Young Athletes™ Curriculum

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Special Olympics

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We especially want to thank all of the teachers, children and families from Rhode Island and North Carolina who participated in this evaluation project. Without their involvement the Young Athletes evaluation would not have been possible.

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INTRODUCING THE YOUNG ATHLETES™ CURRICULUM

Young Athletes™ is an innovative sports play program with 76,000 participants aged 2-7 years involved around the world. The program includes active games, songs and other play activities that help children develop motor, social and cognitive skills. Children with intellectual disabilities have this opportunity to learn, grown and have fun because of you—their families, teachers, coaches, volunteers, early intervention specialists and other professionals.

Your commitment to learn about and lead the Young Athletes™ program at home, in the community, and in schools is what makes the biggest difference in young children's lives. The new Young Athletes™ Curriculum is a tremendous resource to support your success and we are pleased to introduce it to you.

The Young Athletes™ Curriculum builds on the Young Athletes™ Activity Guide and Training video resources, providing scripted Lesson Plans for you to use over an 8 week period. For each week there are 3 days of Lesson Plans for a total of 24 days. Lessons are designed to be offered in sequence to help children become acquainted with the activities and build skills through repetition.

- Week 1: Foundation Skills
- Week 2: Walking and Running
- Week 3: Balance and Jumping
- Week 4: Trapping and Catching
- Week 5: Throwing
- Week 6: Striking
- Week 7: Kicking
- Week 8: Review of Skills as Sports

We encourage you to download the resources from the online toolkit at:
http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/Young_Athletes/Young_Athletes_Toolkit.aspx
Online tools include all the Lesson Plans (8 weeks with 3 days each), the Lesson Summary Cards, Equipment List, Activity Guide, Videos, Suggestions from Teachers, and additional promotional and planning tools.

It is extremely exciting to provide this resource to you because of the promising results of the research study results. This Curriculum was developed and evaluated by the Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts at Boston in collaboration with the Frank Porter Graham Research Institute at the University of North Carolina. Those children whose teachers lead Young Athletes™ using the Curriculum gained significantly more motor development skills than their peers whose teachers did not incorporate the Lessons into their preschool program. In addition, teachers and families also reported that young athletes made important gains in social skills, language development, confidence and other kindergarten readiness skills. (Favazza, Siperstein, Zeisel, Odom & Moskowitz, 2011)

For additional information e-mail Barbara Warman, Director, Family and Young Athletes Programs at: bwarman@specialolympics.org or call +1 202-824-0299.

Favazza, P.C., Zeisel, S., Parker, R., & Leboeuf, L. (2011). *Young Athletes Intervention*. Special Olympics International, Washington, DC.

Foundational Skills

WEEK ONE

THIS SET OF LESSONS PROVIDES

games and activities to help children develop fitness, strength, body awareness, spatial concepts, adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements) and visual tracking skills. Children will also become familiar with the Young Athletes equipment and routines.

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Overview

Lesson Plans (Day One, Day Two, Day Three) provide details to help you plan and carry out the Young Athletes program with a group of children between the ages of 2 and 7 years old.

Adults Needed: Plan for at least 1 adult for every 4 children. Recruit help from families, volunteers, older students, college students and others in your community to make sure the program runs smoothly and is fun.

Time: Young Athletes is implemented with great enthusiasm, high energy and quick pace. Time estimates are provided to guide completion of each lesson in 30 minutes. However, the pace and length of the lesson should be matched to the needs, interests, ages, and skills of the young athletes in your group.

Sequence: There are three lessons for each skill area labeled Day One, Day Two and Day Three. Lessons within the skill area are designed to be offered in sequence to help children become acquainted with the activities and build skills through repetition.

Resources: The Lesson Plan Summary Cards include an outline of the activities, list of equipment needed, and page numbers to find the activity descriptions. The cards, Young Athletes Activity Guide, Suggestions from Teachers, and training videos are included in the online Toolkit (see website below).

Playing at home: Give families the Lesson Plan Summary Cards and encourage them to sing the songs and play one or two games with their child at home before the next session. Help them learn about the activities by including them in your group sessions and/or providing a family training session. Be sure they have access to the Activity Guide and Videos for more information.

>> See the Young Athletes Toolkit online at:
www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes

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Young Athletes Curriculum. Special Olympics International, Washington, DC.

Opening Sports Song *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE Start each Young Athletes class with a gathering/warm-up song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with. This will help them warm-up, serve as a gathering activity, create body awareness and support adaptive skills (following directions, singing along, imitating motor movements).

EXPLAIN "Today is our first day of Young Athletes! An athlete is someone who plays sports and exercises the muscles in their body. We are all going to be Young Athletes while we play new games and exercise the muscles in our bodies. Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class touch their toes (bend and stretch), touch their toes, touch their toes. The athletes in our class touch their toes, - all through the day.
- The runner on the team goes run run run, run run run run, run run. The runner on the team goes run run run - all through the town.
- The swimmer in the water goes swim swim swim, swim swim swim, swim swim swim. The swimmer in the water goes swim swim swim - all through the pool.

I Spy *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Floor markers, bean bags, cones, hoops, balls

PURPOSE Identify and locate sports equipment using a variety of motor movements, strength, and general fitness.

DEMONSTRATE "Great warm-up! Now let's play I Spy with all of our new sports equipment! I spy with my little eye a blue ball! Where is the blue ball?" Look around, find the ball.

LEAD "Hurry, let's walk to the balls! Where is the blue ball? (balls, cones, floor markers, scarves, etc.) Great! OK, listen carefully! I spy with my little eye an orange cone! Where is the orange cone? Look around find it! Hurry, let's run to the cone!"

- Encourage athletes to find an object that is visible and everyone races to the object by walking or running.
- The I Spy game progresses as teacher (or athlete) calls out the name of a piece of equipment and all athletes find that object.
- The teacher can lead by also calling out a color and all athletes find equipment of a particular color.

Scarf Game *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Scarf for each child

PURPOSE Motor coordination, visual tracking, identification of body parts

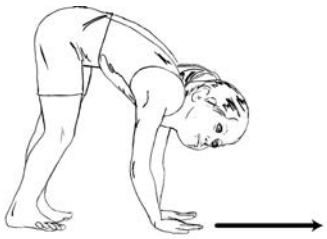
DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now let's play the Scarf Game! Watch the scarf! Look where the scarf is going! Catch the scarf with your (hands, head, elbow, foot)! You/I caught a (blue, red, yellow) scarf with my/your (hand, head, elbow, foot)!"

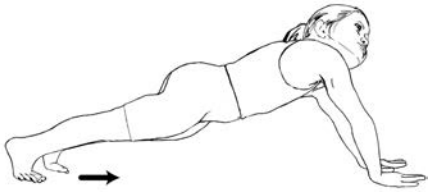
Inchworm Wiggle *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE Strength, general fitness, motor skills

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Bend over and put your hands on the ground. "Let's play the Inchworm Wiggle!" "Great, watch me move like an inch worm. (Model while talking.) Walk with your hands then, walk with your feet. Awesome!"

- Let's do it again! Let's do the Inchworm Wiggle.
- Walk with your hands; then walk with your feet.
- Great! Inch worm to the (name a piece of equipment: bean bags, balance beam, etc.)





Bridges and Tunnels *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE Strength, general fitness

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "OK, now we are going to play Bridges and Tunnels! First let's make our tunnel!" If physically able, have one athlete bend forward so that hands and feet are on the ground to form a bridges and tunnels. Encourage other athletes to form a bridge or tunnel.

Bridges and Tunnels *(continued)*

Tunnels

"Who can bend like this to make a tunnel? (Hands and feet on ground, bottom up making tunnel) Awesome, he/she made a tunnel. Now, who can go under his/her tunnel? Great! After you go under the tunnel you make a tunnel right next to him/her! Great, now our tunnel is even bigger!"

- One athlete forms a tunnel by touching the ground with his/her feet and hands or by getting down onto hands and knees.
- The other athletes crawl, scoot, under the tunnel.
- Once they go under the tunnel, have each athlete extend the tunnel (by forming a tunnel next to the person who started the activity).

Tips: Make note of approximately how many times the child can perform the activity or how long the child hold up the bridge or tunnel. Encourage more repetitions or more time over several weeks to develop muscular strength and endurance. Encourage bridges and tunnels to be rigid and strong while people and objects pass under and through.

Bridges

"OK! Now we are going to play bridges. Who can bend like this to make a bridge? (Sit on ground. Place hands/feet flat on ground. Push bottom off ground.) Great! Now let's make a bridge and go under the bridge!

- One athlete forms a bridge by sitting with his/her hands and feet flat on the ground and pushing his/her bottom off the ground.
- The other athletes crawl, scoot, under the bridge.
- To make it easier have athletes place their feet or hands on the wall or an object and other athletes go under.

Closing Sports Song *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE End each Young Athletes class with a closing/cool-down song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with. This builds body awareness and adaptive skills (followingdirections, singing along, imitation of motor movements) and helps with transitions.

EXPLAIN "Let's end Young Athletes with a song, If You're Happy and You Know It. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING

- If you're happy and you know it, clap and stomp (wiggle your body; fly like a bird: walk around with arms outstretched).
- If you're happy and you know it then your face will really show it if you're happy and you know it clap and stomp.

Foundational Skills

Opening Sports Song with Scarf *(5 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class touch their toes (bend and stretch); touch their toes; touch their toes. The athletes in our class touch their toes, - all through the day.
- The player on the court jumps up and down, up and down, up and down. The player on the court jumps up and down - all during the game.
- The athlete on the team throws the scarf, throws the scarf, throws the scarf. The athlete on the team throws the scarf - all through the town.

Tip: Have athletes suggest additional motions and lead.

I Spy: Bunny Hop *(5 min)*

Adapt the Game from Day 1 by asking athletes to hop, then crawl to the sports equipment you name.

Inchworm Wiggle *(4 min)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 1

Bridges and Tunnels *(5 min)*

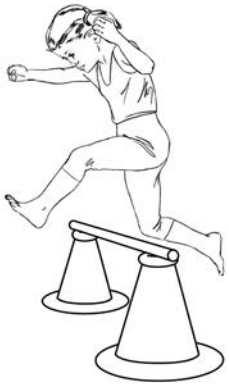
Repeat the Activity from Day 1

Obstacle Course *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Set up a 5 station course with floor markers (dots for jumping on), bean bags with hoop (throwing bean bag through hoop), a series of hurdles (cones with dowel/stick), balance beam, area to run to finish (through a ribbon).

EXPLAIN Now we get to run the obstacle course! Watch and follow me!

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Show the athletes how to go through the obstacle course. Then assist athletes in moving through course.



Station 1: Jump on Dots

- Arrange 10 dots in zigzag pattern, close to one another.
- Athlete will bunny hop on two feet from dot to dot.
- Athlete will jump to the right, then jump to the left, zigzagging down length of dots.

Station 2: Throw Bean Bag Through Target (basket, hoop)

- Use floor marker to show where athlete stands.
- Athlete will throw bean bag or small ball to a hoop held parallel to the floor or to a bucket.
- Progress to throwing through target (hoop on cone or block) from distance of 3 feet.
- Throw underhanded and if child is able proceed to throwing over-hand.
- Move distance closer or further away, depending on skill of athlete.

Foundational Skills

Tip: Encourage color recognition, object recognition, verbal and counting development by calling out colors, names, and numbers of objects used in each activity. Ask children to repeat the objects you reference, including their name, color and numbers. Make note of the concepts the child has mastered and those that are still developing (e.g., knows on/off; identified red, not blue). Incorporate concepts during play such as giving directions to move around stationery objects like a couch or crawl under a table to retrieve a toy.

Station 3: Step/Jump Over Hurdles

- Make hurdle using two cones and one dowel or stick. Place dowel through holes in cone.
- Adjust height as needed for athletes and always start the bar at the lowest height.
- Always start the bar at the lowest height. If he/she is unable to jump, they can step over hurdle.

Station 4: Walk on Balance Beam

- Athletes will independently walk the length of the beam, alternating steps.
- Add various ways to move down the beam for advanced athletes (walk backwards, side-steps, change directions – forward to backwards).
- Add length to the beam by using multiple beams.

Station 5: Run to Finish Line (through ribbon)

- When athlete steps off beam, he/she should run to the finish line.
- Teach athletes to run through the line. Introduce this skill several times as some may stop, not wanting to hit or touch the finish line.
- The finish line is a long ribbon. To set the finish line, attach the ribbon to one side of the area while holding the other end of the ribbon in your hand (or have another person hold the other end). As the athlete touches the ribbon, let it go.

Closing Sports Song *(5 min.)*

Repeat the song you used in Day 1 to end the Lesson.

Opening Sports Song with Bunny Hop

(3 min.)

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class can bend and stretch, bend and stretch, bend and stretch. The athletes in our class can bend and stretch, all through the town.
- The athletes in our class can hop like a bunny, hop like a bunny, hop like a bunny. The athletes in our class can hop like a bunny - all through the day.
- The athletes in our class can go up and down (on your toes), up and down, up and down. The athletes in our class can go up and down - all through the town.

Tip: Have athletes suggest additional motions and lead.

I Spy: Stomp/Tip Toes

(3 min.)

Adapt the Game from Day 1 by instructing athletes to move in different ways to the equipment (e.g. tiptoe, stomp slowly, stomp fast, walk backwards)

Bridges and Tunnels

(4 min.)

Repeat the Activity from Day 1

Follow the Leader with Side Steps, Follow a Path *(4 min.)*

PURPOSE

Introduction to Walking and Running skills. Motor Skills (walking, running, side steps, grasp, release),adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

EQUIPMENT

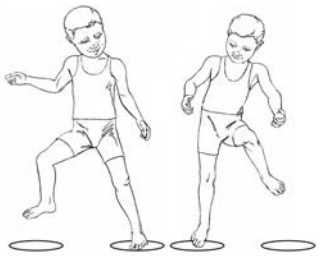
Set up space with 3 floor markers placed about two feet apart in a line.

Place bean bags or small ball on the 2nd floor marker so athletes can side step from first marker to second marker, pick up bean bag/ball, side step to last marker, place ball on last marker. Adapt by adding more markers and/or increasing distance between markers.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD

Encourage athletes to sidestep right and left onto a variety of floor markers (plastic disks, hoops). "Ok! Now let's play follow the leader!"

- March around the room, swing your arms!
- March around the room, hands on head! Side step to the right.
- Great! Side step again. Side step one more time! Now side step to the left. One big side step and again, and again!
- Now this time, side step to the marker, pick up the bean bag, side step to the next marker, drop the bean bag on the marker!



Running Styles *(introduction to week 2)*

PURPOSE Body awareness, general fitness, motor skills (walk, run, balance), adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Using a clap or whistle, signal change in running style, while providing verbal command for each running/walking style:

- Stomp slow/fast
- Run slow/fast
- Run backwards
- High knees run (raise knees high when running)
- Tiptoe walking

Obstacle Course *(7 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 2.

Closing Sports Song *(3 min.)*

Repeat the song you used in Day 1 and 2 to end the Lesson.

You have finished Week One: Foundational Skills Lessons. You can now begin Week Two: Walking and Running.

Walking & Running
WEEK TWO

THIS SET OF LESSONS PROVIDES

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

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Overview

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Adults Needed: Plan for at least 1 adult for every 4 children. Recruit help from families, volunteers, older students, college students and others in your community to make sure the program runs smoothly and is fun.

Time: Young Athletes is implemented with great enthusiasm, high energy and quick pace. Time estimates are provided to guide completion of each lesson in 30 minutes. However, the pace and length of the lesson should be matched to the needs, interests, ages, and skills of the young athletes in your group.

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Playing at home: Give families the Lesson Plan Summary Cards and encourage them to sing the songs and play one or two games with their child at home before the next session. Help them learn about the activities by including them in your group sessions and/or providing a family training session. Be sure they have access to the Activity Guide and Videos for more information.

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Opening Sports Song *(5 min.)*

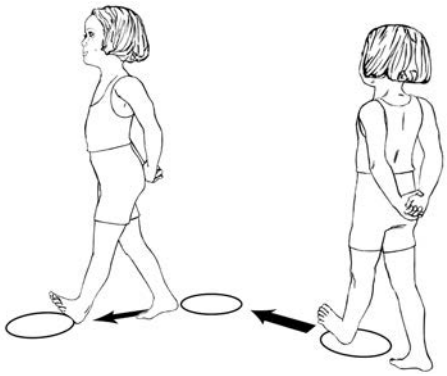
EQUIPMENT Whistle, floor markers (distributed around room to create a path), tambourine or drum.

PURPOSE Start each Young Athletes class with a gathering/warm-up song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with. This will help them warm-up, serve as a gathering activity, create body awareness and support adaptive skills (following directions, singing along, imitating motor movements).

EXPLAIN "It is time for Young Athletes! Let's start with our Sports Song Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class swing their arms, swing their arms, swing their arms. The athletes in our class swing their arms, - all through the day.
- The runner on the team runs real fast, runs real fast, runs real fast. The runner on the team runs real fast - all through the town.
- The runner on the team runs real slow, runs real slow, runs real slow. The runner on the team runs real slow - all through the game.



Walking & Running

Follow the Leader and Follow a Path *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Tambourine or drum, floor markers

PURPOSE Strength, general fitness, motor skills

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Great warm-up! Now let's play Follow the Leader! March around the room; swing your arms!"

- Use a tambourine or drum or overhead clapping to lead athletes around room, marching.
- Encourage athletes to swing arms and lift knees high.
- March around room, following a path (floor markers).
- Repeat with Follow the Leader: running; walking backwards.

Side Stepping *(4 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Floor markers, short balance beam, long balance beam

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Let's do some Side Stepping!"

- Encourage athletes to sidestep right and left onto floor markers.
- Side step to the right, across path.
- Side step to left across the path.
- Use the same side step to move across short balance beam and longer balance beam.

Tips: Encourage child not to crouch or make extra movements when walking or sidestepping and to keep his/her hips and feet facing forward. Try placing a beanbag on the child's head to encourage good posture and balance.

Running Styles *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Whistle

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Choose a variety of running/walking styles to teach children. Then explain at the sound of the whistle (or other command signal like hand clapping) you will tell them to switch their running/walking styles.

- Stomp slow/fast
- Run slow/fast
- Run backwards
- High knees run (Raise knees high when running)
- Tiptoe walk

Or, create a foot race (competition) using different running styles

Bridges and Tunnels *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE Strength, general fitness

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "OK, now we are going to play Bridges and Tunnels! First let's make our tunnel!" If physically able, have one athlete bend forward so that hands and feet are on the ground to form a bridges and tunnels. Encourage other athletes to crawl (inchworm, walk) under tunnel or bridge.

Bridges and Tunnels *(continued)*

Tunnels

"Who can bend like this to make a tunnel? (Hands and feet on ground, bottom up making tunnel) Awesome, he/she made a tunnel. Now, who can go under his/her tunnel? Great! After you go under the tunnel you make a tunnel right next to him/her! Great, now our tunnel is even bigger!"

- One athlete forms a tunnel by touching the ground with his/her feet and hands or by getting down onto hands and knees.
- The other athletes crawl, scoot, under the tunnel.
- Once they go under the tunnel, have each athlete extend the tunnel (by forming a tunnel next to the person who started the activity).

Tips: Make note of approximately how many times the child can perform the activity or how long the child hold up the bridge or tunnel. Encourage more repetitions or more time over several weeks to develop muscular strength and endurance. Encourage bridges and tunnels to be rigid and strong while people and objects pass under and through.

Bridges

"OK! Now we are going to play bridges. Who can bend like this to make a bridge? (Sit on ground. Place hands/feet flat on ground. Push bottom off ground.) Great! Now let's make a bridge and go under the bridge!

- One athlete forms a bridge by sitting with his/her hands and feet flat on the ground and pushing his/her bottom off the ground.
- The other athletes crawl, scoot, under the bridge.
- To make it easier have athletes place their feet or hands on the wall or an object and other athletes go under.

Closing Sports Song *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE End each Young Athletes class with a closing/cool-down song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with.

EXPLAIN "It is time to end Young Athletes. Let's sing If You're Happy and You Know It. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING

- If you're happy and you know it, clap and stomp (wiggle your body; fly like a bird: walk around with arms outstretched)
- If you're happy and you know it then your face will really show it if you're happy and you know it clap and stomp, (wiggle your body; fly like a bird: walk around with arms outstretched).

Opening Sports Song with Scarf *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Scarf for each athlete.

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

"The athletes in our class bend and stretch, bend and stretch, bend and stretch. The athletes in our class bend and stretch, - all through the day."

- Grab opposite corners of scarf, place hands on hips. Start with feet apart, directly below hips. Slowly bend down with scarf in two hands towards your toes, when you sing bend. Come back up, hands on hips when you sing stretch. When you sing all through the day, twirl whole body or scarf around over head.

"The athletes in our class bend and stretch, bend and stretch, bend and stretch. The athletes in our class bend and stretch - all through the town."

- Grab two (or opposite) corners of scarf, place hands on hips. As you sing, move the scarf with body. Start with feet apart, directly below hips. Slowly bend right and back to center, bend left and back to center when singing the words bend and stretch. When you sing all through the town, twirl whole body or scarf around over head.

"The athletes on the team catch a scarf, catch a scarf, catch a scarf. The athletes on the team catch a scarf - all through the game."

- Have athletes suggest additional motions and lead.

Follow the Leader *(5 min.)*

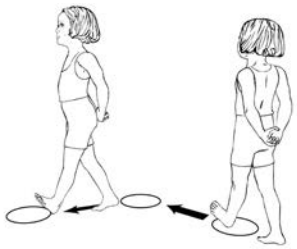
With Side Steps, Follow the Path, Bunny Hop, Inch Worm

EQUIPMENT Floor markers, bean bags or small ball

WARM UP Set up space with 3 floor markers placed about two feet apart in a line. Place bean bags or small ball on the 2nd floor marker so athletes can side step from first marker to second marker, pick up bean bag/ball, side step to last marker, and place ball on last marker. Adapt by adding more markers and/or increasing distance between markers.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Great warm-up! Now let's play Follow the Leader!"

- March around the room, swing your arms!
- March around the room, hands on head! Side step to the right.
- Great! Side step again. Side step one more time! Now side step to the left. One big side step and again, and again!
- Now this time, side step to marker, pick up bean bag, side step to next marker, drop the bean bag on marker!
- Encourage athletes to side step right and left onto a variety of floor markers (plastic disks, hoops).



Run and Carry *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Floor markers, hoop on floor with balls or bean bags in it, hoop on block for target Make a path with 10 floor markers that leads to target (hoop on block), placing markers about one foot apart. Place balls/bean bags in a small hoop on the ground, next to the 5th floor marker) so athletes can pick up bean bag/ball, walk/run/side step to last marker and throw ball/bag through hoop (target).Adapt by adding more markers and/or increasing distance between markers.

PURPOSE Strength, general fitness, motor skills (walk, side-step, throw to target, run)

WARM-UP

- Have athletes run a short distance, pick up the ball or bean bag and return it back to you.
- Repeat this a couple of times for each child.
- Then line up athletes at the first floor marker (the marker furthest away from target).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Great! Now you're ready to learn a Run and Carry Routine. Watch me do the routine! Now you do it. When I say GO! You do it!"

- walk/run/side step along the path
- stop to pick up ball/bag
- keep going on path to target
- stop on last marker and throw ball/bean bag into target
- follow path back (walking/running/side stepping)
- touch the next person's hand and say "GO!"

Tip: Repeat Run and Carry routine using walk, run, side-step, walk backwards, etc.

Running Styles *(6 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 1.

Obstacle Course *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT

Set up a 5 station course with floor markers (dots for jumping on), bean bags with hoop (throwing bean bag through hoop), a series of hurdles (cones with dowel/stick), balance beam, area to run to finish (through a ribbon).

EXPLAIN

Now we get to run the obstacle course! Watch and follow me!

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD

Show the athletes how to go through the obstacle course. Then assist athletes in moving through course.

Station 1: Jump on Dots

- Arrange 10 dots in zigzag pattern, close to one another.
- Athlete will bunny hop on two feet from dot to dot.
- Athlete will jump to the right, then jump to the left, zigzagging down length of dots.

Station 2: Throw Bean Bag Through Target (basket, hoop)

- Use floor marker to show where athlete stands.
- Athlete will throw bean bag or small ball to a hoop held parallel to the floor or to a bucket.
- Progress to throwing through target (hoop on cone or block) from distance of 3 feet.
- Throw underhanded and if child is able proceed to throwing overhand.
- Move distance closer or further away, depending on skill of athlete.

Walking & Running

Obstacle Course *(continued)*

Station 3: Step/Jump Over Hurdles

- Make hurdle using two cones and one dowel or stick. Place dowel through holes in cone.
- Adjust height as needed for athletes and always start the bar at the lowest height.
- Always start the bar at the lowest height. If he/she is unable to jump, they can step over hurdle.

Station 4: Walk on Balance Beam

- Athletes will independently walk the length of the beam, alternating steps.
- Add various ways to move down the beam for advanced athletes (walk backwards, side-steps, change directions – forward to backwards).
- Add length to the beam by using multiple beams.

Station 5: Run to Finish Line (through ribbon)

- When athlete steps off beam, he/she should run to the finish line.
- Teach athletes to run through the line.
- Introduce this skill several times as some may stop, not wanting to hit or touch the finish line.
- The finish line is a long ribbon. To set the finish line, attach the ribbon to one side of the area while holding the other end of the ribbon in your hand (or have another person hold the other end.
- As the athlete touches the ribbon, let it go.

Closing Sports Song *(3 min.)*

Repeat song used in Day 1 to end the lesson.

Opening Sports Song with Bunny Hop *(3 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class can bend and stretch, bend and stretch, bend and stretch. The athletes in our class can bend and stretch - all through the day.
- The athletes in our class can hop like a bunny, hop like a bunny, hop like a bunny. The athletes in our class can hop like a bunny - all through the town.
- The athletes in our class can go up and down (on your toes) up and down. The athletes in our class can go up and down - all through the game.

Step and Jump *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Balance beams, ropes, floor markers. Use the balance beam/rope and floor markers to set goals for athletes to jump to.

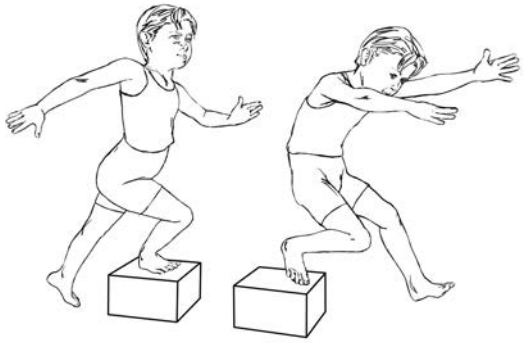
PURPOSE Introduction to Balance and Jumping skills. Motor coordination, strength, general fitness, motor skills (balance and direction), body awareness.

EXPLAIN "OK athletes, now we are going to jump off of our balance beams/ropes and try to land on the floor markers."

Step and Jump *(continued)*

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD

- Step onto the balance beam/rope, then bend your knees, and jump to the floor markers.
- If athletes are physically able, allow them to jump onto the balance beam/rope as well.
- As athletes master jumping to a floor marker, move the markers further away, raise the level of the jump, and alter the floor marker position to allow for twisted jumps.
- For example, an athlete could face forward but jump to a marker to their side. Assure that balance skills have been acquired first.



Run and Carry *(6 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 2.

Coach Says *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE

Introduction to Balance and Jumping skills. Identification of body parts, general fitness, balance, motor coordination, body awareness. Shifting of body weight to engage balance muscles is an important functional and sports related skill.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD

"Now let's play Coach Says using our bodies. I want you to look at what I do with MY body and try to do it with your own. I want you to COPY what I do. Look at me, see how I am…"

- Standing on one foot, standing with one foot in front of the other, standing on tip toes, standing on my heels…You try!
- Now try it with your arms out/in/up/down, or eyes closed/open.
- Encourage athletes to try these new balancing techniques while manipulating their bodies so that their muscles will need to counteract shifts in weight.

Tips: Encourage the child to mimic your movements; try placing a bean bag on the child's head to encourage good posture and balance; encourage landing with two feet at the same time.

Obstacle Course *(7 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 2.

Closing Sports Song *(3 min.)*

Repeat the song used in Day 1 and Day 2 to end the lesson.

You have finished Week Two: Walking & Running Lessons. You can now begin Week Three: Jumping & Balancing.

Jumping & Balancing

WEEK THREE

THIS SET OF LESSONS PROVIDES

games and activities to help children develop fitness, strength, body awareness, spatial concepts, balance, jumping, and hand eye coordination, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

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Overview

Lesson Plans (Day One, Day Two, Day Three) provide details to help you plan and carry out the Young Athletes program with a group of children between the ages of 2 and 7 years old.

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Time: Young Athletes is implemented with great enthusiasm, high energy and quick pace. Time estimates are provided to guide completion of each lesson in 30 minutes. However, the pace and length of the lesson should be matched to the needs, interests, ages, and skills of the young athletes in your group.

Sequence: There are three lessons for each skill area labeled Day One, Day Two and Day Three. Lessons within the skill area are designed to be offered in sequence to help children become acquainted with the activities and build skills through repetition.

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Favazza, P.C., Zeisel, S., Parker, R., & Leboeuf, L. (2011).
Young Athletes Curriculum. Special Olympics International, Washington, DC.

Opening Sports Song *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE Start each Young Athletes class with a gathering/warm-up song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with. This will help them warm-up, serve as a gathering activity, create body awareness and support adaptive skills (follow directions, sing along, imitation of motor movements).

EXPLAIN "We're going to start a NEW week of Young Athletes! Remember, an athlete is someone who plays sports and exercises the muscles in their body. We are all going to be Young Athletes while we play new games and exercise the muscles in our body. Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The runner on the team goes run run run, run run run, run, run, run. The runner on the team goes run run run - all through the day.
- The athletes in our class walk real slow, walk real slow, walk real slow. The athletes in our class walk real slow - all through the town.
- The player on the court goes jump jump jump, jump jump jump, jump jump jump. The player on the court goes jump jump jump - all through the game.

WEEK DAY

three 1 2 3

Jumping & Balancing

Coach Says *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE Shifting of body weight to engage balance muscles is an important functional and sports related skill. Other skills to be developed include identifying body parts, general fitness, motor skills (balance), motor coordination, body awareness, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Encourage athletes to try these new balancing techniques while manipulating their bodies so that their muscles will need to counteract shifts in weight. "Great warm-up! Now let's play "Coach Says" using our bodies. I want you to look at what I do with MY body and try to do it with your own. I want you to COPY what I do. Look at me, see how I am:

- Standing on one foot, standing with one foot in front of the other, standing on tip toes, standing on my heels…You try!
- Now try it with your arms out/in/up/down, or eyes closed/open.

Balance Beam/Ropes *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Balance beams/ropes

PURPOSE Motor coordination, strength, general fitness, motor skills, body awareness, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Let's play with our balance beams/ropes!" Walk along the balance beam/ropes nice and straight.

- Now try walking with one foot on each side of the balance beam/ropes like I am (straddling rope).
- Great! Now let's walk on TOP of the balance beam/ropes with one foot in front of the other. Go very slowly to keep your balance.

Foot Trap *(4 min.)*

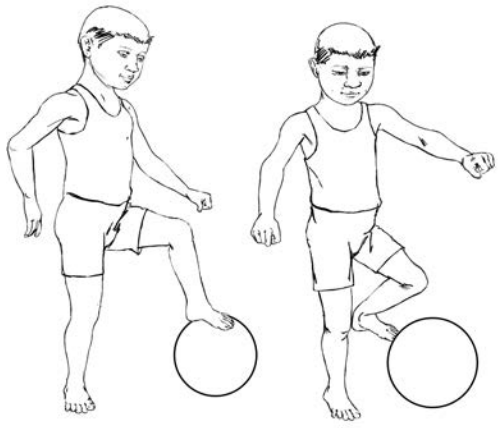
EQUIPMENT Slow motion ball; Use various sized balls for athletes to experience various amounts of challenge to their balance (smaller ball = smaller challenge).

PURPOSE Motor coordination, strength, general fitness, motor skills (kicking & trapping), body awareness, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we are going to use our feet to trap a ball. Take your foot like I am, and place your foot on top of the ball. Stand like this and balance. Then, take your foot off and kick the ball to another athlete/coach."

- Give children opportunities to practice kicking the ball from a stand still trap. If athletes master this begin having them trap a rolling ball.
- Now, when another athlete kicks the ball to you, try to stop the ball while it's moving by putting your foot on top of it the same way.
- Once it stops, get your balance, and then kick the ball back.
- Great job passing the ball back and forth using foot traps!

Tips: Encourage athletes trying this skill with smaller balls if larger ones are too difficult.



Jumping & Balancing

Step and Jump *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Balance beams/ropes, floor markers. Use the balance beam/rope and floor markers to set goals for athletes to jump to.

PURPOSE Motor coordination, strength, general fitness, motor skills (balance and direction), body awareness, adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "OK athletes, now we are going to jump off of our balance beams/ropes and try to land on the floor markers.

- Step onto the balance beam/rope, then bend your knees, and jump to the floor markers.
- As athletes master jumping to a floor marker, move the markers further away, raise the level of the jump, and alter the floor marker position to allow for twisted jumps if athletes have balance skills.

Closing Sports Song *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE End each Young Athletes class with a closing/cool-down song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with.

EXPLAIN "It is time to end Young Athletes. Let's sing If You're Happy and You Know It. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING

- If you're happy and you know it, clap and stomp (wiggle your body; fly like a bird: walk around with arms outstretched)
- If you're happy and you know it then your face will really show it if you're happy and you know it clap and stomp, (wiggle your body; fly like a bird: walk around with arms outstretched).

Jumping & Balancing

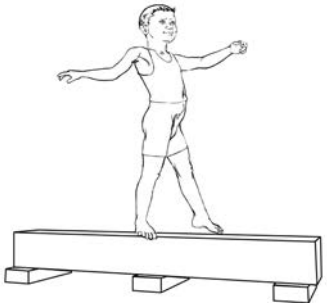
Opening Sports Song *(4 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Balance beam/rope

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song (Wheels on the Bus melody). Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

- (On balance beam/rope) The player on the court goes jump jump jump, jump jump jump, jump jump jump. The player on the court goes jump jump jump - all through the day.
- (On balance beam/rope) The athletes in our class jump on and off, on and off, on and off. The athletes in our class jump on and of - all through the town.
- The athletes in our class jump forward and back, forward and back, forward and back. The athletes in our class jump forward and back - all through the game.



Coach Says *(4 min.)*

Adapt the Activity from Day 1, having athletes stand on a balance beam or rope as they stand on one foot, tip toe, heels, etc.

Jumping & Balancing

Rolling and Trapping *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Ball

PURPOSE Motor coordination, identification of body parts (toes touching), strength, general fitness/flexibility, motor skills (rolling, trapping), body awareness, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Arrange athletes in pairs facing one another on the ground with their legs outstretched in a straddle position so that their legs are touching in the shape of diamond.

- Give them a slow motion ball/ball to roll back and forth between them.
- Now we're going to practice rolling these balls to our partners like we started last week.
- Face sitting your partner with your legs out and spread like this (demonstrate).
- Make sure your toes are touching your partner's toes.
- Next, one of you rolls the ball to the other on the ground like this (demonstrate). Stop the ball with your hands, and roll it back.
- If athletes are physically able to, encourage them to advance to a kneeling or standing position.
- Try passing the ball to your partners on your knees like this (demonstrate).
- Try passing the ball to your partners standing up and rolling it to them like this (demonstrate crouching position).
- Great job!!

Jumping & Balancing

Foot Trap *(4 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 1.

Jumping High *(5 min.)*

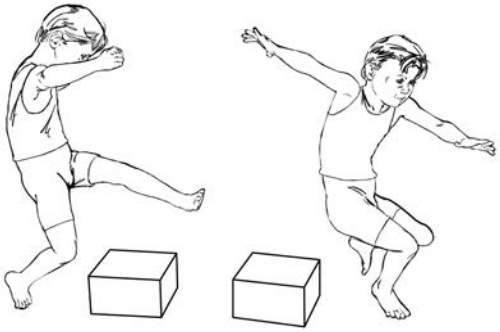
EQUIPMENT Floor markers, dowel, bean bags, cones, hoops, balls, balance beam/rope, and blocks. Equipment should be already placed around room. Spread the equipment around the room so that athletes can have a chance to jump over the various pieces.

PURPOSE Identify and locate sports equipment, motor coordination, strength, general fitness, motor skills (jumping, balance, grasp), body awareness, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Introduce the skill of jumping over equipment to the athletes.

- Yesterday we jumped on an off of our balance beams onto our floor markers.
- Today, we're going to try to jump OVER our equipment.
- Jump onto the equipment first– THEN see if you can jump OVER it!

Tips: Children can jump onto or off of equipment if their feet cannot clear the floor (for instance they can jump over the bean bag, or on top of it); If they are jumping off of the equipment as opposed to over it, challenge them to reach for an object (ex: scarf) while doing so.



Jumping & Balancing

Frog Hoppin'/ Leapin' Lizards

(5 min.)

EQUIPMENT

Floor markers placed around the room

PURPOSE

Identify and locate sports equipment (floor markers), motor coordination, strength, general fitness, motor skills (hopping & running), body awareness and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD

"OK athletes, now we're going to play Leapin' Lizards! Everyone is going to LEAP/HOP from one floor marker to another just like a leapin' lizard!"

- You can jump from one to the next (demonstrate) or over them (demonstrate).
- If athletes master jumping from one to the next, and/or over the markers, encourage them to run and land either onto or over the marker:
- Now that you can hop onto the marker, and over the marker, try running first and then landing on the marker.

Tips: If the child takes off or lands flat-footed, encourage leaning forward and bending the knees; If leaping is difficult for the child, run along the child's side, holding his/her hand and practice leaping onto a marker over an object.

Closing Sports Song

(5 min.)

Repeat the song used in Day 1 to end the Lesson.

Jumping & Balancing

Opening Sports Song with Leapin' Lizard *(2 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song (Wheels on the Bus melody). Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

- The athletes on the team leap over the mark, over the mark, over the mark. The athletes on the team leap over the mark - all through the day.
- The player on the court runs forward and back, forward and back, forward and back. The player on the court runs forward and back - all through the town.
- The athletes in our class leap on the mark, on the mark, on the mark. The athletes in our class leap on the mark - all through the game.

Coach Says: with a bean bag *(3 min.)*

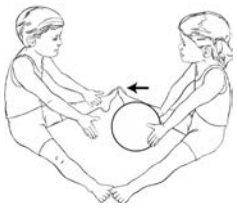
Adapt the Activity from Day 1 by having them first jump on, then over a bean bag, then play catch with it.

Jumping High *(4 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 2.

Rolling & Trapping *(5 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 2.



Foot Trap *(4 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 2.

Jumping & Balancing

Frog Hoppin'/ Leapin' Lizards

(5 min.)

Repeat Activity from Day 2.

Goalie Drill

(5 min.)

EQUIPMENT

Two cones to form each goal and slow motion ball placed around room.

PURPOSE

Motor coordination, (shift weight to react to ball movements), strength, general fitness, motor skills (grasping, running), body awareness, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movement).

EXPLAIN

Arrange athletes so that they are standing in-between two cones forming a goal. "OK Leapin' Lizards, let's practice being goalies! Stand in-between the two cones. The space in-between the cones is called a GOAL."

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD

- When the coach or your partner rolls or kicks the ball into the goal, use your hands to stop the ball like this.
- The goalie's job is to stop the ball before it goes in-between the cones, the goal. Let's practice being goalies!

Closing Sports Song

(2 min.)

Repeat the song used in Day 1 and 2 to end the Lesson.

You have finished Week Three: Jumping & Balancing Lessons. You can now begin Week Four: Trapping & Catching.

Trapping & Catching
WEEK FOUR

THIS SET OF LESSONS PROVIDES games and activities to help children develop trapping and catching (fitness, strength, body awareness, spatial concepts, balance, hand eye coordination, motor control, proprioception).

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Trapping & Catching

Opening Sports Song *(5 min.)*

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EXPLAIN "We're going to start a NEW week of Young Athletes! Remember, an athlete is someone who plays sports and exercises the muscles in their body. We are all going to be Athletes while we play new games and exercise the muscles in our bodies. Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The goalie on the team goes stop that ball (jump in front of ball), stop that ball, stop that ball. The goalie on the team goes stop that ball - all through the day,
- The player on the court goes jump jump jump, jump jump jump, jump jump jump. The player on the court goes jump jump jump - all through the town.
- The athletes in our class roll the ball, roll the ball, roll the ball.
- The athletes in our class roll the ball— all through the game.

WEEK DAY

four 1 2 3

Trapping & Catching

Rolling & Trapping *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Ball

PURPOSE Motor coordination, identification of body parts (toes touching), strength, general itness/flexibility, motor skills (rolling, trapping), body awareness, adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Arrange athletes in pairs facing one another on the ground with their legs outstretched in a straddle position so that their legs are touching in the shape of diamond. Give them a slow motion ball/ball to roll back and forth between them. "Great job with our song! Now we're going to practice rolling these balls to our partners like we started last week."

- Face sitting your partner; with your legs out and spread. Make sure your toes are touching your partner's toes.
- Next, one of you rolls the ball to the other on the ground. Stop the ball with your hands, and roll it back.
- If athletes are physically able to, encourage them to advance to a kneeling or standing position.
- Great job!

Trapping & Catching

Goalie Drill *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Two cones to form each goal and slow motion ball should be already placed around room.

PURPOSE Motor coordination (shift weight to react to ball movements), strength, general fitness, motor skills (grasping, running), body awareness, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Arrange athletes so that they are standing in-between two cones forming a goal. "OK Athletes, let's practice being goalies! "

- Stand in-between the two cones. Remember, the space in-between the cones is called a GOAL.
- When the coach or your partner rolls or kicks the ball into the goal, use your hands to stop the ball.
- The goalie's job is to stop the ball before it goes in-between the cones, the goal. Let's practice being goalies!

Trapping & Catching

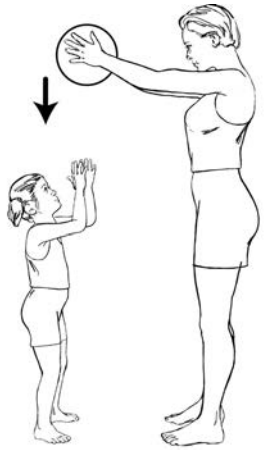
Big Ball *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Big ball

PURPOSE Motor coordination, strength, general fitness, motor skills (balance), body awareness, proprioception, hand eye coordination, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now, let's play catch with our big ball (or slow motion ball) Watch me first, then everyone will get a chance to play with an adult."

- Stand facing the athlete and slowly bring the ball toward them. "See the ball coming towards you! Keep your eye on the ball!" Repeat several times. Moving more quickly each time. "It's moving faster now!"
- Next, have the athlete grab the ball from your hands. "OK, now when I get close, TAKE the ball from my hands."
- Then, explain, "I'm going to let go of the ball so you can catch it now! Just use your hands to catch it!" Practice this several times before actually tossing the ball.
- Give each athlete as much practice as possible catching the ball while being sure to incorporate all children. Waiting children can cheer, toss an imaginary ball, or toss another ball to themselves.



Trapping & Catching

Bean Bag Catch *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Bean bag

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Adapt the Big Ball Activity using a bean bag instead of ball to practice catching skills.

Closing Sports Song *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE End each Young Athletes class with a closing/cool-down song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with.

EXPLAIN "It is time to end Young Athletes. Let's sing If You're Happy and You Know It. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING

- If you're happy and you know it, clap and stomp (wiggle your body; fly like a bird: walk around with arms outstretched)
- If you're happy and you know it then your face will really show it if you're happy and you know it clap and stomp, (wiggle your body; fly like a bird: walk around with arms outstretched).

Trapping & Catching

Opening Sports Song *(4 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Balance beam/rope

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song (Wheels on the Bus melody). Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

- The athletes in our class catch the bean bag, catch the bean bag, catch the bean bag. The athletes in our class catch the bean bag - all through the day.
- The player on the team catches the ball, catches the ball, catches the ball. The player on the team catches the ball - all through the town.
- The athletes on the team jump up and down, up and down, up and down. The athletes on the team jump up and down - all through the game.

Goalie Drill *(5 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 1.

Big Ball or Bean Bag Catch *(5 min.)*

Repeat the Big Ball or Bean Bag Catch Activity from Day 1.

Trapping & Catching

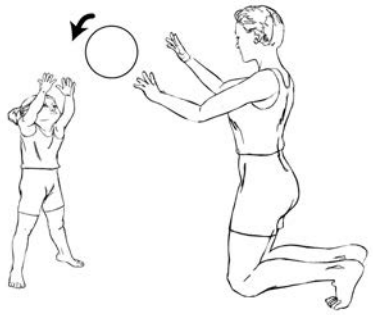
High Ball Catch *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Large beach ball, slow motion balls

PURPOSE Motor coordination, strength, general fitness, motor skills (grasping, catching, & holding), body awareness, proprioception, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements). Use a large beach ball or slow motion balls to introduce catching from a short distance.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Kneel facing the child who is about 3 feet away. "OK athletes, we're going to practice catching this BIG ball!"

- Gently toss a beach ball or fairly large ball to the child and encourage catching the ball with fingers pointing up (because it's from above the waist). Be sure the toss is done from the chest level and with the fingers pointing up. "See how I am tossing the ball to (athlete) with my fingers pointing UP? Catch the ball with your fingers pointing UP!"
- Vary distances and heights depending on child's physical abilities. Progress by moving further away and mixing up high and low tosses."Great job!! Now I'm going to back up a little bit and see if we can do this!"
- Give the athletes as much practice as possible while being sure to incorporate all children. Waiting children can be cheering, or tossing an imaginary ball, or tossing it to themselves if there are enough.



Trapping & Catching

Bounce Catch *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball

PURPOSE Motor coordination, strength, general fitness, motor skills (grasping, catching, & holding), body awareness, proprioception, and adaptive skills (follow directions, imitating motor movements). Use a large beach ball to introduce catching from a floor bounce.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Face the child and bounce a beach ball or fairly large ball so the child can catch the ball without moving. "Now that we practiced catching the ball from up here (motion to chest area), NOW we're going to catch it from down here (motion to lower half of body)."

Tip: Eyes should be focused on the target. Fingers should be pointing down when catching a ball that approaches below the waist and pointing up when the ball approaches above the waist.

- See if I bounce the ball to (athlete), he can point his fingers DOWN because it's coming from DOWN here (motion to lower half of body)."
- Point your fingers down to catch the bounce pass. Now try with your partners!
- Vary distances and use smaller balls depending on child's physical abilities.
- Give the athletes as much practice as possible while being sure to incorporate all children. Waiting children can be cheering, or tossing an imaginary ball, or tossing it to themselves if there are enough.

Closing Sports Song *(3 min.)*

Repeat the song you used in Day 1 to end the Lesson.

Trapping & Catching

Opening Sports Song with Leapin' Lizard

(5 min.)

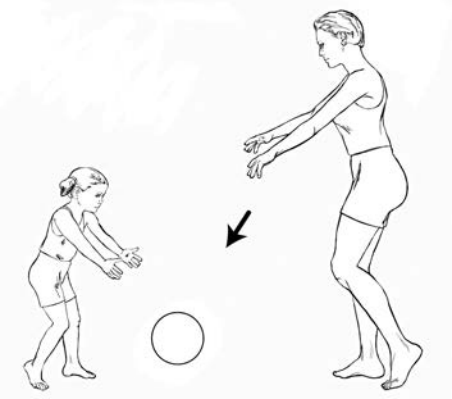
EXPLAIN

"Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song (Wheels on the Bus melody). Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE

Wheels on the Bus Melody

- The athletes on the team leap over the mark, over the mark, over the mark. The athletes on the team leap over the mark - all through the day.
- The player on the court jumps up and down, up and down, up and down. The player on the court jumps up and down - all through the town.
- The athletes in our class catch the ball, catch the ball, catch the ball. The athletes in out class catch the ball - all through the game.



Trapping & Catching

Bean Bag Catch/Throw *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT You will need a bean bag for each child so that they can toss the bean bag with adults, and by themselves when waiting.

PURPOSE Identification of body parts, general fitness, motor skills (catching, throwing), motor coordination, body awareness, Adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements). Introducing Week 5 skills.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Great job with that, Athletes!! Now we're going to try the catching AND throwing our bean bags! Watch me first then everyone will get a chance to play with an adult."

- Stand facing the athlete and slowly bring the bean bag toward them. "See the bean bag coming towards you! Keep your eye on the ball!" Repeat several times. Moving more quickly each time. "It's moving faster now!"
- Next, have the athlete grab the bean bag from your hands. "OK, now when I get close, TAKE the ball from my hands."
- Then, explain, "I'm going to let go of the bean bag so you can catch it now! Just use your hands to catch it!" Practice this several times.
- Then begin tossing the bean bag. "I'm throwing the bean bag, and you're catching it!
- Now introduce throwing the bean bag. "Take the bean bag and put it in your hands. Look at my hands and toss the bean bag to me, just like I did to you!" This is an UNDERHAND throw.
- We can throw the bean bag back and forth. Give the athletes as much practice as possible while being sure to incorporate all children. Waiting children can be cheering, tossing an imaginary bean bag, or tossing the bean bag to themselves, getting used to how the manipulate the bean bags.

Tip: Note that students should be pointing their fingers down when taking and throwing objects passed below their waists.

Trapping & Catching

High Ball Catch *(5 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 2.

Rolling *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Two cones to form each goal and slow motion ball should be already placed around room.

PURPOSE Motor coordination, strength, general fitness/flexibility, motor skills (rolling, trapping), hand and eye coordination (aiming at goal), body awareness, and adaptive skills (follow directions, imitating motor movements). Introduce Week 5 skills.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Demonstrate and Lead: Arrange athletes so that they are standing one bodies length away from two cones forming a goal. Place a floor marker where you want them to sit/kneel/stand. "OK Athletes, let's practice making goals!"

- Sit on the ground and roll the ball THROUGH the cones to make a GOAL!! This can be done against a wall alone, or with a partner athlete on the other side of the cones, mirroring one another, with the same task to make a goal
- Now kneel on your knees and try rolling the ball THROUGH the cones to make a GOAL kneeling!
- Now stand on your feet and try rolling the ball THROUGH the cones to make a goal standing!

Tip: Remind athletes to keep their eyes on the ball and to use the floor markers as an indicator of where to sit, kneel or stand.

Bounce Catch *(4 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 2.

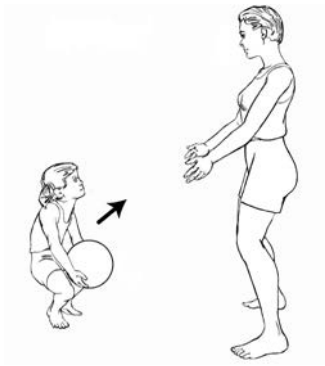
Trapping & Catching

Two-Hand Underhand *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Inflatable balls or slow motion balls for each athlete or each pair of athletes.

PURPOSE Motor coordination (shift weight to react to ball movements), strength, general fitness, motor skills (grasping, throwing, catching), identification of body parts (fingers), body awareness and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements). Introduce Week 5 skills.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Arrange athletes so that they are standing face to face with another athlete and use floor markers to give athletes a reference point of where to stand, if needed. Arrange the athletes about 3 feet, or one athlete's body length apart.



- OK athletes, just like we threw our bean bags, we're going to practice throwing these balls to our partners.
- Take the ball and put in your hands. Look at my/your partner's hands and throw the ball into my/their hands. Be sure to point your fingers down!
- This is an UNDERHAND throw. We can throw the ball back and forth to our partners!

Closing Sports Song *(3 min.)*

Repeat the song you used in Day 1 and 2 to end the Lesson.

You have finished Week Four: Trapping & Catching Lessons. You can now begin Week Five: Throwing.

Throwing
WEEK FIVE

THIS SET OF LESSONS PROVIDES

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

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Overview

Lesson Plans (Day One, Day Two, Day Three) provide details to help you plan and carry out the Young Athletes program with a group of children between the ages of 2 and 7 years old.

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Time: Young Athletes is implemented with great enthusiasm, high energy and quick pace. Time estimates are provided to guide completion of each lesson in 30 minutes. However, the pace and length of the lesson should be matched to the needs, interests, ages, and skills of the young athletes in your group.

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Playing at home: Give families the Lesson Plan Summary Cards and encourage them to sing the songs and play one or two games with their child at home before the next session. Help them learn about the activities by including them in your group sessions and/or providing a family training session. Be sure they have access to the Activity Guide and Videos for more information.

>> See the Young Athletes Toolkit online at:
www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes

Favazza, P.C., Zeisel, S., Parker, R., & Leboeuf, L. (2011).
Young Athletes Curriculum. Special Olympics International, Washington, DC.

Opening Sports Song *(4 min.)*

PURPOSE Start each Young Athletes class with a gathering/warm-up song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with. This will help them warm-up, serve as a gathering activity, create body awareness and support adaptive skills (follow directions, sing along, imitation of motor movements).

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class touch their toes (bend and stretch), touch their toes, touch their toes. The athletes in our class touch their toes - all through the day.
- The runner on the team goes run run, run, run run, run, run run run. The runner on the team goes run run run - all through the town.
- The player on the court jumps up and down, up and down, up and down. The player on the court jumps up and down - all through the game.

Throwing

Rolling *(5 min.)*

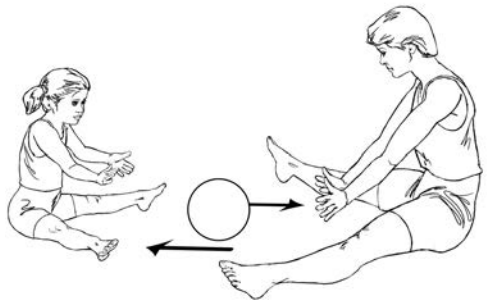
EQUIPMENT Slow motion ball, cones, floor markers placed next to cones

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Sit with legs extended out to the side facing the child. "Let's sit down like we did last week –with our legs out. Now let's roll the ball." Roll the ball back and forth.

- Great – now legs try rolling the ball while we kneel. Roll the ball from half-kneeling position.
- Okay. Now let's stand up and roll the ball between the cones to make a goal.
- Encourage the child to roll the ball from a standing position so it passes between two cones. This can be done against a wall alone, or with a partner athlete on the other side of the cones, mirroring one another, with the same task to make a goal.

Tip: Remind athletes to keep their eyes on the ball and to use the floor markers as an indicator of where to sit, kneel or stand.



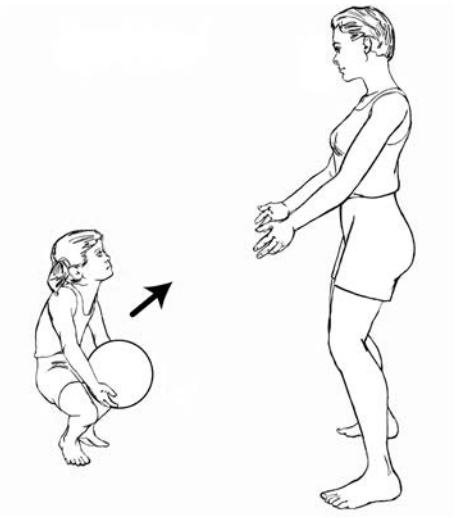
Two-Hand Underhand *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Slow motion ball for each pair of athletes, floor markers

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Arrange athletes so that they are standing face to face with another athlete and use floor markers to give athletes a reference point of where to stand, if needed. Arrange the athletes about 3 feet, or one athlete's body length apart.

- OK athletes, just like we're going to practice throwing these balls to our partners.
- Take the ball and put it in your hands. Look at my/your partner's hands and throw the ball into my/their hands. Be sure to point your fingers down!
- This is an UNDERHAND throw. We can throw the ball back and forth to our partners!
- Progress to having athletes stand further away.



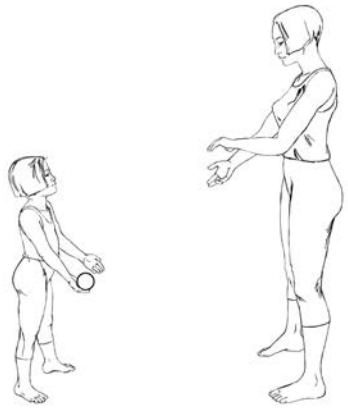
Underhand Toss *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Small foam ball, bean bag

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, motor skills

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Athletes—let's make a circle and we can toss the ball/beanbag to each other. Hold the ball/beanbag like this". Fingers should be facing down when tossing a ball underhand. Foot opposite the hand tossing the ball should always be forward in an open stance.

- Throw the ball or beanbag to the athlete standing next to you. Encourage the child to stand with bent knees holding the small ball or beanbag in his/her hand.
- Ask the child to toss the ball or the beanbag to the child standing next to him/her and have the ball/beanbag go around the circle.
- Keep going—everyone gets a turn throwing the ball/beanbag. Remember to keep your fingers down when tossing underhand.



Two Hand Throwing (overhead) *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Slow motion ball

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, motor skills

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we are going to throw the ball. Watch how I do it."

"Stand sideways with one foot a little bit in front of the other one .This is called a sideways stance. Raise your hands over your head. Bend your arms. Now throw the ball."

- Encourage the child to stand in a sideways stance and to rock back and forth. As the child rocks to the back foot ask them to raise their hands over their head.
- When rocking forward encourage the child to bring their arms forward as well as overhead to throw the ball towards you. Practice throwing several times.
- That was great! Good job.

Closing Sports Song *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE End each Young Athletes class with a closing/cool-down song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with.

EXPLAIN "It is time to end Young Athletes. Let's sing If You're Happy and You Know It. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING

- If you're happy and you know it, clap and stomp (wiggle your body; fly like a bird: walk around with arms outstretched)
- If you're happy and you know it then your face will really show it if you're happy and you know it clap and stomp, (wiggle your body; fly like a bird: walk around with arms outstretched).

Throwing

Opening Sports Song *(3 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song (Wheels on the Bus melody). Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

- The athletes in our class hop up and down, up and down, up and down. The athletes in our class hop up and down - all through the day.
- The swimmer in the pool goes slash splash splash, (splash motion with hands), splash splash splash, splash splash splash – all through the pool.
- The swimmer in the pool goes splash splash splash - all through the pool.

Underhand Toss *(6 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 1.

Two Hand Throwing *(5 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 1.

Overhand Throwing *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Small foam ball

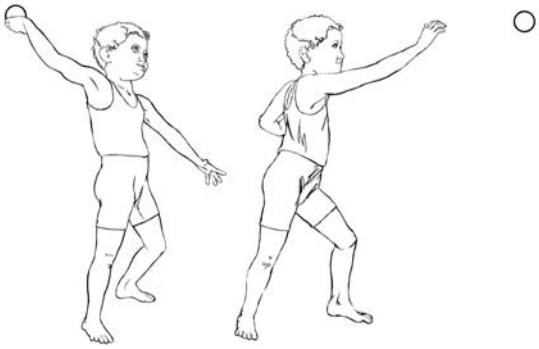
PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, motor skills

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD

Tips: The hips and shoulders should rotate forward; The arm should bend at the elbow and then straighten at the release of the ball.; Wrist should snap downward when the ball is released.

This uses the same techniques as two hand throwing but encourage the child to use one hand, bringing his/her arm back and forward the throw the small ball towards you. "Now let's throw this smaller ball like I am doing with just one hand."

- Stand in your sideways stance.
- Bring the hand holding the ball up over your head.
- Bend your arm at the elbow.
- Now throw the ball.
- That was great! Good job. Let's do it again.



Throwing

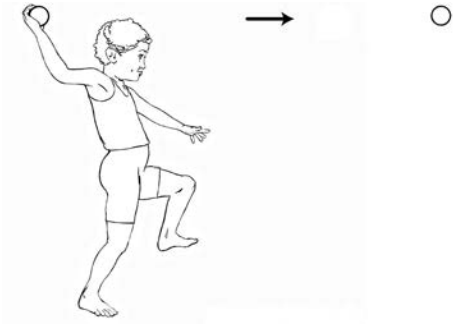
Throwing for Distance *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Small foam ball or bean bag, floor markers, hoops set up on cones. Set up markers about 3 feet apart.

PURPOSE Strength, general fitness, motor skills

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Encourage athletes to throw the ball at the markers, then through the hoops.

- Now we are going to throw the ball at the first star/floor marker. Great—now go and get it and throw to the second star/floor marker. Wow—can you throw it to the third star/floor marker?
- Move over to the hoop. One athlete stands on a marker to throw the ball and the other athlete stands by the hoop to retrieve it. Now let's throw the ball or beanbag through the hoop. Look you made a basket!
- Have another athlete pick up the ball and take their turn throwing it. Vary distances according to ability.



Closing Sports Song *(4 min.)*

Repeat the song you used in Day 1 to end the Lesson.

Opening Sports Song *(3 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song (Wheels on the Bus melody). Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

- The athletes in our class touch their toes (bend and stretch),touch their toes, touch their toes. The athletes in our class touch their toes - all through the day.
- The pitcher on the team throws the ball, throws the ball, throws the ball. The pitcher on the team throws the ball - all through the game.

Review of Underhand Toss *(4 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Small foam ball, bean bag, hoop (NOTE: Hoop can either be held by an adult or set up on the top of the cone).

SING AND DEMONSTRATE "Today we are going to make baskets with the ball/beanbag in front of the hoop."

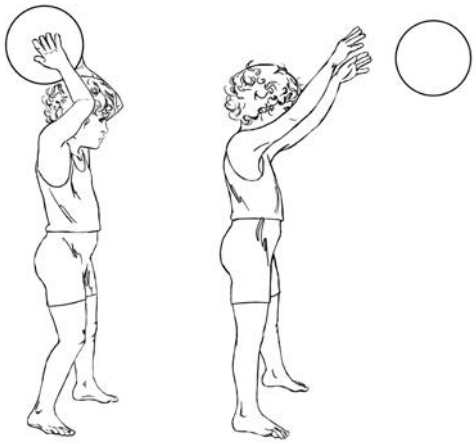
- Hold the ball/beanbag like this (show fingers facing down). Stand like we did before, sideways with one foot in front of the other.
- Now throw the beanbag/ball through the hoop. Great—you made a basket.
- Have another athlete at the hoop pick up the ball and take their turn throwing it. Vary distances according to ability.

Throwing

Two Hand Throwing

(4 min.)

Repeat the Activity from Day 1 and 2.



Overhand Throwing

(4 min.)

Adapt the Activity from Day 2, by encouraging athletes to use one hand, bringing his/her arm back and forward to throw a small ball towards you.

Throwing for Distance and Accuracy

(4 min)

Repeat the Activity from Day 2.

Ball Tapping *(4 min.)*

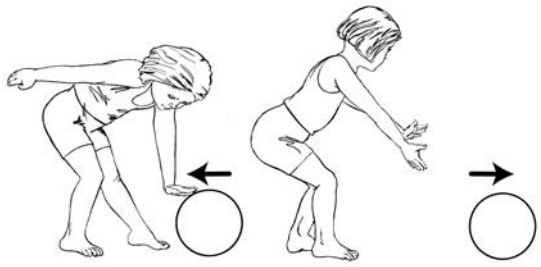
EQUIPMENT Beach ball or slow motion ball, floor markers

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Tap a beach ball toward the child. "Tap the ball across the floor back to me— keep your hand open."

Tips: Eyes should be focused on the ball; Encourage the child to follow through by twisting his or her belly forward and clapping the hands out in front.

- Progress to having the child stand sideways with 1 foot on each of two markers (front/back).
- Toss a beach ball to the child and have him/her hit the ball with an open hand.
- Great job!



Throwing

Handball *(4 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, cone

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements. Introducing Week 6 skills).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we are going to see if we can hit this ball off the cone. Watch – keep your hand open and hit it like this."

- Place the ball on the cone and hit it with an open hand or fist.
- Line athletes up opposite the cone to take turns hitting the ball and bringing it back.
- OK, now you do it. Good job!

Closing Sports Song *(3 min.)*

Repeat the song you used in Day 1 and 2 to end the Lesson.

You have finished Week Five: Throwing Lessons.
You can now begin Week Six: Striking.

Striking
WEEK SIX

THIS SET OF LESSONS PROVIDES

games and activities to help children develop kicking skills, fitness, strength, body awareness, eye hand coordination, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

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Opening Sports Song *(4 min.)*

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EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class can jump, jump, jump, jump, jump, jump, jump. The athletes in our class jump, jump, jump - all through the day.
- The basketball player on the team can make a basket (arms up and forward throw as if making a basket as in overhand toss) make a basket, make a basket. The basketball player on the team can make a basket – all through the game.

Striking

Ball Tapping *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball or slow motion ball, floor markers

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Tap a beach ball toward the child. "Tap the ball across the floor back to me – keep your hand open."

Tips: Eyes should be focused on the ball; encourage the child to follow through by twisting his or her belly forward and clapping the hands out in front.

- Progress to having the child stand sideways with 1 foot on each of two markers (front/back).
- Toss a beach ball to the child and have him/her hit the ball with an open hand.
- Great job!

Handball *(4 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, cone

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements.

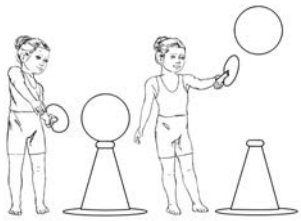
DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we are going to see if we can hit this ball off the cone. Watch – keep your hand open and hit it like this."

- Place the ball on the cone and hit it with an open hand or fist.
- Line athletes up opposite the cone to take turns hitting the ball and bringing it back.
- OK, now you do it. Good job!

Side Striking *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, cones; paddle, junior size racket or plastic bat

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Athletes, now we are going to use a racket to hit the ball". Using a sideways stance, encourage the child to strike a tossed ball with a junior size racket or bat.



- Look at the ball. See it coming to you.
- Now swing the racket. Great, you got a hit!
- Keep practicing being sure all children get several turns.

Obstacle Course *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Set up a 5 station course with floor markers (dots for jumping on), bean bags with hoop (throwing bean bag through hoop), a series of hurdles (cones with dowel/stick), balance beam, area to run to finish (through a ribbon).

PURPOSE Body awareness, general fitness, motor skills (run, jump, throw, balance), and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we get to run the obstacle course! Watch and follow me!"
Show the athletes how to go through the obstacle course. Then assist athletes in moving through course.

Obstacle Course *(continued)*

Station 1: Jump on Dots

- Arrange 10 dots in zigzag pattern, close to one another.
- Athlete will bunny hop on two feet from dot to dot.
- Athlete will jump to the right, then jump to the left, zigzagging down length of dots.

Station 2: Throw Bean Bag Through Target (basket, hoop)
Athlete will throw bean bag or small ball to a hoop held parallel to the floor or to a bucket.

- Progress to throwing a bean bag or small ball through target (hoop on cone or block) from distance of 3 feet.
- Use floor marker to show where athlete stands.
- Move distance closer or further away, depending on skill of athlete.

Station 3: Jump Over Hurdles

- Make hurdle using two cones and one dowel or stick. Place dowel through holes in cone.
- Adjust height as needed for athletes. Always start the bar at the lowest height.
- Encourage athlete to jump using two feet, over the bar, landing on two feet.

Station 4: Walk on Balance Beam

- Athletes will independently walk the length of the beam, alternating steps.
- Add various ways to move down the beam for advance athletes (backwards, sideways, change directions – forward to backwards).
- Add length to the beam by using multiple beams.

Station 5: Run to Finish Line (through ribbon)

- When athlete steps off beam, he/she should run to the finish line. Teach athletes to run through the line.
- Introduce this skill several times as some may stop, not wanting to hit or touch the finish line.
- The finish line is a long ribbon. To set the finish line, attach the ribbon to one side of the area while holding the other end of the ribbon in your hand (or have another person hold the other end.
- As the athlete touches the ribbon, let it go.

Closing Sports Song *(5 min.)*

PURPOSE End each Young Athletes class with a closing/cool-down song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with.

EXPLAIN "It is time to end Young Athletes. Let's sing If You're Happy and You Know It. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING

- If you're happy and you know it, wiggle your arms (flap like a bird's wings, walk around with arms outstretched)
- If you're happy and you know it then your face will really show it if you're happy and you know it wiggle your arms.

Opening Sports Song *(4 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

- The athletes in our class roll the ball, roll the ball, roll the ball. The athletes in our class roll the ball - all through the day.
- The athletes in our class jump up and down, up and down, up and down. The athletes in our class jump up and down - all through the town.

Side Striking *(6 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 1.

Beginning Hockey *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, small foam ball, dowel, junior sized hockey stick or junior size plastic golf club

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills, and eye hand coordination

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Today we are going to learn to play some sports. First we are going to play hockey." Place a large ball on the ground.

- Stand in your sideways stance.
- Hold the stick (hockey stick, golf club) with both hands.
- Now hit the ball
- Great!

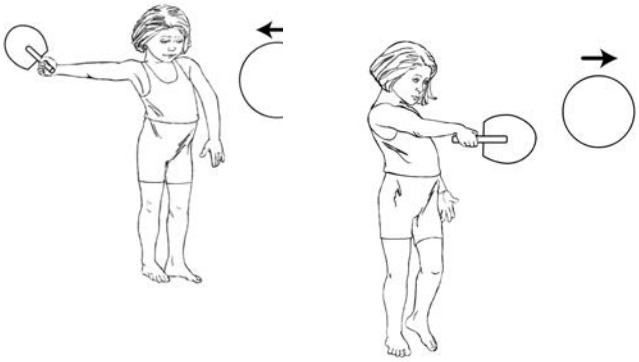
Beginning Tennis/Softball *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, cones; paddle, junior size racket or plastic bat

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills and eye hand coordination

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we are going to play tennis/softball." Place a large ball on a cone and use floor markers to help athletes learn how to stand sideways.

- Now stand sideways and hold the paddle/racket with one hand.
- Hit the ball with your paddle/racket.



Bridges/Tunnels *(4 min.)*

PURPOSE Strength, general fitness, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "OK, Now we are going to play tunnels and bridges. First let's make our tunnel!" If physically able, have one athlete bend forward so that hands and feet are on the ground to form bridges and tunnels. Encourage other athletes to crawl (inchworm, walk) under tunnel or bridge.

Bridges/Tunnels *(continued)*

Tunnels

"Who can bend like this to make a tunnel? (Hands and feet on ground, bottom up making tunnel). Awesome, he/she made a tunnel. Now, who can go under his/her tunnel? Great! After you go under the tunnel, you make a tunnel right next to him/her! Great, now our tunnel is even bigger!"

- One athlete forms a tunnel by touching the ground with his/her feet and hands or by getting down onto hands and knees.
- The other athletes crawl, scoot, under the tunnel.
- Once they go under the tunnel, have each athlete extend the tunnel (by forming a tunnel next to the person who has already made a tunnel).

Bridges

"Ok! Now we are going to play bridges. Who can bend like this to make a tunnel? (Sit on ground. Place hands/feet flat on ground.) Push bottom off ground. Great! Now let's make a bridge and go under the bridge!"

- One athlete forms a bridge by sitting with his/her hands and feet flat on the ground and pushing his/her bottom off the ground.
- The other athletes crawl, scoot, under the bridge.
- To make it easier have athletes place their feet or hands on wall or an object and other athletes go under.

Closing Sports Song *(4 min.)*

Repeat the song you used in Day 1 to end the Lesson.

Opening Sports Song *(2 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song (Wheels on the Bus melody). Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

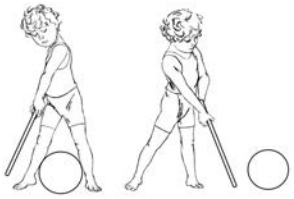
- The athletes in our class touch their toes (bend and stretch),touch their toes, touch their toes. The athletes in our class touch their toes - all through the day.
- The pitcher on the team throws the ball, throws the ball, throws the ball. The pitcher on the team throws the ball - all through the game.

Side Striking *(5 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 1 and 2.

Beginning Hockey *(5 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 2.



Beginning Tennis/Softball *(5 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 2.

Striking

Kicking *(4 min.)*

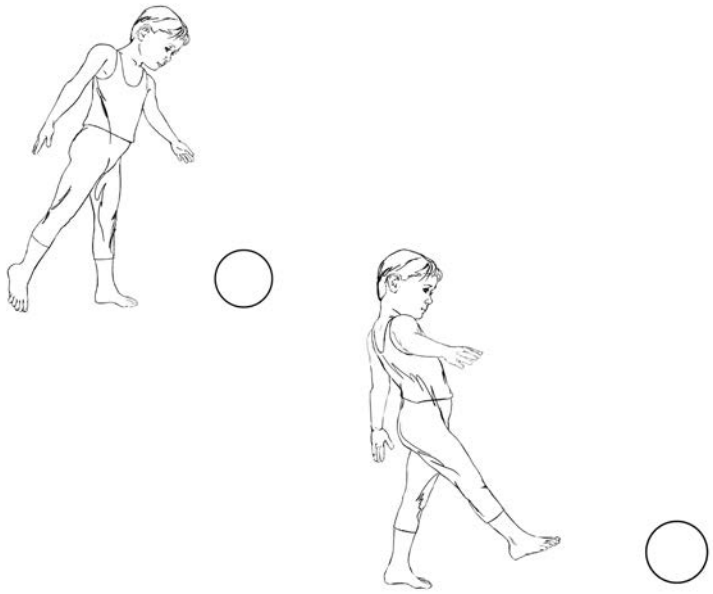
EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, junior size soccer ball or playground ball

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills. Introduction of Week 7 skills.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Athletes, now we are going to kick the ball. Watch me!"

Tips: The child's eyes should be focused on the ball; Non-kicking foot should be positioned just behind and to the side of the ball; The kicking leg should bend at the knee for a back swing and should follow through; The opposite arm swings forward as the ball is kicked.

- Stand behind the ball. Now kick it.
- Have the child kick the ball towards you with his/her preferred foot.
- Wonderful. Now get the ball and give it to (child) to kick.



Obstacle Course *(7 min.)*

EQUIPMENT

Set up a 5 station course with floor markers (dots for jumping on), bean bags with hoop (throwing bean bag through hoop), a series of hurdles (cones with dowel/stick), balance beam, area to run to finish (through a ribbon).

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD

"Now we get to run the obstacle course and practice some things we have learned! Watch and follow me!" Show the athletes how to go through the course. Then assist athletes in moving through course.

Station 1: Throwing for distance and accuracy

- Set up markers about 3 feet apart.
- Have the child throw the ball at the marker.
- Encourage the child to throw the ball at the markers.

Station 2: Frog Hoppin'

- Place round floor markers so that they are a distance that the athlete can jump.
- Have athletes hop from one marker to the next.

Station 3: Walk on Balance Beam

- Athletes will independently walk the length of the beam, alternating steps.
- Add various ways to move down the beam for advance athletes (backwards, sideways, change directions – forward to backwards).
- Add length to the beam by using multiple beams.

Striking

Station 4: Jump Over Hurdles

- Make hurdle using two cones and one dowel or stick. Place dowel through holes in cone.
- Adjust height as needed for athletes. Always start the bar at the lowest height.
- Encourage athlete to jump using two feet, over the bar, landing on two feet.

Station 5: Run to Finish Line (through ribbon)

- When athlete steps off beam, he/she should run to the finish line. Teach athletes to run through the line.
- Introduce this skill several times as some may stop, not wanting to hit or touch the finish line.
- The finish line is a long ribbon. To set the finish line, attach the ribbon to one side of the area while holding the other end of the ribbon in your hand (or have another person hold the other end.

Closing Sports Song

(2 min.)

Repeat the song used in Day 1 and 2 to end the Lesson.

You have finished Week Six: Striking Lessons.
You can now begin Week Seven: Kicking.

Kicking
WEEK SEVEN

THIS SET OF LESSONS PROVIDES

games and activities to help children develop kicking skills, flexibility, general fitness, strength, body awareness, coordination, spatial concepts, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements).

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Overview

Lesson Plans (Day One, Day Two, Day Three) provide details to help you plan and carry out the Young Athletes program with a group of children between the ages of 2 and 7 years old.

Adults Needed: Plan for at least 1 adult for every 4 children. Recruit help from families, volunteers, older students, college students and others in your community to make sure the program runs smoothly and is fun.

Time: Young Athletes is implemented with great enthusiasm, high energy and quick pace. Time estimates are provided to guide completion of each lesson in 30 minutes. However, the pace and length of the lesson should be matched to the needs, interests, ages, and skills of the young athletes in your group.

Sequence: There are three lessons for each skill area labeled Day One, Day Two and Day Three. Lessons within the skill area are designed to be offered in sequence to help children become acquainted with the activities and build skills through repetition.

Resources: The Lesson Plan Summary Cards include an outline of the activities, list of equipment needed, and page numbers to find the activity descriptions. The cards, Young Athletes Activity Guide, Suggestions from Teachers, and training videos are included in the online Toolkit (see website below).

Playing at home: Give families the Lesson Plan Summary Cards and encourage them to sing the songs and play one or two games with their child at home before the next session. Help them learn about the activities by including them in your group sessions and/or providing a family training session. Be sure they have access to the Activity Guide and Videos for more information.

>> See the Young Athletes Toolkit online at:
www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes

Favazza, P.C., Zeisel, S., Parker, R., & Leboeuf, L. (2011).
Young Athletes Curriculum. Special Olympics International, Washington, DC.

Opening Sports Song *(4 min.)*

PURPOSE Start each Young Athletes class with a gathering/warm-up song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with. This will help them warm-up, serve as a gathering activity, create body awareness and support adaptive skills (follow directions, sing along, imitation of motor movements).

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class can jump, jump, jump, jump, jump, jump, jump. The athletes in our class jump, jump, jump - all through the day.
- The tennis player on the team can swing their racket, swing their racket, swing their racket. The tennis player on the team can swing their racket - all through the game.

Kicking *(5 min.)*

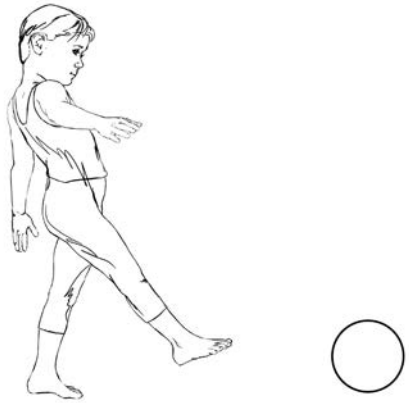
EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, junior size soccer ball or playground ball

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills. Introduction of Week 7 skills.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Athletes, now we are going to kick the ball. Watch me!"

- Stand behind the ball. Now kick it.
- Have the child kick the ball towards you with his/her preferred foot.
- Wonderful. Now get the ball and give it to (child) to kick.

Tips: The child's eyes should be focused on the ball; Non-kicking foot should be positioned just behind and to the side of the ball; The kicking leg should bend at the knee for a back swing and should follow through; The opposite arm swings forward as the ball is kicked.



Penalty Kick Prep *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, junior size soccer ball or playground ball

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating, motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now let's get ready to play soccer! We are going to run and then kick the ball. Watch!" Place a ball on the ground.

- Walk to the ball and kick it.
- Have children repeat activity, progressing to running and kicking.
- Great! Let's do it again.

Kicking for Distance *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, junior size soccer ball, playground ball, cones, floor markers

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Let's see how far we can kick the ball. Which marker can you kick the ball past? "

- Encourage athletes to walk or run up to the ball and kick it for distance by having them kick a ball past various markers.
- Great job! Can you kick the ball past the cone (blue maker, etc.)

Kicking for Accuracy *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, junior size soccer ball or playground ball; cones, floor markers

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements, counting)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "In soccer you score goals by kicking the ball through the cones. Now let's try to make a goal in a soccer game." Place a ball on the ground.

- Encourage child to walk or run up to the ball to kick to toward a goal or between 2 cones.
- Great – let's see how many goals the team has scored (count as each child scores a goal).

Closing Sports Song *(4 min.)*

PURPOSE End each Young Athletes class with a closing/cool-down song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with.

EXPLAIN "It is time to end Young Athletes. Let's sing If You're Happy and You Know It. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING

- If you're happy and you know it, wiggle your arms (flap like a bird's wings, walk around with arms outstretched)
- If you're happy and you know it then your face will really show it if you're happy and you know it wiggle your arms.

Opening Sports Song *(4 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

- The runners in our class run, run run (run in place). The runners in our class run, run, run - all through the day.
- The hockey players in our class strike the puck, strike the puck, strike the puck (make hockey motion from week 6). The hockey players in our class strike the puck - all through the game.

Penalty Kick Prep *(4 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 1.

Kicking for Distance *(5 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 1.

Kicking for Accuracy *(5 min.)*

Repeat Activity from Day 1.

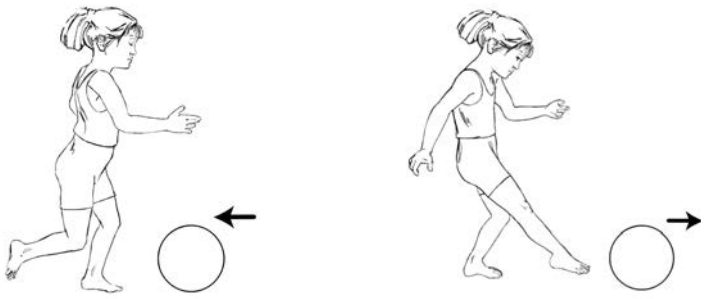
Kickball *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, junior size soccer ball or playground ball

PURPOSE Body Awareness, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills (run, jump, throw, balance) and adaptive skills (following directions, imitation of motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now let's kick the ball as I roll it to you. Remember to keep your eyes on the ball!"

- Roll or kick a ball toward an athlete and encourage him/her to kick the moving ball toward you or a moving target.
- Have the athlete bring the ball back to you.
- That was a great job. Now let's do it again with (child).
- Give athletes more opportunity to practice by assigning adults to small groups.



Give and Go *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, junior size soccer ball, playground ball; cones

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills, eye hand coordination, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements, counting)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Let's play soccer. I am going to kick the ball to you and you kick it between the cones."

- Kick a ball toward the athlete and encourage him/her to kick the moving ball toward a goal or between 2 cones.
- You scored a goal! Let's keep count and see how many goals our team can score.
- an object and other athletes go under.

Closing Sports Song *(3 min.)*

Repeat the song you used in Day 1 to end the Lesson.

Opening Sports Song *(4 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song (Wheels on the Bus melody). Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

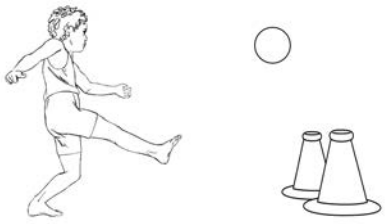
- The soccer player in our class kick the ball, kick the ball, kick the ball. The soccer players in our class kick the ball - all through the day.
- The pitcher on the team throws the ball, throws the ball, throws the ball. The pitcher on the team throws the ball - all through the game.

Kicking for Distance *(5 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 1 and 2.

Kicking for Accuracy *(5 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 2.



Kickball *(5 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 2.

Give and Go *(4 min.)*

Repeat the Activity from Day 2.

Bridges and Tunnels *(4 min.)*

PURPOSE Strength, general fitness, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "OK, Now we are going to play tunnels and bridges. First let's make our tunnel!" If physically able, have one athlete bend forward so that hands and feet are on the ground to form bridges and tunnels. Encourage other athletes to crawl (inchworm, walk) under tunnel or bridge.

Tunnels

"Who can bend like this to make a tunnel? (Hands and feet on ground, bottom up making tunnel). Awesome, he/she made a tunnel. Now, who can go under his/her tunnel? Great! After you go under the tunnel, you make a tunnel right next to him/her! Great, now our tunnel is even bigger!"

- One athlete forms a tunnel by touching the ground with his/her feet and hands or by getting down onto hands and knees.
- The other athletes crawl, scoot, under the tunnel.
- Once they go under the tunnel, have each athlete extend the tunnel (by forming a tunnel next to the person who has already made a tunnel).

Bridges

"Ok! Now we are going to play bridges. Who can bend like this to make a tunnel? (Sit on ground. Place hands/feet flat on ground.) Push bottom off ground. Great! Now let's make a bridge and go under the bridge!"

- One athlete forms a bridge by sitting with his/her hands and feet flat on the ground and pushing his/her bottom off the ground.
- The other athletes crawl, scoot, under the bridge.
- To make it easier have athletes place their feet or hands on wall or an object and other athletes go under.

Closing Sports Song

(2 min.)

Repeat the song you used in Day 1 and 2 to end the Lesson.

You have finished Week Seven: Kicking Lessons.
You can now begin Week Eight: Review of Skills as Sports.

Review of Skills as Sports

WEEK EIGHT

THIS SET OF LESSONS PROVIDES athletes the chance to apply the skills developed over the course of the Young Athletes™ program to sports games.

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>> See the Young Athletes Toolkit online at:
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Favazza, P.C., Zeisel, S., Parker, R., & Leboeuf, L. (2011).
Young Athletes Curriculum. Special Olympics International, Washington, DC.

Review of Skills as Sports

Opening Sports Song *(4 min.)*

PURPOSE Start each Young Athletes class with a gathering/warm-up song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with. This will help them warm-up, serve as a gathering activity, create body awareness and support adaptive skills (follow directions, sing along, imitation of motor movements).

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING **Wheels on the Bus melody:**

- The athletes in our class can run run, run, run, run, run. The athletes in our class run run run - all through the day.
- The swimmer on the team can swim, swim, swim, swim, swim, swim. The swimmer on the team can swim, swim, swim - all through the pool

WEEK DAY

eight | 1 | 2 | 3

Review of Skills as Sports

Running Styles *(4 min.)*

PURPOSE Strength, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movement)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "This week we are going to practice different sports. Today we are going to do sports that you would see in track and field. First let's try running different ways."

Use a whistle to signal when athletes should listen to you and change their running style.

- Stomp slow/fast
- Run slow/fast
- Run backwards
- High knees runs (raise knees high when running)
- Tiptoe walking

Or, create a foot race (competition) using different running styles movements)

Review of Skills as Sports

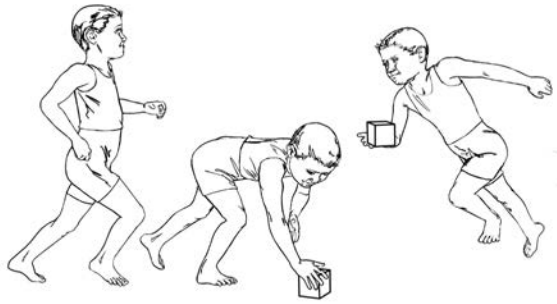
Run and Carry Relay *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Bean bag, floor markers placed at equal intervals around the floor.

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Set up floor markers around the room, then show each child a marker to stand on. Give a bean bag to the child at the first marker. "Now let's play a running game."

- (Child at first marker/home base) is going to run from home to the second marker.
- He/she is then going to hand the bean bag to (child at second marker) and he/she will run to the next marker and give the bean bag to (child at third marker.).
- We will keep going around the room until (child on last marker) gets the beanbag and runs "home' to me.
- Ready, set, go.



Review of Skills as Sports

Jumping High *(5 min.)*

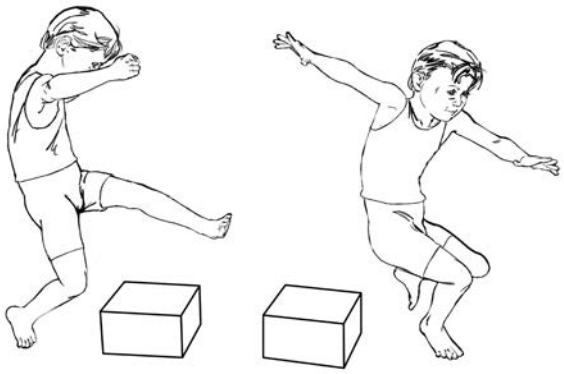
EQUIPMENT Floor markers, dowel, bean bags, cones, hoops, balls, balance beam/rope, and Blocks should be spread around the room. so that athletes can have a chance to jump over the various pieces.

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we are going to do the high jump. We're going to try to jump OVER our equipment. "

- Jump onto the equipment first– THEN see if you can jump OVER it!
- Now move to the next piece of equipment and try it again.

Tips: Children can jump onto or off of equipment if their feet cannot clear the floor; If they are jumping off of the equipment as opposed to over it, challenge them to reach for an object (ex: scarf) while doing so.



Review of Skills as Sports

Hurdles *(5 min.)*

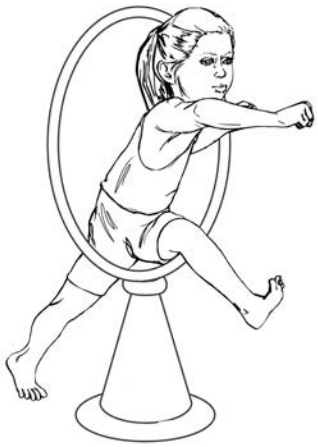
EQUIPMENT One dowel with two cones or blocks (for hurdle). Make hurdle using two cones and one dowel or stick. Place dowel through holes in cone.

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, adaptive skills (following directions, imitating of motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Set up several hurdles for athletes. Always start the bar at the lowest height. Adjust height as needed for athletes. "Now we are going to jump over hurdles."

- Encourage athlete to jump using two feet, over the bar, landing on two feet.
- After everyone has jumped over the lowest height, raise the dowel. Repeat.

For more of a challenge (optional) set up 2 hurdles several feet apart. "Now that everyone had jumped over the stick, let's see if you can jump over 2 in a row like this. Jump over first one, walk to the next one and then jump over that one."



WEEK DAY

eight | 1 | 2 | 3

Review of Skills as Sports

Throwing for Distance and Accuracy *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Small foam ball, floor markers

PURPOSE Body Awareness, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills (run, jump, throw, balance) and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Set up markers (e.g. stars) about 3 feet apart. Have the child throw the ball at the marker. Encourage the child to throw the ball at the markers.

- Now we are going to throw the ball at the first star/marker.
- Great – now go and get to and throw to the second star/marker.
- Wow – can you throw it to the third star/marker?

Closing Sports Song *(4 min.)*

PURPOSE End each Young Athletes class with a closing/cool-down song with motions. Use a common melody and motions that children have done before or are familiar with. This builds body awareness and adaptive skills (following directions, singing along, imitation of motor movements) and helps transition to the next activity.

EXPLAIN "Let's end Young Athletes with a song, If You are Happy and You Know It. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE

- If you're happy and you know it, wiggle your arms (flap like a bird's wings, walk around with arms outstretched)
- If you're happy and you know it then your face will really show it if you're happy and you know it wiggle your arms.

Review of Skills as Sports

WEEK eight DAY 1 2 3

Opening Sports Song *(3 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song. Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

- The athletes in our class roll the ball, roll the ball, roll the ball. The athletes in our class roll the ball - all through the day.
- The athletes in our class jump up and down, up and down, up and down. The athletes in our class jump up and down - all through the game.

Balance Beam *(4 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Balance beam/rope.

PURPOSE Body Awareness, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills (run, jump, throw, balance) and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Athletes – today we are going to play more sports games.First we are going to do the balance beam – this is part of gymnastics. OK athletes, I want you to look at what I do with MY body and try to do it with your own. I want you to COPY what I do. Look at me, see how I am:"

- Standing on one foot on the balance beam/rope, standing with one foot in front of the other on the balance beam/rope, standing on tip toes on the balance beam/rope, and standing on my heels on the balance beam/rope…You try!
- Now try it with your arms out/in/up/down, or eyes closed/open.
- Encourage athletes to try these new balancing techniques while manipulating their bodies so that their muscles will need to counteract shifts in weight. Shifting of body weight to engage balance muscles is an important functional and sports related skill.

Review of Skills as Sports

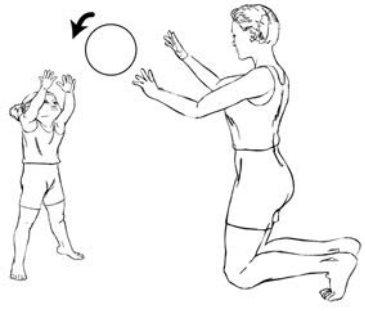
High Ball Catch *(4 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Large beach ball, slow motion balls

PURPOSE Motor coordination, strength, general fitness, motor skills (grasping, catching, & holding), body awareness, proprioception, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements). Use a large beach ball or slow motion balls to introduce catching from a short distance.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD Kneel facing the child who is about 3 feet away. "OK athletes, we're going to practice catching this BIG ball!"

- Gently toss a beach ball or fairly large ball to the child and encourage catching the ball with fingers pointing up (because it's from above the waist). Be sure the toss is done from the chest level and with the fingers pointing up. "See how I am tossing the ball to (athlete) with my fingers pointing UP? Catch the ball with your fingers pointing UP!"
- Vary distances and heights depending on child's physical abilities. Progress by moving further away and mixing up high and low tosses."Great job!! Now I'm going to back up a little bit and see if we can do this!"
- Give the athletes as much practice as possible while being sure to incorporate all children. Waiting children can be cheering, or tossing an imaginary ball, or tossing it to themselves if there are enough.



Review of Skills as Sports

Overhand Throwing *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Small foam ball

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, motor skills

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD This uses the same techniques as two hand throwing but encourage the child to use one hand, bringing his/her arm back and forward the throw the small ball towards you. "Now let's throw this smaller ball like I am doing with just one hand."

- Stand in your sideways stance.
- Bring the hand holding the ball up over your head.
- Bend your arm at the elbow.
- Now throw the ball.
- That was great! Good job. Let's do it again.

Handball *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, cone

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements.

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we are going to see if we can hit this ball off the cone. Watch – keep your hand open and hit it like this."

- Place the ball on the cone and hit it with an open hand or fist.
- Line athletes up opposite the cone to take turns hitting the ball and bringing it back.
- OK, now you do it. Good job!

Review of Skills as Sports

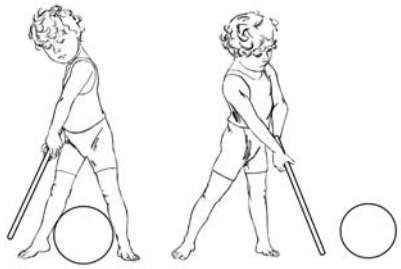
Beginning Hockey *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, small foam ball, dowel, junior sized hockey stick or junior size plastic golf club

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills, and eye hand coordination

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Today we are going to learn to play some sports. First we are going to play hockey." Place a large ball on the ground.

- Stand in your sideways stance.
- Hold the stick (hockey stick, golf club) with both hands.
- Now hit the ball
- Great!



Closing Sports Song *(3 min.)*

Repeat the song used in Day 1 to end the Lesson.

Review of Skills as Sports

WEEK eight DAY 1 2 3

Opening Sports Song *(4 min.)*

EXPLAIN "Let's start Young Athletes with our Sports Song (Wheels on the Bus melody). Sing along with me and do what I do."

SING AND DEMONSTRATE **Wheels on the Bus Melody**

- The athletes in our class touch their toes (bend and stretch); touch their toes; touch their toes. The athletes in our class touch their toes, - all through the day.
- The pitcher on the team throws the ball, throws the ball, throws the ball. The pitcher on the team throws the ball - all through the town.

Beginning Tennis/Softball *(6 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, cones; paddle, junior size racket or plastic bat

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills and eye hand coordination

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we are going to play tennis/softball." Place a large ball on a cone and use floor markers to help athletes learn how to stand sideways.

- Now stand sideways and hold the paddle/racket with one hand.
- Hit the ball with your paddle/racket.

Review of Skills as Sports

Kickball *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, junior size soccer ball or playground ball

PURPOSE Body Awareness, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills (run, jump, throw, balance) and adaptive skills (following directions, imitation of motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we are going to practice our soccer skills! First we are going to kick the ball."

- Roll or kick a ball toward an athlete and encourage him/her to kick the moving ball toward you or a moving target.
- Have the athlete bring the ball back to you.
- That was a great job. Now let's do it again with (child).
- Give athletes more opportunity to practice by assigning adults to small groups.

Penalty Kick Prep *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, junior size soccer ball or playground ball

PURPOSE Motor coordination, flexibility, general fitness, motor skills, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating, motor movements)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Now we are going to practice our penalty kick! We are going to run and then kick the ball. Watch!" Place a ball on the ground.

- Walk to the ball and kick it.
- Have children repeat activity, progressing to running and kicking.
- Great! Let's do it again.

Review of Skills as Sports

WEEK eight DAY 1 2 3

Give and Go *(5 min.)*

EQUIPMENT Beach ball, slow motion ball, junior size soccer ball, playground ball; cones

PURPOSE Motor coordination, general fitness, flexibility, motor skills, eye hand coordination, and adaptive skills (following directions, imitating motor movements, counting)

DEMONSTRATE AND LEAD "Let's play soccer. I am going to kick the ball to you and you kick it between the cones."

- Kick a ball toward the athlete and encourage him/her to kick the moving ball toward a goal or between 2 cones.
- You scored a goal! Let's keep count and see how many goals our team can score.

Closing Sports Song *(4 min.)*

Repeat the song used in Day 1 and Day 2 to end the Lesson.

CONGRATULATIONS!
You have finished Week Eight: Review of Skills as Sports and the Young Athletes program. Plan for a culminating event with your local Special Olympics Program. You can repeat or adapt the Lessons to help children practice their skills and gain more confidence, too. See the online toolkit for Suggestions from Teachers and other resources at: www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes

Young Athletes Study

Fact Sheet

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Center for Social Development and Education
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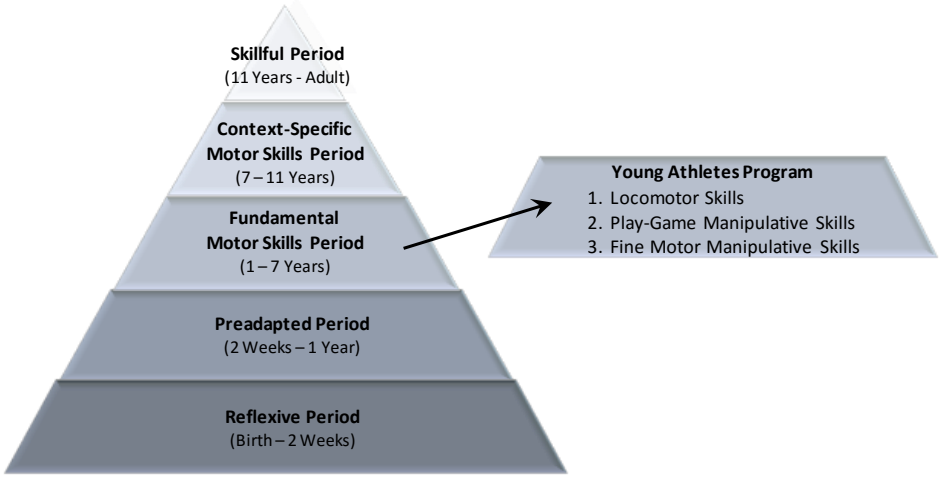
November 16, 2011

Center for Social Development and Education

Elements of Young Athletes

1. Young Athletes Intervention (Favazza, Zeisel, Parker, Leboeuf, 2011) is based on Clark's "mountain of motor development" (Clark, 1994; Clark, 2005; Clark and Metcalfe, 2002) (see Figure 1).

   Figure 1. Motor Development Periods



2. YA is structured as an eight week program which occurs at schools or centers led by teachers and teacher assistants/volunteers.

3. YA occurred three days a week (for 30 minutes each day) as teachers utilize comprehensive scripted lessons that correspond to 8 motor units: foundational skills (visual tracking, motor imitation), walking and running, balance and jumping, trapping and catching, throwing, striking, and kicking. (90 minutes a week) The final week is a review of the previously introduced motor skills while connecting the skills to sports (soccer, softball, hockey, etc.)

4. YA teachers are also provided with Lesson Summary Cards for each week, to enable them to have a quick glance at an abbreviated version of the lessons while moving move freely among children. Each class uses 2 YA Kits of Equipment, supplemented with additional scarves.

5. Once a week, *Suggestions for YA at Home* is sent home to let the parents know about the activities at school and encourage their use of YA at home. Families are provided with a list of everyday household items that could be used in place of the YA equipment.

Strengths of the YA Study

The YA study (Favazza, Siperstein, Zeisel, Odom & Moskowitz, 2011) addressed several points cited recently about limitations of research of preschool motor programs raised by Riethmuller, Jones, and Okely (2009).

1. *The newly developed components* and programmatic structure of the YA intervention (Favazza, Zeisel, Parker, Leboeuf, 2011) used in the study are linked to the "mountain of motor development" and recommendations of quality indicators, suggesting that the program possesses *strong theoretical underpinnings* (Clark, 1994; Clark, 2005; Clark and Metcalfe, 2002; Riethmuller, Jones, and Okely, 2009; DEC, 2007; NASPE, 2002)
    a. Training of teachers and teacher assistants (Favazza, Zeisel, Odom, & Siperstein, 2011)
    b. Scripted lessons and lesson summary cards
    c. YA at Home Suggestions
    d. Inclusion of families and teachers in part of the assessment process

2. *A rigorous research design* was evident in the study which
    a. employed a randomized assignment to treatment
    b. used 4 indicators of fidelity
        i. attendance
        ii. Teacher Evaluation and Implementation Log (TEIL)
        iii. the Fidelity of Implementation Checklist
        iv. the YA Home Record

3. *The study has high methodological quality* (as interpreted by Riethmueller et al., 2009) including:
    a. adequate sample size
    b. adequately powered for statistical analysis
    c. pretest comparison across groups at baseline of at least 3 characteristics (age, gender, disability level of functioning on ABILITIES Index (AI) (Simeonsson & Bailey, 1988, 1995)
    d. administered pre and post test data collection in both comparison groups in the same timeframe and sequence for both treatment groups
    e. Peabody Developmental Motor Scales (PDMS) (Folio & Fewell; 2000) and the Vineland-II Teacher Rating Form (VTRF), Second Edition (Sparrow, Cicchetti, & Balla, 2006) was administered independently by research staff and teachers, respectively
    f. post survey of observed child behavior was completed independently by teachers and parents

g. Follow-up data collection was undertaken at 5 months and 10 months after the YA program ended. Data collection is still occurring through early Dec. 2011. Analysis of follow-up data is expected by Feb. 2012.

4. *Several aspects of the study and components of the YA intervention* (Favazza, Zeisel, Parker, Leboeuf, 2011) *are consistent with recommended practice from national professional organizations* such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2003), the National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play (2010), Association for Physical Education (NASPE) (2002) and CEC' s Division of Early Childhood (DEC) (2007).

    a. School and home components
    b. Training of teachers and assistant teachers
    c. Inclusion of stakeholders (parents and teachers) in the evaluation
    d. Occurrence of intervention primarily in inclusive school settings
    e. Structure and weekly amount of time for the intervention (3 times a week in 30 minute increments)
    f. Valued content is learned through active engagement and play
    g. Focused, intentional teaching using strategies such as guidance, direct instruction and modeling
    h. Clear connection to theoretical underpinning
    i. Rigorous research design and methodology
    j. Evidenced based practice

5. *The findings from the study demonstrated efficacy* of YA.

    a. The results demonstrate that motor skills in young children with developmental delays can improve when they consistently participate in high quality motor interventions.
    b. These motor skill improvements occurred over a short period of time (8 weeks) during which children made gains of several months.
    c. Children in the YA intervention group gained on average 7 months on the age equivalent scales, compared to average gains of 3 months for children in the control group on the object manipulation and locomotion subscale of the PDMS. Simply stated, the motor skills of young children participating in YA improved at twice the rate of children in the control group who did not participate in YA.
    d. Children in the YA intervention group gained almost 9 months on the PDMS Stationary subscale compared to gains of 5 months for the children in the control group.
    e. It is notable that these positive results were found in children who had varying disabilities such as Developmental Delays, Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disabilities.
    f. Similar results were found on two well known motor measures, the PDMS and the VTRF when administered independently by research staff and teachers, respectively.

g. Moreover, the motor gains were found in three distinct areas of development on the PDMS: object manipulation, locomotion and, stationary skills.
h. Lastly, the findings on the standardized tests were consistent with observations of motor gains reported on the post survey. This triangulation of data sources was useful in confirming results through multiple measures and it provides different types of data to illuminate specific skills observed by both teachers and parents.

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