



***Special Olympics***

## **FOOTBALL COACHING GUIDE**

Planning a Football Training and Competition Season



## Table of Contents

### Goals and Objectives

- Setting Goals

- Assessing Goals Checklist

### Planning a Football Training and Competition Season

- Sample Training Plan

- Confirmation of Practice Schedule

### Essential Components of Planning a Football Training Session

- Considerations for Practice

- Preparing for Practice

  - Sample Coaching Grid

- Principles of Effective Training Sessions

- Sample Practice Plan Form

- Tips for Conducting Successful Training Sessions

- Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

- Football Practice Competitions

### Selecting Team Members

- Ability and Age Grouping

- Creating Meaningful Involvement in Unified Sports

### Athlete Skills Assessment

- Football Athlete Skills Assessment Card

### Daily Performance Record

### Football Attire

### Football Equipment



### Goals

Realistic, yet challenging goals for each athlete are important to the motivation of the athlete both at training and during competition. Goals establish and drive the action of both training and competition plans. Sport confidence in athletes helps to make participation fun and is critical to the athlete's motivation. Please see the *Principles of Coaching* section for additional information and exercises on goal setting.

### Benefits

- Increases athlete's level of physical fitness
- Teaches self-discipline
- Teaches the athlete sports skills that are essential to a variety of other activities
- Provides the athlete with a means for self-expression and social interaction

### Goal Setting

Setting goals is a joint effort between the athlete and coach. Following are the main features of goal setting..

1. Structured into short-term, intermediate and long-term
2. Stepping stones to success
3. Must be accepted by the athlete
4. Vary in difficulty – easily attainable to challenging
5. Must be measurable

### Long Term Goal

The athlete will acquire basic football skills, appropriate social behavior and functional knowledge of the rules necessary to participate successfully in football competitions.

### Assessing Goals Checklist

1. Write a goal statement.
2. Does the goal sufficiently meet the athlete's needs?
3. Is the goal positively stated? If not, rewrite it.
4. Is the goal under the athlete's control and does it focus on his/her goals and no one else's?
5. Is the goal a goal and not a result?
6. Is the goal important enough to the athlete that he/she will want to work toward achieving it? Have the time and energy to do it?
7. How will this goal make the athlete's life different?
8. What barriers might the athlete encounter in working toward this goal?
9. What does the athlete need to learn how to do?
10. What risks does the athlete need to take?



## Planning a Football Training and Competition Season

There will be many different skills to teach players during the course of a season. A season-long training plan will help coaches present skills in a systematic and effective way. The sessions in the plan below are organized in a twice-a-week format.

Make time at each practice to work individually with your goalkeepers for 10-15 minutes. If you do not have an assistant coach, you may have to do this before or after the practice session.

### Sample Training Plan

<b>Preseason</b>	
<b>Week #1</b>	Assessment Fitness Assessment Fitness
<b>Week #2</b>	Dribbling Fitness Dribbling Rules
<b>Competition Season</b>	
<b>Week #3</b>	Shooting Rules/Restarts Shooting Rules/Restarts
<b>Week #4</b>	Control Team Play/Positions Control Team Play/Positions
<b>Week #5</b>	Passing Team Play/Support Passing Team Play/Support
<b>Week #6</b>	Passing Team Play/Wings Passing Team Play/Support
<b>Week #7</b>	Tackling Team Play/Defending Tackling Team Play/Defending
<b>Week #8</b>	Heading Tournament Prep Shooting Tournament Prep



### Confirmation of Practice Schedule

Once your venue has been determined and assessed, you are now ready to confirm your training and competition schedules. It is important to publish training and competition schedules to submit to the interested groups below. This can help generate community awareness for your Special Olympics Football Program.

- Facility Representatives
- Local Special Olympics Program
- Volunteer Coaches
- Athletes
- Families
- Media
- Management Team Members
- Officials

The training and competition schedule is not exclusive to the areas listed below.

- Dates
- Start and end times
- Registration and/or meeting areas
- Contact phone number at the facility
- Coaches phone numbers



### Essential Components of Planning a Football Training Session

Special Olympics athletes respond well to a simple, well-structured training routine with which they can become familiar. An organized plan, prepared before you get to the field, will help establish such a routine and help make best use of your limited time. A recommended training plan is outlined below.

#### Warming Up/Stretching

- Every player warms up with a ball; i.e., low-intensity dribbling drills.
- Stretch each muscle group.
- Have players lead the stretching while coaches assist individual players when necessary.
- Finish the warm-up with a fun dribbling/tag game.

#### Skills Instruction

- Quickly review and practice previously taught skills.
- Introduce the theme of the skills activity.
- Demonstrate skills simply and dramatically.
- Divide into groups of six or less for practice.
- Physically assist and prompt lower ability players when necessary.
- Introduce and practice new skills early in the practice session.

#### Competition Experience

- Players learn a lot by simply playing the game. The game is a great teacher.
- Use minigames (one vs. one / three vs. three) to teach basic rules and game understanding.
- Use scrimmages to teach basic positions and restarts.
- Always allow at least 10 minutes of free play where the coach says nothing. Let them play.

#### Cool Down

- Slow run/walk/stretch.
- As the players cool down, comment on the session and the next game.
- Finish with a team cheer.



### Considerations for Practice

- When designing practices, exercises and drills, consider the strengths and weaknesses of each player and your team as a whole. Choose activities that allow your players to improve their weaknesses and exploit their strengths in competition.
- Teach so that your players learn to help coach each other. Instruct them to watch for correct and incorrect techniques, movements and decisions when in pairs or groups. The feedback your players give each other will prove invaluable in developing team unity and help players develop a greater understanding of the game.
- Make practices fun. Design practices that hold players' attention. Use exercises and drills that your players enjoy. Use these exercises to lighten the load of hard work and to establish positive team attitude. When practicing drills, do enough to improve technique, yet not so much as to bore your athletes.
- Keep your talking to a minimum. Short, concise instructions are better than long explanations.
- Be willing to create or adapt drills to meet unique needs of your team. Skilled players master drills fairly quickly, so add some new twists to challenge these players.
- As you introduce new skills and techniques, you also need to review fundamental ones. Drills are a good vehicle for addressing your players' technical flaws.
- Introduce new skills early in the practice session, when players are fresh and attentive. Practice new skills for several days before incorporating them into more complex drills and game scenarios.
- And above all, be well organized.



## Preparing for Practice

### Your Practice Plan

Practice is where you teach, make mistakes, gain fitness, practice game strategy and tactics and prepare for the next contest. A successful practice plan creates an environment that helps you accomplish your goals. With your goals in mind, design your practices specifically to fulfill those goals. Be sure to determine the time needed for each phase of practice. However, be willing to make time adjustments, depending on specific circumstances.

You need to develop a season plan just as you develop your individual practice sessions. Take time to review weekly, tournament and league-play goals and objectives for your team. Write out these goals before the start of the season. Each practice session is one block of a performance block. The better each block fits with the others, the stronger and higher the blocks will grow.

### Equipment Setup

Before each day's practice begins, determine the sequence of drills and where you will set up equipment. When possible, set up your practice field and equipment before the start of practice. Setting up and moving equipment can waste valuable practice time. Set up equipment early and assign different groups to bring out balls, cones, nets, goals and other equipment. You can also designate exercise captains to help organize players for drills, creating leaders within the team.

### Coaching Grids

Grids are a great way to organize players and make maximal use of your practice field. They let you organize the field into distinct areas the size of which can be adapted to fit the skill level and number of the players involved. You can create grids by using cones, flags or other markers.

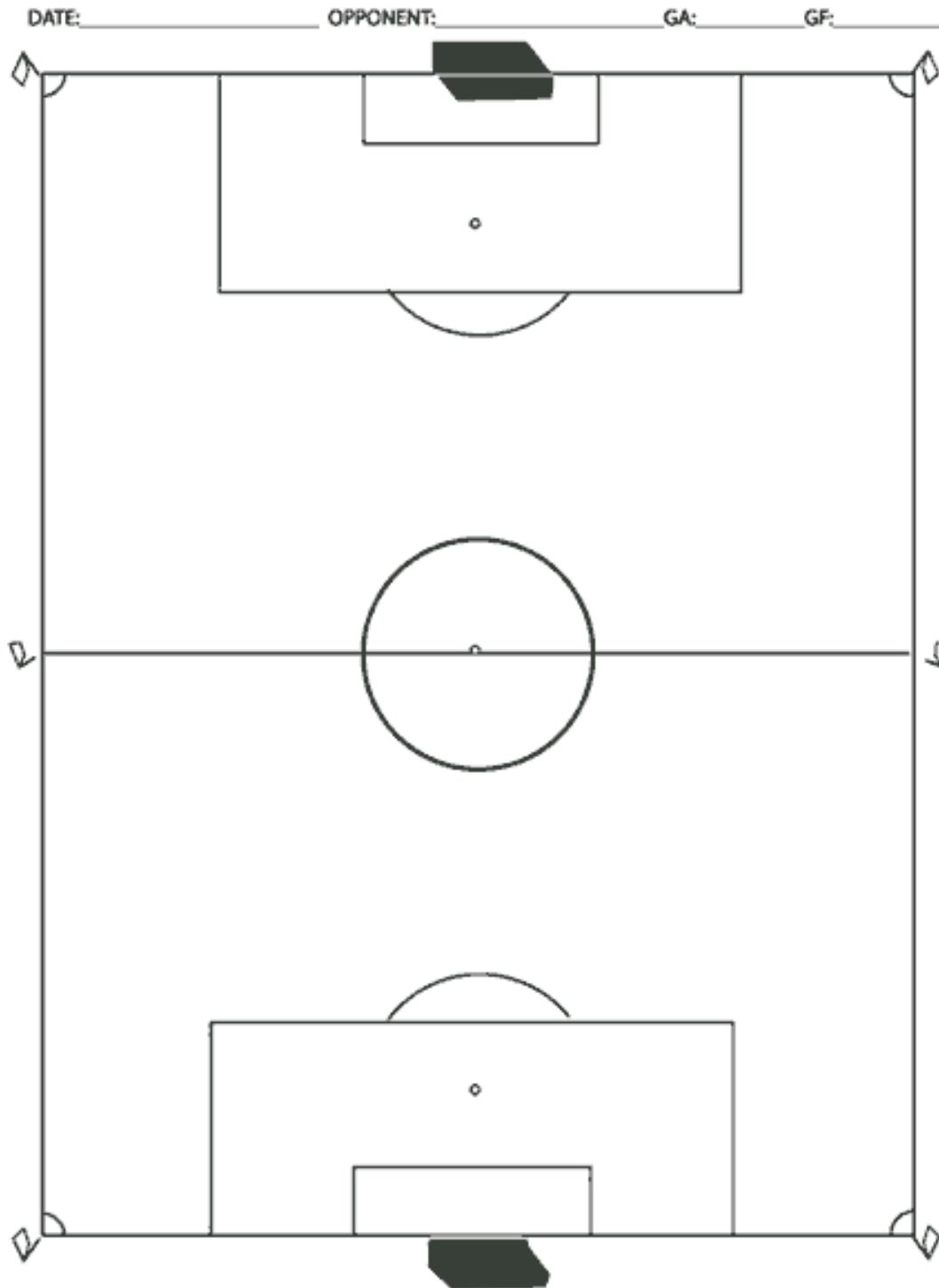
The game of football is about time and space. The best players can control the ball in little time and within a small space. Less skilled players need more time and greater space in which to perform. Coaching grids let you adjust the field of play according to the technical abilities of your athletes.

You can use the attached coaching grid to develop your own plays and game strategy.





Sample Coaching Grid





## Principles of Effective Training Sessions

<b>Keep all active</b>	Athlete needs to be an active listener.
<b>Create clear, concise goals</b>	Learning improves when athletes know what is expected of them.
<b>Give clear, concise instructions</b>	Demonstrate – increase accuracy of instruction.
<b>Record progress</b>	You and your athletes chart progress together.
<b>Give positive feedback</b>	Emphasize and reward things the athlete is doing well.
<b>Provide variety</b>	Vary exercises – prevent boredom.
<b>Encourage enjoyment</b>	Training and competition is fun; help keep it this way for you and your athletes.
<b>Create progressions</b>	Learning is increased when information progresses from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Known to unknown – discovering new things successfully</li> <li>• Simple to complex – seeing that “I” can do it</li> <li>• General to specific – this is why “I” am working so hard</li> </ul>
<b>Plan maximum use of resources</b>	Use what you have, and improvise for equipment that you do not have – think creatively.
<b>Allow for individual differences</b>	Different athletes, different learning rates, different capacities.



### Sample Practice Plan Form

<b>Date:</b>		<b>Location:</b>		<b>Time:</b>	
<b>Goals:</b>					

**Warm Up** - Make the body ready for practice.

Leader	Activity	Equipment

**Team Talk** - Let the athletes know your expectations for practice.

<b>Goals for Today</b>	
<b>Previous Skill Lesson</b>	
<b>New Skill Lesson</b>	

**Skill Development** - Games and exercises to reinforce learning. Make it fun.

Leader	Activity	Equipment

**Break** - Supply water and take the skill into the scrimmage.

<b>Reinforce Skill from Today:</b>	
------------------------------------	--

**Scrimmage** - Emphasize last week's skill and new skill.

<b>Previous Skill</b>	
<b>New Skill</b>	

**Team Talk** - Emphasize new skill and techniques from scrimmage.

<b>Scrimmage Lesson 1</b>	
<b>Scrimmage Lesson 2</b>	
<b>Review Last Week's Skill</b>	
<b>Review Homework</b>	

Developed by The Coaching Corner TM - [www.thecoachingcorner.com](http://www.thecoachingcorner.com)



### Tips for Conducting Successful Training Sessions

- ☐ Assign assistant coaches their roles and responsibilities in accordance to your training plan.
- ☐ When possible, have all equipment and stations prepared before the athletes arrive.
- ☐ Introduce and acknowledge coaches and athletes.
- ☐ Review intended program with everyone. Keep athletes informed of changes in schedule or activities.
- ☐ Alter the plan according to weather, and the facility, to accommodate the needs of the athletes.
- ☐ Change activities before the athletes become bored and lose interest.
- ☐ Keep drills and activities brief so athletes do not get bored. Keep everyone busy with an exercise, even if it is rest.
- ☐ Devote the end of the practice to a fun, group activity that can incorporate challenge and fun, always giving them something to look forward to at the end of practice.
- ☐ If an activity is going well, it is often useful to stop the activity while interest is high.
- ☐ Summarize the session and announce arrangements for next session.
- ☐ Keep the **fun** in fundamentals.



### Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

Though the risks can be few, coaches have a responsibility to ensure that athletes know, understand and appreciate the risks of football. The safety and well-being of athletes are the coaches' primary concerns. Football is not a dangerous sport, but accidents do occur when coaches forget to take safety precautions. It is the head coach's responsibility to minimize the occurrence of injuries by providing safe conditions.

1. Establish clear rules for behavior at your first practice and enforce them.
  - ◆ Keep your hands to yourself.
  - ◆ Listen to the coach.
  - ◆ When you hear the whistle, "stop, look, and listen."
  - ◆ Ask the coach before you leave the field of play.
2. When the weather is poor, have a plan to immediately remove athletes from inclement weather.
3. Make sure athletes bring water to every practice, especially in hotter climates.
4. Check your first-aid kit; restock supplies as necessary.
5. Train all athletes and coaches on emergency procedures.
6. Choose a safe field area. Do not practice in areas with rocks or holes that could cause injury. Simply telling players to avoid obstacles is not enough.
7. Walk the field and boundary and remove unsafe objects. Be particularly vigilant when you are playing in cluttered indoor gyms. Remove anything that a player might run in to.
8. Check the balls for loose panels that could cause eye injury.
9. Check the goals for poorly secured posts and cross-bars. Instruct players never to swing on goals. Pay particular attention to portable goals that could tip over in a high wind or if players swing on the cross-bar. Make sure these goals are securely staked into the ground.
10. Review your first-aid and emergency procedures. Have someone who is trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation on or very near to the field during practice and games.
11. Establish clear rules for behavior at your first practice.
12. Warm up and stretch properly at the beginning of each practice to prevent muscle injuries.
13. Train to improve the general fitness level of your players. Physically fit players are less likely to get injured. Make your practices active.
14. Make sure that players are physically matched in games where players go against each other, head-to-head, (e.g., one-on-one drills).
15. Require all your players to wear shin pads at practices and games. The use of athletic cups and fitted mouth guards is recommended, particularly for players with slower reactions.
16. Do not put a player with a very slow reaction time in goal. Make sure that a goalkeeper is able to understand how to play the position safely.



### Football Practice Competitions

The more we compete, the better we get. Part of the strategic plan for Special Olympics football is to drive more sport development at the local levels. Competition motivates athletes, coaches and the entire sport management team. Expand or add to your schedule as many competition opportunities as possible. We have provided a few suggestions below.

1. Host football games with adjacent local Programs.
2. Ask the local high school team if your athletes can compete with them in practice football games.
3. Join the local community football league, club and/or associations.
4. Create your own football league or club in your community.
5. Host weekly football games for the area.
6. Incorporate competition components, scrimmages at the end of every training session.

### Simulate Game Situations

Football requires accurate and quick decision making. The ability to recognize situations, understand the pitch and make appropriate decisions is very important. Recognition skills are best learned in game settings. Create practice situations that emphasize skill and tactics likely to be encountered during a game. Practicing in a game-like setting will help your players learn to recognize when certain skills or tactics are appropriate. For example, playing four vs. four on a small field with regular goals is a great way to emphasize player movement and shooting, rather than simply shooting at the goal without opposition or movement.

Please refer to the *Teaching Football Skills* section to incorporate different types of teammate scrimmages into practice sessions. Scrimmages at practice allow players to develop a feel for the game, field positioning and basic technique in game-like situations.

### Keep Away

Objective: One team attempts to keep possession of ball for as long as possible.

#### Steps

1. Mark a designated area of the pitch.
2. Create teams of unequal numbers with the larger teams having initial control of the balls.
3. One team will have one or more balls.
4. Player with ball moves only in marked area.
5. Player with ball may have unlimited contacts with ball for no longer than three seconds.

### Ball to the Goalie

Objective: Each team attempts to get possession of ball and pass it to its own goalie located at the opposite end of the court, standing behind specified line.

#### Steps

1. Create two teams of equal numbers; one team has the ball.
2. Goalie stands inside a marked space (e.g., circle) and may not step outside to catch the ball.
3. Team with the ball must pass to at least two or more teammates before attempting to pass the ball to their goalie.
4. Defenders must keep a four-foot distance from the goalie's designated area.
5. Start game with two to three players per team with one ball and gradually add players.
6. Add balls and goalies, maintaining a 1-1 ratio between number of goalies and number of balls.



### Selecting Team Members

The key to the successful development of a traditional Special Olympics or Unified Sports team is the proper selection of team members. We have provided some primary considerations below.

#### Ability Grouping

Unified Sports football teams work best when all team members have similar sports skills. Partners with abilities that are far superior to other teammates will either control competition or accommodate others by not competing to their potential. In both situations, the goals of interaction and teamwork are diminished and a true competitive experience is not achieved.

#### Age Grouping

All team members should be closely matched in age.

- Within 3-5 years of age for athletes 21 years of age and under.
- Within 10-15 years for athletes 22 years of age and over.

For example, in football, an 8-year-old should not be competing against or with a 30-year-old athlete.

### Creating Meaningful Involvement in Unified Sports

Unified Sports embraces the philosophy and principles of Special Olympics. When selecting your Unified Sports team you want to achieve meaningful involvement at the beginning, during and end of your sport season. Unified Sports teams are organized to provide meaningful involvement for all athletes and partners. Every teammate should play a role and have the opportunity to contribute to the team. Meaningful involvement also refers to the quality of interaction and competition within a Unified Sports team. Achieving meaningful involvement by all teammates on the team ensures a positive and rewarding experience for everyone.

#### Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

- Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
- Teammates compete according to the rules of competition.
- Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team.
- Teammates understand how to blend their skills with those of other athletes, resulting in improved performance by athletes with lesser ability.

#### Meaningful Involvement Is Not Achieved When Team Members

- Have superior sports skills in comparison to their fellow team members.
- Act as on-field coaches rather than teammates.
- Control most aspects of the competition during critical periods of the game.
- Do not train or practice regularly and only show up on the day of competition.
- Lower their level of ability dramatically, so that they do not hurt others or control the entire game.



### Football Athlete Skills Assessment

The sport skills assessment chart is a systematic method that is useful in determining the skill ability of an athlete. The Football Skills Assessment Card is designed to assist coaches in determining athletes' ability levels before they begin participation. Coaches will find this assessment a useful tool for several reasons.

1. Help coach to determine with the athlete which events they will compete in.
2. Establish the baseline training areas of athlete.
3. Assist coaches to group athletes of similar ability on training teams.
4. Measure the athlete's progression.
5. Help determine athlete's daily training schedule.

Before administering the assessment, coaches need to perform the following analysis when observing the athlete.

- Become familiar with each of the tasks listed under the major skills.
- Have an accurate visual picture of each task.
- Have observed a skilled performer executing the skill.

When administering the assessment, coaches will have a better opportunity in getting the best analysis from their athletes. Always begin by explaining the skill you would like to observe. When possible, demonstrate the skill.





## Special Olympics Football Skills Assessment Card

Athlete's Name

Date

Coach's Name

Date

### Instructions

1. Use tool at the beginning of the training/competition season to establish a basis of the athlete's starting skill level.
2. Have the athlete perform the skill several times.
3. If the athlete performs the skill correctly three out of five times, check the box next to the skill to indicate that the skill has been accomplished.
4. Program assessment sessions into your program.
5. Athletes may accomplish skills in any order. Athletes have accomplished this list when all possible items have been achieved.

### Control-Receiving

- ☐ Controls ball using inside of foot
- ☐ Controls ball using chest
- ☐ Controls ball using thigh
- ☐ Cushions ball with chest or thigh
- ☐ Distributes body weight, so that they are able to move backward, forward or sideways
- ☐ Judges ball flight speed appropriately
- ☐ Chooses the right technique and body surface to control ball

### Dribbling

- ☐ Dribbles forward, using the top of foot
- ☐ Uses inside of foot to quickly change direction
- ☐ Uses outside of foot to shield ball from opponents
- ☐ Uses sole of foot to change ball direction
- ☐ Dribbles up field with ball while walking
- ☐ Dribbles up field with ball while running

### Passing

- ☐ Squares up ball, player and target in a straight line
- ☐ Makes eye contact with intended receiver
- ☐ Follows through in direction of intended receiver kicking foot
- ☐ Places kicking foot flat against back of ball
- ☐ Contacts ball with the toes pulled up, foot parallel to ground and ankle locked



### Shooting

- ☐ Approaches ball from side
- ☐ Places nonkicking foot by side of ball
- ☐ Controls ball before shooting

### Tackling

- ☐ Leans upper body into front-block tackle
- ☐ Maintains good balance with outstretched leg in side-block tackle
- ☐ Tracks and closes down on opponents dribbling the ball
- ☐ Knows when to use appropriate tackle technique
- ☐ Moves quickly to close distance to opponent with ball
- ☐ Focuses attention on ball, not opponent's body

### Heading

- ☐ Attempts to head the ball
- ☐ Looks at ball as it comes toward the head
- ☐ Rocks onto back foot before ball arrives
- ☐ Attacks through ball for power
- ☐ Directs ball in correct, general direction
- ☐ Directs ball with accuracy
- ☐ Heads ball while standing
- ☐ Heads ball while jumping

### Goalkeeping

- ☐ Maintains concentration when ball is away from the goal
- ☐ Gets behind the line of the ball
- ☐ Scoops low balls up with legs straight and together
- ☐ Goes down on one knee and scoops up low balls
- ☐ Secures high ball with both hands working together as one unit
- ☐ Dives on side of body
- ☐ Distributes the ball using appropriate technique



### Daily Performance Record

The Daily Performance Record is designed to keep an accurate record of the athlete's daily performance as they learn a sports skill. There are several reasons why the coach can benefit from using the Daily Performance Record.

1. The record becomes a permanent document of the athlete's progress.
2. The record helps the coach establish measurable consistency in the athlete's training program.
3. The record allows the coach to be flexible during the actual teaching and coaching session because he can break down the skills into specific, smaller tasks that meet the individual needs of each athlete.
4. The record helps the coach choose proper skill-teaching methods, correct conditions and criteria for evaluating the athlete's performance of the skills.

### Using the Daily Performance Record

At the top of the record, the coach enters his/her name and, the athlete's name and event. If more than one coach works with an athlete, they should enter the dates that they work with the athlete next to their names.

Before the training session begins, the coach decides what skills will be covered. The coach makes this decision based on the athlete's age, interests and their mental and physical abilities. The skill needs to be a statement or a description of the specific exercise that the athlete must perform. The coach enters the skill on the top line of the left-hand column. Each subsequent skill is entered after the athlete masters the previous skill. Of course, more than one sheet may be used to record all of the skills involved. Also, if the athlete cannot perform a prescribed skill, the coach may break down the skill into smaller tasks that will allow for the athlete's success at the new skill.

### Conditions and Criteria for Mastering

After the coach enters the skill, they must then decide on the conditions and criteria by which the athlete must master the skill. Conditions are special circumstances which define the manner in which the athlete must perform a skill. For example, "given a demonstration, and with assistance." The coach needs to always operate under the assumption that the ultimate conditions in which the athlete masters a skill are, "upon command and without assistance" and, therefore, does not have to enter these conditions in the record next to the skill entry. Ideally, the coach needs to arrange the skills and conditions such that the athlete gradually learns to perform the skill while upon command and without assistance.

Criteria are the standards that determine how well the skill must be performed. The coach needs to determine a standard that realistically suits the athlete's mental and physical abilities. For example, "pass to a target 60 percent of the time." Given the varied nature of skills, the criteria might involve many different types of standards, such as amount of time, number of repetitions, accuracy, distance or speed.

### Dates of Sessions and Levels of Instruction Used

The coach may work on one task for a couple of days, and may use several methods of instruction during that time to progress to the point where the athlete performs the task upon command and without assistance. To establish a consistent curriculum for the athlete, the coach must record the dates he works on particular tasks and must enter the methods of instruction that were used on those dates.

# Planning a Football Training and Competition Season Daily Performance Record



<b>Event:</b>	Insert Event Name	<b>Athlete's Name</b>	Insert Name
<b>Skill:</b>	Insert Skill	<b>Coach's Name</b>	Insert Name

Skill Analysis	Conditions & Criteria	Dates & Instruction Methods	Date Mastered



### Football Attire

Players must wear appropriate football attire to train and compete successfully. Inappropriate uniforms and equipment can impact a player's ability to play the game and, in some cases, may be a safety hazard. Teams dressed in good-looking and properly-fitted uniforms are more likely to be motivated to train and play as a team.

**DRESS LIKE A WINNER ... PLAY LIKE A WINNER!**



Appropriate football attire is required for all competitors. As coach, discuss the types of sport clothes that are acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. Discuss the importance of wearing properly fitted clothing, along with the advantages and disadvantages of wearing certain types of clothing during training and competitions. For example, long-pant jeans to blue-jean shorts are not proper football attire for any event. Explain that they cannot perform their best while wearing jeans that restrict their movement. Take athletes to high school or collegiate matches and point out the attire being worn. You can even set the example, by wearing appropriate attire to training and competitions and not rewarding athletes that come improperly dressed to train and/or compete.

### Shirts



Shirts are best when they are loose fitting and made of light material. Short-sleeved shirts are recommended for warm weather. The player's number is required on the back of the shirt in all official competitions.

### Shorts

Shorts that are made of light, water-resistant nylon/polyester and have plenty of leg room are best. Male players, particularly those with slower motor skills, are encouraged to wear a protective athletic cup.



#### Socks



Long, knee-length socks to cover shin pads are recommended. A pair of under socks, usually made of cotton or cotton blend, is recommended to help prevent blisters.

#### Shin Pads



Shin pads are required for both competition and practices. Light-weight pads with elastic ties and placed between under-sock and top sock are recommended.

#### Shoes



Cleats need to be snug-fitting. When purchasing shoes, try on the cleats with one pair of thin socks to make sure the fit is good. Shoes will quickly stretch to a comfortable fit. Molded rubber soles are recommended rather than screw-in studs. Non-studded shoes are worn for indoor practice

#### Sweatshirts

Sweatshirts are recommended for cold-weather practice and day-long tournaments. Players are not allowed to wear sweat tops in official tournaments.

**No jeans. No shoes or high tops. No jewelry or watches!**



### Football Equipment

It is important for athletes to be able to recognize and understand how equipment works and impacts their performance for the specific events. Have your athletes name each piece of equipment as you show it, and give the use for each. To reinforce this, have athletes select the equipment used for their events as well.

A well-run training session begins with having the right coaching equipment. Below is a list of the most important training items.

A ball for every player must be available. Players can only improve their technical skills if they frequently touch a soccer ball. Junior players (under 12 years) play with a size-4 ball; all other players play with a larger size-5. Softer, synthetic leather balls should be used, particularly for beginner players. A brightly colored ball may help keep the attention of lower ability players and help players with visual impairments.

A set of scrimmage vests is essential when playing any kind of team activity. The brightly colored vests help players distinguish teammates from opponents, especially important for beginner Special Olympics athletes. Vests should be the slip-over type rather than the tie type that can be difficult to put on.

Plastic marker cones (12) are needed to mark playing areas and goals. It is almost impossible to run a training session without some kind of marker cones. Cones come in various sizes, but 9-inch plastic cones are recommended. Larger marker cones make ideal goals when proper goals are not available.

A whistle is useful for organizing players and for refereeing scrimmages. Coaches should use verbal commands whenever possible; however, some players respond better to the sound of the whistle.

A clipboard with that day's training session plan will help you stay organized and keep you on track. Once a training session has started, it is easy to forget where you are going next unless you have a copy of the session plan.

A basic first-aid kit will allow you to treat minor cuts and abrasions on the field. Please refer to the *Athlete Safety, Fitness and Nutrition* section for more information on first-aid kits and athlete injury.

### General Football Equipment List At-A-Glance

Balls
Scrimmage Vests
Cones
Whistle
Clipboard
First-Aid Kit

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