




**MATP**  
 Motor Activity Training Program

Coaches and Volunteers

# Activity Guide



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**Motor Activity  
Training Program**

COACHES AND VOLUNTEERS  
**Activity Guide**



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# Overview of the Motor Activity Training Program

## Need for the Program

The Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) is an internationally recognised Special Olympics sports and movement program developed for people with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs. Despite increased awareness of the value of inclusive sport, individuals with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs continue to face significant barriers to participation. Many existing programs are not adapted to meet their physical, sensory or communication needs, resulting in exclusion from the social, emotional and health benefits of physical activity.

The Special Olympics MATP was developed to fill this critical gap—providing an **accessible, individualised pathway to sport and movement**. This approach aligns with Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which recognises the right of persons with disabilities to **participate on an equal basis in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport**. The MATP supports this right by creating meaningful opportunities for engagement, expression, and achievement—no matter the level of ability or support required.





## Program Aim

The Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) aims to support athletes with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs by **providing an individualised, sport-based curriculum focused on developing fundamental gross and fine motor skills**. Through tailored, inclusive activities, the program enhances athletes' physical abilities, expands their access to sporting opportunities and promotes skills that contribute to greater independence and quality of life in everyday settings.



**Gross motor skills** involve the use of large muscle groups that control movements such as walking, crawling, standing, reaching, throwing and kicking. These skills support **balance, co-ordination, strength and mobility**, enabling individuals to interact with their environment and participate in everyday physical activities.

**Fine Motor skills** refer to the co-ordination of small muscles, particularly in the hands and fingers, required for completing tasks such as grasping and releasing objects, manipulating tools, turning pages or pointing. These movements are essential for communication, self-care, play and learning.



Developing gross and fine motor skills is essential for **improving independence, communication and quality of life** in individuals with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs. Motor skills form the foundation for participation in daily routines, interactions and leisure activities.



For many athletes in the MATP, even **small improvements** in movement—like reaching for a ball or kicking with support—can open **new opportunities** for engagement, self-expression and connection with others.

Building these skills also supports physical health, contributes to **emotional well-being** and affirms the athlete's right to participate fully in meaningful activity.

Coaches and volunteers supporting the delivery of the Motor Activity Training program have received the 'MATCODE - Introduction to the Motor Activity Training Program' qualification. This is a Special Olympics Ireland accredited qualification delivered by volunteer Tutors and Coach Developers. This qualification equips coaches and volunteers working with athletes with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs with the skills to support each athlete's individual development, nurturing their enjoyment of movement, love of sport and foundation for physical literacy in a way that is meaningful and accessible to them.





## Program Objectives



## Program Delivery

### 1 Develop Athletes with a Love of Movement and a Foundation in Physical Activity Engagement

The Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) engages athletes with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs through individualised activities that foster a love of movement, functional physical development and confidence. These activities are adapted to each athlete's abilities, helping them participate meaningfully in sport and movement in a safe, inclusive setting.



The MATP has helped me discover what I can do. As a MATCODE ambassador, I want to help more athletes and coaches experience what this program can bring - confidence, joy and a chance to be part of sport."

**Francis Donnelly, MATP Athlete and MATCODE Ambassador**

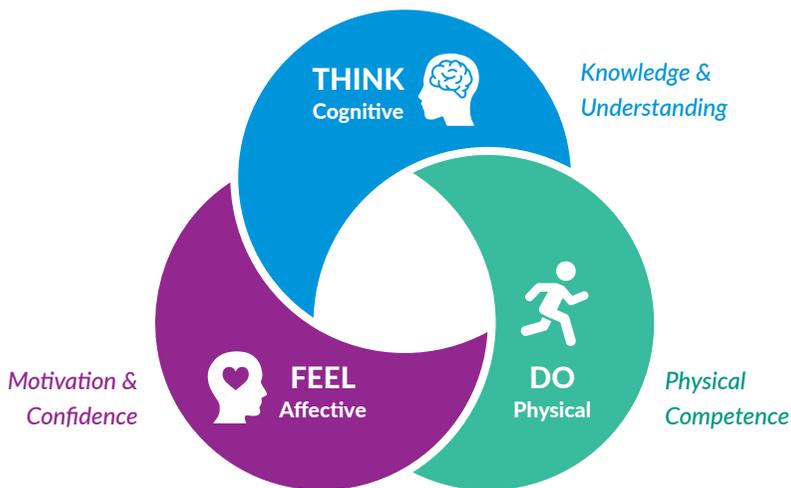
The MATP supports athletes to:

- ✔ **Develop functional motor and movement skills** through adapted, individualised activities that align with their physical, cognitive and sensory needs.
- ✔ **Foster engagement, enjoyment and self-expression through movement**, supporting long-term participation in physical activity.

While the traditional concept of physical literacy may not fully apply, the MATP nurtures each athlete's **physical capabilities, motivation and enjoyment of movement** – which are essential foundations for lifelong physical activity engagement.



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*



## 2 Support Athletes and Families through Connection, Understanding and Inclusion

Participation in the MATP offers families an opportunity to engage in their athlete's development and to become part of a broader, supportive community. The program supports families in understanding their athlete's abilities and potential, provides encouragement and shared learning, as well as offering emotional and social support through connection with others on similar journeys.

This aligns with the **MATP goal** to:



**Empower families and caregivers by involving them in their athlete's journey**, building understanding, connection and confidence in their ongoing support role.

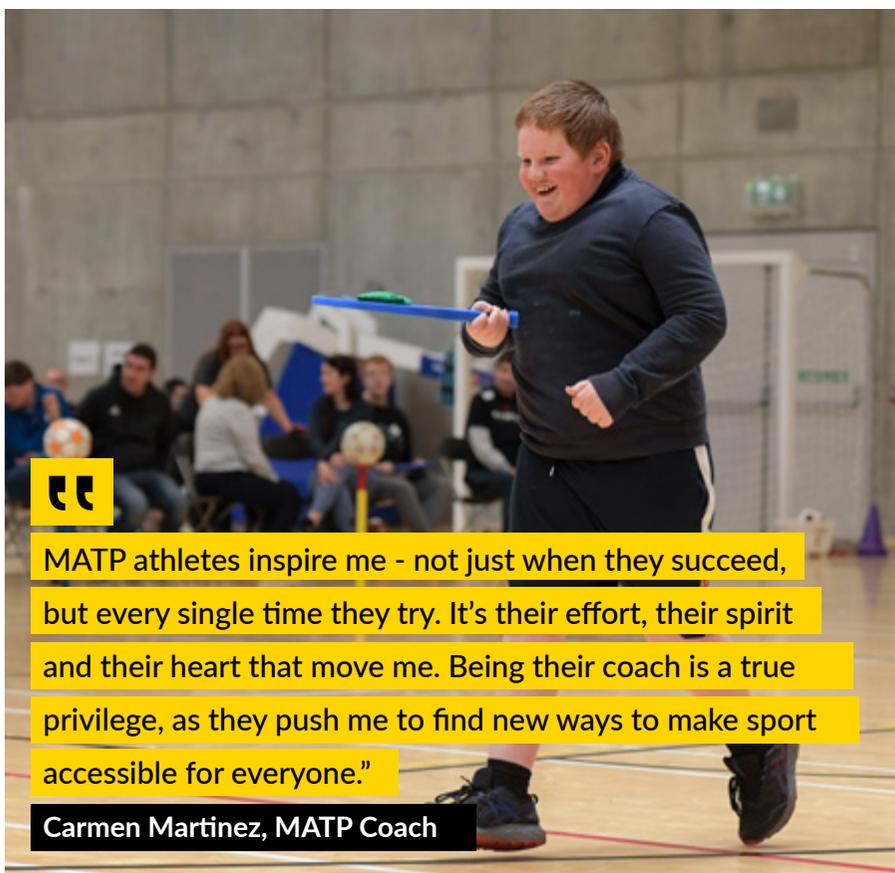




### 3 Prepare Athletes for a Lifetime of Participation and Belonging

The MATP introduces athletes to the structure and rhythm of sport – such as following routines, engaging with others and celebrating achievements. These foundational experiences build athletes' confidence and support their future engagement, whether within the Special Olympics community or in broader physical activity settings.

Even if an athlete does not transition into traditional competitive sport, the MATP ensures they are **included, celebrated and given opportunities to express their ability and joy in movement** – which is the heart of the Special Olympics mission.



MATP athletes inspire me - not just when they succeed, but every single time they try. It's their effort, their spirit and their heart that move me. Being their coach is a true privilege, as they push me to find new ways to make sport accessible for everyone."

Carmen Martinez, MATP Coach





Program  
Delivery



## Program Delivery

### MATP in Intellectual Disability Services

MATP offers individuals with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs the opportunity to engage in meaningful movement experiences within their day or residential service settings. Activities are adapted to meet each athlete's needs and can be facilitated by staff, healthcare professionals (e.g., physiotherapists or occupational therapists) or volunteers who know the individuals best. These sessions support physical development, build confidence and encourage self-expression – all within a familiar and supportive environment.



### MATP in Schools

Teachers, Special Need Assistants, and school therapists can implement MATP in classrooms or during PE sessions to support students with severe to profound intellectual disabilities in achieving developmental and physical goals. MATP provides structure and strategies that can be embedded into the school day, encouraging participation, progress and a sense of achievement.



### MATP at Home

Parents, caregivers, siblings and friends can use Motor Activities ideas at home to support physical development, social interaction and shared play. The adaptable nature of MATP means families can continue the program informally in ways that are fun, meaningful and tailored to their athlete's needs.



## MATCODE Project Overview

The MATCODE (Motor Activity Training & Coaching Development in Europe) project is an Erasmus+ funded initiative designed to enhance the Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) for individuals with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities (PIMD).

Led by a consortium including Special Olympics Ireland, Disability Sport Netherlands, and Special Olympics Slovakia, MATCODE aims to:

- ✔ **Broaden access** to adapted physical activity for individuals with complex support needs.
- ✔ **Train coaches and support staff** to deliver inclusive, individualized motor activity sessions.
- ✔ **Innovate and refine** MATP activities to better align with the diverse abilities and interests of participants.
- ✔ Promote **social inclusion, personal development, and well-being** through meaningful engagement in sport.

### Participation and Reach

The MATCODE project directly engages with over 450 individuals with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs across Ireland, the Netherlands, and Slovakia.

Participation in physical activity remains significantly low among people with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs who often rely entirely on others for daily support.

MATCODE addresses this gap by creating structured, supportive and enjoyable opportunities for engagement.





## Long-Term Impact

The project is expected to deliver:

- ✔ **Increased awareness** and **inclusion** for people with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs.
- ✔ Expanded leisure choices and **improved quality of life**.
- ✔ **Sustainable training resources**, including a digital coach course, open-source tools, and implementation guidelines applicable across the EU.

Watch this MATP Activity Guide introduction video below:



By investing in inclusive sport, MATCODE reinforces the values of **equity, dignity** and **participation** for all individuals, regardless of ability.





## Planning and Organising a MATP Session

### Motor Activity Training Program Structure

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#### Program Length:

Year-round programming, similar to Special Olympics Sports Programs

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#### Duration:

Typically, MATP sessions are delivered for between 45-60 minutes.

#### Reminder:

While the World Health Organization recommends **60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily** for children and **150 minutes weekly for adults**, for individuals with severe to profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs, any level of regular movement—adapted to their abilities—can offer meaningful health, functional and wellbeing benefits.

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#### Frequency:

Once per week in the community club setting. Intellectual disability services and schools may deliver the MATP more frequently during their gym, sports or PE classes. Parents and support staff can further support the development of gross and fine motor skills by carrying out activities at home with athletes outside of their club sessions.

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#### Space:

The MATP can be implemented **indoors/outdoors** once the space is **accessible for wheelchair users**, for example in a gym hall, community centre or a room with minimal furniture.

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### Equipment:

When delivering the Motor Activity Training Program, clubs, schools and services are encouraged to use a range of adaptable, inclusive equipment that supports athletes in achieving their individual goals. While Special Olympics Ireland previously provided MATP equipment kits, the current approach focuses on guiding clubs and services to select suitable items that best meet their athletes' needs. Examples of useful equipment include soft foam balls, beanbags, floor markers, hoops, ramps, and lightweight bats or paddles. The emphasis is on using safe, flexible equipment that can be adapted to different ability levels to ensure meaningful and engaging participation for all athletes. Please see examples of equipment that you can use to deliver the program below.



Table Boccia



Pop Up Goals



Hilltop Stepping Stones



Footballs



Ribbon Balls



Bean Bags



Foam Blocks



Physio Balls  
(Various Sizes)



Balance Beam



Net Goal



Velcro Communication Board



Parachute



Ramp



Batting Tee



Various sports balls and tees



Adjustable Punch Bag



## Types of Support in the MATP

Athletes in the MATP have diverse physical, sensory and communication needs. To ensure every athlete can take part meaningfully, activities can be adapted using three flexible types of support. These are not fixed categories but guiding approaches to help tailor activities so each athlete experiences success and personal progress. Importantly, an athlete may require different types of support on different days, depending on their needs and energy levels.



### Levels of Support

**FS**

#### Full Support

This type of support may include a combination of physical assistance, verbal instruction and visual demonstrations. It is used when an athlete is learning a new skill or needs more hands-on guidance.

**Example:**

During a bean bag toss activity, the coach uses a hand-over-hand technique to support the athlete in grasping the bean bag, lifting their arm and helping them release it towards the target. This type of support ensures the athlete experiences the full movement pattern and can participate meaningfully in the activity, even if they cannot yet perform any part of it independently.

**PS**

#### Partial Support

Athletes complete the activity with verbal and/or visual prompts, but without physical assistance. This support type encourages athletes to process instructions while gaining confidence in the skill.

**Example:**

In a kicking activity, the athlete is able to stand with support and swing their leg but struggles to make contact with the ball. The coach positions the ball, gives clear verbal prompts ("Ready... kick!") and lightly steadies the athlete's leg to assist with contact. As the athlete becomes more confident, the coach reduces their involvement.



## IP Independent Participation

Athletes perform the activity on their own, without verbal visual, or physical prompts. Independent participation may look different for every athlete and should reflect their own best effort and comfort level.

### **Example:**

In a mobility activity, the athlete independently navigates through a soft obstacle course using their walker, without needing assistance or reminders. The coach observes and praises the athlete's effort but does not intervene.

## Why This Matters

These support types allow every athlete, regardless of ability, to:

- ✓ Engage meaningfully in physical activity
- ✓ Progress at their own pace
- ✓ Experience success in different environments
- ✓ Be included in group experiences
- ✓ Develop confidence and movement skills in a safe, supportive space

Every athlete progresses in their own way and at their own pace. Just because an athlete may begin in the MATP with full support doesn't mean they will always require the same level of assistance. Coaches should observe athletes closely during each session for signs of progress — no matter how small.



For example, when assisting with grasping and rolling a ball, if the coach notices the athlete beginning to move their fingers independently, they may shift from full hand-over-hand support to simply guiding the hand into position and allowing the athlete to complete the grasp and release on their own.

Support needs may also vary by activity — an athlete may be independent in one task (e.g., crawling through a tunnel) but need full support in another (e.g., striking a balloon).

**Be flexible and focus on progress, not perfection.**



## Key Components of a Session

The below components of a MATP session are recommended to maximise gross and fine motor skill development. All activities delivered within an MATP session should be age specific to the group you are coaching and supporting.



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

Start each session with general warm-up exercises to prepare the body and mind for activity. These should include:

- ✔ **Awareness Activities:** Encourage athletes to explore their surroundings and their bodies in space. Examples include moving around the area without touching others, responding to colour or sound cues, or mimicking animal walks.
- ✔ **Relaxation Activities:** Gentle movements paired with breathing to promote calmness and body awareness. For example, slow arm circles with deep breaths, or rocking gently side to side.
- ✔ **Stretching:** Lead dynamic and static stretches that are accessible and adapted to each athlete's needs (e.g., assisted arm raises, seated leg extensions). Use visual or verbal cues to encourage engagement.

**Goal** To gradually elevate heart rate, improve range of motion, and create a sense of readiness.





## 2 | Skill Stations (15-30 minutes)

Athletes rotate through a series of skill stations that develop the foundational motor skills emphasised in the MATP. Each station targets one of the following areas:

<b>Mobility</b>	Activities such as stepping over objects like hurdles, crawling, or pushing a wheelchair along a marked path.	
<b>Dexterity</b>	Tasks like place objects into containers, threading beads or handling balls of various sizes.	
<b>Striking</b>	Hitting balloons, balls, or pads using hands or adapted equipment.	
<b>Kicking</b>	Kicking stationary or moving balls, or pushing an object with the feet while seated or standing.	
<b>Balance</b>	Activities such as shifting weight from side to side, reaching for objects at varying heights, or maintaining posture while navigating gentle turns in a wheelchair.	

**Goal** To develop athletes' movement abilities in a focused, supportive environment tailored to their needs and level of support.



### 3 | Group Game (10 minutes)

Bring athletes together for a group-based game that reinforces the skills practiced at the stations. Choose games that:

- ✓ Allow all athletes to participate, regardless of mobility or communication style.
- ✓ Introduce or reinforce simple rules (e.g., turn-taking, waiting for a signal).
- ✓ Encourage social interaction and peer engagement in a supportive environment.

**Examples:** Balloon volley circle, beanbag target toss relay, or a rolling ball challenge with music.

*Goal To promote application of skills, teamwork, fun and a sense of belonging.*



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

End each session with a cool down activity to signify the end of the session and help athletes transition out of sports activity:

- ✓ **Relaxation Activities:** Gentle swaying, breathing exercises, or lying down with soft music.
- ✓ **Stretching:** Light, slow stretches that are calming and help prevent stiffness.
- ✓ **Celebration of Effort:** Congratulate athletes for participation, highlight progress, and give everyone a chance to celebrate what they did well.

*Goal To transition athletes out of activity feeling calm, safe, and successful.*



#### Note

Adjust the timings for each of these activities depending on the duration of your MATP session. Depending on the athlete's ability levels, gradually increase the duration of the session over time. Additionally, allow time for transitions between activities and set up. Give athletes water and rest breaks during these transition periods.



## How to use the Activity Guide

This activity guide is intended to support the development of each athlete's physical, motor and functional abilities through meaningful movement experiences tailored to their individual needs, while encouraging personal progress, participation and enjoyment.

It has been designed to help coaches and volunteers organise and plan a MATP session. The guide aims to provide a range of tools to support coaches and volunteers in helping athletes with profound intellectual disabilities and complex support needs to develop both gross and fine motor skills during their participation in the program.



Athletes



Coaches



Volunteers

Athletes develop essential movement and sport-related skills through participation in the MATP across **five key areas**:

1)

Mobility

2)

Dexterity

3)

Striking

4)

Kicking

5)

Stability

This Activity Guide outlines the coaching and learning approaches for the following skill groups:

 <p>Mobility</p>	<p>Ability <b>to move from one place to another</b>. This includes walking, crawling, using a wheelchair or being assisted in movement. It focuses on how athletes travel across space in ways that suit their individual abilities.</p>
 <p>Dexterity</p>	<p>The use of hands and fingers to carry out tasks that involve <b>reaching, grasping, holding or releasing objects</b>. This can include actions like picking up a ball, stacking items or manipulating equipment in a controlled way.</p>
 <p>Striking</p>	<p>The ability to <b>make contact with an object</b> using a part of the body or an aid (such as a paddle, bat, or hand). This can include activities like hitting a balloon, tapping a ball off a tee, or pushing a lightweight object with a stick</p>
 <p>Kicking</p>	<p><b>Using the feet or legs to move or make contact with an object</b>. This may include rolling a ball with the foot, tapping a balloon, or kicking toward a target, depending on the athlete's level of ability and support.</p>
 <p>Stability</p>	<p>The ability to <b>maintain control of the body while sitting, standing or moving</b>. This includes both static balance (e.g. sitting upright or standing still) and dynamic balance (e.g. shifting weight during movement), with or without support.</p>



It is important to teach and coach a balanced range of skills across the five key areas of mobility, dexterity, striking, kicking and stability throughout the year.

Within each game or activity in the guide, the coach will be provided with:



**Duration** Recommended number of minutes to spend on the activity.



**Description** How to set up and play the activity.



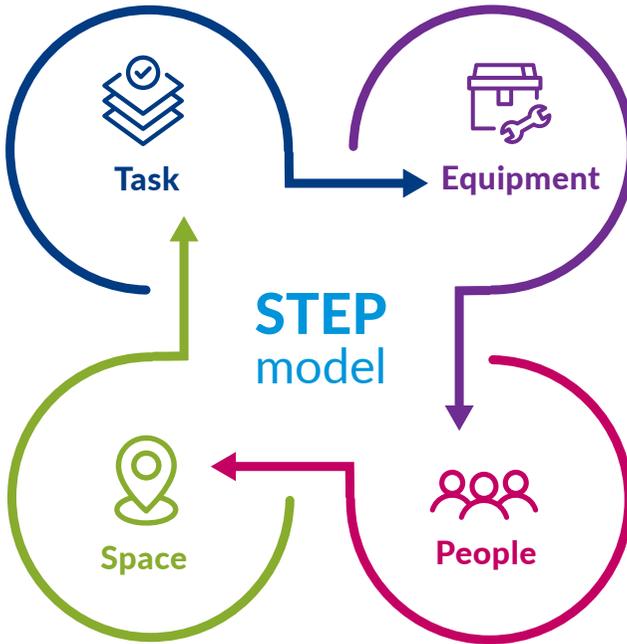
**Equipment** A list of the equipment needed for the activity.



**Levels of Support** Suggestions for making the activity easier/harder depending on the level of support the athlete may require.



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

Adapt the environment to meet athletes' needs.

### This may include:

- Changing the surface (e.g., soft matting, grass, hard floor)
- Adjusting distances between equipment or participants
- Using clear zones or pathways marked with cones, colours or tactile markers
- Expanding or reducing the activity area depending on mobility and safety needs
- Minimising visual or auditory distractions for athletes with sensory sensitivities



## Task

**Modify the activity to match individual abilities and support progression**

**For example:**

- Simplify the skill or break it into smaller steps
- Change the rules to focus on participation rather than competition
- Adapt the goal of the activity (e.g., touching the ball rather than kicking it)
- Provide multiple ways to succeed (e.g., rolling instead of striking)
- Extend time allowed to complete a task or remove time pressures entirely



## Equipment

**Use equipment that is accessible, motivating and appropriate to each athlete.**

**For instance:**

- Provide balls of different sizes, textures or weights
- Use sensory-friendly or brightly coloured items for better visibility or engagement
- Offer adapted or custom-made tools (e.g., lightweight bats, foam paddles, ramps)
- Ensure all equipment is safe and non-threatening for athletes with complex support needs



## People

**Adjust how people support or interact during the activity.**

**Options include:**

- Pairing athletes with peer buddies, volunteers, or coaches for support
- Varying group sizes – small groups, 1:1, or parallel individual activity
- Changing roles within a game (e.g., observer, helper, thrower)
- Providing physical, verbal or visual prompts as needed based on the athlete's support level
- Encouraging positive peer interaction and teamwork in a supported setting





**Warm Up  
Activities**



# Parachute Traffic Lights

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of Activity

Athletes gather in a circle, seated or standing with hands on the parachute. Wheelchair users are positioned so they can reach/ touch the edge of the parachute. Coach shows the visual cue card and demonstrates the movement. Practice each movement before the game starts. Coach changes colour every 5-15 seconds. Continue the activity for 2-4 minutes, rest then repeat.



- Red:** Stop moving and hold parachute still
- Orange:** Shake the parachute slowly (slow waves)
- Green:** Shake the parachute quickly (fast waves)



### Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Large parachute
- ✓ Three large, laminated cue cards in Green, Orange and Red
- ✓ Optional: Auditory cues, Bell (Green), Drum (Orange) and Whistle (Red)



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach or volunteer assists the athlete's hands to hold and move the parachute in response to each cue.
PS	Athlete holds the parachute with assistance and follows cues with some physical or verbal prompting.
IP	Athlete holds and moves the parachute in response to visual or auditory cues without assistance.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Follow the Leader

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes stand or sit in a semi-circle or circle, facing the leader. The coach or athlete leader performs a simple action (e.g., waving, clapping, stretching), and the rest of the group copies the movement. The leader changes every 30–60 seconds. Keep movements slow and predictable, allowing athletes to observe, process, and respond. Continue for several rounds, offering breaks if needed.



### Example Actions

- Raise both arms overhead
- Tap shoulders or knees
- Wiggle fingers or stomp feet
- Lean side to side



### Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Optional: Music or drum beat to help with pacing
- ✓ Visual cue cards (optional) with movement symbols



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach or volunteer physically assists the athlete in copying each movement.
PS	Athlete follows with some verbal or gestural prompting.
IP	Athlete copies the leader's movements unaided.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



**Mobility**



# Mobility

Mobility is the ability to move from one place to another. This includes walking, crawling, using a wheelchair or being assisted in movement. It focuses on how athletes travel across space in ways that suit their individual abilities.

*Watch the mobility demonstration video below to get some ideas for your session!*



## MATP Activity Guide: Mobility





# Balloon Retrieval Race

Duration: 5-8 mins

## Description of the Activity

Balloons or beanbags are placed at different heights or positions. Athletes move to collect and return balloons to a base zone by walking, pushing their wheelchair, using a mobility aid or having their movement supported by a coach or volunteer. This activity encourages mobility as well as reaching, bending and controlled movement. To progress this activity: increase the distance between the base zone and object, introduction gentle obstacles (cones, mats) for navigation practice or time how many objects they can retrieve in a set period (measuring against athletes own previous score).



### Equipment

- ✓ Balloons or Beanbags
- ✓ Plastic buckets
- ✓ Floor hoops
- ✓ Table for athletes to pick up bean bags / balloons from

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Dynamic movement
- ✓ Co-ordination
- ✓ Tracking objects

### Levels of Support

FS	Coach or volunteer assist with both navigation and retrieval.
PS	Athlete utilises a mobility aid to retrieve the balloon or beanbag.
IP	Athlete completes the task unaided.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Lift and Carry Relay

Duration: 5-8 mins

## Description of the Activity

Light weight objects (e.g., Balloons, beanbags, soft balls or scarves) are placed at different heights or positions in the playing area. Athletes move to collect and return objects to a base zone or drop them into plastic buckets by walking, pushing their wheelchair, using a mobility aid or having their movement supported by a coach or volunteer. This activity encourages mobility as well as reaching, bending and controlled movement. To add an element of competition, this activity can be timed, or athletes may work in small groups to see how many objects their team can gather within a designated time.



### Equipment

- ✓ Balloons or Beanbags
- ✓ Plastic Buckets
- ✓ Floor hoops
- ✓ Table for athletes to pick up bean bags / balloons from

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Dynamic movement
- ✓ Co-ordination
- ✓ Tracking objects



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach or volunteer assist with both navigation and retrieval.
PS	Athlete utilises a mobility aid to retrieve the balloon or beanbag.
IP	Athlete completes the task unaided.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Walking and Wheeling Races

Duration: 4-6 mins

## Description of the Activity

The coach sets up short-distance races where athletes walk, wheel or move from start to finish line using mobility aids or with the assistance of a support person. The focus is on participation and effort rather than speed. This activity be carried out in groups to add some friendly competition. To progress this activity coaches may set up lines that are curved, zigzag or straight to further challenge athletes.



### Equipment

- ✓ Cones or floor markers to mark out race lanes
- ✓ Ribbon for the finish line

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Endurance
- ✓ Stamina
- ✓ Peer interaction



### Levels of Support

FS	Athlete is guided in the race in their wheelchair by a support person.
PS	Athlete moves using a mobility aid or hand assisted support.
IP	Athlete moves unaided, encouraged by cheering.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Reach and Retrieve

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athlete is assisted to position themselves over a peanut ball (or similar supportive surface) in a prone or semi-prone position, either on the floor or at a supported height. Colourful soft objects (e.g., beanbags, soft toys, sensory balls) are placed just beyond their immediate reach. The athlete is encouraged to shift their weight, lean forward and reach to grasp and retrieve each item. Objects can then be placed into a nearby bucket, hoop, or handed to a coach to repeat the task. This activity promotes forward movement, weight transfer, upper body strength, and trunk stability — all important components of mobility development, particularly for athletes using assisted movement.



### Skills in Focus

- Weight transfer
- Trunk rotation
- Control



### Equipment

- Peanut ball or similar supportive therapy ball
- Soft lightweight objects (Beanbags, soft balls, scarves)
- Bucket, hoop or box to collect items
- Floor mats for safety and comfort
- Cones or floor markers to mark out race lanes
- Optional: wedge, bench or height adjustment for athletes for varied physical abilities



### Levels of Support

<b>FS</b>	Coach supports the athlete's torso and helps guide the hand-over-hand movement toward objects.
<b>PS</b>	Coach stabilises the lower body or offers verbal/physical prompts while athlete initiates reach.
<b>IP</b>	Athlete independently leans forward to reach, retrieve, and place objects into the container.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Scooter Board Shuffle

Duration: 5-8 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes sit or lie on scooter boards and use their arms, legs, or receive gentle assistance to move toward a target. Athletes can participate in this activity in small groups and perform scooter board races.



### Equipment

- ✓ Scooter boards
- ✓ Soft targets
- ✓ Cones or floor markers

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Upper/lower body strength
- ✓ Co-ordination



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach assists the athlete by pushing or guiding their scooter board.
PS	Athlete moves the scooter board with some push-start or visual and verbal support.
IP	Athlete self-propels the scooter board using their arms and legs.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation





Dexterity



# Dexterity

Dexterity is the ability to use your hands and fingers to carry out tasks that involve reaching, grasping, holding or releasing objects. This can include actions like picking up a ball, stacking items, or manipulating equipment in a controlled way.

*Watch the dexterity demonstration video below to get some ideas for your session!*



## MATP Activity Guide: Dexterity



# Bean Bag Drop Challenge

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes are invited by the coach or volunteer to grasp beanbags and drop them into buckets or hoops placed at varying heights or distances. Coaches can support by bringing buckets or hoops closer or moving them further away from the athletes as needed. This activity can be performed in a seated or standing position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Beanbags
- ✓ Plastic buckets
- ✓ Floor Hoops
- ✓ Optional: Table for athletes to pick up bean bags from

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Grasp and release
- ✓ Hand-eye co-ordination



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hand-over-hand assistance to complete the activity.
PS	Athlete receives verbal or visual cues or light hand-over-hand guidance.
IP	Athlete selects bean bags and drops them into targets unassisted.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Scarf Float and Catch

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes watch and catch a scarf as it floats down slowly through the air. The scarf can be dropped by the coach or by the athlete themselves if able. The slow movement of the scarf provides more time to react, encouraging tracking, timing and coordination in a fun and low-pressure way. This activity can be completed in a seated or standing position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Dance scarves
- ✓ Open playing space

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Visual Tracking
- ✓ Hand-eye co-ordination
- ✓ Reaction Time



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach drops the scarf and guides the athlete's hand to catch it.
PS	Coach provides verbal cues and gestures, or gently prompts the athlete's arm movement.
IP	Athlete tracks and catches the scarf on their own.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

# Sensory Sorting

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes are invited to sort objects by colour, texture or shape (bean bags, various sized balls) into matching containers (e.g., red balls into red bins). This activity can be performed in a seated or standing position.



### Equipment

- ✔ Coloured, textured balls of various sizes and shapes
- ✔ Coloured, textured bean bags of various sizes and shapes
- ✔ Matching coloured and various shaped containers
- ✔ Table or flat surface

### Skills in Focus

- ✔ Fine motor control
- ✔ Colour/shape recognition
- ✔ Decision-making



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hand-over-hand assistance to help the athlete place the items with prompts.
PS	Athlete receives verbal encouragement and physical guidance as needed.
IP	Athlete completes the sorting task on their own.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

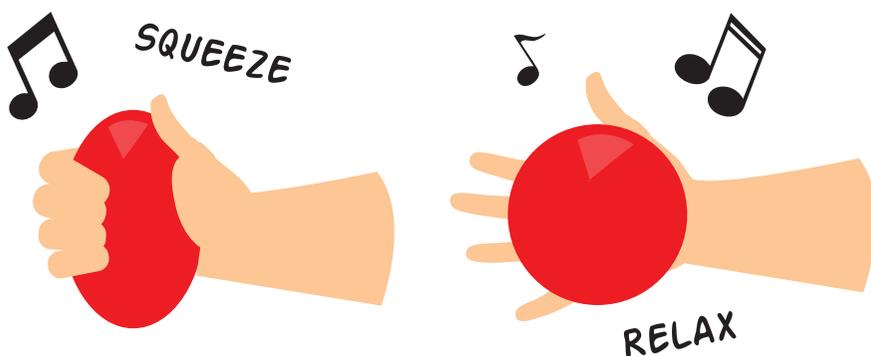


# Squeeze and Release

Duration: 5 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes use stress balls or other textured (foam, rubber) and mouldable balls of various weights to squeeze and relax their hand. This activity can be performed either in rhythm with music or during transitions between activities. This activity can be performed in a seated or standing position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Coloured balls of various sizes, textures and weights
- ✓ Table or flat surface
- ✓ Optional: Music

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Grip strength
- ✓ Tactile sensitivity
- ✓ Hand control



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hand-over-hand assistance to model the action or assist with squeezing motion.
PS	Athlete receives verbal encouragement and physical guidance as needed.
IP	Athlete squeezes and relaxes, completing the task on their own.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

# Sticky Match Up

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes match Velcro-backed shapes, numbers, or pictures on a board. Athletes can place the object onto the board and pull it back off again. Boards can be placed at table height or hung up on a wall to make the activity more challenging. This activity can be completed individually or in smaller groups to add some friendly competition. This activity can be performed in a seated or standing position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Velcro boards
- ✓ Matching shapes, blocks or cards

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Visual matching
- ✓ Grasp and placement
- ✓ Pincer grip



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hand-over-hand assistance to help the athlete match the pieces to the board.
PS	Athlete receives verbal encouragement and is prompted with pointing by the coach or volunteer.
IP	Athlete completes the task, matching the blocks or shapes onto the board.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Tabletop Boccia

Duration: 8-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes roll, slide, or gently push soft balls across a tabletop toward a small target ball (the "jack"). The objective is to get as close as possible to the jack, just like in traditional boccia. A small tabletop ramp may be used to support athletes with limited arm movement – they can release or drop the ball from the top of the ramp to direct it toward the target. This version of the game supports seated participation and helps athletes build focus, coordination, and control. Alternatively, athletes can play this game using larger ramps across the floor in a designated playing space.



### Equipment

- ✓ Table or floor surface
- ✓ Soft boccia balls (two colours, typically red and blue) or alternatives can be used
- ✓ Small target ball (the jack, typically white in colour)
- ✓ Small tabletop ramp or larger ramp for floor use

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Grasp and release
- ✓ Hand eye co-ordination
- ✓ Target accuracy



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hand-over-hand guidance to position and release the ball or helps the athlete place the ball at the top of the ramp.
PS	Athlete receives verbal or visual prompts for aiming or may use the ramp independently with guidance.
IP	Athlete rolls or drops the ball toward the target using their chosen method, with no assistance.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation





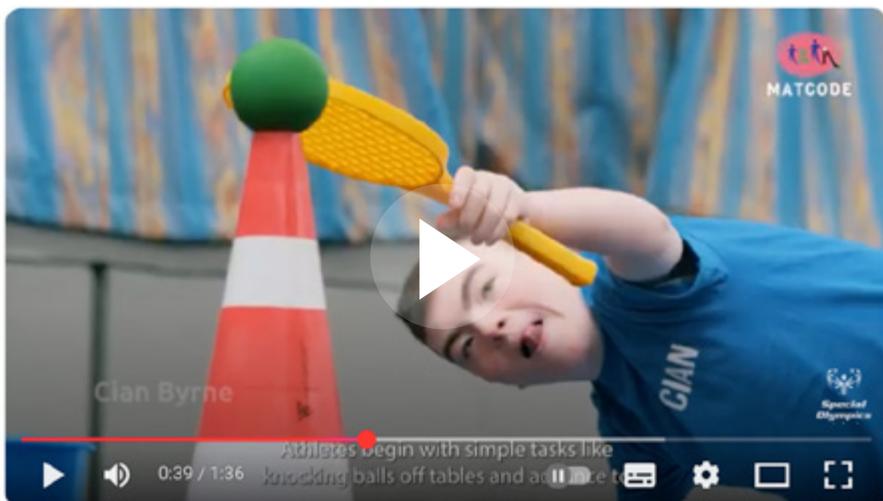
**Striking**



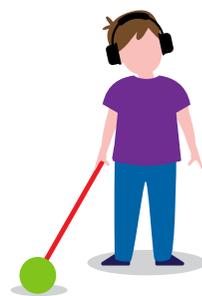
# Striking

Striking is the ability to make contact with an object using a part of the body or an aid (such as a paddle, bat or hand). This can include activities like hitting a balloon, tapping a ball off a tee, or pushing a lightweight object with a stick.

*Watch the striking demonstration video below to get some ideas for your session!*



## MATP Activity Guide: Striking Skills



# Balloon Bop

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes are invited to hit a balloon into the air using their hand, a foam paddle or a bat. The goal is to keep the balloon from touching the ground, either individually or with a partner. The balloon's slow movement gives athletes time to coordinate their actions and respond.



### Equipment

- ✓ Balloons
- ✓ Foam Paddles, soft bats, lightweight rackets

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Hand-eye coordination
- ✓ Tracking
- ✓ Reaction time
- ✓ Upper limb movement
- ✓ Object control



### Levels of Support

<b>FS</b>	Coaches provide hand-over-hand guidance to help the athlete strike the balloon.
<b>PS</b>	Coach provides verbal encouragement and may physically help position the athletes hand or striking implement.
<b>IP</b>	Athlete chooses their preferred implement and strikes the balloon independently.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Tee it Up!

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes use a bat (eg. Foam pool noodle) or a lightweight racket to strike a beach ball placed on a tee. Coaches assist athletes with grip, aim and swing as needed. The focus is on making contact and enjoying success.



### Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Batting tee
- ✓ Beach ball
- ✓ Bats or rackets

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Grasping
- ✓ Object striking
- ✓ Bilateral coordination
- ✓ Aiming
- ✓ Body awareness



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hand-over-hand assistance to complete the swing.
PS	Coach helps the athlete get into position and gives verbal or visual prompts.
IP	Athlete positions themselves and bats the ball from the tee alone.

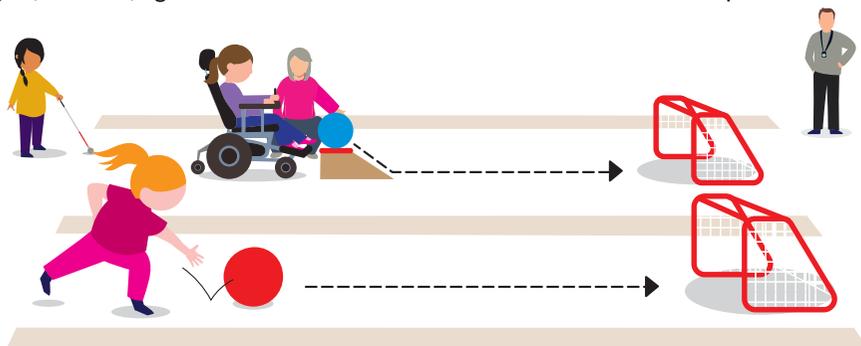
FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

# Roll to Goal

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes roll or kick a soft ball toward a goal using their hands, feet, legs or a hockey/floorball stick. The goal can vary based on available equipment – it might be a pop-up goal, foam blocks, a space between two cones or even a coach or peer acting as the receiver. This activity helps athletes practice aiming, direction and control in a simple, repeatable format. Top Tip: To help direct the ball towards the goal, barrier's, eg. Benches turned on their side or tall cones can be helpful.



## Equipment

- ✓ An open playing space
- ✓ Soft or lightweight ball (appropriate to athletes' activity)
- ✓ Target options: Pop up goal, cones, foam blocks partner/coach as receiver
- ✓ Optional: Adjustable stand to raise ball off the ground for seated athletes

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Hand-eye or foot-eye coordination
- ✓ Object striking
- ✓ Aiming



## Levels of Support

<b>FS</b>	Coach physically guides the athlete's hand or foot to roll or kick the ball toward the goal.
<b>PS</b>	Coach gives verbal prompts, gestures, or lightly assists movement to support aim and direction.
<b>IP</b>	Athlete independently rolls or kicks the ball toward their chosen goal.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

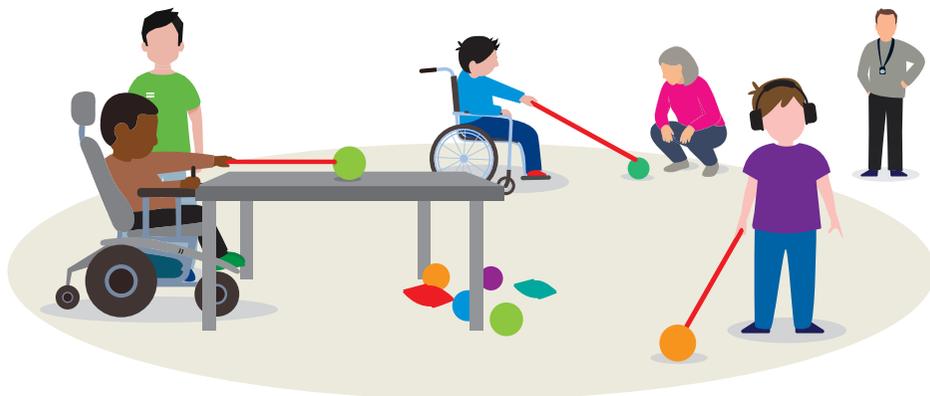


# Wand Wizard

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes use a hockey/floorball stick or paddle to push or strike soft objects (eg. Balloon or large yoga ball) across a surface (table or floor) or into a target zone.



### Equipment

- ✓ Lightweight hockey or floorball stick, paddle
- ✓ Soft object (balls, bans bags, puck or floor markers)

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Grasping
- ✓ Object striking
- ✓ Bilateral coordination
- ✓ Aiming
- ✓ Body awareness



### Levels of Support

FS	The coach guides the stick with the athlete's hand to demonstrate pushing or striking.
PS	The coach offers verbal or visual cues to start and maintain the direction of the push or strike.
IP	The athlete manoeuvre's the stick on their own to complete the task.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Skittle Smash

Duration: 7-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes aim to knock down skittles or plastic bottles by striking a ball towards them. Use different size balls (e.g bowling ball or large yoga ball) to add variety and aid in progressing the activity.



### Equipment

- ✓ Various balls (e.g. Bowling ball, large yoga ball, soft medium size balls)
- ✓ Skittles or plastic bottles
- ✓ Optional: Ramp for athletes who may require it

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Grasping
- ✓ Object striking
- ✓ Bilateral coordination
- ✓ Aiming
- ✓ Body awareness



### Levels of Support

FS	The coach helps position and guide the athlete's swing using hand-over-hand or a guiding motion.
PS	The athlete is supported with verbal and physical positioning prompts.
IP	Athlete strikes the ball independently towards the target.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



**Kicking**



# Kicking

Kicking is using the feet or legs to move or make contact with an object. This may include rolling a ball with the foot, tapping a balloon, or kicking toward a target, depending on the athlete's level of ability and support.

*Watch the kicking demonstration video below to get some ideas for your session!*



## MATP Activity Guide: Kicking



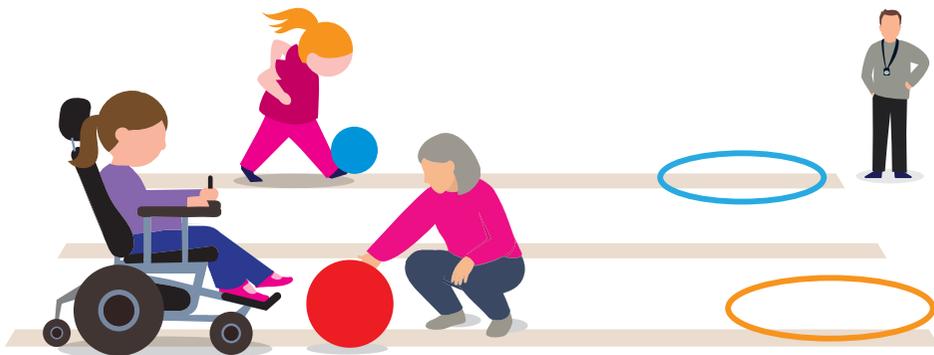


# Big Target Kick

Duration: 5-8 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes kick a soft ball toward a large visual target (e.g., a colourful mat, hula hoop, open doorway or bin). The coach can start with the ball stationary or gently roll it to the athlete for a reaction kick. This activity can be performed in a seated or standing position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Various balls (e.g. Football, large yoga ball, soft medium size balls)
- ✓ Large floor target or mat

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Using the feet or legs to make contact with or move an object.



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hand-over-foot assistance or verbal/visual cueing; athlete may be seated.
PS	Coach offers hand or frame for balance and verbal prompting.
IP	Athlete stands or sits independently and kicks the ball on their own.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Balloon Foot Tap

Duration: 5-8 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes keep a balloon or lightweight ball in the air using only their feet. Seated or lying on a mat depending on ability. The goal is to tap it up as many times as possible or just maintain contact. Top tip: a balloon ball in a net bag can be useful, the coach can lower and raise the ball as needed until the athlete reacts with leg movement.



### Equipment

- ✓ Balloon or foam ball
- ✓ Mat or chair

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Using the feet or legs to make contact with or move an object.



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach supports athlete's leg and taps balloon with their foot.
PS	Coach stabilises athlete and guides leg movement if needed.
IP	Athlete taps balloon solo using one or both feet.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

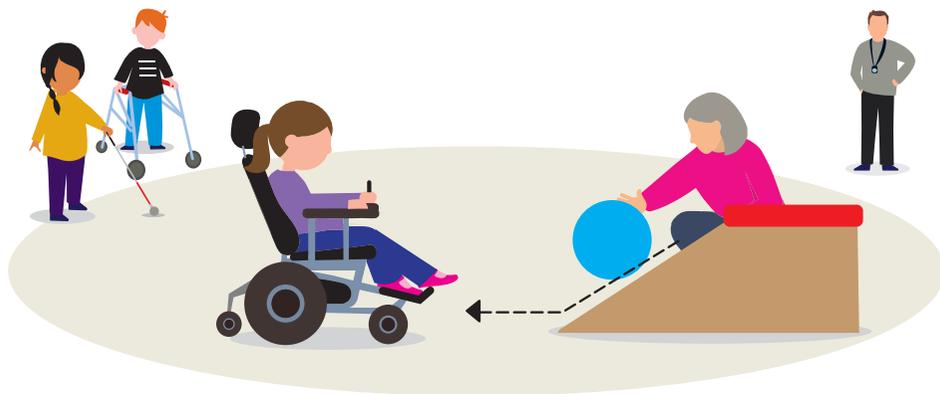


# Ramp Roll Kick

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

A ball is rolled down a short incline or ramp toward the athlete, who attempts to kick it back as it reaches the bottom. Encourages reaction and timing. This activity can be performed in a seated or standing position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Balloon or foam ball
- ✓ Mat or chair

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Using the feet or legs to make contact with or move an object.



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach can provide hand-over-foot to guide athlete's kicking motion.
PS	Coach can provide physical or verbal cueing as the ball approaches.
IP	Athlete kicks the ball back with one or both feet unaided.

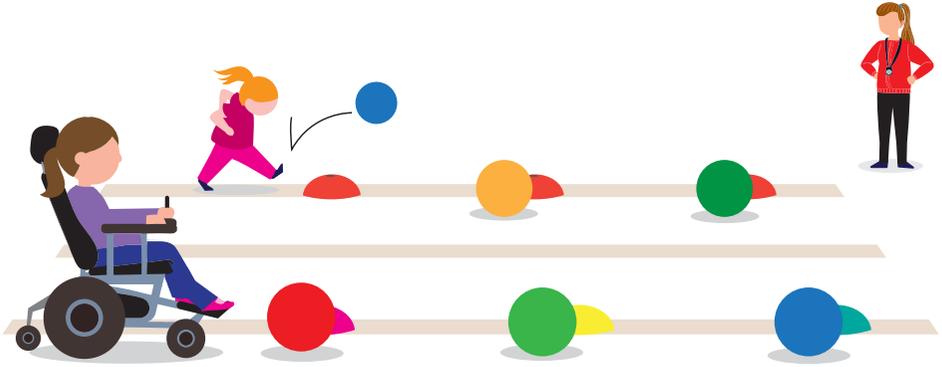
FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

# Step and Kick Pathway

Duration: 8-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

Set up a simple marked path (with floor markers or tape). Athletes take a step, pause and then kick a ball placed at each marker. Balance support is available as needed.



### Equipment

- ✓ Soft balls
- ✓ Floor markers or tape
- ✓ Athlete's own mobility aid, parallel bars or support bar

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Using the feet or legs to make contact with or move an object.



### Levels of Support

FS	Athlete places their arms onto the coach for support or uses support bar or their own mobility aid. Coach may place the athlete's foot into the kicking position.
PS	Athlete holds a rail or wall for balance, uses verbal prompting.
IP	Athlete completes the path and kicks without aid.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Seated Balloon Volleyball

Duration: 8-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes sit in chairs arranged in a semi-circle or across from a partner and play seated balloon volleyball using only their feet. Balloons float slowly, allowing time to react.



### Equipment

- ✓ Balloons
- ✓ Chairs
- ✓ Optional: Net Rope

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Using the feet or legs to make contact with or move an object.



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach guides the athletes foot to contact the balloon.
PS	Athlete uses chair with support and verbal cues.
IP	Athlete plays independently, seated securely.

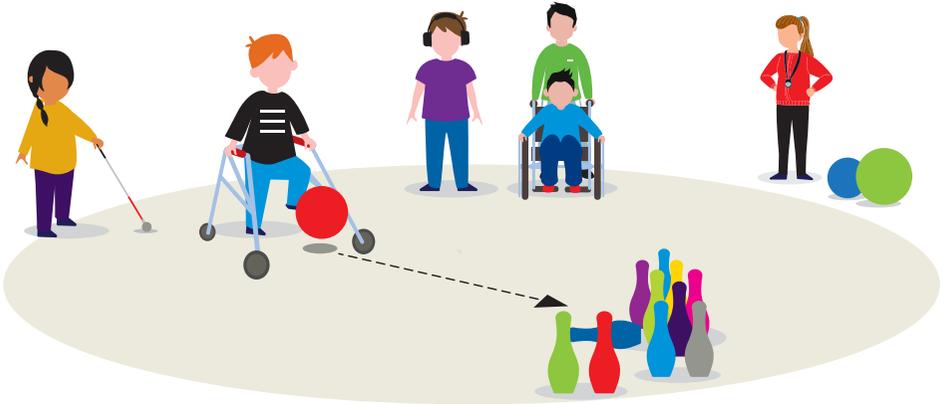
FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

# Knock em' Down

Duration: 5-10 mins

## Description of the Activity

The coach sets up the skittles (plastic or foam) and encourage the athlete to kick a ball or push the ball gently with their foot, to knock them over. Provide feedback and celebrate each successful attempt. This activity can be performed in a seated or standing position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Skittles, cones or foam blocks
- ✓ Soft ball

### Skills in Focus

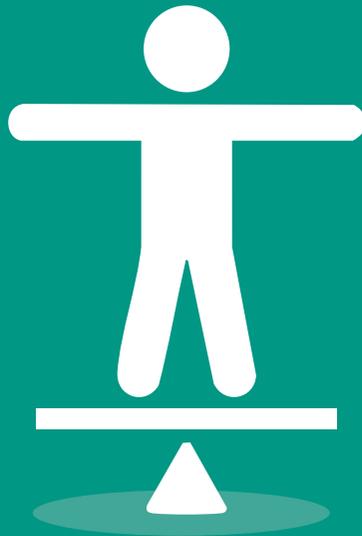
- ✓ Using the feet or legs to make contact with or move an object.



### Levels of Support

<b>FS</b>	Coach can provide hand-over-foot to guide the athlete's kick or to help stabilise their body.
<b>PS</b>	Athlete aims and kicks with support of visual or verbal cues.
<b>IP</b>	Athlete lines up and performs the kick unaided.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



**Stability (Balance)**



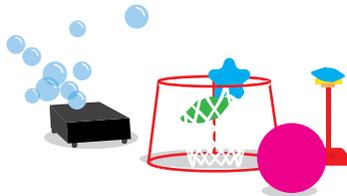
## Stability (Balance)

Stability or balance is the ability of an individual to maintain control of their body while sitting, standing or moving. This includes both static balance (e.g. sitting upright or standing still) and dynamic balance (e.g. shifting weight during movement), with or without support.

*Watch the stability (balance) demonstration video below to get some ideas for your session!*



### MATP Activity Guide: Stability





# Balancing Bridge

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes walk, step or shuffle across a wide, low balance beam or textured mat. Coaches can guide or support the athlete physically, or place visual markers (e.g., animal footprints) to cue steps.



### Equipment

- ✓ Foam balance beam or textured mat
- ✓ Visual guides of plastic footprints or animal footprints
- ✓ Optional: Support rope or hand rail

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Static and dynamic balance
- ✓ Foot placement
- ✓ Posture control



### Levels of Support

<b>FS</b>	Athlete walks across the beam with hand-over-hand or physical support from a coach or volunteer.
<b>PS</b>	Athlete moves across the beam with minimal physical assistance or verbal cues, using a rope or rail for stability if needed.
<b>IP</b>	Athlete completes the activity unaided.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

# Seated Weight Shifting

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

While seated on the floor, on a chair, or in their wheelchair, athletes pass a medium-sized ball or object from one side of their body to the other. As they do this, they shift their weight from side to side to follow the movement of the object. This promotes core activation, balance and trunk control in a safe and supported position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Open playing area
- ✓ Chair
- ✓ Medium-sized soft ball or lightweight object (e.g. bean bag, cushion, small toy)

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Trunk stability
- ✓ Weight transfer
- ✓ Core strength



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach sits behind or beside the athlete, helping guide the object and gently assisting with the weight shift.
PS	Coach provides verbal cues, gestures, or light physical prompts (e.g. tapping one side to encourage leaning).
IP	Athlete shifts their weight and passes the object side to side on their own.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Tap the Target

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

A soft ball or lightweight object is suspended from above at shoulder height. Athletes tap or reach to touch the object with a hand, paddle or lightweight racket. This stationary set up promotes focused repetition and coordination.



### Equipment

- ✓ Open playing area
- ✓ Ball or object suspended on string
- ✓ Bat or lightweight racket

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Trunk stability
- ✓ Weight transfer
- ✓ Core strength



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach physically guide's the athletes arm to tap the object.
PS	Coach uses gestures and verbal prompts, may lightly touch elbow or wrist to assist.
IP	Athlete locates the object and taps it on their own.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

# Statue Challenge

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes stand with or without the support of a mobility aid and try to lift one foot off the ground for a few seconds. The coach counts aloud or gives a “statue freeze” cue. Balance support can include holding onto a stable surface or the elbow of a coach. Over time, the coach can extend the duration of time for which they are holding the “freeze” cue. Coaches may play music to incorporate a game of ‘musical statues’ once athletes are comfortable with short balances.



### Equipment

- ✓ Open playing area

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Static balance
- ✓ Weight transfer
- ✓ Postural stability



### Levels of Support

FS	Athlete balances while holding onto a stable surface or with physical support from a coach, such as holding their elbow or hand.
PS	Athlete attempts to lift one foot with occasional support or verbal encouragement, using nearby surfaces or props as needed.
IP	Athlete lifts one foot and balances unaided in response to cues or during a game like ‘musical statues’.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Reach and Return

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes remain seated in their wheelchair or sit on a physio ball, wobble cushion, or the floor. Athletes are encouraged to reach forward or sideways to pop bubbles from a bubble machine or collect light weight items (e.g. scarves, beanbags, soft balls) placed just out of reach. Athletes collect the items and drop them into a bucket or hula hoop beside them. This encourages controlled shifts in balance from a seated position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Physio ball or wobble cushion
- ✓ Lightweight objects
- ✓ Buckets or hula hoops
- ✓ Optional: Bubble Machine

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Seated balance
- ✓ Trunk control
- ✓ Dynamic postural adjustments



### Levels of Support

FS	Athlete is assisted with hand-over-hand support or guided reaching, while being stabilised by a coach or support person.
PS	Athlete reaches with minimal physical assistance or verbal cues, possibly using one hand for support or leaning against a stable surface.
IP	Athlete independently shifts weight and reaches for objects or bubbles from a seated position, using balance and core control.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

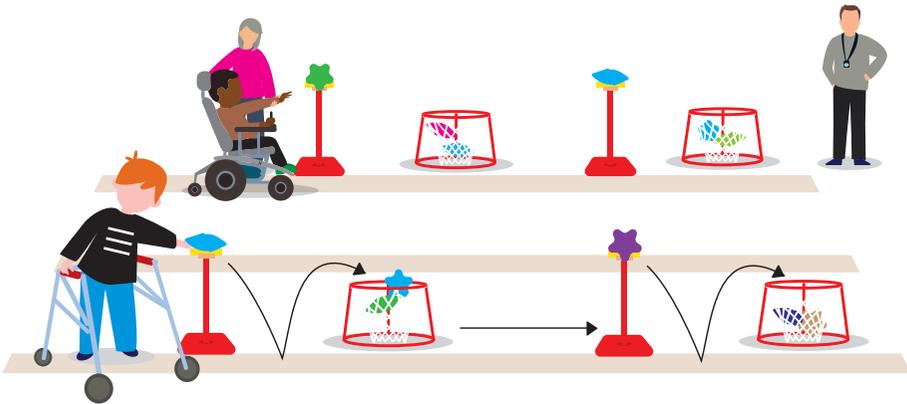


# Step and Place Challenge

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes are asked to pick up a beanbag (or similar object), take a step forward and place it into a target such as a bucket or hoop. The focus is on controlled movement, coordination, and balance while transitioning weight from one foot to the other. This can be repeated with multiple objects and targets to build consistency and engagement.



### Equipment

- ✓ Open playing area
- ✓ Beanbags or small objects
- ✓ Targets such as buckets, hoops or marked zone

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Stepping and weight transfer
- ✓ Object placement and aim



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach assists with both the step and guiding the object into the target.
PS	Coach gives verbal instructions and light physical prompts to help with stepping or object placement.
IP	Athlete picks up the object, steps forward, and places it into the target on their own.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Scarves in Slow Motion

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes follow the coach, dancing slowly to gentle music using scarves. Movements include slow turns, reaching, bending, and stretching – all helping with dynamic balance. This activity can be performed in a seated or standing position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Scarves or ribbons
- ✓ Speaker for music

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Dynamic balance
- ✓ Co-ordination
- ✓ Movement rhythm



### Levels of Support

FS	Athlete performs movements with hand-over-hand guidance or physical support from a coach, either seated or standing with mobility aids.
PS	Athlete follows movements with occasional physical assistance or verbal/visual cues, possibly using a support surface for balance.
IP	Athlete performs slow, flowing dance movements independently, either seated or standing, using the scarf to extend range of motion and enhance balance.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Sport Specific Skills in the MATP



## Sport Specific Skills in the MATP

Special Olympics International has developed a series of sport-specific MATP guides for **Athletics, Basketball, Football and Tennis**. These resources provide adapted skill-building activities that align with the core principles of the Motor Activity Training Program—focusing on individualised goals, functional movement and meaningful participation.



**Athletics**



**Basketball**



**Football**



**Tennis**

To support coaches in getting started, we've included a selection of **Sports Skill Stations** below that can be explored with athletes during MATP sessions. These stations offer simple, accessible examples of sport-specific movements and are designed to spark ideas, promote engagement, and provide variety. Some other introduction to sports activities that are included in the stations include Gymnastics, Bowling, Boccia / Bocce and Boxing!

They are intended as flexible suggestions, and we encourage coaches to adapt them to suit the needs, interests and abilities of their athletes.

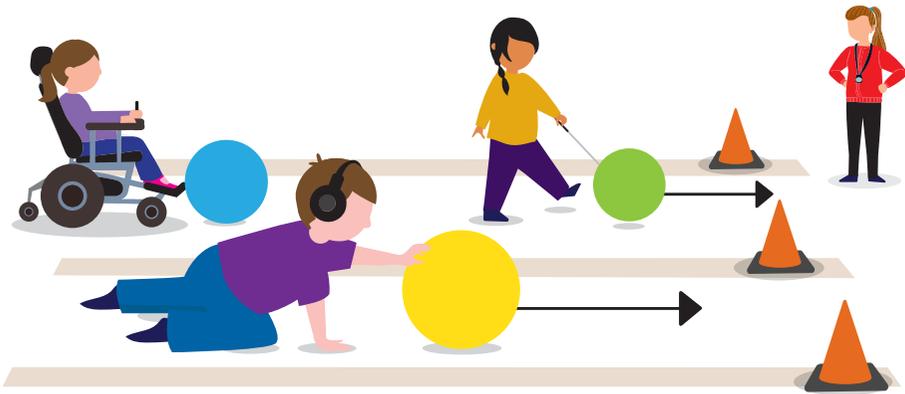


# Big Goal Kick (Football)

Duration: 5-7mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes aim to kick or push a large foam or lightweight ball toward a wide target area, such as a goal marked with cones or a hoop. The activity focuses on building kicking accuracy, directional control and foot-eye coordination. Athletes can approach the ball by walking, stepping, or using assistive equipment to direct the ball toward the goal. Increase the challenge by moving the goal farther away or narrowing the target.



### Equipment

- ✓ Large foam or lightweight ball
- ✓ Pop up goal, cones, hoop, or other markers to create a wide goal

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Kicking accuracy
- ✓ Target and aiming
- ✓ Directional control



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hand or foot guidance to assist with motion and direction.
PS	Coach offers verbal prompts, visual cues, or demonstrates the movement.
IP	Athlete approaches and kicks or pushes the ball on their own.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Tennis Balloon Rally (Tennis)

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes strike a floating balloon using a hand, paddle, or racket, aiming to keep it in the air or rally with a partner. The soft and slow movement of the balloon supports success, encourages engagement and helps develop timing, hand-eye coordination and striking skills. This activity also encourages partner interaction in a low-pressure setting. To progress this activity: athletes can attempt to strike a moving balloon, or one tossed from a distance, increase the number of hits in a rally or the coach can introduce light challenges like aiming at a target zone. This activity can be carried out in a seated or standing position.



### Equipment

- ✓ Open playing space
- ✓ Bright, coloured balloons
- ✓ Paddle or lightweight racket

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Reaction control
- ✓ Basic rallying
- ✓ Object striking



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hand-over-hand guidance to assist with swinging and striking.
PS	Coach tosses the balloon gently to improve timing and increase likelihood of contact.
IP	Athlete rallies solo or with a partner, keeping the balloon in the air.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

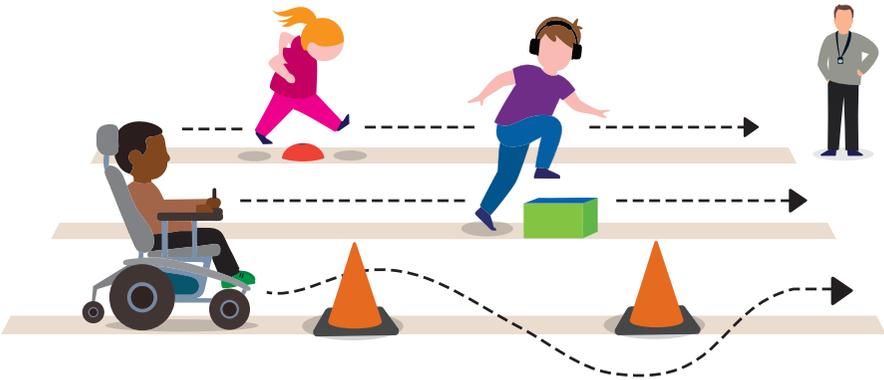


# Mini Hurdle Pathway (Athletics)

Duration:  
5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes move along a short pathway with mini obstacles—stepping over soft foam hurdles or weaving around cones. This activity builds balance, spatial awareness and basic agility in a fun and adaptable format. A parallel pathway can be set up for athletes using wheelchairs, encouraging safe and engaging navigation through a zig-zag route. To progress this activity: use shorter or taller hurdles to vary difficulty, increase the length or complexity of the path or add pause points for balance control.



### Equipment

- ✓ Open playing area
- ✓ Soft foam blocks, low hurdles or cones
- ✓ Floor markers

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Postural stability



### Levels of Support

<b>FS</b>	Coach physically guides the athlete or pushes the wheelchair through the course.
<b>PS</b>	Use of a mobility aid, verbal cues, or hand-over-hand assistance for balance.
<b>IP</b>	Athlete navigates the hurdle or cone pathway unaided.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Basket Drop Challenge (*Basketball*)

Duration:  
5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes aim to drop or throw foam balls or beanbags into baskets, buckets, or nets placed at various heights. The activity focuses on developing reach, grasp, release, and coordination, while encouraging accuracy and control of force. Ambulant athletes walk, pick up the ball or beanbag, then drop or throw it toward the target. Athletes using wheelchairs or mobility aids, retrieve the ball and push or drop it at an accessible height into the target. To progress this activity: adjust basket or target height to increase difficulty or introduce rolling passes to a partner using ramps or inclined surfaces.



### Equipment

- ✓ Open playing space
- ✓ Foam balls or bean bags
- ✓ Baskets, buckets, or nets set at different accessible heights

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Reaching
- ✓ Grasping and releasing
- ✓ Co-ordination



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hand-over-hand guidance to assist with release.
PS	Coach offers verbal or visual cues to guide aiming and throwing.
IP	Athlete completes the activity unaided.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

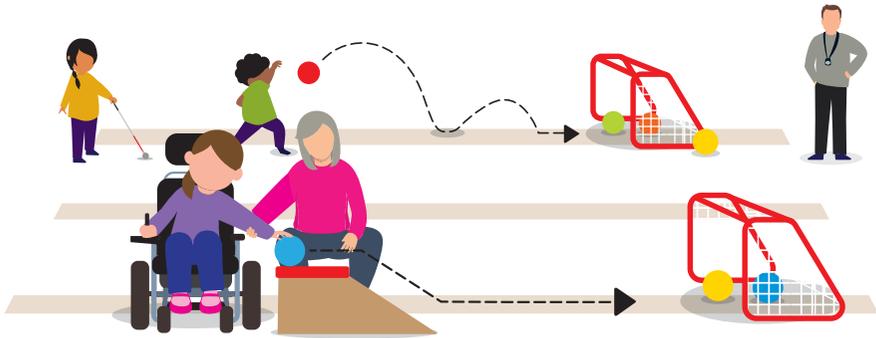


# Target Throw/Roll (Boccia/Bocce)

Duration:  
5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes aim to roll or throw soft or standard bocce balls toward a designated target area. This activity helps develop reach, hand-eye coordination, and release timing, focusing on accuracy and targeting. Athletes who are ambulant can roll or throw the ball toward the target area. Athletes using wheelchairs or mobility aids can use their hands or a ramp to deliver the ball toward the target. To progress this activity: increase the distance to the target or reduce the size of the target to increase difficulty.



### Equipment

- ✓ Clearly marked target area
- ✓ Soft or standard bocce balls
- ✓ Ramps where required

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Hand-eye coordination
- ✓ Release timing



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach guides the athlete's release hand or arm.
PS	Coach provides verbal or visual cues to assist aiming and timing.
IP	Athlete completes the throw or roll unaided.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Movement and Balance on the Mats (Gymnastics)

Duration:  
5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes explore movement and balance using soft mats and equipment. Activities may include crawling, rolling, stretching, balancing, or manipulating objects. This low-pressure, sensory-rich environment supports body awareness, coordination, and functional movement in a playful and adaptable way. It's designed to encourage self-expression and joyful movement at each athlete's level.



### Equipment

- ✓ Soft mats, foam wedges, peanut ball or yoga ball
- ✓ Sensory or soft props: scarves, foam blocks, lightweight balls

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Co-ordination
- ✓ Reaching



### Levels of Support

FS	Coach provides hands-on physical support to guide movement or maintain balance.
PS	Coach assists with positioning and movement through verbal cues or light physical prompts.
IP	Athlete explores the mat area and engages with equipment freely and at their own pace.

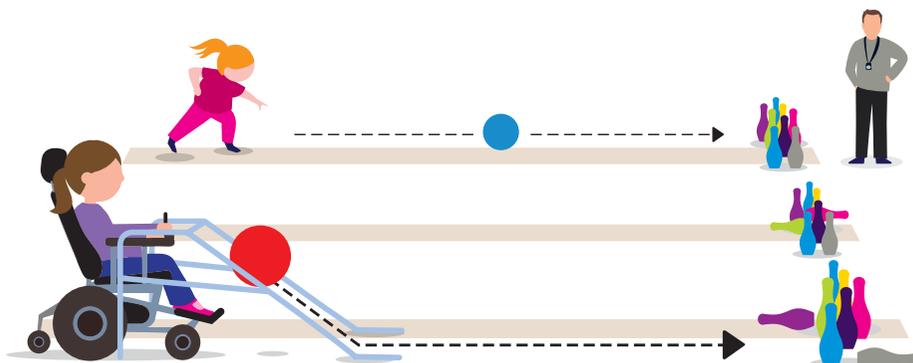
FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation

# Ramp Roll Challenge (Bowling)

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes aim to knock over bowling pins by rolling a ball down a ramp. This activity focuses on rolling accuracy, targeting, and force control, while also developing key MATP skills such as hand-eye coordination and timing. The use of ramps allows athletes of all abilities to participate, whether in a standing or seated position. To progress this activity: increase the distance between the ramp and pins, adjust the ramp angle to vary speed and difficulty or introduce target zones or scoring areas for added challenge.



### Equipment

- ✓ Standard or plastic bowling pins
- ✓ Standard or lightweight bowling balls
- ✓ Tactile lane markers (e.g., rope, tape, or foam mats)

### Skills in Focus

- ✓ Spatial awareness
- ✓ Hand-eye coordination
- ✓ Timing



### Levels of Support

<b>FS</b>	Coach provides hand-over-hand assistance with ball placement and release.
<b>PS</b>	Coach helps position the ramp and assists with ball placement or provides verbal/visual cues.
<b>IP</b>	Athlete aims, positions the ball, and rolls it down the ramp independently.

FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



# Power Punch (Boxing)

Duration: 5-7 mins

## Description of the Activity

Athletes are invited to strike a foam boxing pad or target held by a coach or an assistant. The coach positions the pad at a height and angle suitable for the athlete and encourages them to strike using a closed fist, open palm, or while wearing a boxing glove. This activity is designed to support strength, confidence, timing and body coordination. Strikes can be performed seated, standing, or supported depending on the athlete's ability. To progress this activity: increase the height or distance of the target, add light resistance (e.g., firmer bag or heavier gloves) or introduce simple reactive cues (e.g., "left" or "right" strikes) for timing and directional awareness.



## Equipment

- ✓ Foam boxing pads or large target mitts
- ✓ Optional: Lightweight gloves or handwraps
- ✓ Optional: Chair or athlete uses their own mobility aid if required

## Skills in Focus

- ✓ Grasping
- ✓ Object striking
- ✓ Bilateral coordination
- ✓ Aiming
- ✓ Body awareness



## Levels of Support

FS	The coach provides hand-over-hand guidance to help the athlete make contact with the pad.
PS	The coach offers verbal or visual cues and may gently guide the athlete's arm if needed.
IP	The athlete strikes the pad on their own with minimal or no prompting.

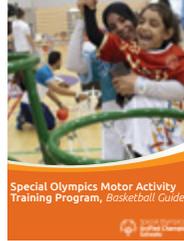
FS: Full Support PS: Partial Support IP: Independent Participation



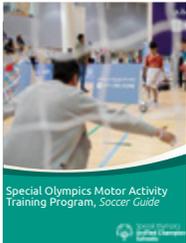
You can access the **sport-specific MATP guides** by clicking the links below:



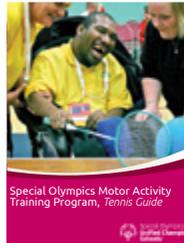
MATP Guide  
**Athletics**



MATP Guide  
**Basketball**



MATP Guide  
**Football**



MATP Guide  
**Tennis**



Each guide includes visual examples, activity progressions and adaptation tips by level of support (full, partial, or independent), helping coaches deliver sport-themed sessions that remain true to MATP's emphasis on inclusion and ability.



# Cool Down Activities

# Parachute Games

Duration: 6-8 mins

## Description of the Activity

Parachute activities offer a fun, engaging, and inclusive way for athletes to participate in group play, movement, and sensory exploration. With the support of coaches and volunteers, athletes are invited to interact with a large, colourful parachute through a series of low-impact games that can be adapted for all ability levels. These activities focus on promoting social interaction, rhythm, coordination and calming sensory experiences. Whether holding the parachute, watching the motion, tracking soft balls, or relaxing underneath the canopy, every athlete can engage in a meaningful and enjoyable way. Activities can be delivered seated, standing, or lying down, with assistance as needed.



### Equipment

- ✓ Parachute
- ✓ Lightweight balls (foam, textured or sensory balls)
- ✓ Optional: Beanbags, scarves, soft toys
- ✓ Floor mats (for athletes lying or seated on the floor)



## 1 Up and Down – At Their Own Speed

Focus: Sensory regulation, coordination, participation

- Invite each athlete (seated, standing, or supported) to **grasp a parachute handle**.
- Begin with **slow, gentle lifts and lowers** of the parachute together.
- Use **verbal or visual cues**, or music to guide pace: "Up... and down..."
- Try **slow waves**, then **faster waves** – but adjust for comfort levels and sensory tolerance.



### Adaptation Tips

- ▶ Volunteers may support athletes' hands to hold handles or place hands gently on top of the parachute.
- ▶ Athletes who cannot hold can participate by feeling the motion and rhythm or tracking the movement visually.



2

## Ball Games – (Roll & Pop!)

Focus: Tracking, teamwork, anticipation, counting, cause-effect

### Roll Around

- Keep the parachute low and flat.
- Gently **roll a ball** around the edge or across the surface.
- Encourage athletes to track the ball, tap it back, or name who it reaches.

### Popcorn Countdown

- Place **several soft balls** on top of the parachute.
- One athlete counts: "3, 2, 1... GO!"
- Everyone lifts together to make the balls bounce or fly.
- Count how many fall off and **celebrate each athlete's turn** to lead the countdown.



### Adaptation Tips

- ▶ Allow athletes to touch or hold a ball before placing it on the parachute for sensory engagement.
- ▶ For athletes with vision impairments, use balls with bells or contrasting colours.





### 3 Under the Dome / Sensory Tent

Focus: Calming transition, sensory play, storytelling, peer recognition

- Lift the parachute high and **gently pull it down behind the group**, creating a calm “dome.”
- Everyone stays seated or supported underneath.



#### Adaptation Tips

- ▶ Sing songs or use **gentle music** to promote relaxation.
- ▶ Say one fun fact or give a compliment about each athlete (“Tom likes cars!” or “Sarah smiles really big!”).
- ▶ Two athletes take turns switching places underneath (with support if needed).
- ▶ Create an “igloo” or “tent” — make a small opening and gently guide each athlete through it like a tunnel adventure.



# Cool Down Stretches



## Description of the Activity

The coach and volunteers lead the athletes through a series of stretches to help cool them down after the busy session. The coach chooses 3-4 stretches or movements. Coaches, volunteers and support staff can provide physical or verbal prompts, modelling or hand-over-hand assistance if needed. Help athletes focus on relaxation, deep breathing and slow, calming movement. Encourage each athlete to engage at their own level, seated, lying or supported. Athletes follow the coach, dancing slowly to gentle music using scarves. Movements include slow turns, reaching, bending, and stretching — all helping with dynamic balance. This activity can be performed in a seated or standing position. Optional extra: Coaches can play gentle background music.

### 1 Seated Marching (Gentle Leg Movement)

**Target:** Gentle circulation, cool down from activity

- For athletes seated in chairs, wheelchairs, or on the floor: gently lift one knee, then the other, slowly.
- Move arms in opposite directions (coach can assist).

**Cue** "Let's slow our legs down like we're walking in slow motion."



*Duration:*  
20–30 seconds

### 2 Butterfly Wings (Seated or Supported)

**Target:** Hip and inner thigh stretch

- Sit with soles of feet together, knees bent outward.
- Gently move knees up and down like butterfly wings.
- For athletes who cannot do this alone, gently support the knees with hands or let them passively rest in position.

**Cue** "Let's flap our butterfly wings nice and slowly."



*Reps: 10–15 flaps,  
rest, and repeat*



### 3 Cat / Camel

**Target: Spine and core stretch**

- Option A (on all fours): Arch back down (camel), then up (cat).
- Option B (seated): Lean chest forward slightly (camel), then curl shoulders in and look down (cat).
- Option C (with support): A caregiver gently guides trunk forward and back for sensory feedback.

**Cue**

*"Be a big stretching camel... now a small curling cat."*



*Reps: 5 times in each direction*

### 4 Reach for the Sky / Toes

**Target: Upper body and hamstring stretch**

- Reach arms up high ("touch the clouds")
- Then reach down to touch toes, knees, or just stretch forward.
- Adapt for seated athletes by helping guide the arms up or encouraging assisted forward stretch.

**Cue**

*"Big stretch up... now reach down and tickle your toes!"*



*Hold each for 10-15 seconds, repeat 3-5 times*

### 5 Toe Touches (Leg by Leg or Supported)

**Target: Hamstrings and lower back**

- Sit with legs out (shoulder width).
- Gently reach forward to touch one foot, then the other.
- For athletes with limited mobility, support the stretch gently or encourage tactile contact with legs.

**Cue**

*"Let's see how far our fingers can go!"*



*3 times on each side, 15-20 seconds hold*



6

## Breathing with Arm Movement

Target: Calm breathing and sensory regulation

- Inhale while raising arms slowly out and up
- Exhale while lowering arms down gently
- Athletes can sit, lie down, or be in wheelchairs
- Pair with calming music or scarves for extra sensory input



Reps: 5 slow  
breaths

Cue

*"Breathe in like a balloon... and breathe out nice and slow."*



## How to organise Inter-Club activities for the MATP

The **practical implications** for coaches of MATP athletes include:

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Inter-club activities within MATP provide a valuable opportunity for athletes with profound intellectual disabilities with high support needs to experience **connection, inclusion and achievement** beyond their usual training environment. These events allow athletes and their families to meet others from different MATP groups, helping to build **social networks** and foster a **shared sense of community and celebration**.

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The focus of inter-club MATP events should centre on **participation, individual effort and personal bests**, rather than traditional concepts of winning or competition. Activities should be designed to support the individual goals of each athlete, recognising the diverse abilities and support needs within the group. The aim is to create a **supportive and flexible environment** where every athlete can engage at their own level and pace.

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Competition within MATP inter-club events should be understood as a **learning experience**, helping athletes build confidence, follow routines and develop familiarity with event structures. For coaches and families, it is also a valuable opportunity to observe athletes' responses in a new setting, which can inform individualised programming and adaptations. Inter-club MATP events are not about comparison but about **celebrating achievement and effort in meaningful and inclusive ways**, with activities framed as cooperative and supportive rather than competitive.

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## 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 to ensure athletes welfare and support needs can be met.



## 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 Athletes

#### **Expanded opportunities to practice and develop motor skills**

Inter-club events provide new environments for athletes to engage in purposeful movement, allowing them to apply and strengthen fundamental motor skills such as dexterity, striking, kicking, balancing and mobility – all adapted to their individual abilities and support needs.

#### **Participation in meaningful and individualised challenges**

Athletes can take part in event-style activities that celebrate effort, persistence, and personal achievements rather than traditional competition. This developmental approach respects each athlete's stage and supports a sense of accomplishment through guided tasks and personal bests.

#### **Valuable social and sensory experiences**

These events give athletes the chance to engage with peers from other MATP groups, enhancing their social world in a safe, structured, and enjoyable way. Inter-club events can create joyful, shared experiences for athletes and families – fostering inclusion, belonging, and celebration beyond their usual setting.

### For Coaches

#### **Opportunities for collaboration and professional learning**

Inter-club events create valuable space for coaches to connect with one another, share ideas, and exchange best practices in adapting activities for athletes with complex needs. These informal networking moments can spark new ideas and foster ongoing support between programs.

#### **Exposure to new games, equipment, and activity setups**

Coaches can observe how others deliver MATP sessions, learn about alternative equipment, or see different methods for adapting tasks to various ability levels. This peer learning can inspire creative approaches and enrich the overall quality of program delivery.

#### **Stronger relationships with nearby clubs and volunteers**

Building connections across local MATP Programs supports a more inclusive and collaborative environment. These relationships can lead to shared training opportunities, co-hosted events, and stronger community ties that benefit both athletes and coaches.



## For MATP Clubs

### **Share the joy with families**

Interclub events give families an opportunity to watch and support their family member in a sport setting, to share the love of sport and to meet with other families. It is also a great opportunity for families to see what their athlete has been learning and working on during their MATP training sessions.

### **Opportunities for coach development and shared learning**

Inter-club events offer coaches, staff and volunteers a chance to observe other programs in action, learn new ways to adapt activities, and gain confidence in delivering MATP through exposure to different tools and approaches.

### **A supportive environment to introduce competition in a developmental way**

These events help coaches, staff and volunteers implement meaningful, age- and ability-appropriate competitive experiences that prioritise participation, effort, and enjoyment over outcomes.

### **Preparation for progression within Special Olympics pathways**

Inter-club events give athletes experience in structured activity days, helping schools and services introduce the idea of future participation in Special Olympics training and competitions, should athletes progress to sport-specific programs.

### **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 Special Olympics Ireland Combined Liabilities and the Personal Accident Policies.





## Additional Resources

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Introduction to Coaching the Motor Activity Training Program – Information on the **Coach Education qualification** for delivering or supporting the Motor Activity Training program

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MATP Special Olympics Ireland **website**

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MATCODE **YouTube** channel

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Athlete Passport- **Club Resources**

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Special Olympics International – **Motor Activities Training Program Resources**

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

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Youth Sport Trust - **PE resources** designed to support in-school and remote learning for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

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**Inclusion Factsheets** – Active Disability Ireland

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