 'Coaching Young Athletes' course is specifically tailored to meet the needs of coaches and volunteers delivering the Young Athletes programme. This course is a combination of theory and practical elements designed to provide coaches and volunteers working with children with intellectual disabilities, with the skills they need to develop athletes who have a love of sport, movement and who are physically literate.





### Objective 3

Improve the **professional development** of existing Young Athletes coaches and increase motor skill proficiency of Young Athletes.



#### ACTION 3.1

Create a Continuous Professional Development module for existing coaches

- ✓ Create a Continuous Professional Development module for existing coaches to provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively observe, correct and detect errors in children's fundamental movement skills performance.

This is intended to improve overall skill development among the Young Athletes they coach.



# Planning and Organising a Young Athletes Session

## Young Athletes Structure



### Programme Length:

Year-round programming, similar to Special Olympics Sports programmes



### Duration:

Typically, Young Athletes sessions are delivered for between 45-60 minutes. With longer sessions this allows time for free-play at the beginning of the session.



**World Health Organization**

### Reminder:

The World Health Organisation's recommended physical activity guidelines for children is **60 minutes of moderate-vigorous intensity, physical activity every day.**



### Frequency:

Once per week in the community club setting. Schools may deliver Young Athletes more frequently during their Physical Education classes. Parents can further support the development of fundamental movement skills by carrying out activities at home with their child outside of the club sessions.



### Space:

Young Athletes can be implemented in indoor/outdoor astro pitches, in a gym hall, community centre or a room with minimal furniture.



## Equipment:

When a Young Athletes club is established, they receive a kit bag with tailored sports equipment to help coaches and volunteers deliver the programme as well as helping children to develop their fundamental movement skills. The items in this kit bag include but are not limited to\*:



Ribbon Balls


Size 3 Dur-a-ball  
(Age 5-7)

Size 3 Dur-a-ball  
(Age 9-14)

Velcro board and  
PECS cards

Physical Activity  
Cubes


Bean Bags



Pop Up Goals


Belco plastic  
footballs


Balance Beam


Precision training  
20 ball bag

Hilltop steering  
stones


Floor markers

\* subject to change



## Key Components of a Session

The below components of a Young Athletes session are recommended to maximise fundamental movement skill development.

### 1 | Warm Up (5-10 minutes)

Choose **one** activity from this section to kick off the Young Athletes session.

The warm up is Important for:

- ✓ Increasing heart rate and warming muscles
- ✓ Decreasing risk of injury
- ✓ Gradual transition from rest to physical activity
- ✓ Ensure a positive and safe experience for Young Athletes

### 2 | Recap one skill coached the week before to reinforce learning (5-10 mins)

When beginning the Young Athletes session, it is important to recap on the key fundamental movement skill from the previous week to help reinforce learning and skill development. Children with intellectual disabilities require more time and practice to learn and master fundamental movement skills compared to typically developing children. Repetition provides them with additional opportunities to understand and execute the movements correctly. Furthermore, repetition allows Young Athletes to experience small successes and gradual improvement which boosts their confidence and motivation to continue practicing the skills.

### 3 | Fundamental movement specific skill development (6-8 mins)

Coaching specific elements of the fundamental movement skill before incorporating them into games is important for a number of reasons:

- ✓ **Skill acquisition:** Coaching fundamental movement skills first allows athletes to develop a strong technical foundation, making it easier for them to learn and execute more advanced skills later on.
- ✓ **Safety:** Proper technique and form are essential for performing movements safely and effectively.



- ✔ **Skill development:** Mastery of fundamental movement skills enhances overall physical literacy. The skills of running, jumping, throwing, catching and balance provide a solid basis for participating in a wide range of physical activities and sports.
- ✔ **Confidence Building:** Mastering fundamental movement skills builds confidence and self-esteem amongst athletes. Feeling competent in basic movements motivates individuals to participate in physical activity and sports, leading to healthier lifestyle.
- ✔ **Skill Transferability:** Once athletes have mastered the fundamental movement skills they can more easily adapt and apply them in different contexts, sports and games situations.

#### 4 | Fundamental movement skill development through Games (6-8 mins)

Incorporating the learning of fundamental movement skills into games is particularly important for children with intellectual disabilities for a number of reasons:

- ✔ **Engagement and Motivation:** Games are inherently enjoyable and engaging for children. By incorporating fundamental movement skills into games, coaches can create a fun and motivating environment that encourages active participation and learning.
- ✔ **Contextual Learning:** Games provide a meaningful context for practicing and applying fundamental movement skills. Children with intellectual disabilities may benefit from learning the context, as it helps them understand the purpose and relevance of the skills they are acquiring.
- ✔ **Social Interaction:** Games often involve interaction with peers, promotion socialisation and teamwork skills. Games provide athletes with an opportunity to practice communication, cooperation and social skills.

#### 5 | Obstacle Course Guide (10 mins)

Choose one obstacle course from the guide to encourage athletes to further practice and develop a number of fundamental movement skills in one activity!



## 6 | Cool Down (5-10 minutes)

Choose **one** activity from this section to bring the Young Athletes session to a close.

The cool down is important for:

- ✓ Allow muscles to return to their resting state
- ✓ Decreasing risk of injury
- ✓ Promotion of relaxation, reduce stress and anxiety levels
- ✓ Gradual transition from physical activity to rest allowing athletes to gradually wind down and return back to other activities and routines



Adjust the timings for each of these activities depending on the duration of your Young Athletes session. Additionally, allow time for transitions between activities and set up. Give athletes water breaks during these transition periods.





## How to use the Activity Guide

This activity guide is intended to contribute to the development of the physically literate child. It has been designed to help coaches and volunteers organise and plan a Young Athletes session. The guide aims to provide a range of tools to support coaches and volunteers in helping Young Athletes to develop their fundamental movement skills (FMS) during their participation in the programme.

The games and activities outlined in the activity guide should contribute to a physically literate athlete, who has the movement competence, confidence, and understanding to continue participation in physical activity throughout their lives (Whitehead, 2016).

Children develop **10 key fundamental movement skills** across the three categories of movement (**Locomotor**, **Object Manipulation** and **Balance**) through participation in the Young Athletes programme. This Activity Guide outlines the coaching and learning approaches for the following fundamental movement skills:



### Locomotor Skills

---

Running

---

Hopping

---

Jumping

---

Skipping



### Object Manipulation Skills

---

Throwing

---

Catching

---

Dribbling

---

Kicking



### Balance Skills

---

Static

---

Dynamic



It is important to teach and coach a balanced range of locomotor, object manipulation and balance skills across the year. Within each game or activity in the guide, the coach will be provided with:



**Description**

How to set up and play the activity



**Equipment**

A list of the equipment needed for the activity



**Variations**

Suggestions for making the activity easier/harder



**Adaptations**

Specific adaptations for inclusive play



**Things to consider**

Organisational and safety tips to maximise skill development



**Key words**

Vocabulary linked to the skill





## Adaptations

Welcome to the Adaptations section of the Activity Guide! This essential resource is designed to ensure that every game and activity is accessible and enjoyable for Young Athletes of all abilities. Here, you will find a comprehensive key that outlines specific adaptations tailored to a variety of disabilities. Whether you are a coach, volunteer, educator or caregiver this guide will help you modify activities to meet diverse needs, promoting inclusivity and fun for everyone involved. Let's work together to create an environment where all athletes can participate fully and thrive.



### Adaptations

MI

#### **Mobility Impairment**

Athletes with a mobility impairment may fall into two categories. The first category are athletes who may be non-ambulatory, i.e.; they may use a wheelchair. The second category are athletes who can ambulate but may utilise an ambulatory aid, i.e.; uses crutches, a cane or a walker.

In the adaptation's sections of this activity guide, we will offer an alternative activity for athletes where certain skills and games are not suitable to meet the needs of these athletes. The adaptations suggested ensure that athletes are being presented with the opportunity to develop their fundamental movement skills.

HOH

#### **Hard of Hearing**

Athletes with difficulty hearing

VI

#### **Visual Impairment**

Athletes with difficulty seeing

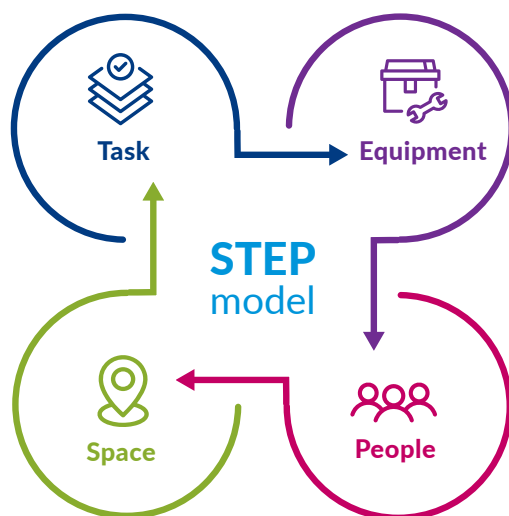
SPD

#### **Sensory Processing Disorder**

Athletes who have difficulty with different types of touch or tactile cues, loud sounds, bright or strobe lights



Furthermore, a simple adaptation tool that you can use during your coaching to help you modify the games and activities within your session is the **STEP model**.



#### Space

The space in which the activity is being played can be modified e.g. playing surface (hard or soft), distance between players, obstacles, using zones, increase or decrease size of playing area.



#### Task

Vary the task, e.g., change action or the objective, alter the scoring system for example everyone must touch the ball before you can score, break down the task into smaller components.



#### Equipment

Using a variety of equipment that is inclusive in nature, e.g. using different sized balls to suit the ability of athletes, brightly coloured cones for those with visual impairment, sensory friendly equipment.



#### People

Athletes can be organised within games and activities to support inclusive practice, e.g., matching athletes of similar abilities together in small-sided games, smaller or larger numbers participating, changing the role athletes have within the game.



**Warm Up  
Activities**



# Traffic Lights

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Invite athletes to find a space in a large open playing area where they are not in contact with anyone else. On a signal, athletes move around the playing area in response to the following commands. Coach demonstrates each command.

**Red:** Balance on one leg/Walk heel-to-toe on the line

**Orange:** Walk slowly     **Green:** Run really fast

### Skills in Focus

✓ Run

✓ Walk

✓ Balance



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Green, Orange and Red cones



## Adaptations

MI

Encourage athletes to self-propel their wheelchair in the open playing area during the green and orange traffic light, where possible. A balance activity suitable for an athlete who is a wheelchair user could be carrying out diagonal reaches with their arms or performing side bends when the red traffic light is held up by the coach. Ensure enough space is provided for athletes with ambulatory aids to move around without banging into other athletes. Athletes can use their ambulatory aid, a wall, a volunteer's shoulder or the back of a chair to help them with the balance movement.

HOH

Use audio amplification or sign language for instructions.

VI

Assist with verbal cues.

SPD

Assess environment and adapt accordingly for increased noise and visual stimulation





# Move like an Animal

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of Activity

Invite athletes to move freely around the playing area using the movements of a particular animal suggested by the Coach: a rabbit (hopping on one leg) a flamingo (balance on one leg for 5 secs) a snake (slithering) an ostrich (running) a kangaroo (jumping with two feet) a crab (moving sideways). Now focus on animals running. Select a range of animals such as a cheetah, an elephant, a chicken or a hippopotamus. Ask athletes to show you how that animal would run. Which animal do they think would be the fastest? Which animal would run the slowest?



### Skills in Focus

✓ Run

✓ Balance

✓ Hop

✓ Jump



### Equipment

✓ An open playing space

✓ Animal Cubes



### Adaptations

MI

Encourage athletes to self-propel their wheelchair around the open playing area where possible. Encourage athletes to make animals sounds and use whichever body part they can move most freely to move like an animal.

HOH

Use audio amplification or sign language for instructions.

VI

Assist with verbal cues.

SPD

Assess environment and adapt accordingly for increased noise and visual stimulation



# Active Adventures

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of Activity

Invite athletes to move freely around the playing area using the movements suggested by the Coach. The coach demonstrates the activity as they call out the actions. Each action is repeated 2-3 times during the game:

<b>Tall</b>	Walking on tippy toes arms reaching towards the sky
<b>Bouncy</b>	Jumping up and down on two feet
<b>Speedy</b>	Running around the open space
<b>Skippy</b>	Skipping around the open space
<b>Small</b>	Crouch down on hunkers and walking small
<b>Lazy</b>	Lie down on the ground and pretend to sleep - challenge athletes balance by standing on one leg
<b>Straight Line</b>	Walking heel to toe on the line, hands on hips



### Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Skip
- ✓ Hop
- ✓ Jump
- ✓ Run



## Adaptations

MI

Encourage athletes to self-propel their wheelchair around the open playing area where possible. A balance activity for an athlete who is a wheelchair user could be carrying out diagonal reaches with their arms or performing side bends. Ensure enough space is provided for athletes with ambulatory aids to move around without banging into other athletes. Fast walking or marching with the support of the ambulatory aid or a volunteer is a good alternative for skills which athletes find challenging.

HOH

Use audio amplification or sign language for instructions.

VI

Assist with verbal cues.

SPD

Assess environment and adapt accordingly for increased noise and visual stimulation.





# Body Parts

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of Activity

Invite athletes to move freely around the playing area, the coach calls out different movements e.g. running, side stepping, skipping, hopping, jumping. When the coach calls out a body part (for example knee), the athletes must freeze and balance with that body part touching the floor. The coach demonstrates and participates in this activity to model the balance positions for the athletes.



### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Skip
- ✓ Hop
- ✓ Jump
- ✓ Run



## Adaptations



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space

MI

Encourage athletes to self-propel their wheelchair around the open playing area where possible. A balance activity suitable for an athlete who is a wheelchair user could be carrying out diagonal reaches with their arms or performing side bends. Ensure enough space is provided for athletes with ambulatory aids to move around without banging into other athletes. Fast walking or marching with the support of the ambulatory aid or a volunteer is a good alternative for skills which athletes find challenging.

HOH

Use audio amplification or sign language for instructions.

VI

Assist with verbal cues.

SPD

Assess environment and adapt accordingly for increased noise and visual stimulation.







# Locomotor Skills

In the context of fundamental movement skills, the locomotor subset contains motor skills that demonstrate **fluid, co-ordinated movements as the child's body moves through space.**



# Running

Running involves a similar action to walking, but with a distinct moment called the flight phase, during which both feet are off the ground simultaneously. Momentum is generated as the back leg propels off the ground, creating force. The greater the force exerted and directed, the faster the speed of the run. Running encompasses various skills such as jogging, sprinting, dodging and evading. Proficiency in running is vital for engaging in a wide range of activities, both in everyday life and sports contexts. Whether it's sprinting in a race, running for enjoyment, pursuing a football, or attempting to catch a butterfly, mastering a proficient running technique is essential for all individuals.

*Watch the running demonstration below to learn how to demonstrate the skill of running!*



Young Athletes Activity Guide: Running



## Things to consider

Running activities should be carried out in an open playing area where possible. When using an enclosed area ensure there is sufficient space between athletes and a large enough run-off safety area to enable athletes space to slow down and stop.



### Adaptations

Examples of adaptations that the coach can make to ensure running activities are inclusive of a range of abilities are provided under each game and activity. Athletes who have limited mobility or who may use an assistive device can practice walking using their assistive device such as crutches or walkers. For wheelchair users they can practice self-propelling their chair which will help to build strength and stamina.



### Key Words

Running, leg drive, arm swing, flight phase, high knee, stride length, momentum, acceleration.

## Identifying the Phases of Motor Development

### Exploring Phase



During the exploring phase, athletes will enjoy exploring different running speeds in different directions and on various levels. Characteristics of running during this phase include:

- Knee lift and kick back is limited
- Arms swing wildly and away from the body
- 90-degree angle not maintained at the elbow when arms are moving
- No obvious flight phase
- Head is unstable
- Landing flat footed



## Developing Phase



During the developing phase, athletes practice running efficiently in different directions. The skill of running is applied through various mini games and activities. Characteristics of running during this phase include:

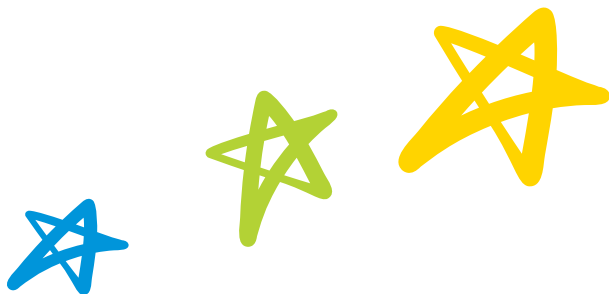
- Knee lift is higher but not yet parallel
- Back leg extends and pushes off the ground to give momentum
- Arm swing increases
- Arms are closer to the body and are more in rhythm with the legs
- Limited flight phase

## Mastering Phase



During the mastering phase, athletes are running with efficient technique as well as applying the skill in a variety of settings such as running for prolonged periods, sprinting, evading and dodging. Characteristics of running during this phase include:

- Arms move in opposition to legs with elbows bent
- Brief period where both feet are off the surface of the ground (flight phase)
- Narrow foot placement, landing on heels or toes (not flat footed)
- Non-support leg bent about 90-degrees, so foot is close to buttocks





## Coaching Observation

Common Errors	Feedback / Coaching Points
Head moving side to side	<i>Head up, look forward</i>
Excessive trunk rotation	<i>Show off your school crest, keep your chest forward</i>
Arms swinging wildly out from the body or across the body	<i>Keep your arms close to your body</i>
Not lifting knee high enough resulting in shorter strides	<i>Imagine you are marching, lift your knee higher</i>
Leaning the body too far forwards when running	<i>Run tall, head up, chest out</i>
Eyes looking at the ground or feet	<i>Head up, eyes forward</i>
Landing flat footed	<i>Push from your toes, run like a ninja</i>



### Rhyme to help coach run

*Heels up, knees high, Arms swing as you fly.  
Lean forward, stay light, Run with all your might!*



## The Movement Explorer

Introducing the skill of running

### Try to run...

- ✓ Tall like a giraffe without bending your knees
- ✓ With no arms
- ✓ Forwards/backwards
- ✓ Small like a mouse
- ✓ On your tiptoes like a ninja
- ✓ As fast as you can on the spot
- ✓ Looking at the sky/looking at the ground



This coach led exercise encourages guided discovery and allows athletes to identify the correct running technique.



## Dynamic Dash Drill

Duration: 6-8 mins

### Description of Activity

This activity encourages the exploration of different running techniques through commands. The coach invites athletes to spread out in the open area and complete the tasks individually. Athletes are instructed to watch the coaches movements and listen to their commands.

- The coach will call '**Coach Says Run...**' followed by different commands, the coach will also do the movement as they command.
- The athletes must copy this movement.
- Commands include - Run while .... doing heel kicks, high knees, leaning forwards, on your tippy toes, moving your hands from hip to lip, stamping hard into the ground, slowly, quickly, high knees, with long arms, with bouncy strides, with fast arms.



*Depending on athletes ability level, keep the number of commands low to make the activity easier or increase the number of demands to make the activity harder.*



### Equipment



An open playing space

### Skills in Focus



Run



## Adaptations

MI

Encourage athletes to self-propel their wheelchair around the open playing area where possible. For athletes who use ambulatory aids, fast walking or marching with the support of the aid or a volunteer is a good alternative for skills which athletes find challenging. If the athlete tires easily, encourage them to take rest breaks during the activity.

VI

Partner the athlete with a buddy for safety. Offer the athlete to place their hand on their buddy's elbow or shoulder for additional support.



## Coaching cues



*“Run like a ninja, light on your toes”*

This will help athletes to land on the ball of their foot instead of being flat footed.

*“Swing your arms back and forth”*

This will help athletes to move their arms in opposition to their legs.





# Equipment Relay Rush

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Coaches and volunteers group athletes into teams of 3-4 children. Each group has to line up behind a hula hoop. Coaches and volunteers place a variety of equipment (beanbags, small balls, large balls etc) at the other side of the playing area. On a signal from the coach, the first athlete in each group must run out, select any piece of equipment from the playing area and run back to their group. The athlete must place their piece of equipment into the hula hoop at the top of their group. Once they do this, the next athlete can run to retrieve another piece. The team with the most items at the end of the activity wins. Coaches reinforce running technique using coaching cues.



*Call out specific colours of equipment so athletes can practice identifying colours. Vary the locomotor skills used to retrieve the equipment e.g. run, hop, skip, jump etc.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Hula Hoops for each group
- ✓ Variety of equipment (beanbags, balls of various sizes, ropes, rackets etc)

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Run





## Adaptations

MI

Encourage athletes to self-propel their wheelchair during the relay where possible. For athletes who use ambulatory aids, fast walking or marching with the support of the aid or a volunteer is a good alternative for skills which athletes find challenging. Elevate equipment such as bean bags, balls etc on a chair, upturned bucket or table for easy reach.

VI

Assist with verbal cues. Utilise equipment that contains a bell or other noise stimulation inside. Mark out the relay path with brightly coloured cones or floor markers. Provide assistance as needed.



## Coaching cues



*“Run like a ninja, light on your toes”*

This will help athletes to land on the ball of their foot instead of being flat footed.

*“Swing your arms back and forth”*

This will help athletes to move their arms in opposition to their legs.





# Tail Tag

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Coaches give each athlete a ribbon or scarf (tail) and invite athletes to tuck it into the waistband of their trousers at the hip. When the coach gives the signal, athletes chase each other around the playing area and attempt to catch each other's tails. If athletes lose their tail, they are not out of the activity as they can continue to attempt to catch the tail of their fellow athletes. If an athlete catches a new tail, they can tuck that into their trousers as an extra tail or to replace the one they lost. After a set amount of time, the coach can blow the whistle to signal the end of the activity. Coach reinforces the coaching cues for running throughout the activity.



*Adjust the size of the playing area, decreasing it to make it harder to avoid athletes' tails being taken.*

## Skills in Focus

✓ Run



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Ribbon, scarf or tail for each athlete



## Adaptations

MI

Encourage athletes to self-propel their wheelchair during this activity. The 'tail' can be velcro-taped to the back or arm of the wheelchair. For athletes who use ambulatory aids, fast walking or marching with the support of the aid or a volunteer is a good alternative for skills which athletes find challenging.

VI

Use textured or brightly coloured 'tails'. Provide assistance and verbal cues as needed. Pair this athlete up with a buddy to work together to collect the 'tails' of fellow athletes.



## Coaching cues



*“Run like a ninja, light on your toes”*

This will help athletes to land on the ball of their foot instead of being flat footed.

*“Swing you arms back and forth”*

This will help athletes to move their arms in opposition to their legs.





# Scavenger Hunt

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Arrange the athletes in groups of 3-4 at one end of a large playing area. Scatter a full set of cones throughout the playing area and randomly hide bean bags under some of the cones. On the coach's signal the first athlete from each group runs into the playing area, looks under one cone, checks for a beanbag and then returns to their group with the beanbag if they were successful. Once tagged the next athlete in line can go in search of a beanbag. An athlete may only check under one cone during their turn. The coach can alternate the skill they ask the athletes to do eg. run out to the cone, hop, skip or two-foot jump to the cone.



To challenge athletes in the activity, after a few minutes the coach can introduce the rule that if an athlete finds a beanbag under the cone, they must transport it back to their group balancing it on their head.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Cones
- ✓ Beanbags

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Run



## Adaptations



Encourage athletes to self-propel their wheelchair during this activity, where possible. For athletes who use ambulatory aids, fast walking or marching with the support of the aid or a volunteer is a good alternative for skills which athletes find challenging. Elevate equipment such as bean bags, balls etc on a chair, upturned bucket or table for easy reach.



Assist with verbal cues to direct the athlete towards a cone. Utilise beanbags that contains a bell or other noise stimulation inside. Mark out the relay path with brightly coloured cones or floor markers. Provide assistance as needed.



## Coaching cues



*“Run like a ninja, light on your toes”*

This will help athletes to land on the ball of their foot instead of being flat footed.

*“Swing you arms back and forth”*

This will help athletes to move their arms in opposition to their legs.





## Hopping

Hopping is a continuous motion similar to sprinting, where one takes off and lands on the same foot. Performing this skill requires dynamic balance, as the non-hopping side of the body acts as a counterbalance, facilitating continuous forward and upward movement. Hopping demands greater leg strength compared to jumping, as it relies on lifting the body using only one foot and maintaining a smaller base of support. It's a crucial skill for maintaining balance and managing the body's position, especially in situations where balance is compromised. Hopping finds application in various practical activities such as catching a ball and performing layups in basketball, as well as in recreational activities like hopscotch and dancing. Additionally, it serves as a foundational component of other fundamental movement skills like skipping, jumping and striking with the foot.

*Watch the hopping demonstration below to learn how to demonstrate the skill of hopping!*



Young Athletes Activity Guide: Hopping



### Things to consider

The skill of hopping is a very fatiguing activity, so coaches should ensure that opportunities for practice are short and intermixed with other activities and skills to allow athletes to recover.



### Adaptations

Examples of adaptations that the coach can implement to ensure hopping activities are inclusive of various abilities are outlined within each game and activity.



### Key Words

Hop, balance, leg swing, push off, stable trunk, push off, take off

## Identifying the Phases of Motor Development

### Exploring Phase



During the exploring phase, athletes will enjoy exploring different ways to hop. Characteristics of hopping during this phase include:

- Body remains in an upright position
- Hop achieves very little height or distance
- Athlete may lose their balance easily and struggle to do more than one or two hops at a time



### Developing Phase

During the developing phase, athletes practice the technique of hopping through games and activities. Characteristics of hopping during this phase include:

- Leaning slightly forward
- Arms move vigorously forwards and backwards but not quite in rhythm
- Knees bend on landing
- Balance is not yet fully under control



## Mastering Phase

During the mastering phase, athletes can apply the skill proficiently in a range of activities and games. Characteristics of hopping during this phase include:

- Non hopping leg swings forward in a pendular fashion to produce force
- Foot of non-hopping leg remains behind hopping leg (does not cross in front)
- Arms flex and swing forward to produce force
- Hops four consecutive times on the preferred foot without stopping

## Coaching Observation

Common Errors	Feedback / Coaching Points
<b>Support (hopping) leg bends deeply on landing and straightens on take-off</b>	<i>Imagine your leg is like a spring, take off like a superhero</i>
<b>Landing flat footed or on the heel of the foot</b>	<i>Land softly, land like a ninja</i>
<b>Swinging leg is held rigid (doesn't move) to the front, back or side</b>	<i>Keep your leg loose</i>
<b>Arms not moving to assist the hopping action</b>	<i>Swing your arms back and forth</i>
<b>Eyes looking at the ground or feet</b>	<i>Head up, look forward</i>



### Rhyme to help coach hop

*Balanced on one leg, hop with all your might  
Lift your knee, then spring up high  
Hop, hop, hop, reach for the sky*







## The Movement Explorer

Introducing the skill of hopping

### Try to hop...

- ✓ Forwards/backwards
- ✓ On the spot
- ✓ As nosily / quietly as you can
- ✓ Like an elephant
- ✓ With one foot or two feet like hopscotch
- ✓ Land as softly / hard as you can
- ✓ Three times on your right foot, three times on your left foot
- ✓ As high/ low as you can
- ✓ With your arms / without your arms



This coach led exercise encourages guided discovery and allows athletes to identify the correct skipping technique.



# Learn to Hop

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Athletes find a space in the open playing area. Coach demonstrates the skill of hopping on one leg to the athletes and asks them to join in. Coach uses the two coaching cues for the hop below. Athletes get the opportunity to practise hopping in a variety of different ways, using the following prompts:

- Hop on the spot
- Hop forwards
- Hop backwards
- Hop sideways
- Hop as quietly/noisily/  
quickly/slowly as possible
- Hop as far as you  
can for distance



Ask a parent or volunteer to assist athletes with this activity by holding their hand for extra balance or support while hopping.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Spot markers for each athlete

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Hop



## Adaptations

MI

In this instance, the skill of hopping may not be a suitable activity for this athlete. To ensure the athlete is still developing their fundamental movement skills, why not try the game of [‘Knock em Down’](#) or a game of the athletes choosing from the [Object Manipulation](#) or [Balance Skills](#) sections of this guide. For athletes who use an ambulatory aid and are safe to attempt this activity, encourage them to push off one foot and land on the other foot. Walking or marching is a suitable alternative to hopping or jumping.

VI

Provide verbal cues and physical assistance as needed. The athlete may feel safer resting their hand on a volunteer shoulder or linking with them to aid balance. First practice the position of the hop, i.e. standing on one leg with the other leg bent at 90 degrees, followed by stationary hopping on the spot until the athlete feels comfortable with this.



For all hopping skills, athletes who have poor balance or are at risk of falling should work with a coach, parent or volunteer as their partner to support them while hopping, i.e., holding their hand, allowing the athlete to place their hand on their arm or shoulder for additional support or hopping close to a wall for support.



## Coaching cues



### *“Flamingo hop or Stand on one leg and jump”*

Encourages athletes to keep the foot of non-hopping leg behind.

### *“Count your hops”*

Encouraging athletes to try and complete four consecutive hops to reinforce the movement.



# Musical Spots

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Set out spot markers or cones for each athlete in an open playing area. Play music and invite athletes to move through the area following a variety of instructions (see movement list below). When the music stops, athletes find a spot marker and practice hopping on one foot until the music starts again.

**Movement List:** walk, run, walk backwards, walk sideways, skip.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Spot markers for each participant
- ✓ Music

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Hop
- ✓ Run
- ✓ Skip



For all hopping skills, athletes who have poor balance or are at risk of falling should work with a coach, parent or volunteer as their partner to support them while hopping, i.e., holding their hand, allowing the athlete to place their hand on their arm or shoulder for additional support or hopping close to a wall for support.



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can self-propel their wheelchair where possible between floor markers. In the instance where this activity may not be a suitable for this athlete, why not try the game of 'Catch me if you can!' or a game of the athletes choosing from the Object Manipulation or Balance Skills sections of this guide. For athletes who use an ambulatory aid and are safe to attempt this activity, encourage them to push off one foot and land on the other foot. Walking or marching between floor markers is a suitable alternative to hopping or jumping.

HOH

Volunteers can assist by tapping the athletes shoulder when the music stops. A volunteer can assist by turning a light on when the music is playing and turning it off when the music stops.

VI

Use textured or audio floor markers. Provide verbal cues.

SPD

Assess reaction to volume and tone of music prior to the activity. Creating a likes/dislikes inventory alongside the parent of athlete can assist with this.



## Coaching cues



*"Flamingo hop or Stand on one leg and jump"*

Encourages athletes to keep the foot of non-hopping leg behind.

*"Count your hops"*

Encouraging athletes to try and complete four consecutive hops to reinforce the movement.



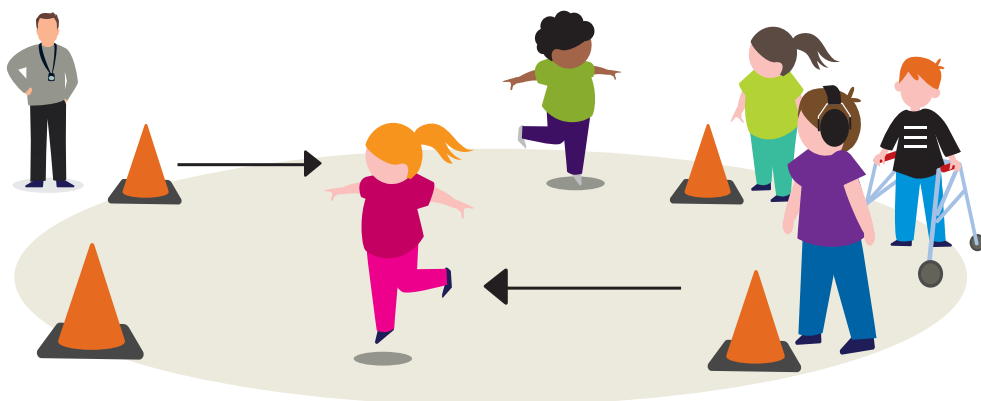


# Hopping Relay

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The focus of this game is to reinforce the skill of hopping. Coaches and volunteers group athletes into teams of 3-4 children. Each group must line up behind a cone. The athletes take it in turns to hop to the opposite cone and back, on the coach's command. Athletes high five their teammate and the next athlete takes a turn. Coaches use the below coaching cues to help improve the athletes' hopping technique.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Cones or spot markers

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Hop



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can self-propel their wheelchair for this relay instead of hopping, where possible. In the instance where this activity may not be a suitable for this athlete, why not try the game of [‘Catch me if you can!’](#) or a game of the athletes choosing from the [Object Manipulation](#) or [Balance Skills](#) sections of this guide. For athletes who use an ambulatory aid and are safe to attempt this activity, encourage them to push off one foot and land on the other foot. Walking or marching between floor markers is a suitable alternative to hopping or jumping.

VI

Use verbal cues. Provide physical assistance or support as needed.



## Coaching cues



### *“Flamingo hop or Stand on one leg and jump”*

Encourages athletes to keep the foot of non-hopping leg behind.

### *“Count your hops”*

Encouraging athletes to try and complete four consecutive hops to reinforce the movement.





# Hopscotch

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The focus of this game is to reinforce the skill of hopping. Coaches and volunteers group athletes into teams of 3-4 children. Each group has to line up behind a set of hula hoops that are laid out in a hopscotch pattern by volunteers and coaches. The athletes take it in turns to complete the hopscotch alternating between a one-foot hop and two-foot jump. The next athlete then completes the hopscotch and rejoins the line to wait for another turn.



*Coaches can add an element of competition between groups to see which group can have all athletes complete the hopscotch first.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Hula Hoops

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Hop





## Adaptations

MI

To ensure athletes are developing their fundamental movement skills within each session as well as ensuring safety for all participants, a parallel activity of **'Ring Toss Challenge'** is being suggested here for any athletes with a mobility impairment in which the above activity may not be suitable. Alternatively, ask the athlete to select a game from the **Object Manipulation** or **Balance Skills** sections of this guide to work on!

VI

Use verbal cues. Allow the athlete to work with a coach, parent or volunteer to help guide them by allowing the athlete to place a hand on their arm or shoulder for additional support. If the athlete is not comfortable with this activity, suggest working on an alternative game.



For all hopping skills, athletes who have poor balance or are at risk of falling should work with a coach, parent or volunteer as their partner to support them while hopping, i.e., holding their hand, allowing the athlete to place their hand on their arm or shoulder for additional support or hopping close to a wall for support.



## Coaching cues



### *"Flamingo hop or Stand on one leg and jump"*

Encourages athletes to keep the foot of non-hopping leg behind.

### *"Count your hops"*

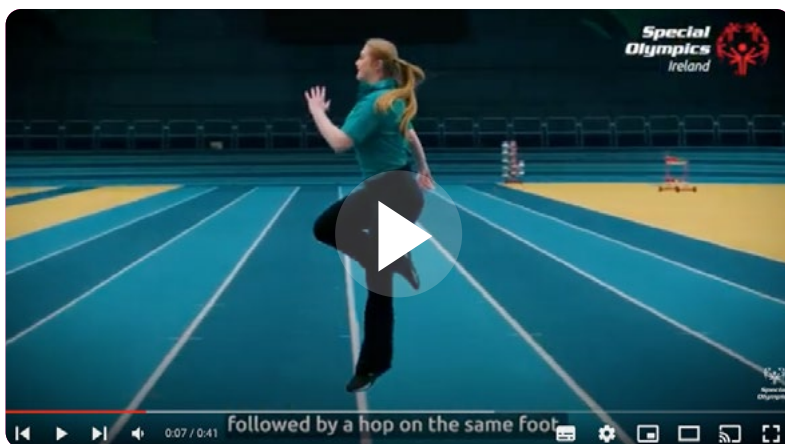
Encouraging athletes to try and complete four consecutive hops to reinforce the movement.



## Skipping

Skipping is a rhythmic locomotor skill that entails shifting weight from one foot to the other. The skill of skipping incorporates a step forward followed by a hop on the same foot. It's a common element in various playground activities and serves as a foundational aspect of effective footwork across numerous sports like basketball, rugby, and dance. As it involves a narrow base of support, maintaining balance is crucial, which is why extending the arms is essential to aid in balance.

*Watch the skipping demonstration below to learn how to demonstrate the skill of skipping!*



Young Athletes Activity Guide: Skipping



### Things to consider

Mastering the skill of hopping serves as a significant foundation for learning how to skip. Being able to exert upward force during a hop is crucial, as it enables the opposite leg to advance freely and continue the skipping motion. When initially learning to skip, it's important to prioritise the step-hop rhythm over speed development. This focus fosters the development of proficient technique, setting the groundwork for mastering the skill.



### Adaptations

Examples of adaptations that the coach can implement to ensure skipping activities are inclusive of various abilities are outlined within each game and activity. Participants with limited mobility or those who utilise assistive devices can engage in modified skipping movements that suit their abilities. For instance, individuals who use crutches or walkers can practice modified skipping while utilising their assistive devices for support. Similarly, wheelchair users can participate by practicing self-propelling their wheelchair, which not only contributes to strength and stamina development but also fosters inclusion within the skipping activity.



### Key Words

Step-hop rhythm, arm swing, narrow base of support, transfer of weight, maintain balance

## Identifying the Phases of Motor Development



### Exploring Phase

During the exploring phase, athletes will enjoy exploring different ways to skip and have fun with the skipping movements such as skipping for distance, skipping for height, or skipping with a partner. Characteristics of skipping during this phase include:

- A step-hop action (a step forward followed by a hop on the same foot) may be evident but is not consistently demonstrated
- Step-step or hop-hop actions may be seen
- Arms are not co-ordinated with the legs so balance in this skill may be difficult
- Skipping movement is uncoordinated and lacks rhythm



## Developing Phase



During the developing phase, athletes practice skipping to a rhythm, to dodge an opponent or skip for prolonged periods of time. Characteristics of skipping during this phase include:

- Evident step-hop action which is more consistent
- Enough force is being generated to allow for a number of continuous skips
- Arms are co-ordinated, rhythmical and help with balance
- Knee drive at times is not high enough
- Landing may be flat footed

## Mastering Phase



During the mastering phase, athletes can apply the skill proficiently in a range of activities and games. Characteristics of skipping during this phase include:

- Step-hop action is smooth and co-ordinated
- Arms are flexed and move in opposition to legs to produce force
- Lands on the toes
- Able to complete four continuous rhythmical alternating skips

## Coaching Observation

Common Errors	Feedback / Coaching Points
Looking at ground or feet	<i>Head up, look forward</i>
Landing flat footed or on the heels of the foot	<i>Land like a ninja</i>
Movement is non-rhythmical	<i>Repeat the step-hop, step-hop action with the athletes, break the movement down</i>
Little arm movement to support legs	<i>Swing your arms back and forth</i>



## Rhyme to help coach skip

*Step and hop, arms swing as you move with glee,  
Skip, Skip, Skip, happy as can be!*



## The Movement Explorer

Introducing the skill of skipping

### Try to skip...

- ✓ Like an elephant
- ✓ Like a fairy
- ✓ As tall as possible
- ✓ As small as possible
- ✓ From side to side
- ✓ In a straight line / on a curved line
- ✓ Without your arms / with your arms
- ✓ The length of the hall / pitch
- ✓ Forwards/ backwards / sideways
- ✓ From tall to small



This coach led exercise encourages guided discovery and allows athletes to identify the correct skipping technique.



# Learn to Skip

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Athletes find a space in the open playing area. Coach demonstrates the skill of skipping to the athletes and asks them to join in, letting the athletes practice for a few minutes. Coach uses the two coaching cues for the skip below. Athletes get the opportunity to practise skipping in a variety of different ways, using the following prompts:

- Try to skip like a giant, a fairy, a clown, a toy soldier
- Try to make yourself very small and skip around
- Try to skip as tall as you can be
- Try to skip forwards, sideways, backwards
- Try to skip angrily, happily, sadly
- Try to skip slowly, fast



*Ask a parent or volunteer to assist athletes with this activity by holding their hand for extra balance or support while skipping.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Skip



## Adaptations

MI

To ensure athletes are developing their fundamental movement skills within each session as well as ensuring safety for all participants, a parallel activity of **'Bounce and Catch'** is being suggested here for any athletes with a mobility impairment in which the above activity may not be suitable. Alternatively, ask the athlete to select a game from the **Object Manipulation** or **Balance Skills** sections of this guide to work on!

VI

Provide verbal cues. Provide physical assistance or support as needed. If the athlete is not comfortable participating in this activity suggest an alternative game or activity to work on.



## Coaching cues



### *"Step and Hop"*

Encourages the athlete to take a step forward followed by a hop on the same foot.

### *"Swing your arms"*

Reminds the athlete to move their arms in opposition to their legs to help propel them forward during the movement.





# Skip and Collect

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach arranges athletes into groups of 4-5. Set out a large playing area approximately twenty metres long with a hoop per group at either end. Each hoop contains four beanbags. All athletes must start behind their hoop. The aim of the activity is for the first athlete in each group to skip to the hoop, take a beanbag, skip back with it and place it in their own hoop. Once the beanbag hits the ground in their own hoop the next athlete can go. The first group to have six beanbags in their hoop wins.



*Ask a parent or volunteer to assist athletes with this activity by holding their hand for extra balance or support while skipping. Alternate the skill of skipping for other locomotor skills including running, hopping and jumping.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Hula Hoops
- ✓ Beanbags

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Skip





## Adaptations

MI

To ensure athletes are developing their fundamental movement skills within each session as well as ensuring safety for all participants, a parallel activity of '[Stationary Ball Kick](#)' is being suggested here for any athletes with a mobility impairment in which the above activity may not be suitable. Alternatively, ask the athlete to select a game from the [Object Manipulation](#) or [Balance Skills](#) sections of this guide to work on!

VI

Provide verbal cues. Provide physical assistance or support as needed. If the athlete is not comfortable participating in this activity suggest an alternative game or activity to work on.



## Coaching cues



### *"Step and Hop"*

Encourages the athlete to take a step forward followed by a hop on the same foot.

### *"Swing your arms"*

Reminds the athlete to move their arms in opposition to their legs to help propel them forward during the movement.





# Skip Yourself Fit

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach invites athletes to find a space in the playing area. This activity involves short bursts of vigorous effort. Invite athletes to skip around the playing area. On a signal, athletes freeze, and the coach calls out an instruction which lasts about 10-15 seconds. The instructions include fast jogging, high knees, heel flicks, swinging arms, jumping, star jumps, skipping on the spot, clapping hands and crazy dancing, balance on one foot. Repeat the activity a number of times.



*Instead of performing activities each time, the coach can alternate them for balance tasks, e.g. standing on one leg like a flamingo, standing tall with eyes closed, balancing with two hands on the ground etc.*



## Equipment



An open playing space

## Skills in Focus



Skip



## Adaptations

MI

To ensure athletes are developing their fundamental movement skills within each session as well as ensuring safety for all participants, a parallel activity of **'Keep it Afloat!'** is being suggested here for any athletes with a mobility impairment in which the above activity may not be suitable. Alternatively, ask the athlete to select a game from the **Object Manipulation** or **Balance Skills** sections of this guide to work on!

VI

Provide verbal cues. Provide physical assistance or support as needed. If the athlete is not comfortable participating in this activity suggest an alternative game or activity to work on.



## Coaching cues



### *"Step and Hop"*

Encourages the athlete to take a step forward followed by a hop on the same foot.

### *"Swing your arms"*

Reminds the athlete to move their arms in opposition to their legs to help propel them forward during the movement.



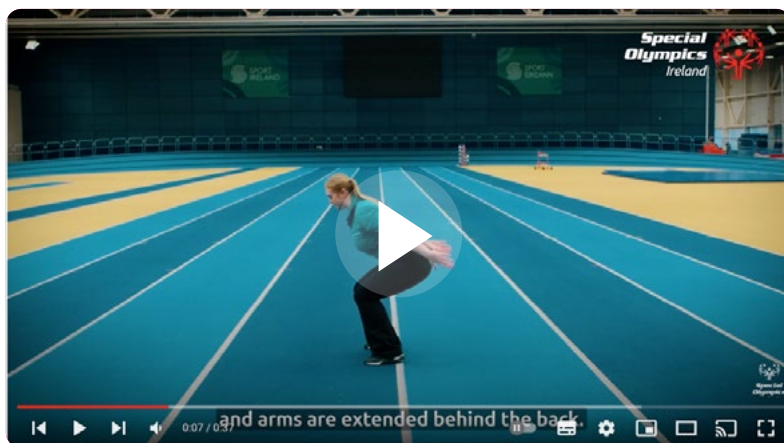


## Jumping

Jumping involves shifting weight from one or two feet to both feet and can be categorised into two types: vertical jumping and horizontal jumping. Vertical jumping aims to reach maximum height from a standing position, requiring coordinated effort from the legs and arms to generate optimal force. This type of jump finds application in various activities like gym workouts, dance routines, reaching for objects on high shelves or sports like volleyball, basketball and Gaelic football. On the other hand, horizontal jumping entails leaping forward as far as possible from both feet and landing on both feet. Success in this jump depends on the coordination of legs and arms, determining the distance covered. It's a fundamental skill in playground games like hopscotch, as well as in gymnastics, dance, and sports such as athletics and swimming.

In this activity guide we focus on games and activities that incorporate the horizontal jump.

*Watch the jumping demonstration below to learn how to demonstrate the skill of jumping!*



Young Athletes Activity Guide: Horizontal Jump



### Things to consider

Landing safely is a key component of learning to jump and coaches should practice activities and games that teach athletes how to land safely before moving on to coaching the skill of jumping. Additionally, another safety consideration for coaches is the large amount of force transferred in a forward direction when practicing the horizontal jump (jumping for distance). Coaches and volunteers should ensure that there is enough open space for athletes, that the ground is not slippery or wet and appropriate sports footwear is worn that has adequate grip to enable athletes to land safely.



### Adaptations

Examples of adaptations that the coach can implement to ensure jumping activities are inclusive of various abilities are outlined within each game and activity.



### Key Words

Horizontal jump, jumping for distance, take off, landing, force, legs extend, arms back, absorb force

## Identifying the Phases of Motor Development

### Exploring Phase



During the exploring phase, athletes will enjoy exploring different ways to jump for distance using the world around them, e.g. hopscotch, jumping over a line on the ground. Characteristics of jumping for distance during this phase include:

- Limited use of arms
- Arms may swing wildly in an attempt to balance
- Difficulty using legs and feet to take-off
- Inconsistent timing between arms and legs
- Tendency to fall backwards when landing



## Developing Phase

During the developing phase, athletes practice either jumping technique through organised or unorganised activities e.g., over obstacles, as far as they can.

Characteristics of jumping for distance during this phase include:

- Arm swing initiates the jumping action
- Arms are held out to the side to help maintain balance during flight phase of the jump
- More coordination between arm and leg action is apparent
- Extending of legs and feet at take off is more consistent
- Landing is stiff, less tendency to fall backwards



## Mastering Phase

During the mastering phase, athletes can proficiently perform the skill of jumping for distance and apply it in a range of activities and games. Characteristics of jumping for distance during this phase include:

- Prior to take off both knees are flexed and arms are extended behind the back
- Arms extend forcefully forward and upward reaching above the head
- Both feet come off the floor together and land together
- Both arms are forced downward during the landing

## Coaching Observation

Common Errors	Feedback / Coaching Points
Looking at ground or feet	<i>Head up, look forward, pick a spot on the wall and look at it</i>
Arms not moving back behind the body in preparation for the jump	<i>Arms back, get into the 'ready' position to explode like a rocket</i>
Legs not extended fully during take-off resulting in a jump upwards instead of outwards	<i>Jump over the puddle, try not to land in the water</i>



Common Errors	Feedback / Coaching Points
Ankles, knees and hops not being flexed for landing	<i>Land like a spring, bend your knees!</i>
Overbalancing on landing	<i>Bend your knees when you land</i>



### Rhyme to help coach jump

*Bend your knees, then push with might,  
Jump high with all your height!*



### The Movement Explorer

Introducing the skill of jumping

Try to jump as far as you can...

- ✓ Forwards
- ✓ From a big squat
- ✓ From a little squat
- ✓ Like an elephant
- ✓ Like a lion
- ✓ For three big jumps
- ✓ Keeping your arms by your side
- ✓ Bringing your arms back behind your body
- ✓ With your legs close together / far apart
- ✓ Landing with your legs far apart / close together



This coach led exercise encourages guided discovery and allows athletes to identify the correct technique when jumping for distance.



# Leaping Frogs

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Set out a number of spot markers or hula hoops in an open playing area. The coach explains to athletes that the spot markers are lily pads and the athletes are 'frogs' who are jumping from lily pad to lily pad. The coach demonstrates how to perform a horizontal jump and shows athletes how to jump between the spot markers. During the activity the coach reinforces the coaching cues for the horizontal jump.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Spot markers or Hula Hoops

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Horizontal Jump





## Adaptations

MI

To ensure athletes are developing their fundamental movement skills within each session as well as ensuring safety of all participants, a parallel activity of '[My Friend Beanie](#)' is being suggested here for any athletes with a mobility impairment in which the above activity may not be suitable. Athletes who use ambulatory aids can participate in this activity and attempt to perform the skill to the best of their ability. Encourage athletes to push off one foot and land on the other foot. Walking between hula hoops is suitable alternative to hopping or jumping.

VI

Provide verbal cues. Provide physical assistance or support as needed between hula hoops.



## Coaching cues



### *"Bend knees, arms, back and jump"*

This cue encourages athletes to bend their knees and bring their arms back prior to take off. Ideally, the arms will swing up over the head and be forced down with the landing. Both feet should land on the ground at the same time.





# Jumping Junction Challenge

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

This activity encourages the athletes to jump over objects of different shapes, sizes and heights, this encourages the kids to calculate the type of jump necessary to complete the task ahead. Set up different stations with the following tasks:

- Jumping over hurdles or pool noodles
- Jumping over balance rocks
- Jumping over tape or a line on the ground
- Jumping from one Hula Hoop to another

Disperse the athletes between the different stations and swap groups so all athletes have an opportunity to try the different jumping challenges.



*If tasks are becoming easy for athletes the coach can increase the heights of hurdles and introduce other equipment into the activity to make it more challenging.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Hurdles and Cones
- ✓ Tape /string / rope / line on the ground Spot markers
- ✓ Hula Hoops
- ✓ Balance rocks

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Horizontal Jump



## Adaptations

MI

To ensure athletes are developing their fundamental movement skills within each session as well as ensuring safety for all participants, a parallel activity of **'Target Practice'** is being suggested here for any athletes with a mobility impairment in which the above activity may not be suitable. Athletes who use ambulatory aids can participate in this activity and attempt to perform the skill to the best of their ability. Stepping over the objects or equipment is a suitable alternative to jumping. Athletes may need physical support or assistance from a parent, coach or volunteer. Encourage athletes to push off one foot and land on the other foot.

VI

Use textured or audio floor markers and provide verbal cues and direction and distance.

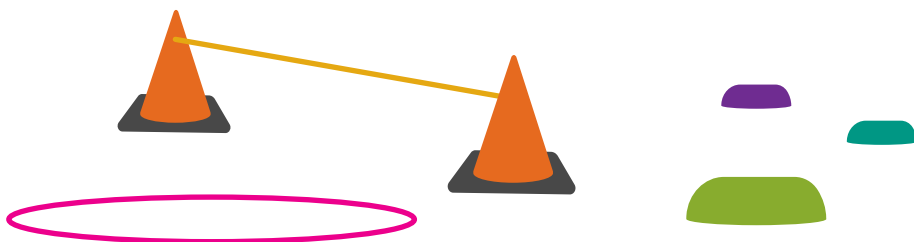


## Coaching cues



*"Bend knees, arms, back and jump"*

This cue encourages athletes to bend their knees and bring their arms back prior to take off. Ideally, the arms will swing up over the head and be forced down with the landing. Both feet should land on the ground at the same time.





## Jump like an Animal

Duration: 6-8 mins

### Description of Activity

The coach introduces different styles of jumps by referring to animals, call out and demonstrate the animal to the athletes and get them to complete the movement.

- Jump like a frog (deep squat)
- Jump like a kangaroo (Distance Jump)
- Jump like a monkey (exaggerated arms)
- Jump like a flamingo (One leg)
- Star fish jumps (Height Jump)
- Bunny Jumps (Jumps in quick succession)

Each animals' movement pattern is directed at different individual parts of the jumping movement looking to be achieved.



*If athletes are getting bored after repeating the animals above ask them to come up with new animals that jump and the whole group follows an athletes lead.*



### Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Horizontal Jump



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can self propel their wheelchair around the open playing area where possible. Encourage athletes to make animal sounds and use whichever body part they can move most freely to move like an animal. When athletes are asked to jump like an animal encourage them to carry out a similar movement that suits their mobility. Examples include 'Glide like a bird' – the athlete can use their ambulatory aid to glide or move forward smoothly. 'Hop like a bunny' – the athlete can use their ambulatory aid to perform hopping motions. 'Swim like a fish' – the athlete can focus on swimming motions rather than jumping. In the instance where this activity is not suitable for the athlete, suggest an alternative activity from within this guide to work on.

HOH

Use audio amplification or sign language for instructions.

VI

Assist with verbal cues.

SPD

Assess environment and adapt accordingly for increased noise and visual stimulation.



## Coaching cues



### *"Bend knees, arms back and jump"*

This cue encourages athletes to bend their knees and bring their arms back prior to take off. Ideally, the arms will swing up over the head and be forced down with the landing. Both feet should land on the ground at the same time.





## Jump to the Finish Line

Duration: 6-8 mins

### Description of Activity

The coach arranges athletes in two lines facing each other, spreading out for a few meters down the hall. Each pair of athletes has one soft ball. One pair of athletes wait at the end of the line. The rest of the athletes roll their ball forward and back to their partner using an underarm roll. The waiting athletes must attempt to horizontal jump their way down the line while their fellow athletes try to tag them with the soft ball. Once they reach the other end, they join the line and the next pair of athletes attempt the challenge.



*To make this activity easier ask the pairs of athletes to slowly roll the ball across to each other to give the jumping athletes a higher chance of not getting 'tagged' by the ball.*



### Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Soft ball for each athlete
- ✓ Cones to create two lines (Optional)

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Horizontal Jump
- ✓ Underarm roll



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can self-propel their wheelchair down the line and try to avoid getting 'tagged' or a partner can assist them to push their chair down the line up. For athletes who use ambulatory aids, they can fast walk or march as a suitable alternative to jumping. For those athletes who wish to practice the skill of jumping, encourage them to take off from two feet and land on two feet. Provide physical assistance or support where needed.

HOH

Use audio amplification or sign language for instructions.

VI

Assist with verbal cues.

SPD

Assess environment and adapt accordingly for increased noise and visual stimulation.



## Coaching cues



### *"Bend knees, arms back and jump"*

This cue encourages athletes to bend their knees and bring their arms back prior to take off. Ideally, the arms will swing up over the head and be forced down with the landing. Both feet should land on the ground at the same time.



# Object Manipulation Skills

Also known as 'object control' subset, contains motor skills that centre around a **child's ability to control and manipulate objects**

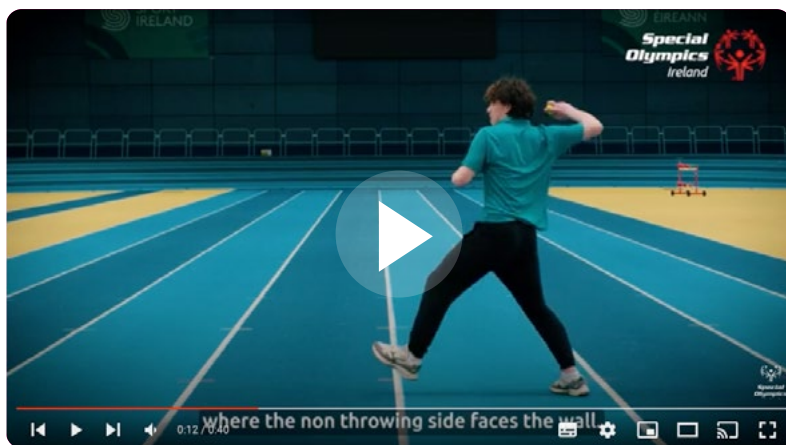




## Throwing

The art of throwing, an essential skill, is closely intertwined with the act of catching and entails projecting an object away from oneself. This fundamental skill encompasses various techniques, including the underhand throw, overhand throw, rolling, and the two-handed throw. The activities and games in this section of the activity guide incorporate both underhand throwing and overhand throwing skills. Understanding concepts like weight transfer, generating force, cultivating a smooth swinging motion, and grasping momentum is crucial in mastering this skill. It finds application in diverse activities such as javelin throwing, volleyball serving, basketball chest passing, lawn bowls rolling, baseball pitching, or even launching a paper airplane.

*Watch the throwing demonstration below to learn how to demonstrate the skill of throwing!*



Young Athletes Activity Guide: Overhand Throw



## Young Athletes Activity Guide: Underhand Throw



### Things to consider

Although throwing and catching are interrelated skills, it's advisable to coach them separately, emphasising one skill at a time. Effective throwing technique necessitates the generation of force, and learners with less developed catching abilities might struggle to fully participate in the activity. To address this challenge, it's suggested to begin practicing throwing with items like bean bags, foam balls, or similar lightweight objects. Additionally, using appropriately sized objects for practice is crucial, as larger ones can hinder skill development. The object should fit comfortably within the fingers for optimal practice.



### Adaptations

Examples of adaptations that the coach can implement to ensure throwing activities are inclusive of various abilities are outlined within each game and activity.



### Key Words

Throw, overhand, underhand, roll, manipulative skill, force, momentum, swinging action, weight transfer



## Identifying the Phases of Motor Development

### Exploring Phase



During the exploring phase, athletes will enjoy throwing different sized balls or using equipment like bean bags or foam javelins to exploring different ways to throw at targets. Characteristics of throwing during this phase include:

#### Overhand throw

- Body directly faces the target
- Very little arm swing back
- Little to no transfer of weight during the throw
- Follow through of arm is a downward action
- Very little rotation of hips and shoulders

#### Underhand throw

- Very little arm swing back
- Little to no transfer of weight during the throw
- Arm does not swing back
- Ball may be released in front of the body
- Foot does not step forward, throw taken from a stationary position



## Developing Phase

During the developing phase, athletes practice throwing in a variety of activities, from a stationary position at different targets, from a range of distances.

Characteristics of throwing during this phase include:

### Overhand throw

- Body faces side on to the target
- Arm comes back and swings forward however the action comes above the shoulder
- Whole body (not just hips and shoulders) rotates during the throw
- Weight transfer during the throw is evident
- Tendency to step forward with the foot on the throwing side

### Underhand throw

- Arm comes back and swings forward however the action does not reach too far behind the trunk
- Weight transfer during the throw is evident
- Tendency to step forward with the foot on the throwing side
- Ball may bounce on the ground and roll to the target
- Hand may follow through after ball release at waist height



## Mastering Phase

During the mastering phase, athletes can apply the skill proficiently in a range of activities and games. Characteristics of throwing during this phase include:

### Overhand throw

- Windup is initiated with a downward movement of hand and arm
- Rotates hip and shoulder to a point where the non-throwing side faces the wall
- Steps with the foot opposite the throwing hand toward the wall
- Throwing hand follows through after ball release, across the body towards the hip of the non-throwing side

### Underhand throw

- Preferred hand swings down and back reaching behind the trunk
- Steps forward with the foot opposite the throwing hand
- Ball is tossed forward hitting the target without a bounce
- Hand follows through after ball release to at least chest level

## Coaching Observation

Common Errors	Feedback / Coaching Points
Looking at ground or feet	<i>Look at the target, keep your eyes on the target</i>
Standing front on with chest facing the target (overhand throw)	<i>Stand side on</i>
Arm action is the only movement when throwing	<i>Step forward / Stomp (underhand throw) Take a step and then throw (overhand throw)</i>
Little or no weight transfer	<i>Step then throw</i>



### Rhyme to help coach overhand throw

*Stand side on, make a star,  
point your finger and throw it far!*



### Rhyme to help coach underhand throw

*Bend your knees, arm down low, step forward, nice and slow.  
Swing from under, aim just right, throw the ball with all your might!*



## The Movement Explorer

Introducing the skill of throwing

### Try to throw...

- ✓ As far as possible
- ✓ As hard as possible
- ✓ As high as possible
- ✓ While facing the target with your feet stuck to the floor
- ✓ Overhand
- ✓ Underhand
- ✓ To a partner
- ✓ At a wall
- ✓ With your right hand and left hand



This coach led exercise encourages guided discovery and allows athletes to identify the correct throwing technique.



# Underarm Pass

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach arranges athletes in groups of 2-3 with one beanbag per group, spread out in the open playing area. Athletes practise throwing the beanbag to each other using the underarm technique. The coach invites the athletes to throw in a variety of different ways e.g. high, low, fast, slowly etc. Athletes can also be paired with a volunteer or parent for this activity as an alternative. To challenge the athletes a volunteer or parent can hold up a hula hoop and athletes practise throwing the bean bag through the hula hoop using the underarm throw technique. The volunteer or parent holding the hula hoop can move towards the path of the beanbag to help the throwers to achieve the target.



*Instead of using beanbags, soft balls can be substituted. Move the athletes/ partners closer together or further away from each other to decrease or increase the difficulty.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Beanbags
- ✓ Hula Hoop

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Underhand Throw



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can play in a seated position. Athletes who can release one hand from their ambulatory aid can throw while standing.

VI

Use a ball that makes a sound with movement, provide verbal cues for direction, distance and achievement.



## Coaching cues



### *“Arm back and stomp”*

This cue reinforces the hand swinging back and behind the body and the athlete steps forward with foot opposite throwing hand.







# Knock 'em Down

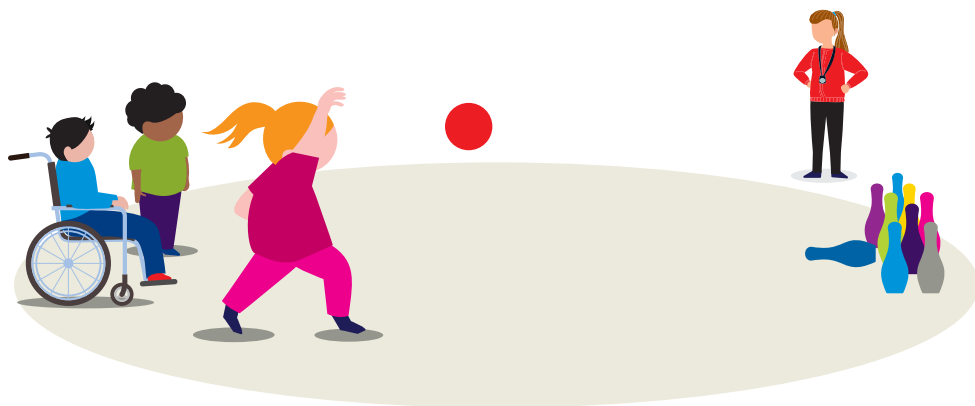
Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach and volunteers set up a number of plastic cups into a tower or skittles or plastic bottles in different corners of the playing area. Athletes can be grouped into small teams of 3-4 athletes, working with a volunteer or parent in one corner of the room. Athletes can explore using small, large balls or beanbags practicing their overhand throw technique to knock down the cups, skittles or bottles. Coaches and volunteers can use the rhyme 'Stand side on, make a star, point your finger and throw it far!' to reinforce the technique for overhand throw. Encourage athletes to say the rhyme while carrying out the action.



*Let the athlete decide which piece of equipment they will use to throw first, this instils autonomy amongst athletes. Once they achieve the skill using one piece of equipment, encourage them to try a different piece.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Plastic cups, plastic bottles or skittles
- ✓ Beanbags, soft balls (small and large)

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Overhand Throw



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can play in a seated position. Athletes who can release one hand from their ambulatory aid can throw while standing. Athletes can move closer to the target or aim for bigger targets where needed.

VI

Use verbal cues for location of the targets, ensure a sound is created by the ball makes contact with the target.



## Coaching cues



### *“Arm high, step and throw”*

Encourages athletes to start the movement by bringing their throwing arm down before coming up over the head. The ‘step’ encourages them to take a step with the foot opposite the throwing hand with the hand following through across the body after release. (Overhand throw)





# Ring Toss Challenge

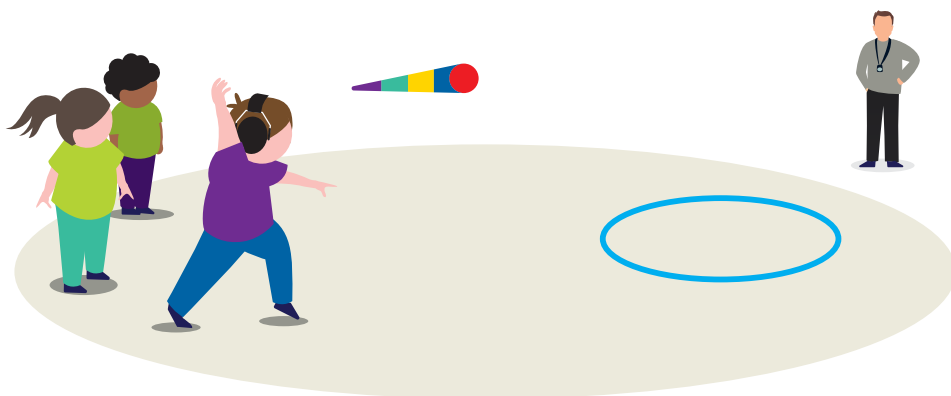
Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach gives each athlete a ribbon ball and lets them practice using the overarm technique to throw the ribbon ball as far as they can for 2-3 minutes. The coach then arranges athletes in groups of 3-4 with a ribbon ball and hula hoop per group. Volunteers help to spread the groups out in the playing area and to place their hoop on the ground in the centre of the group. Athletes stand a small distance back from their hoop and take turns to throw their ribbon ball into the hoop. If they are successful, they can take a step back and throw from there next time. If they are not successful, they have to try again from that distance. Athletes continue throwing to see how many steps away from their hoop they can get with the help of a coach/volunteer/parent.



*Instead of using ribbons balls, bean bags can be substituted. Instead of laying the hula hoop on the ground, ask a volunteer or parent to hold the hoop at various heights for athletes to throw through the hoop.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Plastic cups, plastic bottles or skittles
- ✓ Beanbags, soft balls (small and large)

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Overhand Throw
- ✓ Underhand Throw



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can play in a seated position. Athletes who can release one hand from their ambulatory aid can throw while standing. Introduce bigger or smaller sized hula hoops to decrease or increase the difficulty level of the activity.

VI

Use a ball that makes a sound with movement, if using a target ensure that a sound is created with contact or provide auditory feedback.



## Coaching cues



### *“Arm high, step and throw”*

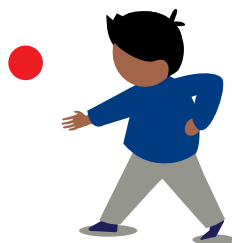
Encourages athletes to start the movement by bringing their throwing arm down before coming up over the head. The ‘step’ encourages them to take a step with the foot opposite the throwing hand with the hand following through across the body after release.

(Overhand throw)

### *“Arm back and stomp”*

This cue reinforces the hand swinging back and behind the body and the athlete steps forward with foot opposite throwing hand.

(Underhand throw)





# Target Practice

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach blue tacks a range of pictures with different images or targets to the walls (at various heights) of the playing area. The coach then sets a cone/floor marker about 1-2 meters away from each target, indicating where athletes need to stand before throwing. Coach and volunteers encourage athletes to throw (overhand) or toss (underhand) the balls, beanbags or ribbon balls to hit the different targets (pictures on the wall).



*If athletes are struggling to hit the target, the coach can tell the athlete to take a step closer to ensure the athlete establishes a sense of achievement.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Wall and Pictures with blue tack to act as targets
- ✓ Soft balls or beanbags or ribbon balls

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Overhand Throw
- ✓ Underhand Throw



## Adaptations

MI

Position athlete's wheelchair or walker at an appropriate distance from the wall to aid in success with this activity. Athletes who can release one hand from their ambulatory aid can throw while standing.

VI

Use brightly coloured targets and a ball that makes a sound with movement. Use verbal cues for location of target and ensure that auditory feedback is given when the target is hit.



## Coaching cues



### *"Arm high, step and throw"*

Encourages athletes to start the movement by bringing their throwing arm down before coming up over the head. The 'step' encourages them to take a step with the foot opposite the throwing hand with the hand following through across the body after release.

(Overhand throw)

### *"Arm back and stomp"*

This cue reinforces the hand swinging back and behind the body and the athlete steps forward with foot opposite throwing hand.

(Underhand throw)

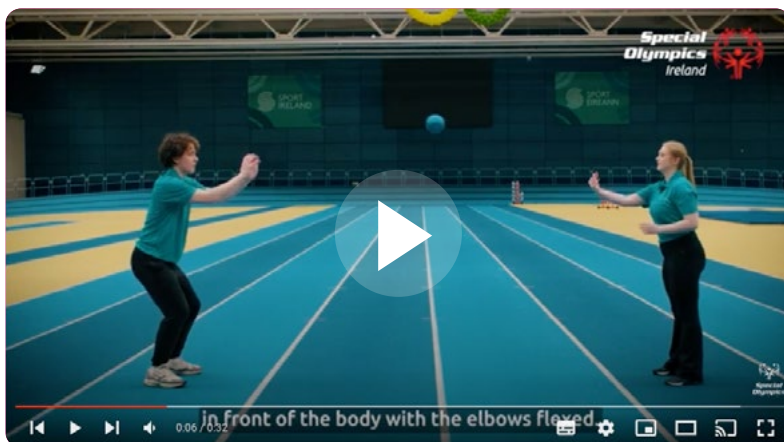




## Catching

Catching represents a manipulative skill closely linked with throwing, yet fundamentally distinct. It relies on visual tracking, involving the absorption and control of an object's force, typically with the hands. Balance plays a critical role; a stable, wide stance and aligning the body with the object's trajectory are essential. Early development emphasises the importance of balance for successful catching. Proficiency in catching is indispensable for various games including Gaelic football, basketball, rugby, hurling, baseball, rhythmic gymnastics and playground activities. An athlete's catching ability becomes apparent to their peers quite quickly in sport and play settings, highlighting the need for ample opportunities to practice with objects of varying sizes to foster skill mastery.

*Watch the catching demonstration below to learn how to demonstrate the skill of catching!*



**Young Athletes Activity Guide: Catching**



### Things to consider

When learning to catch, athletes can start with slower moving objects such as a scarf or balloon which provides more time for them to react to catch the object. Starting athletes with a larger ball for catching will make the skill more accessible as larger objects are easier to visually track. As athletes become more proficient, gradually introduce a smaller ball to help refine their catching skills. It takes on average five years or more for a child to become proficient with the skill of catching. Therefore, particularly for Young Athletes it is vital that they are exposed to as many opportunities to practice this skill as possible.



### Adaptations

Examples of adaptations that the coach can implement to ensure catching activities are inclusive of various abilities are outlined within each game and activity.



### Key Words

Hands reach for the ball, watch the ball, absorbing force, wide and stable base of support





## Identifying the Phases of Motor Development

### Exploring Phase



During the exploring phase, athletes will enjoy exploring a variety of catching experiences using objects of different sizes, textures and shapes. Characteristics of catching during this phase include:

- Athletes may turn their body away to avoid the catch
- Arms are held straight out in front of the body
- The body rather than the hands may be used to catch or trap the object
- Body doesn't react to the catch until the point of contact

### Developing Phase



During the developing phase, athletes practice catching a range of different sized objects, thrown from different heights and distances, at various speeds. The catch is predominantly still static. Characteristics of catching during this phase include:

- Eyes may close upon contact with the object
- Arms tend to trap the ball rather than catching with the hands
- Hands attempt to squeeze the object
- Catches are poorly timed and uneven

### Mastering Phase



During the mastering phase, athletes display catching proficiency in changing environments. The skill will be executed in a variety of activities and game settings. Characteristics of catching during this phase include:

- Hands are positioned in front of the body with the elbows flexed
- Arms extend and reach for the ball as it arrives
- Ball is caught with the hands only
- Eyes follow the flightpath of the object into the hands
- Hands and fingers are spread and relaxed to receive the object



## Coaching Observation

Common Errors	Feedback / Coaching Points
Looks away from the object or shutting eyes when catching	<i>Keep your eyes on the object, try to keep your eyes open</i>
Not moving body in line with the object or leaning back when catching	<i>Reach towards the object</i>
Trapping the object with the arms and chest	<i>Hands open like a book, spread your fingers</i>
Little or no 'give' after the catch	<i>Bend your elbows (to absorb the force)</i>



### Rhyme to help coach catch

*Eyes on the ball, hands ready to greet,  
Catch it softly, fingers spread wide, grasp it gently with pride!*



## The Movement Explorer

Introducing the skill of catching

Try to...

- ✓ Roll the ball slowly / fast
- ✓ Roll the ball to a partner
- ✓ Throw a beanbag or scarf in the air and catch it
- ✓ Catch an object without letting it touch your body
- ✓ Catch like standing / sitting / kneeling
- ✓ Catch with one hand / two hands



This coach led exercise encourages guided discovery and allows athletes to identify the correct catching technique.



# Catch Me if You Can!

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Each athlete is given a beanbag, scarf or balloon and asked to spread out in the open playing area, so they are not close to anyone else. The coach demonstrates throwing the beanbag up in the air and catching it with two hands. The coach invites the athletes to throw the beanbag up in the air and catch it with two hands while standing still. The athletes practice catching the beanbag in this manner for a couple of minutes while the coach reinforces the coaching cues for catching. Once the athletes are comfortable with the movement, the coach challenges the athletes asking:

- How many catches can you count before the beanbag drops?
- Can you clap before catching the beanbag?
- Can you turn around before catching the beanbag?
- Can you walk around while throwing the beanbag up in the air and catching it?



Scarves travel more slowly through the air, allowing more time for the athlete to catch it. This helps to build athletes' confidence.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Beanbags or scarf for each athlete

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Catch



## Adaptations



Athletes can play in a seated position. Athletes who can release one hand from their ambulatory aid can practice catching one-handed while standing.



Use a ball that makes a sound with movement to aid catching.



Assess response to the texture and impact of the beanbag, scarf or balloon prior to play to adapt accordingly.



## Coaching cues

*"Hands ready"*

Encourages athlete to have their hands positioned in front of their body with their elbows flexed.



*"Reach for the ball"*

Encourages children to extend their arms reaching for the ball as it comes towards them.





# Bounce and Catch

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Each athlete is asked to sit on the ground with their legs astride. The coach gives each athlete a small ball. Athletes bounce the ball on the ground to head height and catch it again before the ball touches the ground. The coach encourages athletes to try using a different hand to bounce or catch the ball eg. Bounce with the left and catch with the right, bounce with one hand and catch with two. After some time, athletes can practice from a standing position.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Small soft ball for each athlete

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Catch





## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can play in a seated position. Athletes who can release one hand from their ambulatory aid can practice catching one-handed while standing or sitting on a chair.

VI

Use a ball that makes a sound with movement to aid catching.

SPD

Assess response to the texture and impact of the ball prior to play to adapt accordingly.



## Coaching cues



*“Hands ready”*

Encourages athlete to have their hands positioned in front of their body with their elbows flexed.

*“Reach for the ball”*

Encourages children to extend their arms reaching for the ball as it comes towards them.





## Partner Pass

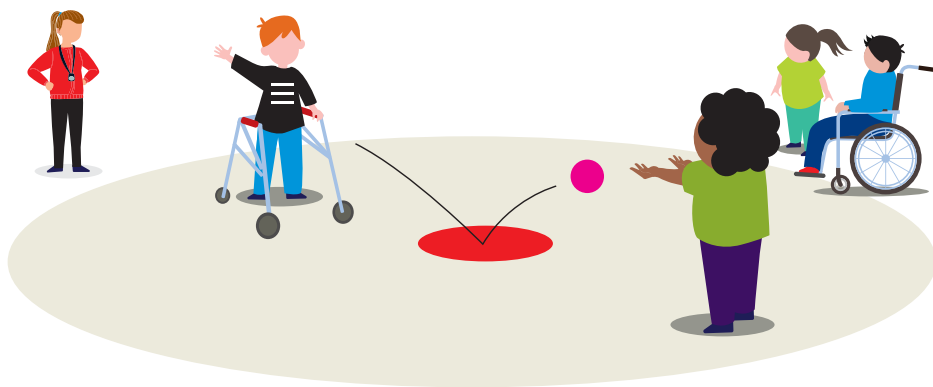
Duration: 6-8 mins

### Description of Activity

Coach arranges athletes in pairs OR partners a parent/volunteer with an athlete and invites them to find a space in the playing area where they are not in contact with others. Pairs face each other, approximately 2-3 metres apart and place a spot marker on the floor in the middle, equidistant from each participant. Athlete A bounces the ball on or near the spot for their partner to catch. Athlete/ Person B then repeats the action.



Coach reinforces the coaching cues focusing on arms reaching for the ball and catching with the hands only. To increase the difficulty move the partners further away from each other, to make the activity easier move the partners closer together. Increase the distance as the activity progresses and once partners can both catch the ball repeatedly for a number of catches.



### Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Small soft ball for each pair

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Catch



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can play in a seated position. Athletes who can release one hand from their ambulatory aid can practice catching one-handed while standing or sitting on a chair.

VI

Use a ball that makes a sound with movement to aid catching.

SPD

Assess response to the texture and impact of the ball prior to play to adapt accordingly.



## Coaching cues



*“Hands ready”*

Encourages athlete to have their hands positioned in front of their body with their elbows flexed.

*“Reach for the ball”*

Encourages children to extend their arms reaching for the ball as it comes towards them.





# Hot Potato

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach arranges athletes into small groups. Each group forms a circle with the help of a volunteer. One athlete in each circle begins with the hot potato (ball or beanbag). Athletes pass the ball around the circle from one person to the next. After the potato has made is around the circle without being dropped, everyone takes a step backwards. Now athletes need to pass the ball a further distance. Include additional instructions to keep athletes engaged:

- **'It's burning'** – pass the potato quicker around the circle
- **'Cool it down'** – blow on your hands after you pass the potato to cool them down
- **'Lunch time'** – pretend to eat the potato when you catch it
- **'Change direction'** – you have to pass the potato in the opposite direction around the circle
- **'Curly fries'** – spin around before catching the ball



*As the game goes on, add in an extra 1-2 balls or beanbags to make it more challenging. Carry out the activity in a seated position to make it more inclusive.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Soft balls or beanbags

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Catch



## Adaptations



Athletes can play in a seated position. Athletes who can release one hand from their ambulatory aid can practice catching one-handed while standing.



Use a ball that makes a sound with movement to aid catching.



Assess response to the texture and impact of the ball or beanbag prior to play to adapt accordingly.



## Coaching cues



### *“Hands ready”*

Encourages athlete to have their hands positioned in front of their body with their elbows flexed.

### *“Reach for the ball”*

Encourages children to extend their arms reaching for the ball as it comes towards them.



## Kicking

Using the foot for striking, commonly known as kicking, is a fundamental skill prevalent in various sports activities. It encompasses actions such as kicking a moving object, foot dribbling, trapping and punting. Initially, this activity guide focuses on kicking a stationary object, as it offers a simpler starting point for skill development and can be applied across a range of activities and modified games. When kicking a ball, force is exerted from the foot, propelling the ball in the direction of the force. The intensity of the force determines the distance the ball travels. Kicking serves as an effective means to enhance coordination between the foot and the eye.

*Watch the kicking demonstration below to learn how to demonstrate the skill of kicking!*



Young Athletes Activity Guide: Kicking





### Things to consider

Kicking is one of the more challenging fundamental movement skills to master, so particular attention should be paid to the technique. When learning to kick, athletes should be encouraged to kick as hard as they can. Focus should be placed on generating force rather than accuracy during the early stages of development. In order to maximise force, the ball needs to make contact with the shoelaces or instep of the foot. For safety, use a light or foam ball initially and ensure no other athletes are standing in or near the target area.



### Adaptations

Examples of adaptations that the coach can implement to ensure kicking activities are inclusive of various abilities are outlined within each game and activity.



### Key Words

Kick, dribble, force, shoelaces or instep, follow through, run up, foot close to the ball



## Identifying the Phases of Motor Development

### Exploring Phase



During the exploring phase, athletes will enjoy exploring kicking a variety of different sized balls at various sized targets. The focus is on making contact with the ball and generating as much force as possible. Characteristics of kicking during this phase include:

- Movement is stiff throughout
- Trunk remains upright and arm on the non-kicking side not used
- Limited backswing of kicking leg
- Inconsistent contact with the ball
- Little follow through

### Developing Phase



During the developing phase, athletes practice kicking technique which focuses on kicking for distance and accuracy using stationary and moving balls. Characteristics of kicking during this phase include:

- Movement is smoother but still upright
- Backswing of the leg is obvious but still not more than 90 degrees
- Follow through is evident but the knee of kicking leg remains bent
- Consistent contact with the ball

### Mastering Phase



During the mastering phase, athletes can apply the skill of kicking to activities and mini game situations. Proficient kicking technique will be combined with other fundamental movement skills such as running to partake in an unpredictable, changing environment. Characteristics of running during this phase include:

- Rapid, continuous approach to the ball
- Athlete takes an elongated stride or leap just prior to making contact with the ball
- Non-kicking foot placed close to the ball
- Kicks ball with instep or inside of preferred foot (not the toes)
- Backswing goes beyond 90 degrees and follow through in the direction of the target is clearly evident



## Coaching Observation

Common Errors	Feedback / Coaching Points
Looking at ground or feet	<i>Look at the target, keep your eyes on the target</i>
Standing front on with chest facing the target (overhand throw)	<i>Stand side on</i>
Arm action is the only movement when throwing	<i>Step forward / Stomp (underhand throw) Take a step and then throw (overhand throw)</i>
Little or no weight transfer	<i>Step then throw</i>



### Rhyme to help coach kick

*Leg back and swing, aim just right, kick the ball with all your might,  
Follow through, watch it fly,  
Kick, kick , kick, reach for the sky!*



## The Movement Explorer

Introducing the skill of kicking

**Try to kick a ball...**

- ✓ As hard as you can
- ✓ As soft as you can
- ✓ With your hands stuck to your sides
- ✓ With your hands in the air
- ✓ From a standing position
- ✓ From a big run up
- ✓ And hit a target
- ✓ Through the goals
- ✓ To a partner



This coach led exercise encourages guided discovery and allows athletes to identify the correct kicking technique





# Beanbag Footwork Challenge

Duration: 3-4 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach gives each athlete a beanbag and invites everyone to spread out in the playing area. Athletes place the beanbag at their feet and pass or slide the beanbag from one foot to the other while standing in the same spot.



Attempt the activity with the athletes folding their arms behind their back. Discuss if this makes the activity easier or harder.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Beanbag for each athlete

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Kick





## Adaptations

MI

Athletes who use a wheelchair/walker could use a larger ball instead of a beanbag and move the ball by contacting it using the wheelchair/walker. Another suggestion is to encourage the athlete to practice kicking a large yoga ball or to kick a soft ball off the top of a cone. Athletes who use ambulatory aids can play in a seated position, those who can stand should position the ambulatory aid to allow them to kick the beanbag between their feet.

VI

Use a beanbag or ball that makes a sound with movement, provide assistance for optimal positioning.



## Coaching cues



### *“Big step, big kick”*

Gets athletes to focus on taking an elongated stride prior to making contact with the ball and swinging the kicking leg back.

### *“Shoe laces to the ball”*

Encourages athletes to bring their kicking leg forward fast, making contact with the ball using the shoe laces or instep of the foot.





# Stationary Ball Kick

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach arranges athletes to stand on a floor marker each approximately 2-3 meters away from a wall. Each athlete receives an appropriately sized ball for kicking. The coach demonstrates the skill of the kick and then encourages athletes to practice kicking their ball to the wall using the inside of their preferred foot for 3-4 minutes. Volunteers then help to set up a number of goals using pop up goals or two tall cones to form a goal. Athletes have the opportunity in small groups to practice scoring a goal.



*If using cones, the goal can be made larger or smaller to decrease or increase difficulty level for athletes.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Soft balls or plastic footballs
- ✓ Cones or pop up goals

## Skills in Focus

✓ Kick



## Adaptations

MI

Establish partners and encourage the athlete in the wheelchair to instruct their partner how to move the wheelchair/walker to make contact with the ball or encourage the athlete to self propel and make contact with the ball. A larger ball can be used.

VI

Use a ball that makes a sound with movement, provide cues for optimal positioning.



## Coaching cues



### *"Big step, big kick"*

Gets athletes to focus on taking an elongated stride prior to making contact with the ball and swinging the kicking leg back.

### *"Shoe laces to the ball"*

Encourages athletes to bring their kicking leg forward fast, making contact with the ball using the shoe laces or instep of the foot.



## Partner Pass

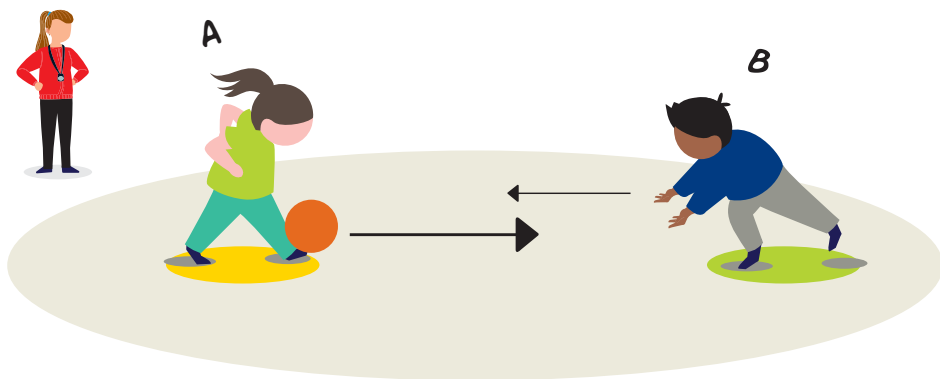
Duration: 6-8 mins

### Description of Activity

Arrange athletes in pairs with one ball per pair. Each athlete stands on a spot marker facing their partner who is also standing on a spot marker a few metres away. Athlete A begins by kicking the ball to their partner, keeping it low along the ground. Coach emphasises using the instep or inside of the preferred foot (not toes). Athlete B bends down and collects the ball with their hands, before placing it back on the ground and returning the kick. Repeat the kicking action between athletes back and forth for 10 minutes. Option to swap partners after a few minutes. Coaches to reinforce the kicking coaching cues below during this activity.



*To make this activity easier or harder move the athletes/ pairs closer (easier) or farther away (harder) from each other. Ask a parent or volunteer to partner with an athlete for this activity.*



### Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Spot markers for each participant
- ✓ Football or appropriate sized ball for each pair

### Skills in Focus

✓ Kick



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes who use a wheelchair/walker could use a larger ball and move the ball by contacting it using the wheelchair/walker. Another suggestion is to encourage the athlete to practice kicking a large yoga ball or to kick a soft ball off the top of a cone. Athletes who use ambulatory aids can play in a seated position, those who can stand should position the ambulatory aid to allow them to kick the ball. In the instance where this activity is not suitable for the athlete, suggest an alternative activity from this guide.

VI

Use a ball that makes a sound with movement, provide assistance for optimal positioning.



## Coaching cues



### *“Big step, big kick”*

Gets athletes to focus on taking an elongated stride prior to making contact with the ball and swinging the kicking leg back.

### *“Shoe laces to the ball”*

Encourages athletes to bring their kicking leg forward fast, making contact with the ball using the shoe laces or instep of the foot.



# Kick through the Gate

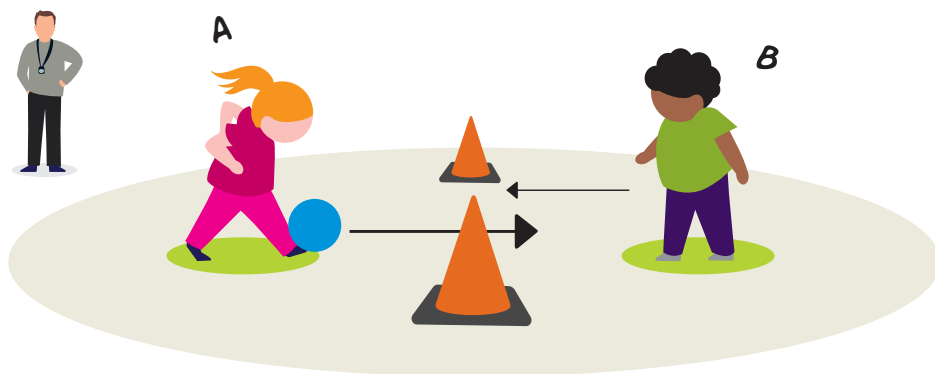
Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Arrange athletes in pairs with one ball per pair. Each athlete stands on a spot facing their partner who is also standing on a spot a few meters away. Set up a gate between each pair using two cones. Athlete A attempts to kick the ball to athlete B through the gate. How many successful kicks through the gate can each athlete get? Ask a volunteer to help athletes keep track. Coaches to reinforce the kicking coaching cues below during this activity of shoelaces to the ball and leg ready to pull the trigger.



To make this activity easier or harder, move the athletes/pairs closer (easier) or farther away (harder) from each other. Ask a parent or volunteer to partner with an athlete for this activity.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Spot markers for each participant
- ✓ Football or appropriate sized ball for each pair

## Skills in Focus

✓ Kick



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes who use a wheelchair/walker could use a larger ball and move the ball by contacting it using the wheelchair/walker. Another suggestion is to encourage the athlete to practice kicking a large yoga ball through the cones or to kick a soft ball off the top of a cone. Athletes who use ambulatory aids can play in a seated position, those who can stand should position the ambulatory aid to allow them to kick the ball through the cones. In the instance where this activity is not suitable for the athlete, suggest an alternative activity from this guide.

VI

Use a ball that makes a sound with movement, provide assistance for optimal positioning.



## Coaching cues



### *“Big step, big kick”*

Gets athletes to focus on taking an elongated stride prior to making contact with the ball and swinging the kicking leg back.

### *“Shoe laces to the ball”*

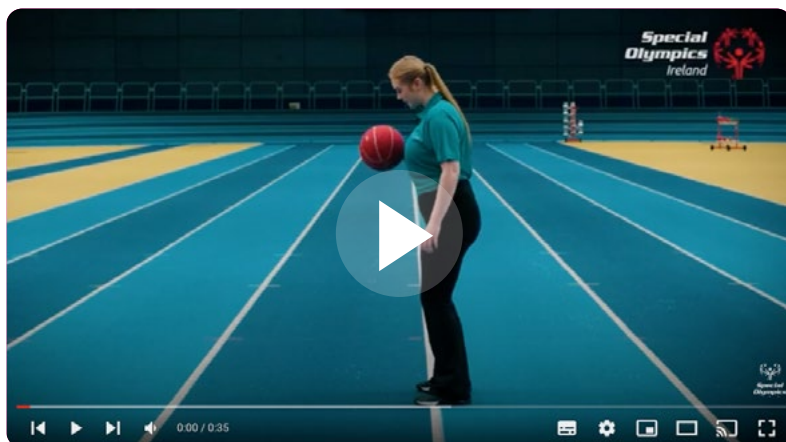
Encourages athletes to bring their kicking leg forward fast, making contact with the ball using the shoe laces or instep of the foot.



## Dribbling

The skill of dribbling involves a key movement of controlling an object in a downward direction. Dribbling is defined as striking with the hand while moving and is considered one of the more challenging fundamental movement skills, involving hand-eye coordination, tracking moving objects, and applying force through the hand while maintaining balance. This activity guide begins with the introductory skill of the stationary bounce. Many of the coaching points associated with the stationary bounce can be applied to bouncing while moving when athletes are ready to develop these skills. Dribbling is an important skill for sports such as basketball.

*Watch the dribbling demonstration below to learn how to demonstrate the skill of dribbling!*



**Young Athletes Activity Guide: Dribbling**





### Things to consider

Soft balls are appropriate for athletes to use when beginning to learn the skill of dribbling.



### Adaptations

Examples of adaptations that the coach can implement to ensure dribbling activities are inclusive of various abilities are outlined within each game and activity.



### Key Words

Bounce, stationary, hand-eye co-ordination, balance, strike with the hand, tracking an object



## Identifying the Phases of Motor Development

### Exploring Phase



During the exploring phase, athletes will enjoy exploring dribbling with different sized light weight balls. The main focus is to make good contact with the hand on the ball and build upon this. Characteristics of during this phase include:

- Bouncing the ball with both hands
- Fingers are stiff and close together
- Height of bounces varies
- Bounce tends to be a slapping action

### Developing Phase



During the developing phase, athletes have more control of the ball during the bouncing action. Athletes begin to move with the bounce, controlling the direction and force applied. Mini activities and games alone and with a partner are important at this stage to build skill proficiency. Characteristics of dribbling during this phase include:

- Athletes can bounce the ball with one hand, demonstrating good control when stationary
- Slapping action is still evident and eyes are focused on the ball
- Athletes can dribble while moving however control and height of the bounce is consistent

### Mastering Phase



During the mastering phase, athletes can successfully execute the stationary dribble and can dribble while moving in game like scenarios with others. There is a clear ability to track the movement of the ball and obvious hand-eye coordination. Characteristics of dribbling during this phase include:

- Athlete contacts ball with one hand at waist level
- Pushes the ball with the fingertips (not slapping the ball)
- Maintains control of the ball for at least four consecutive bounces without moving the feet to retrieve the ball (stationary dribble)



- Eyes can comfortably move from the ball to look up over the ball and assess surroundings (moving while dribbling)

## Coaching Observation

Common Errors	Feedback / Coaching Points
Slapping the ball	<i>Soft hand, open and relaxed fingers</i>
Ball bouncing at inconsistent heights	<i>Ball to your belly button</i>
Athlete not looking where they are going when moving while dribbling	<i>Practice getting your head up and looking around you while bouncing</i>
Standing upright with legs and trunk straight	<i>Bend your knees and bounce the ball</i>



### Rhyme to help coach dribbling

*Bounce, bounce with rhythm and grace,  
Keep the ball moving at a steady pace,  
Controlled and light, like a dancers feet,  
Bounce, bounce to the beat!*



## The Movement Explorer

Introducing the skill of dribbling

### Try to dribble a ball...

- ✓ On the spot
- ✓ Using your left hand / right hand
- ✓ Over the height of your waist
- ✓ To your belly button
- ✓ Below your knees
- ✓ From one hand to the other hand
- ✓ Between your legs
- ✓ While walking / jogging / running
- ✓ While looking away from the ball



This coach led exercise encourages guided discovery and allows athletes to identify the correct dribbling technique



# Keep it Afloat!

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach arranges athletes in groups of 3-4 and invites them to stand in a square. Cones can be used to mark out a number of squares on the floor to guide athletes where to stand. Provide each group with a balloon and challenges them to keep the balloon in the air for as long as possible, by only striking the balloon with their hand. The strike must be overhand with an open palm or the finger tips. This reinforces the hand position for the dribble.



Provide athletes with an opportunity to practice this on their own using a wall.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Cones
- ✓ Balloons for each group

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Dribble



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can play in a seated position. For athletes who use an ambulatory aid, if standing ensure space for the aid and strike the balloon with one hand only.

VI

Provide verbal prompts and guidance to help direct the athlete to where the balloon is.

SPD

Assess response to the texture and impact of the balloon prior to play to adapt accordingly.



## Coaching cues



*"Fingers spread wide"*

Encourages athletes to push the ball with their fingertips, rather than slapping at the ball. Fingers are spread open but relaxed.





# Stationary Dribble

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Each athlete stands on a spot marker on the floor and is given a basketball which they can dribble. The coach demonstrates the position of the athletes hand, using the coaching cues below. The coach asks the athletes to stand on the spot and try to bounce the ball:

- With one hand
- With the other hand
- Below the height of their knees
- Between their legs
- To waist height



*Coach the skill of dribbling while the athletes are standing stationary to begin with until proficiency develops.*



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Basketball or appropriately sized ball that bounces easily

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Dribble



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can play in a seated position with a variety of different size balls to choose from. For athletes who use an ambulatory aid, if standing ensure space for the aid and dribble with one hand only.

VI

Provide verbal prompts. Use a ball that makes a sound with movement where available.

SPD

Assess response to the texture and impact of the balloon prior to play to adapt accordingly.



## Coaching cues



### *“Fingers spread wide”*

Encourages athletes to push the ball with their fingertips, rather than slapping at the ball. Fingers are spread open but relaxed.

### *“Keep the ball by your side”*

Ensures athletes are bouncing the ball at or below waist level when in a stationary position.





# Dribble Relay Challenge

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach arranges athletes into small groups, with each group lining up behind a cone at one end of the playing area. Give each group one ball. The first athlete in each group dribbles the ball halfway up the playing area to a cone and then dribbles back, handing the ball to the next player. The athletes are tasked with completing a variety of dribbling techniques in a non-competitive environment as follows:

- With one hand
- With the other hand
- Below the height of their knees
- Between their legs
- To waist height



Vary the ball used, e.g. small bouncy ball, tennis ball, football, plastic ball etc.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Basketball or appropriately sized ball that bounces easily
- ✓ Cones

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Dribble





## Adaptations

MI

Encourage the athlete to self-propel their wheelchair, stopping to bounce or dribble the ball along the way. For athletes who use an ambulatory aid they may need additional support for this activity, encourage the athlete to walk using the aid stopping along the way to dribble the ball while in a stationary position. In the instance where this activity is not suitable for the athlete, suggest an alternative game or activity from this guide to try!.

VI

Provide verbal prompts. A volunteer, coach or parent can work with the athlete and offer them to place a hand on their elbow or shoulder for additional support and guidance.

SPD

Assess response to the texture and impact of the balloon prior to play to adapt accordingly.



## Coaching cues



### *“Fingers spread wide”*

Encourages athletes to push the ball with their fingertips, rather than slapping at the ball. Fingers are spread open but relaxed.

### *“Keep the ball by your side”*

Ensures athletes are bouncing the ball at or below waist level when in a stationary position.



## Dash and Score

Duration: 6-8 mins

### Description of Activity

The coach arranges athletes into pairs (A and B) with a basketball or soft bouncy ball per pair. Invite athletes to position themselves behind a line of cones at one end of playing space. Athlete A dribbles the ball down the hall to the other side, throws it against the wall, catches it again. They then dribble back and pass to their partner. Athlete B then repeats the action. The game continues for a set period of time (e.g. 5 mins) with athletes counting the runs they make (volunteers can help athletes keep track). The aim is to make as many runs as possible in the allocated time.



*Vary the ball used, e.g. small bouncy ball, tennis ball, football, plastic ball etc.*



### Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Basketball or appropriately sized ball that bounces easily per group
- ✓ Cones

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Dribble



## Adaptations

MI

Encourage the athlete to self-propel their wheelchair, stopping to bounce or dribble the ball along the way. For athletes who use an ambulatory aid they may need additional support for this activity, encourage the athlete to walk using the aid stopping along the way to dribble the ball while in a stationary position. In the instance where this activity is not suitable for the athlete, suggest an alternative game or activity from this guide to try!

VI

Use a balloon that makes a sound with movement, provide verbal assistance to aid in the direction of the balloon.

SPD

Assess response to the texture and impact of the balloon prior to play to adapt accordingly.



## Coaching cues

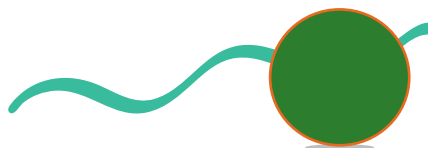


### *“Fingers spread wide”*

Encourages athletes to push the ball with their fingertips, rather than slapping at the ball. Fingers are spread open but relaxed.

### *“Keep the ball by your side”*

Ensures athletes are bouncing the ball at or below waist level when in a stationary position.





# Balance Skills

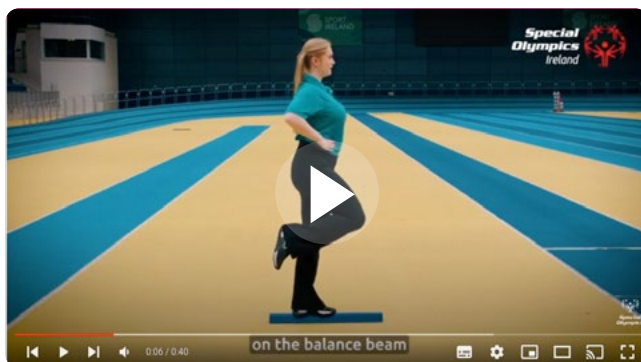
Balance is defined as a person's ability to maintain a stationary position throughout the movement (static balance) OR a person's ability to control their body when moving (dynamic balance).



## Balance

Balance skills are crucial for physical development both on and off the sports field. Balance is defined as a person's ability to maintain a stationary position throughout the movement (static balance) e.g. a handstand in gymnastics or a person's ability to control their body while moving (dynamic balance) e.g. keeping the body stable while kicking a football. The activities and games in this section of the activity guide incorporate both static and dynamic balance skills.

*Watch the balance demonstrations below to learn how to demonstrate static and dynamic balance skills!*



Young Athletes Activity Guide: Single Leg Beam Balance



Young Athletes Activity Guide: Walking Heel to Toe on a Line



### Things to consider

Always ensure that athletes have enough personal space when performing a balance. For beginners, start by incorporating balance skills which require minimal equipment e.g. walking along a line or rope on the floor. Once the athletes have mastered this level, progress the activities by including equipment such as balance beams and balance rocks.



### Adaptations

Examples of adaptations that the coach can implement to ensure catching activities are inclusive of various abilities are outlined within each game and activity.



### Key Words

Hands reach for the ball, watch the ball, absorbing force, wide and stable base of support

## Identifying the Phases of Motor Development

### Exploring Phase



During the exploring phase, athletes will enjoy experimenting with different types of balances, stationary, while moving on different body parts, alone or with others. Characteristics of balance during this phase include:

- Using body parts to overcompensate to try and retain the balance, e.g. arms swinging widely, body leaning from side to side
- Looking down at the ground rather than straight ahead
- Can balance with support
- Balance is achieved occasionally



## Developing Phase



During the developing phase, athletes become more confident and proficient at balancing by taking part in balance activities in a task-oriented environment. Examples of this would include challenging the athletes to walk across the beam without falling off (static balance) or athletes walk across the beam while balancing a bean bag on their head or hand (dynamic balance). Characteristics of balance during this phase include:

- Eyes are more focused on a target with the head up
- Arms are out by the sides to aid with balance
- Balance is lost less frequently
- Balance is achieved on the dominant leg more frequently
- Athletes achieve dynamic balance during this phase with a lot of concentration e.g. balancing in the 'tree' pose, standing on one leg with the opposite foot placed on inner thigh or calf of standing leg

## Mastering Phase



During the mastering phase, athletes will be able to perform static and dynamic balances proficiently as well as applying these skills in a gymnastics, dance and sports setting. Characteristics of balance during this phase include:

- Eyes focused on the target
- Arms and other body parts are used to counterbalance
- Ability to balance on either leg
- Ability to balance with eyes closed



### Rhyme to help coach balance

*Lift one foot, find your spot,  
Arms out wide, don't let them drop.  
Count to five, switch and stay,  
Balancing fun, every day!*





## Coaching Observation

Common Errors	Feedback / Coaching Points
Eyes looking down	<i>Head up, look at the wall. Put a marker on the wall and encourage athletes to look at that point</i>
Arms waving wildly	<i>Hold your arms out to the side, keep them there for 5 seconds (the coach counts out the seconds)</i>
Holding the non-support leg against the support leg or hooking the non-support leg in behind the support leg	<i>Hold the bent leg away from the support leg. The coach can get the athletes to practice this holding onto a wall first to build confidence</i>
Lifting the non-support leg too high	<i>Keep your knees at similar height. Imagine there is a rope between your two knees</i>
Leaning the body forwards or sideways to assist with balance	<i>Stand up tall, arms out by your side to help you balance</i>

## The Movement Explorer

Introducing the skill of balance

### Can you balance on one leg with...

- ✓ Your arms out by your sides
- ✓ Your hands on your hips
- ✓ Both legs touching
- ✓ Your eyes closed
- ✓ A beanbag on your head
- ✓ The non balancing leg out in front
- ✓ The non balancing leg out behind

### Can you balance...

- ✓ On two body parts
- ✓ On three body parts
- ✓ On four body parts
- ✓ On one leg while catching a ball
- ✓ On one leg while throwing a ball
- ✓ For three seconds
- ✓ For five seconds
- ✓ For three seconds then walk and hold a balance again



This coach led exercise encourages athletes to discover for themselves the correct technique to use to balance.







# Tightrope Walk

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Athletes walk along a line, heel-to-toe on the floor marked by a line painted on the floor, a strip of tape, line drawn by chalk or floor markers. The coach invites athletes to:

- Turn fully around in the middle of the line, without losing their balance or toppling off the line
- Complete the task with their eyes closed (this can be done in pairs with a volunteer or another athlete acting as a guide)
- Hold a 'flamingo pose' (standing on one leg) for the count of 3 seconds as the athlete balances on the line

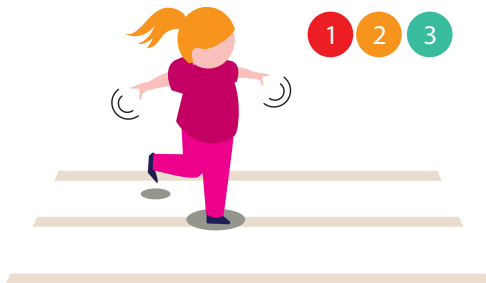
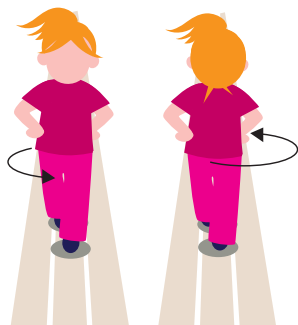


Progress this activity by getting the athletes to walk across ropes on the floor. Once athletes have achieved this you can advance to the balance beam.



### Top Tip:

Set up different balance stations and let athletes rotate in small groups through the different balance activities.



### Equipment

- ✓ Balance Beam
- ✓ Tape
- ✓ Pool Noodles
- ✓ Chalk
- ✓ Rope

### Skills in Focus

✓ Balance





## Adaptations

MI

Create a narrow path using tape on the floor or pool noodles to create a path for athletes who use a wheelchair. These athletes can self-propel their wheelchair where possible and practice turning. Additional balance activities for wheelchair users or athletes in a seated position include: diagonal reaches, seated weight shifting and toe touches. [Click here](#) to see more balance exercises!

VI

Use pool noodles to allow for tactile feedback; provide physical assistance from a volunteer as needed.



## Coaching cues



### *“Stand like a flamingo”*

Encourages athletes to stand with one leg bent at 90 degree angle (static balance)

### *“Aeroplane arms”*

Encourages athletes to hold their arms as still as possible, either at their side or extended out to aid balance.



# Rock Hop

Duration: 5-6 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach sets up the balance rocks or stepping stones and floor markers around the open space. The coach encourages athletes to pretend that they are walking on the rocks to avoid falling into a river or getting eaten by crocodiles. Athletes move around the space and step up onto the balance rocks, floor markers or ropes. Turn fully around in the middle of the line, without losing their balance or toppling off the line



*Coaches can progress this activity by getting athletes to stand on one foot when on the rocks and or by moving the rocks, floor markers or rope further away from each other. Use a variety of equipment with different textures to further challenge balance and base of support.*



## Equipment

- ✓ Floor Markers
- ✓ Balance rocks
- ✓ Ropes

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Dynamic Balance



## Adaptations

MI

Additional balance activities for wheelchair users or athletes in a seated position include: diagonal reaches, seated weight shifting and toe touches. [Click here](#) to see more balance exercises! Athletes who use an ambulatory aid can participate in this activity using their aid for support. Physical support or assistance from a coach, parent or volunteer may be needed for safety. Ensure enough space for the ambulatory aid and place floor markers, balance rocks and ropes at appropriate distances for stepping

VI

Provide verbal prompts. Ask a volunteer or coach to work with the athlete and offer them to place a hand on their elbow or shoulder for additional support and guidance.



## Coaching cues



### *“Stand like a flamingo”*

Encourages athletes to stand with one leg bent at 90 degree angle (static balance)

### *“Aeroplane arms”*

Encourages athletes to hold their arms as still as possible, either at their side or extended out to aid balance.



# Freeze Dance

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach chooses upbeat music that athletes will enjoy. The coach invites the athletes to move to the music e.g. by walking, skipping, twirling, swaying, jumping. The coach explains that when the music stops, all athletes have to 'freeze'. This means trying to stay perfectly still until the music starts playing again. When the coach stops the music and calls 'freeze', athletes must copy the balance pose demonstrated by the coach and try to hold this position until the music starts again.

Examples of balances include:

- Standing on one leg (hands on hips or out to the side to help balance)
- Downward dog pose with hands on the floor
- Sitting on your bum with arms and legs lifted off the floor
- Extend the leg behind the body while standing up tall
- Standing with one foot in front of the other (narrow base of support, to challenge further close your eyes)



*To make this activity harder, the coach can prolong the duration of the music pauses by increasing them from three seconds up to four or five, depending on how well athletes are balancing.*



## Equipment

- ✓ Open Space
- ✓ Music

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Static Balance



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can self-propel their wheelchair where possible around the open playing space. Athletes must freeze in their wheelchair on the coach's call. The coach can incorporate seated friendly balance poses which include diagonal reaches, seated weight shifting and toe touches. [Click here](#) to see more balance exercises!

Athletes who use an ambulatory aid can participate in this activity using their aid for support. Physical support or assistance from a coach, parent or volunteer may be needed for safety when practicing the balance poses.

HOH

Volunteers can assist by tapping the athletes shoulder when the music stops. A volunteer can assist by turning a light on when the music is playing and turning it off when the music stops.

VI

Provide verbal prompts. Provide physical assistance where needed.

SPD

Assess reaction to volume and tone of music prior to the activity. Creating a likes/dislikes inventory alongside the parent of athlete can assist with this.



## Coaching cues



### *"Stand like a flamingo"*

Encourages athletes to stand with one leg bent at 90 degree angle (static balance)

### *"Aeroplane arms"*

Encourages athletes to hold their arms as still as possible, either at their side or extended out to aid balance.



# Bean Bag Balance

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Set up a large playing area using cones. Invite three athletes to be taggers and three volunteers to be rescuers. The remaining athletes balance a beanbag on their head in their own space in the area. On the coach's signal, athletes walk or run around the area with a bean bag on their head, trying not to get tagged. If athletes are tagged or if they drop their beanbag on the ground, they must freeze and perform a static balance holding their arms out to the side until they are released by the 'rescuers' (volunteers). Athletes are 'tagged' when the taggers tap them on the shoulder and say 'tag'.



## Equipment

- ✓ Cones to mark out the playing area
- ✓ Bean bag for each athlete

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Static Balance
- ✓ Dynamic Balance





## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can place their bean bag on their head while they self-propel their wheelchair in the open playing area. For athletes who use an ambulatory aid, they can place their bean bag on the aid, e.g. On the walker, if easier for them. If a bean bag is too challenging coaches can provide another object like a scarf.

HOH

Athletes know they have been tagged by when they receive a tap on the shoulder.

VI

Use textured or bright coloured bean bags. Athletes know they have been tagged when they receive a tap on the shoulder.

SPD

Encourage athletes to interact with the bean bag according to need and tolerance (consider adaptations using light, sound, textures etc).



## Coaching cues



### *“Stand like a flamingo”*

Encourages athletes to stand with one leg bent at 90 degree angle (static balance)

### *“Aeroplane arms”*

Encourages athletes to hold their arms as still as possible, either at their side or extended out to aid balance.



# My Friend Beanie

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach invites the athletes to try balancing their beanbag on different parts of their body. The coach can demonstrate examples such as on balancing the beanbag on their head, their elbow, their foot. The athletes can try to balance the beanbag on different parts of their body while in different positions such as standing on one foot, sitting with feet in the air, while on their hands and knees. The next challenge is to encourage athletes to balance the bean bag while moving around e.g. on their head while walking on their back while crawling, on their hand while running. As the coach is demonstrating the activities, they can talk while doing so which will help the athletes learn the words for different body parts and positions, e.g. between your legs, on the tip of your nose, under your chin.



## Equipment

- ✓ Open Space
- ✓ Bean Bag for each athlete

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Static Balance
- ✓ Dynamic Balance



## Adaptations

MI

Athletes can place their bean bag on their head while they self-propel their wheelchair in the open playing area. For athletes who use an ambulatory aid, they can place their bean bag on the aid, eg. On the walker, if easier for them. If a bean bag is too challenging coaches can provide another object like a scarf.

HOH

Visual cues and demonstrations will be very important.

VI

A beanbag with a bell in it or brightly coloured fabric square could be used. Additional assistance can be provided by a volunteer or parent.

SPD

If the athlete does not like the feel of the beanbag a small sensory ball, fabric square, light scarf could be substituted. By offering sensory friendly options, coaches can create a more comfortable environment to suit the athlete's needs.



## Coaching cues



### *“Stand like a flamingo”*

Encourages athletes to stand with one leg bent at 90 degree angle (static balance)

### *“Aeroplane arms”*

Encourages athletes to hold their arms as still as possible, either at their side or extended out to aid balance.



# Coach Says Balance

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

Play a traditional game of Simon Says, but focus on commands that involve balance exercises, such as “Coach says stand on one leg,” “Coach says tiptoe across the room,” or “Coach says balance on one foot and touch your nose.” Examples of other commands include:

- Coach says walk heel-to-toe (walk on a tight rope)
- Coach says stand tall and close your eyes
- Coach says walk like a crab sideways
- Coach says walk backwards
- Coach says walk in a figure of eight



*All of the balances listed can be carried out using a wall for support. Additionally, seated versions of these balances for wheelchair users or those with limited mobility include seated diagonal reaches, seated weight shifting from left to right, lateral reaches down either side of the chair, leaning forward to touch the toes (toe touches) and throwing/catching a ball in a seated position.*



## Equipment

- ✓ Open Space

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Static Balance
- ✓ Dynamic Balance



## Adaptations

MI

Balance tasks can be carried out in a seated position or beside a wall for support. Modify the type of balance to suit the ability level of the athlete. The coach can incorporate seated friendly balance poses which include diagonal reaches, seated weight shifting and toe touches. [Click here](#) to see more balance exercises!

HOH

Visual demonstrations by the coach or volunteers will be beneficial. Additionally, using picture cards to demonstrate the sequence of the movement may be helpful.

VI

The verbal prompts from the coach should be sufficient. Additional support may be required in the form of 'hand over hand' demonstrations of tasks or for commands such as walking backwards to ensure safety of the athlete.

SPD

Allow the athlete to choose the type and intensity of the balance activity they feel comfortable with. Offer options for different balance challenges and let them decide which ones they want to try. Break down the activity into smaller, more manageable steps to help the athlete build confidence and skills.



## Coaching cues



### *"Stand like a flamingo"*

Encourages athletes to stand with one leg bent at 90 degree angle (static balance)

### *"Aeroplane arms"*

Encourages athletes to hold their arms as still as possible, either at their side or extended out to aid balance.



# Obstacle Course Guide



# Obstacle Course Guide

Incorporating an obstacle course into your Young Athletes session on a weekly basis has several benefits including:

- 1 Skill Development:** Offering a variety of movements and challenges that help children to develop a wide range of fundamental movement skills. From climbing and crawling to jumping and balancing, obstacle courses provide opportunities for children to practice and refine different skills in a fun and novel way.
- 2 Engaging and Fun:** Providing a dynamic and interactive environment that captures children's attention and keeps them motivated to participate. The element of challenge and adventure encourages children to actively engage in the session, leading to increased enjoyment and participation.
- 3 Confidence and Self-esteem:** Successfully completing an obstacle course provides children with a sense of accomplishment and boosts their confidence and self-esteem. As children overcome challenges and obstacles, they gain a sense of mastery and achievement, which enhances their self-confidence and belief in their abilities. This positive reinforcement motivates children to continue practicing and improving their fundamental movement skills.





In this guide we provide coaches and volunteers with four examples of how to implement an obstacle course. Coaches and volunteers can get creative and incorporate imaginative play and storytelling into the obstacle courses they create, e.g. A trip to the jungle, rocket ship to the moon, visit to the zoo!



## Adaptations

**MI**

Ensure that tasks of over/under, fast/slow, between/around can be practiced when using an ambulatory aid or wheelchair for navigation. Encourage athletes to self-propel their wheelchair through the obstacle course, moving in and around objects. Encourage partner work. Ask a volunteer or partner to support the athlete to move through the course without the assistive device.

**HOH**

Use audio amplification or sign language.

**VI**

Use brightly coloured equipment, place contrasting tape on edges of equipment, use equipment that is tactile in nature, create walkways with blocks or pool noodles to help the athlete avoid going off track. Ask a parent or volunteer to support the athlete.

**SPD**

Encourage athletes to interact with the equipment within the obstacle course according to need and tolerance (consider adaptations using light, sound, textures etc).





# Obstacle Course 1

Duration: 8-10 mins

## Description of Activity

Athletes take turns to complete the obstacle course which targets and reinforces a range of different fundamental movement skills.

- Run and then crawl through the tunnel
- Bear crawl, matching hands and feet to plastic hands/feet on ground
- Two-foot jump over the hurdles. Keep bar low to encourage athletes to jump
- Walk heel to toe on a line for 6 steps with hands on hips
- Balance on stepping stones
- Throw 3 bean bags into hula hoops at the end



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Tunnel
- ✓ Hands and Feet
- ✓ Hurdles (Cones and Poles)
- ✓ Balance Beam
- ✓ Balance Rocks
- ✓ Hula Hoops
- ✓ Beanbags

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Run
- ✓ Crawl
- ✓ Jump
- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Throw



# Obstacle Course 2

Duration: 8-10 mins

## Description of Activity

Athletes take turns to complete the obstacle course which targets and reinforces a range of different fundamental movement skills.

- Skip for 1-2 meters
- Walk across the balance beam and hold a single leg balance at the end of beam
- Hopscotch, alternating two-foot jump and single leg hop using plastic feet
- Two-foot jump over the hurdles. Keep bar low to encourage athletes to jump
- Balance on stepping stones
- Dribble basketball in and out between the cones and shoot at a target (hula hoop held up by a coach / volunteer)



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Balance Beam
- ✓ Plastic Feet
- ✓ Hurdles (Cones and Poles)
- ✓ Balance Rocks
- ✓ Cones
- ✓ Basketballs
- ✓ Hula Hoop

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Skip
- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Hop
- ✓ Jump
- ✓ Crawl
- ✓ Dribble



# Obstacle Course 3

Duration: 8-10 mins

## Description of Activity

Athletes take turns to complete the obstacle course which targets and reinforces a range of different fundamental movement skills.

- Run for 1-2 meters then in and out of the cones
- Walk heel to toe on a line for 6 steps with hands on hips
- Single leg hops across the spot markers
- Crawling under the hurdles
- Walk heel to toe on a line for 6 steps with hands on hips
- Coach / Volunteer bounce passes ball to athlete who must catch the ball and bounce pass it back



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Cones
- ✓ Line or rope on the ground
- ✓ Plastic Feet
- ✓ Hurdles (Cones and Poles)
- ✓ Spot marker
- ✓ Soft Ball

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Run
- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Hop
- ✓ Crawl
- ✓ Catch



## Obstacle Course 4

Duration: 8-10 mins

### Description of Activity

Athletes take turns to complete the obstacle course which targets and reinforces a range of different fundamental movement skills:

- Hopscotch jumping into the hula hoops (two feet and one foot alternating)
- Walk across the balance beam, hold a single leg balance at the end of beam
- Crawl through the tunnel
- Run moving in and out between cones
- Balance on stepping stones
- Kick a ball into a net or at a target



### Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Hula Hoops
- ✓ Balance Beam
- ✓ Tunnel
- ✓ Cones
- ✓ Balance rocks
- ✓ Ball and Target/Net

### Skills in Focus

✓ Hop

✓ Jump

✓ Balance

✓ Run

✓ Kick



# Cool Down Activities



# Parachute Games

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of Activity

The coach and volunteers open the parachute and invite athletes to find a space and hold onto the handle. The coach starts by asking athletes to move the parachute slowly up and down, then really fast up and down. This is repeated a couple of times. Volunteers help throw some soft balls into the middle of the parachute and the athletes move the parachute to make the balls fly into the air.



*After a few minutes when all the balls are thrown from the parachute, all the athletes lie underneath and take deep breaths to relax before the session finishes. Volunteers and parents move the parachute gently up and down.*



## Equipment

- ✓ Parachute
- ✓ Soft Balls (12+)



### **Merry-Go-Round**

Have athletes turn sideways and hold onto handle with their left hand. Everyone walks in a circle to create a merry-go-round. Get athletes to march, skip or hop in a circle.



### **Mushroom**

Have all athletes hold onto the parachute, raise the handle above their heads and then pull it down quickly so everyone is underneath forming a 'mushroom'. Repeat this a few times.



### **Parachute run**

The coach or volunteer calls out two athletes names and they must run underneath the parachute and switch places.



## **Adaptations**



Use Velcro tape to help secure the parachute to an athletes clothing or wheelchair if they cannot grip the parachute. Play in a seated position as needed.



Use audio amplification or sign language as needed.



Assist with verbal cues, toss balls with bells inside onto the parachute.



Assess environment and adapt accordingly for increased noise and visual stimulation.



## Cool Down Stretches

Duration: 6-8 mins

### Description of Activity

The coach and volunteers lead the athletes through a series of stretches to help them cool down after the busy session. Pick 3-4 stretches to carry out with athletes. Examples of these stretches and low impact exercises include:



#### Marching on the spot

This is a simple and effective way to cool down the body after physical activity. Simply walk on the spot, lifting their knees up high, slowly moving arms in opposite direction to their legs. Slowing the movement right down. Carry out this activity for 20-30 seconds.



#### Butterfly stretch

Invite athletes to sit on the ground with knees bent and feet touching (legs look like a butterfly's wings). Slowly bring the knees up and down, flapping like a butterfly's wings for 10-15 repetitions. Rest and then repeat again.



#### Cat/Camel:

Invite athletes to begin on their knees and hands with a flat back, encourage athletes to take a deep breath in. Arch the back so that the tummy is moving down towards the ground and the shoulders move back so the camels can look up. Invite athletes to breathe out and create a curve on their backs as they become cats stretching into their backs. Repeat this movement about 10 times (5 in each position of cat/camel).



#### Reach for the sky

Invite athletes to reach up and touch the sky for 15 seconds. Now, reach down and touch the toes for 15 seconds. Repeat 5 times until cool.



#### Toe Touches

Invite athletes to sit with their legs outstretched, shoulder width apart or more. Lean forward and try to touch their toes, one leg at a time. Hold the position for 15-20 seconds. Repeat twice more on each side.



#### Breathe

Invite athletes to breathe in while stretching their arms wide and high and then to breathe out while lowering their arms. Repeat this 5 times.





## Adaptations

MI

Encourage athletes to carry out the stretch to the best of their ability, using whichever body part that they can move most freely. The coach can incorporate seated friendly balance poses which include diagonal reaches, seated weight shifting and toe touches. [Click here](#) to see more balance exercises! Play in a seated position as needed.

HOH

Use audio amplification or sign language as needed.

VI

Assist with verbal cues.

SPD

Assess environment and adapt accordingly for increased noise and visual stimulation.







## How to organise an Inter-club Activity for Young Athletes

As part of creating a positive youth sport environment when coaching children, it is recommended that coaches use competition in a developmental way (Lara- Bercial et al., 2022). Inter-club activities are an excellent example of how a club can implement this practice with their Young Athletes.

The **practical implications** for coaches of Young Athletes include:



Inter-club activities can be an excellent way to enlarge the social circle for Young Athletes and their families, by allowing children to interact and meet with others from another Young Athletes club, enabling them to form friendships outside of their club and to see others as 'partners' rather than opponents through friendly games and competitions.



The focus of games and activities during the inter-club event should focus on teaching Young Athletes **how to compete** appropriately rather than placing an emphasis on winning. Competing and winning are two separate things. We want to teach Young Athletes that competing is trying their hardest and giving their best effort.



Competition during inter-club activities for Young Athletes is a learning tool or form of preparation for future involvement in sports specific training. For coaches it can serve as an opportunity to 'benchmark' the athletes' skills to guide future training and development.

*(Guidance adapted from Lara-Bercial et al. (2022), the ICoach Kids Pledge: 10 Golden Principles for Coaching Children)*



## An Inter-Club Activity Involves:

- ✓ Two clubs or a maximum of 30 athletes (if outside of these guidelines, please contact your Regional Special Olympics office).
- ✓ One club taking responsibility for hosting and organising the event.
- ✓ Costs associated with hosting the event being either covered by the host club or an agreement being reached with participating clubs in advance.
- ✓ Registered volunteers that are sourced from within the participating clubs.

### Each Participating Club needs to ensure:

Appropriate coach-to-athlete numbers, the recommended ratio for Young Athletes is **4:1**, athletes to coaches or volunteers. This ratio may increase for the number of coaches and volunteers depending on the age of the athletes and if additional supports are required for certain athletes.

## Safety and Wellbeing

The organiser(s) on the day of the event should:

- ✓ Carry out a safety inspection of the venue before people arrive.
- ✓ Monitor the venue for safety issues throughout the day.
- ✓ Check in and brief volunteers on their own role.
- ✓ Brief volunteers on the evacuation procedures for the venue.
- ✓ Remind volunteers of the need to ensure that exits/floors/pitches are kept clear of obstructions and potential risks.
- ✓ Ensure appropriate First Aid cover is on-site.

### First Aid cover includes:

- ✓ One qualified First Aid person on site who is identifiable by a coloured bib (an attending coach or volunteer may be qualified to take on this role).
- ✓ A First Aid kit available.
- ✓ Organiser(s) should be aware of the location of the nearest Accident and Emergency hospital and/or local General Practitioner (GP).



## Benefits of an Inter-Club Activity

### For Young Athletes

- ✓ Increased opportunity to learn and develop their fundamental movement skills.
- ✓ Increased opportunity to participate in competition in a developmental way that is beneficial for their age and stage.
- ✓ Social aspect in which Young Athletes can make new friends and have a new experience beyond their own club setting.

### For Young Athletes Clubs

- ✓ Additional training opportunities.
- ✓ Enables coaches and volunteers to implement competition in a developmental way.
- ✓ Helps to prepare Young Athletes for future involvement in Special Olympics sports training and competitions.

### For Coaches

- ✓ Opportunities for networking, sharing ideas and experiences.
- ✓ Relationship building with local clubs.

### For Others

- ✓ Opportunity for family involvement at the local level.
- ✓ Volunteers gain additional exp

## Awards

Participation medals can be awarded to athletes for interclub activities. These are sourced and purchased at the club's expense.

## Insurance

Inter-club activities are covered under the 'Inter-club activities are covered under the Special Olympics Ireland Combined Liabilities and the Personal Accident Policies.'







## What's next?

### Developmental Sports

Developmental sports activities can be introduced into the Young Athletes programme once children have developed high levels of proficiency in fundamental movement skills to continue to challenge the athletes, introduce sport-specific activities that are age-appropriate and that will support a child's transition to traditional Special Olympics participation (Special Olympics International). Developmental sports activities may be more appropriate for Young Athletes in the older age bracket of 10-12 years, who have participated in the programme for a few years and are preparing to transition into sports specific training. Developmental sports activities can provide athletes with an opportunity to try several different sports before deciding which sport they would like to commit to in the future.

Special Olympics International have developed a guide to implementing developmental sports. The guide (which you can access below) features resources to introduce the following sports to younger athletes:



badminton



basketball



football



swimming



floorball



Read the Guide here





When appropriate to meet the needs of the athletes, coaches can utilise the Developmental Sports guide to incorporate developmental sports activities during their typical Young Athletes session training.



### Further training

Special Olympics Level 1 Sport Assistant Course, available through the Special Olympics Online Learning Portal.

[Find out more](#)


### Additional Resources

'Coaching Young Athletes' course - Information on the **Coach Education qualification** for delivering or supporting the Young Athletes programme

[See here](#)

8 weeks of **Young Athletes session plans**

[See here](#)

Inclusive **Young Athletes flashcards**

[See here](#)

Special Olympics International - **Young Athletes resources**

[See here](#)

**Inclusion Factsheets** - Active Disability Ireland

[See here](#)

**ICoach Kids** - Free Coach Education courses and support materials

[See here](#)

**Health@Play** - A health education programme for younger athletes which can be incorporated into Young Athletes programme delivery. Watch this video to learn more.

[See here](#)

Special Olympics International - **Online Learning portal** for additional upskilling opportunities

[See here](#)



## Research Papers

Check out the published research studies carried out on the Special Olympics Ireland, Young Athletes programme in collaboration with Dublin City University.

Kavanagh, H., Manninen, M., and Issartel, J. (2023) Comparing the fundamental movement skill proficiency of children with intellectual disabilities and typically developing children: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, <https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/jir.13012>.

Kavanagh, Hayley, Manninen, Mika, Meegan, Sarah, & Issartel, Johann. (2023). Assessing the Fundamental Movement Skills of Children With Intellectual Disabilities in the Special Olympics Young Athletes Program. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1123/apaq.2022-0201>.

Kavanagh, H., Issartel, J., Meegan, S., and Manninen, M. (2023) Exploring the motor skill proficiency barrier among children with intellectual disabilities: analysis at a behavioural component level. *PLOS One*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0288413>.

Kavanagh H, Issartel J, Meegan S, Manninen M. Can Special Olympics coaches accurately report on the motor competence of children with intellectual disabilities? *J Appl Res Intellect Disabil*. 2024 Mar;37(2):e13195. doi: 10.1111/jar.13195.

For more information on the published work or to discuss the research further, please contact the lead author at [hayley.kavanagh7@mail.dcu.ie](mailto:hayley.kavanagh7@mail.dcu.ie)





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