

# Table Tennis

## Special Olympics Coaching Guide

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Advancing the public well-being through improved communication

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## **TABLE TENNIS COACHING GUIDE**

Planning a Table Tennis Training & Competition Season



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### Goals and Objectives

Realistic, yet challenging goals for each athlete are important to the motivation of the athlete. Goals establish and drive the action of both training and competition plans.

### Goal Setting

Setting goals is a joint effort with the athlete and coach and should be used to establish the athlete's training and competition plan. Accomplishing goals during practice sessions in settings similar to the competition environment will instill confidence in the athlete. Confidence helps make sport participation fun and is critical to the athlete's motivation.

The main features of goal setting include:

- ♦ Stepping stones to success
- ♦ Short term and long term goals
- ♦ Acceptance by the athlete
- ♦ Variations in difficulty (easily attainable to challenging)
- ♦ Goal measurement

Athletes may be more motivated by accomplishing short term goals than long term goals. However, do not be afraid to challenge athletes and to include them in the goal setting process. Awareness of why the athlete is participating is important when setting goals. For example, ask the athlete, "What is your focus for this training session?"

There are several participation factors that may influence athlete motivation and goal setting:

- ♦ Age appropriateness
- ♦ Ability level
- ♦ Readiness level
- ♦ Athlete performance
- ♦ Family influence
- ♦ Peer influence
- ♦ Athlete preference

As a coach, you can enhance athlete motivation by:

- ♦ Providing more time and attention to an athlete when he/she is having difficulty learning a skill
- ♦ Rewarding small gains
- ♦ Developing additional measures of achievement other than winning
- ♦ Showing your athletes that they are important to you and that you are proud of them
- ♦ Filling your athletes with self-worth



### Performance Goals versus Outcome Goals

Effective goals focus on performance, not outcome. Performance is under the control of the athlete. An athlete may have an outstanding performance and not win a competition because other athletes have performed even better. Conversely, an athlete may perform poorly and still win an event if all other athletes performed at a lower level.

### Setting Realistic Goals

Effective goals are perceived as challenging, not threatening. A challenging goal is difficult but attainable within a reasonable timeframe and with a reasonable amount of effort. A threatening goal is perceived as being beyond the athlete's current capability. Realistic goals are developed from a baseline of performance during the past one or two weeks.

### Prioritizing Goals

Effective goals are positively stated and are limited in number. This provides meaning to the athlete. Setting a limited number of goals requires that athletes and coaches decide what is important for continued development. Establishing a few, well thought out goals prevents the athlete from becoming overwhelmed.

### Benefits of Goal Setting

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

### Short Term Table Tennis Goals

Establishing a series of short term Table Tennis goals will help athletes gain confidence and achieve their long term table tennis goals. Examples of short term table tennis goals include:

- ♦ Understanding table tennis terms and how the game is scored
- ♦ Understanding the rules of the game
- ♦ Learning appropriate hand-eye coordination
- ♦ Learning basic racket handling skills
- ♦ Learning to serve



#### Long Term Table Tennis Goals

Long term goals will include the mastering of basic table tennis skills, appropriate social behavior and functional knowledge of the rules necessary to participate successfully in table tennis competitions. In addition to these goals, additional long term goals can be set such as the following:

- ♦ Increasing physical fitness
- ♦ Increasing motor coordination and general motor efficiency
- ♦ Increasing decision-making ability
- ♦ Mastering effective racket grip (forehand and backhand)
- ♦ Learning to time the contact for individual strokes
- ♦ Mastering the serve
- ♦ Mastering proper footwork and movement

#### Assessing Goals Checklist

- ✓ Does the goal sufficiently meet the athlete's needs?
- ✓ Is the goal positively stated?
- ✓ Is the goal under the athlete's control and focus on their performance and no one else's?
- ✓ Is the goal a true goal and not a result?
- ✓ Is the goal important enough to the athlete that they will want to work towards achieving it?
- ✓ How will this goal make the athlete's life different?
- ✓ What barriers might the athlete encounter in working toward this goal?



## Planning a Table Tennis Training & Competition Season

Before the season begins, a carefully planned training program should be planned in order to prepare the athletes for competition. When considering your season, keep in mind that Special Olympics coaches not only teach athletes table tennis skills, but also provide an environment for them to make friends and have fun.

There are many skills to teach athletes during the course of a table tennis season. Table tennis is a complex game with ever-changing conditions. The ball is constantly in motion and therefore the athlete must learn to adapt to the ball's changing speed and direction. A season-long training plan will assist you in presenting skills in a systematic and effective manner.

Eight weeks of practices prior to competition should build upon each other, increasing in duration and difficulty, as athletes grow stronger. To establish the habit of success, begin slowly. Make sure each athlete succeeds before moving him/her to the next level.

There are eight (8) basic skills in Special Olympics Table Tennis:

- Hand-eye coordination
- Racket grip
- Timing of contact for individual strokes
- Forehand
- Backhand
- Serve
- Serve return
- Proper footwork and movement

An initial assessment of each athlete's current skill level is a vital first step to planning a competition season. Initial training sessions should then cover the basic skills that athletes need to work on and then move, as soon as possible, into having the athlete train for a competition. As a coach, you can assess which skills the athlete needs more work in and invest more time in them at the beginning.

## Training Sessions

Special Olympics athletes respond well to a simple, well-structured training routine with which they can become familiar. The ideal coaching session should last between 40 and 65 minutes, depending on the age and ability level of the athletes. All practices should contain the following five (5) parts:

- ☐ Warm-ups
  - ☐ Skills Instruction
  - ☐ Practice of specific skills  
(competition experience)
  - ☐ Conditioning
  - ☐ Cool-down and  
announcements





## Special Olympics Table Tennis Coaching Guide Planning a Table Tennis Training & Competition Season

### Sample Practice Schedule

It is important that each athlete have a personal training program designed for them in order to help them achieve the best results. Following is a basic practice schedule for a table tennis program:

<b>Warm-Up and Stretching (10-15 Minutes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Before stretching, have the athletes slowly jog around the practice area. This gets the blood flowing to the muscles that will be stretched next</li><li>• Athletes should stretch each major muscle group</li><li>• Have an athlete lead the stretches. This allows you as the coach, to assist individual athletes</li><li>• Emphasize basic skills through drills performed by athletes (such as racket grip)</li></ul>
<b>Skills Instruction (10-15 Minutes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce the theme of a new skill</li><li>• Demonstrate the proper technique</li><li>• Divide into smaller groups to practice the skill with a coach</li><li>• Introduce drill(s) designed to practice the skill</li></ul>
<b>Competition Experience (10-20 Minutes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Incorporate the new skill into a competition (for example: keep score to see who can hit the most backhand strokes over the net)</li><li>• Emphasize the newly introduced skill in a game/point situation</li><li>• Organize practice matches</li></ul>
<b>Conditioning Exercises (5-10 Minutes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct table tennis specific agility drills</li><li>• Perform general drills that emphasize proper footwork and movement</li></ul>
<b>Cool-down (5 Minutes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Perform slow walk/jog/stretch</li><li>• As athletes cool down, make comments and announcements</li><li>• Finish with a team cheer</li></ul>

### Essential Components of a Table Tennis Training Session

Each training session needs to contain the same essential elements. The amount of time spent on each element will depend on the goal of the training session and the amount of time available for a particular session.

Remember when creating a training session, the progression through the session should allow for a gradual build-up of physical activity including the following elements:

- Easy to difficult
- Slow to fast
- Known to unknown
- General to specific
- Start to finish (logical progression)



### **General Teaching Suggestions**

- Go through the basic components of each skill
- Provide clear, visual demonstrations of how to properly perform each skill
- Keep it simple! Use verbal cues and key words that simplify a new skill
- Be aware of some of the common errors made by athletes with an average or lower ability
- Remember the importance of repetition and reinforcement when training Special Olympics athletes

Coaches should encourage athletes to stay in control and concentrate on consistent repetitions rather than speed. If an athlete loses control of the ball, start over and stress repetition. Athletes who are experiencing difficulties may be better suited using balloons or foam balls. These objects slow down the speed of the ball and allow athletes the opportunity for greater success in newly introduced skills.



#### Principles of Effective Training Sessions

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



## **Tips for Conducting Successful Training Sessions**

- 1) Having several assistant coaches allows the head coach to distribute responsibility and authority among the assistant coaches. Assign assistant coaches their roles and responsibilities in accordance with your training plan.
- 2) When possible, have all equipment and stations prepared before the athletes arrive.
- 3) Introduce and acknowledge coaches and athletes.
- 4) Review intended program with everyone. Keep athletes informed of changes in schedule or activities.
- 5) Alter the plan in order to accommodate the needs of the athletes.
- 6) Change activities before the athletes become bored, and lose interest.
- 7) Keep drills and activities brief so athletes do not get bored. Keep everyone busy with an exercise even if it is rest.
- 8) Devote the end of the practice to a fun, group activity that can incorporate challenge and fun always giving them something to look forward to at the end of practice.
- 9) If an activity is going well, it is often useful to stop the activity while interest is high.
- 10) Summarize the session and announce arrangements for the next session.
- 11) Keep the **fun** in fundamentals.



### Tips for Conducting Safe Training Sessions

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

### General Safety Practices

1. Establish clear rules for behavior at your first practice and enforce them.
  - Keep your hands to yourself.
  - Listen to the coach.
  - When you hear the whistle, Stop, Look, and Listen.
  - Ask the coach before you leave the training area.
2. Make sure athletes bring water to every practice.
3. Check your first aid kit; restock supplies as necessary.
4. Train all athletes and coaches on emergency procedures.
5. Choose a safe practice area with no distractions.
6. Review your first aid and emergency procedures. Have someone who is trained in first-aid and CPR on or very near to the practice areas.
7. Establish clear rules for behavior at your first training session.
8. Warm up and stretch properly at the beginning of each training session to prevent muscle injuries.
9. Train to improve the general fitness level of your players. Physically fit table tennis players are less likely to get injured. Make your training sessions Active.
10. Make sure all equipment is in good working order.
11. Always have your players in front of you and face the athletes when teaching.



### **Safety Checklist Prior to Practice**

- ✓ Are the tables properly set-up and positioned?
- ✓ Is the practice area free of any debris or loose material?
- ✓ Is there a first-aid kit nearby?
- ✓ Does the coach have access to parents'/guardians' telephone numbers and emergency numbers?

### **Safety Checklist During Practice**

- ✓ Are the people waiting in line far enough away from the active player?
- ✓ Are the people waiting in line paying attention?
- ✓ Are the athletes properly positioned to perform drills?
- ✓ Are the balls cleared from the playing area and retrieved regularly?



### Table Tennis Practice Competitions

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

1. Host a Special Olympics area or regional table tennis tournament
2. Host or participate in practice sessions with athletes from other local Special Olympics Table Tennis programs
3. Ask a nearby table tennis club if your athletes can practice with them
4. Incorporate competition components at the end of every training session
5. Encourage your athletes' development by exposing them to higher-skilled competition by attending local tournaments and clinics





## **Training for Table Tennis**

It is highly unlikely that you will have a group of athletes at only one ability level. It will be necessary for you to evaluate the level of individuals and adapt their programs accordingly. Assistant coaches can be a tremendous help with this by taking one ability group while the head coach takes another.

Following are suggested topics for eight (8)-week training programs for beginner and intermediate table tennis athletes. These are suggestions only. Be creative and design a program that is tailored to your particular team of athletes. If time permits, spend two practice sessions on each topic.

Advanced players can review the basic strokes in one or two sessions. Emphasis can then be placed on refining basic strokes and introducing advanced techniques. It is important to stress serves and returns for these players since they will be ready for competitive situations earlier in the season. As your athletes progress, add strategy to their game.





## Special Olympics Table Tennis Coaching Guide Planning a Table Tennis Training & Competition Season

Training Topics for Beginners	
Lesson 1	General introduction to equipment, proper racket grips, and basic strokes
Lesson 2	Ball and racket grip drills – introduce forehand (or forehand counter), and practice forehand with tossed balls and rallying or feeding drills
Lesson 3	Continue ball and racket grip drills – introduce backhand (or backhand counter) stroke – practice backhand with tossed balls and rally with forehand and backhand
Lesson 4	Introduce forehand and backhand push stroke, and practice with balls tossed or hit by coaches – introduce proper footwork technique through demonstration and drills
Lesson 5	Emphasis on proper footwork including hitting and moving, feeding drills, and rally games
Lesson 6	Introduce basic forehand and backhand service and return
Lesson 7	Teach rules of competition and preparation for match play
Lesson 8	Match play
Training Topics for Intermediate Athletes	
Lesson 1	Review all strokes
Lesson 2	Emphasis on proper footwork and movement including hitting and moving, feeding drills, and rally games
Lesson 3	Serve and return technique
Lesson 4	Introduction of advanced techniques (forehand/backhand block, forehand/backhand loop, and forehand/backhand chop) – Teach proper technique for hitting against a lob shot
Lesson 5	Emphasis on stroke technique and preparation for match play
Lesson 6	Singles strategy, practice drills and point situations (doubles strategy and practice may also be introduced)
Lesson 7	Review and practice
Lesson 8	Match play against teammates, other Special Olympics teams, or non Special Olympics athletes of comparable ability



## **Age Grouping**

The following age groups shall normally be used for Special Olympics Table Tennis competitions:

- Ages 8-11
- Ages 12-15
- Ages 16-21
- Ages 22-29
- Ages 30 and over

Age groups may be combined under the following circumstances:

- If there is a need to reduce the variance between the ability levels within a division
- There are less than three (3) competitors within an age group (in which case athletes shall compete in the next oldest age group and the group will be renamed appropriately)



### **Ability Grouping**

As with other Special Olympics events, table tennis athletes should compete by ability. For both genders and all age groups, athletes should be ranked in descending order based on their submitted entry scores and divisioning events.



## **Sport Skills Assessment Card**

The Sport Skills Assessment Card is a systematic method that is used to determine the skill ability of an athlete. The Sport Skills Assessment Card is designed to assist coaches in determining an athlete's ability level in the sport before they begin participation. Coaches will find this assessment to be a useful tool for several reasons.

1. It helps the coach determine with the athlete which events they will compete in
2. It establishes the baseline training areas of the athlete
3. It assists the coach in grouping athletes of similar ability for training
4. It measures the athlete's progression
5. It helps determine the athlete's daily training schedule

Before administering the assessment, coaches need to perform the following:

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

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



## Special Olympics Sport Skills Assessment

Athlete's Name		Date	
Coach's Name		Date	

### Instructions

1. Have the athlete perform the skill several times.
2. If the athlete performs the skill correctly 3 out of 5 times, check the box next to the skill to indicate that the skill has been accomplished.

#### FOREHAND DRIVE

- ☐ Ready position
- ☐ Backswing
- ☐ Forward movement
- ☐ Follow through

#### BACKHAND DRIVE

- ☐ Ready position
- ☐ Backswing
- ☐ Forward movement
- ☐ Follow through

#### BASIC SERVE

- ☐ Topspin and backspin
- ☐ Ready position
- ☐ Toss
- ☐ Backswing
- ☐ Forward movement
- ☐ Follow through

#### FOREHAND PUSH

- ☐ Ready position
- ☐ Backswing
- ☐ Forward movement
- ☐ Follow through

#### BACKHAND PUSH

- ☐ Ready position
- ☐ Backswing
- ☐ Forward movement
- ☐ Follow through

#### FOREHAND TOPSPIN

- ☐ Ready position
- ☐ Backswing
- ☐ Forward movement
- ☐ Follow through



### **BACKHAND TOPSPIN**

- ☐ Ready position
- ☐ Backswing
- ☐ Forward movement
- ☐ Follow through

### **SMASH**

- ☐ Ready position
- ☐ Backswing
- ☐ Forward movement
- ☐ Follow through

### **BLOCK AGAINST TOPSPIN**

- ☐ Forehand
- ☐ Backhand

### **FOOTWORK**

- ☐ Jump step
- ☐ One step
- ☐ Side step
- ☐ Cross step

## **Daily Performance Record**

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

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

## **Using the Daily Performance Record**

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

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



### Conditions and Criteria for Mastering

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

Criteria are the standards that determine how well the skill must be performed. The coach needs to determine a standard that realistically suits the athlete's mental and physical abilities. For example, an athlete without an intellectual disability might be able to perform a skill "upon command and without assistance" 90% of the time in order to be considered a master at the skill. However, in the case of a Special Olympics athlete, the coach should determine a standard that more realistically suits the athlete's abilities. For example, "into a wider than normal target, six out of ten times." Given the varied nature of skills, the criteria might involve many different types of standards, such as - amount of time, number of repetitions, accuracy, distance or speed.

### Dates of Sessions and Levels of Instruction Used

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

### Daily Performance Record

**Event:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Athlete's Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Skill:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Coach's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Skill Analysis	Conditions & Criteria	Dates & Instruction Methods	Date Mastered



### Table Tennis Attire

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

#### Shirts

T-shirts are the most comfortable and practical tops for practice and training. In competition, players are required to wear a dark colored shirt to allow for clear visibility of the table tennis ball during play. Traditionally, table tennis competitions are played in tucked-in, collared shirts.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Shorts

For practice, athletes should wear gym shorts or conventional “tennis-type” shorts. Preferably, the shorts will have pockets. In competition, dark colored “tennis-type” shorts are recommended. Wearing different apparel for competition can build an athlete’s excitement for the competition.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Shoes and Socks

Shoes should be traditional court or tennis shoes with proper ankle, arch, and heel support. Running shoes are inappropriate for table tennis because they are designed for heel-to-toe movement, and table tennis requires support for lateral (side-to-side) movement. Running shoes or worn-down shoes increase the risk of sustaining an injury like a sprained ankle. Socks should be made of an absorbent cloth material to prevent blisters.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**





### Table Tennis Equipment

The sport of table tennis requires the type of sporting equipment listed below.

#### Table Tennis Racket

There are hundreds of models of table tennis rackets available. The primary difference between them can be seen in the type of wood used to make them and the type of rubber that cover the striking surface. With the help of an experienced player or coach, the athlete should seek a racket that fits them and their style of play.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Table Tennis Balls

An abundance of table tennis balls is important for a successful practice. Ideally, each table should have a separate container of balls. Standard balls are adequate for practice; however, better quality balls are suggested for tournament play. Several brands of balls are approved by the International Table Tennis Federation for tournament play. They are labeled with three stars to indicate their higher quality. Athletes should learn to take care of the balls by collecting balls after each drill and after practice ends.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Targets

Targets are objects that serve as a specific spot for athletes to aim when taking a stroke. Examples of targets include rings or hoops, boxes, or baskets.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**



## **Table Tennis Facilities**

Today, because of the speed and spin imparted on the ball, more space is needed for high caliber play than in years past. An arena for national and international play is typically 7 meters by 14 meters. Top players need all of this space, but beginners do not.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**



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## **TABLE TENNIS COACHING GUIDE**

Teaching Table Tennis Skills



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## The Warm Up

Table tennis is a full body exercise that incorporates movement from all major muscle groups. It is important to completely warm up the body before starting to hit table tennis balls.

A warm up period is the first part of every table tennis training session or preparation for competition. The warm up starts slowly and gradually involves all muscles and body parts. In addition to preparing the athlete mentally, warming up also has several physiological benefits.

The importance of a warm up prior to exercise cannot be overstressed. Warming up raises the body temperature and prepares the muscles, nervous system, tendons, ligaments, and the cardiovascular system for upcoming stretches and exercises. The chances of injury are greatly reduced by increasing muscle elasticity.

### Warming Up:

- ♦ Raises body temperature
- ♦ Increases metabolic rate
- ♦ Increases heart and respiratory rate
- ♦ Prepares the muscles and nervous system for exercise

The warm up is tailored for the activity to follow. Warm ups consist of active motion leading up to more vigorous motion to elevate heart, respiratory and metabolic rates. The total warm up period takes between 15 and 25 minutes (depending on the duration of the training session or competition) and immediately precedes the training or competition. A warm up period will include the following basic sequence and components.

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Slow aerobic walk/ Fast walk/ slow run	Heat muscles	1-2 minutes
Dynamic Stretching (specific movements without a racket or ball)	Increase range of movement	5-10 minutes
Event Specific Drills (warming up at the table)	Coordination preparation for training/competition	10 minutes

### Aerobic Warm-Up

Activities such as walking, light jogging, walking while doing arm circles, jumping jacks.

### Walking

Walking is the first exercise of an athlete's routine. Athletes begin warming the muscles by walking slowly for 1-2 minutes. This circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching. The sole objective of the warm up is to circulate the blood and warm the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity.



#### Running

Running is the next exercise in an athlete's routine. Athletes begin warming the muscles by running slowly for 3-5 minutes. This circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching. The run starts out slowly, and then gradually increases in speed; however, the athlete never reaches even 50 percent of their maximum effort by the end of the run. Remember, the sole objective of this phase of the warm up is circulating the blood and warming the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity.

#### Dynamic Stretching

Stretching is one of the most critical parts of the Warm Up and an athlete's performance. A more flexible muscle is a stronger and healthier muscle. A stronger and healthier muscle responds better to exercise and activities and helps prevent injury. Please refer to the Dynamic Stretching section for more in depth information.

#### Event Specific Drills

Drills are activities designed to teach sport skills. They concentrate on the motions to be used in the upcoming activity and mimic the activity. Progressions of learning start at a low ability level, advance to an intermediate level, and finally, reach a high ability level. Encourage each athlete to advance to their highest possible level. Drills can be combined with warm-up and lead into specific skill development.

Skills are taught and reinforced through repetition of a small segment of the skill to be performed. Many times, the actions are exaggerated in order to strengthen the muscles that perform the skill. Each coaching session should take the athlete through the entire progression so that he/she is exposed to all of the skills that make up an event.

#### Specific Warm Up Activities

1. Swinging the racket through forehand strokes

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

2. Swinging the racket through backhand strokes

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

3. Serving an imaginary ball

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**



### Dynamic Stretching

Flexibility is critical to an athlete's optimal performance in both training and competition. Flexibility is achieved through stretching. Stretching follows an easy aerobic jog at the start of a training session or competition.

Dynamic stretching raises the body temperature by practicing movements associated with a specific sport or workout. It is a series of active muscle movements that allow the athlete to work their muscles but are not held in an end position. Dynamic stretching is critical to an athlete's performance and prepares their body for the upcoming activity. It also helps accomplish the following:

- Increase power
- Improve flexibility
- Increase an athlete's range of motion

Dynamic stretching is different from ballistic stretching (when a bouncing motion is used to maximize a stretch). Ballistic stretching can be dangerous and result in stretching a muscle too far. This can cause injuries. Dynamic stretching uses controlled leg and arm movements to gently explore a range of motion. It does not stretch the muscles beyond their limits.

Some athletes, like those with Down Syndrome, may have low muscle tone that makes them appear more flexible. Be careful to not allow these athletes to stretch beyond a normal, safe range.

Dynamic stretching should be performed as part of the warm-up and before the practice/training session or competition. The types of movements completed during stretching will depend on the workout for that day.

Examples of dynamic stretches for table tennis include the following:

#### Leg Swings (Forward and Back)

Hold onto a stationary object and swing one leg forward to a comfortable height. Keep your trunk and lower back straight. Swing the leg back and repeat 10 times. Repeat with the other leg.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Leg Swings (Side to Side)

Hold onto a stationary object, balance on one leg and swing the other gently away from your body sideways with your foot pointing up. Swing the leg back across your body, while pointing your toes in the direction your leg is moving. Repeat 10 times and then switch legs and repeat 10 times.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**



#### **Hurdle Step-Over**

Hold onto a stationary object and stand square. Lift one knee high and mimic the movement of placing it down on the ground in front of you without putting your weight on it or shifting your weight from the stationary leg. Pick the same knee up high again and return it to the starting position. Minimize any trunk movement. Repeat 10 times and then complete 10 more repetitions with the opposite leg.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### **Lower Leg Calf Raises**

Begin in a push-up position with your feet next to each other. Support your weight with your hands and feet. Slowly push one heel towards the ground so your weight rolls onto the ball of your foot then back up again. Alternate between legs and repeat 10 times.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### **Bent Over Upper Body Rotation**

Bend over at the hips so that your lower back maintains its natural inward curve (you might need to bend your knees slightly). Bend one leg and rotate your trunk and arms to reach down toward the opposite toe. Reach as low as your flexibility allows. Return to the starting position and alternate sides. Complete 10 repetitions on each side.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### **Arm Circles**

Stand with your back straight and your knees slightly bent. Gently swing both arms forward in small circles, gradually increasing the circle size. Complete 10 forward circles and then reverse the direction of the circles to complete 10 backwards circles. If there is tightness anyway, spend additional time working on that area to loosen it up.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**





## Dynamic Stretching – Quick Reference Guidelines

### **Start Relaxed**

Do not begin until athletes are relaxed and muscles are warm

### **Be Systematic**

Start at the top of body and work your way down

### **Progress from General to Specific**

Start general, then move into event-specific exercises

### **Use Variety**

Make it fun. Use different exercises to work the same muscles

### **Breathe Naturally**

Do not hold your breath, stay calm and relaxed

### **Allow for Individual Differences**

Athletes start and progress at different levels



## The Cool Down

The cool down is as important as the warm up, however is often ignored. Stopping an activity abruptly may cause pooling of the blood and slow the removal of waste products in the athlete's body. It may also cause cramps, soreness, and other problems for Special Olympics athletes. The cool down gradually reduces the body temperature and heart rate and speeds the recovery process before the next training session or competitive experience. The cool down is also a good time for the coach and athlete to talk about the session or competition. Note that cool down is also a good time to do stretching. Muscles are warm and receptive to stretching movements.

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Slow aerobic jog and walk	Lowers body temperature Gradually lowers heart rate	2-3 minutes
Passive stretching (see below)	Muscles need to be stretched out after contracting continually during practice	5-10 minutes

## Passive Stretching - Flexibility Exercises for Table Tennis Players

Passive stretching is recommended as part of the cool down to increase or maintain flexibility and muscle suppleness.

The following principles apply to stretches:

- No flexing during stretches
- An effective stretch requires a fixed point
- Do not stretch an isolated muscle
- Successively stretch antagonist muscle groups
- The same amount of time has to be spent on coming back to the recovery position as for stretching (6-7 seconds for each of the two phases)

The following rule of 3 x 6 can be applied to passive stretching:

- Tensioning the muscular chain for 6 seconds
- Coming back to the recovery position for 6 seconds
- Holding the stretch for the last 6 seconds.

This method of contraction-relaxation stretching allows for proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (to enhance range of motion).

Example of passive stretching include neck stretches, triceps stretches, bicep stretches, shoulder stretches, forearm stretches, wrist stretches, chest stretches, hip stretches and calf stretches.



## Teaching Table Tennis Skills

### Hand-Eye Coordination

Hand-eye coordination is the foundation for striking a table tennis ball. Eye hand coordination helps the player maintain proper racket positioning and control the arm velocity and direction of hit. Without developing this skill, the athlete will become frustrated and will not be able to make regular contact with the ball. This is an important aspect of developing table tennis skills.

#### Teaching the Skill

- Practice with just a table tennis ball and no racket.
- Encourage the athlete to watch the ball.
- Encourage the athlete to keep his/her head steady when making contact.

WATCH  
VIDEO 1

WATCH  
VIDEO 2

WATCH  
VIDEO 3

### Hand-Eye Coordination Drills

#### Hand Bounce Drill

- Gently bounce the table tennis ball on the table with the palm of the racket hand.
- Attempt to keep the ball bouncing in a controlled manner.
- Perform hand bounces as many times as possible in 15-30 seconds

#### Hand Ball Drill

- Drop the ball onto the table. With a forehand stroke, hit the ball with the racket hand.
- After several repetitions, have a partner toss the ball gently and hit the ball with a forehand stroke.

WATCH  
VIDEO 4

WATCH  
VIDEO 5



### Cup Catches

- Hold a large cup in your racket hand. Try to catch a tossed ball in the cup.
- Count consecutive catches.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

### Common Hand-Eye Coordination Errors

Error	Correction	Drill/Test Reference
Bad body posture	Perform correct table tennis ready position	Imitation of table tennis ready position for signal
Reaction by hand only	Reactions should start with the legs. The ready position is necessary	Basic footwork exercises, one-step; side-step
Missing the ball	Move slower	Bounce the table tennis ball (44mm) on the table
Ball hit too long or too short	Control the power of the stroke-forward, forward-up and down, etc.	Hit the ball to different targets (basket, cup, lily pad, etc.)

### Skill Progression: Hand-Eye Coordination

#### Your Athlete Can:

**Never Sometimes Often**

Recognize the spatial relationship between the racket and the ball			
Understands the relationship between the distance of the racket and the oncoming ball and is proficient at making contact			
<b>Totals</b>			



### Racket Grips

Proper control of the racket is an important building block for learning the strokes of table tennis. Control of the racket begins with a proper grip. There are two basic grips, the shakehand grip and the penhold grip. The shakehand grip is the most popular and is generally recommended for beginners. Athletes should be introduced to both grips and allowed to choose whichever feels the most comfortable to them.

### Teaching the Skills

#### The Shakehand Grip

- Grip the top of the racket handle between your index finger and thumb. This forms the primary grip on the racket. Comfortably grip the racket handle with your remaining three fingers.
- When performing a forehand stroke, you should be able to feel the impact of the ball with your forefinger (index finger). For the backhand, the thumb will have most of the feel.
- When switching from forehand to backhand, there can be minimal movement of the grip.
- Using this grip, practice strokes and drills, which increase the ability to control the racket.



#### The Penhold Grip

- Hold the racket handle just like a pen with the index finger and thumb holding the handle. The third finger rests sideways on the backside of the racket, with the remaining two fingers resting on the third finger.
- Relax the wrist for good range of motion.
- The penhold forehand stroke is very similar to the shakehand forehand stroke but is often considered to be slightly better because the penhold grip allows more freedom of motion with the wrist. This extra wrist motion can be converted into more spin and speed.
- An advantage of the penhold grip is the ease with which to switch from forehand to backhand during a rally.
- The touch for the penhold forehand is mainly in the third finger. For the backhand it is mainly from the thumb and third finger.



### Grip Drills

The following drills can be used for both the shakehand grip and the penhold grip:

#### **Bouncing the ball against the floor with the palm**

**Throwing and catching the ball** – The athlete holds the table tennis ball, imitates the movement of a high toss service and throws the ball vertically up and high, and then catches the falling ball. Make sure that during the whole process of throwing and catching, that the open palm of the hand is used. This helps develop a feel for the ball.

**Bouncing the ball on the floor** - Athletes stand on the floor and drop or throw a table tennis ball onto the floor, and then catch it, then repeat the movement several times.

**Bouncing the ball on the table** - Athletes drop the ball on the table surface and catch it; then repeat the movement several times.

**Holding the ball on the racket** – The athlete stands with the ball on the racket, then swings the racket with the ball, then starts walking, running and changing direction running etc. Make sure that the ball is kept on the racket without it falling.

**Bouncing the ball with the racket** – Athletes initially start with low bouncing (around 20 cm), and gradually bounce higher; experiencing low and high bounces and light and strong hits. They should start in the standing position, then bounce while turning, walking, jogging etc. Make sure that the ball is bounced as many times as possible. The coach can help athletes get the feeling of the ball by supporting their hand if needed.



**Pushing/ Rolling** the ball on the floor, than on the table

**Hitting the ball against the floor with the racket** – Athletes start with the forehand side, then with the backhand side, then alternate between their backhand and forehand. Repeat this several times until the athletes have a good feeling for the ball.

**Bouncing the ball with rotation** – Athletes throw the ball vertically up and when it falls down they hit it with friction upwards, let the ball come down and experience what is happening with the ball; then hit the ball with friction vertically up again and let it drop on their racket. This allows them to get the feeling of what is happening with a rotated ball.

**Hitting the ball indirectly against the wall** –Athletes should stand around 2 meters off the wall, and hit the ball indirectly (racket-wall-floor-racket); after getting the feeling and controlling the ball, they should stand 3-5 meters off the wall and repeat. Start with one person with one ball, after getting the control do the drill with two people hitting the ball alternatively etc. Gradually increase the difficulty.



**Hitting the ball directly against the wall** – Athletes stand around 1 meter off the wall, hit the ball directly (racket-wall-racket). After getting the feeling and controlling the ball, they should stand 3-5 meters off the wall. Start with one person with one ball, then add a second person so they can hit the ball alternatively. Gradually increase the difficulty of activity.

**Two people play tennis on the floor** - Two athletes stand around 2-3 meters from each other. After controlling the ball, they should stand 4-6 meters from each other and play stronger and with spin. Finally, they should stand close and hit the ball vertically up to each other without letting the ball drop on the floor. Gradually increase the difficulty of the activity.

**Racket Bounce “Ups”** – The athlete should hold the racket at waist level and drop a ball onto the racket with the non-racket hand. They then gently bounce the ball into the air in a controlled manner. They should perform as many “ups” as possible on 30 seconds.

**Downs** – The athlete should hold the racket just above the height of the table and gently bounce the ball downward with the racket. They should perform as many “downs” as possible in 30 seconds. As players advance, challenge them to dribble the ball while moving around the table.

#### Common Grip Errors

Error	Correction	Drill/Test Reference
Athlete swats at the ball rather than hitting it with a controlled swing	Swing at the ball in a controlled movement	Hit the ball to a target (box) 3-4m away. Pay attention to the phase of the swing back and shorten the follow-through
Too stiff or too loose a grip	The grip should be natural	Complete a lot of exercises with the racket and ball in one place while focusing on the grip
The racket is “moving” around in the athlete’s hand	Once a grip is confirmed, it should not be changed very often	Complete a lot of exercises with the racket and ball in one place while focusing on the grip



### **Skill Progression: Gripping the Racket**

**Your Athlete Can:**

**Never Sometimes Often**

Time his/her swing to the approaching ball			
The athletes rarely mis-hits a ball that he/she is in the proper position to strike			
The stroke is smooth and in control			
<b>Totals</b>			

### **Basic Forehand and Backhand Strokes**

The basic forehand and backhand strokes are the fundamental rallying strokes in table tennis. A key to success in table tennis is developing stroke consistency. This is accomplished by working on proper stroke technique and improved concentration.

In order to understand and perform the basic strokes within table tennis, the player must learn the basics of the trajectory of the ball and where to contact the ball.

#### **Teaching the Skills**

Spin is an important part of modern table tennis. The forehand stroke creates a slight topspin. Topspin occurs when the ball spins with the top rotating in the same direction the ball is moving. Topspin affects the ball's flight.

A ball with topspin will drop towards the table rapidly after reaching its peak. Once it hits the table, it will bounce forward due to the friction with the table. A ball with topspin normally bounces up off the racket. To adjust for this, the athlete should be taught to angle his/her racket face downward (close it more) and contact the ball near its top.

The reverse of topspin is backspin (or underspin). To hit a ball with backspin, angle your racket slightly upward (open) and contact the ball near its bottom.





#### Forehand Drive

The most important stroke in table tennis is the Forehand Drive.

- From the ready position, place your upper arm near your side with the elbow bent at a 90 degree angle.
- When the opponent strikes the ball, begin to backswing by relaxing your arm to a position below the height of the ball while twisting your waist.
- The racket arm should move away from the ball as you shift your weight onto your back leg (the leg farthest from the table).
- Keeping your elbow beside your body, backswing at the speed of the approaching ball.
- From this position, start the upward stroke without hesitating at the end of the backswing. The stroke will end near your forehead above your right eye.
- Bend your elbow so your forearm moves upward and twist your waist so the racket arm moves toward the opponent, shifting your weight forward.
- Contact the ball while it is rising, striking the center of the ball.
- During contact, the racket face should be angled down slightly.
- Follow through and end with the racket near your forehead.



#### Backhand Counter

Proper backhand technique is essential in table tennis. If the ball is coming to the left side of your body, you should prepare for the backhand stroke.

- From the ready position, twist your upper body so that your racket moves away from the ball.
- Bring your racket back slightly and down to the left side of your stomach.
- As you backswing, shift most of your weight to your left foot (left handed players will shift to their right foot).
- Keep your elbow still and bring your racket up and forward, contacting the ball at the top of its bounce and at the center of the ball. The contact point on the racket should be below the center of the racquet (paddle).
- Extend your arm and shift your weight so it is centered on both feet.
- Finish the stroke by pointing where you want the ball to go.
- At the end of the stroke, the backhand face of the racket should be angled down and the elbow should not have moved.



#### Forehand Push

The forehand push is commonly used when returning short backspin balls on the forehand side. Since it is easy for most players to attack the long ball with the forehand, the forehand push is rarely used when the ball comes deep.

- Stand close to the table and step forward with your right foot, holding your racket with your palm up and faced slightly toward your opponent.
- Keep your elbow near your body and be ready with your feet, not your upper arm. If needed, bend your knees to lean your upper body closer to the ball.
- The backswing should be a small, relaxed stroke made while cocking your wrist. Your forearm should stay near the table.
- Contact the ball as it rises from the table or at the top of its bounce. The contact point on your racket should be near the outer edge.
- Follow through towards the net. After the stroke, spring back into the ready position.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Backhand Push

The backhand push is one of the most common shots in table tennis. The backhand push creates backspin and is often used to control the pace of the game. The placement and spin of the shot make it difficult for the opponent to attack.

- With your feet a shoulder's width apart and the right foot slightly farther away from the table than the left (reverse for left-handed players), backswing to a point in front of your chest with the racket angle open.
- Move your racket forward, using only your forearm. You should contact the ball as it rises from the table or at the top of its bounce.
- The contact point on your racket should be near the bottom edge in the center of the racket. The stroke should be smooth.
- You must adjust your stroke depending on the spin of the ball as it comes to you. If the ball has a lot of backspin, you should open your racket more and stroke more quickly.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

### Beginner Drills for Forehand and Backhand Strokes

#### Hand Bounce

1. Gently bounce the table tennis ball on the table with the palm of the racket hand.
2. Attempt to keep the ball bouncing in a controlled manner.
3. Perform the hand bounce as many times as possible in 15-30 seconds.



#### Hand Ball

1. Drop the ball onto the table.
2. With a forehand stroke, hit the ball with the racket or playing hand.
3. After several repetitions, have a partner toss the ball gently and hit the ball with a forehand stroke.



#### Cup Catches

1. Hold a large cup in your racket or playing hand and try to catch a tossed ball in the cup.
2. Count consecutive catches.

#### Racket Bounce

1. Using a forehand grip, hold the racket about 30 centimeters above the table.
2. Gently bounce the ball downward on the table.
3. Perform as many “downs” as possible in 30 seconds.
4. As players advance, challenge them to dribble the ball while moving around the table.

### Intermediate Drills for Forehand and Backhand Strokes

#### Shadow Drills

Shadow drills are performed without a ball and are an excellent way to check for proper stroke execution.

**Follow the Leader:** An athlete or coach leads the group through a series of strokes without using a ball as the instructor checks technique.

**Simon Says:** Athletes must follow the leader’s instructions only when he/she says “Simon says” before giving the instruction.

**Statues:** The coach calls out a command for the athletes to simulate a forehand or backhand and then calls out “freeze.” At that time, the athletes should remain still as the coach checks for proper grip and form.

#### Self Drop

1. Hold the racket with the proper grip and position your body in either the forehand or backhand ready position.
2. Drop the ball from the non-playing hand onto the table to the front of the body.
3. Stroke the ball over the net onto the opposite side of the table.
4. Record the number of successful drop hits and note improvement as the season progresses.
5. An adaptation of this drill is to have the coach stand at the side of the table and drop the ball.

#### Hit Tossed Balls

1. A partner or coach tosses a ball over the net to the athlete.
2. Make contact after the first bounce and hit the ball over the net.
3. Count consecutive hits, aim for targets, and keep score between players. Be creative and keep the athletes interested.



#### **Basket Feeding**

1. The coach feeds balls from a hopper or basket to the athletes.
2. The athletes should line up on one side of the table. One or two lines can be formed depending on the number of athletes.
3. The coach gently hits the ball to the player's forehand or backhand.
4. The athletes hit a designated number of shots and return to the back of the line.
5. Coaches can make the feeds easier or more difficult as appropriate.
6. Targets can also be used to aim at or keep score.

#### **Hitting Between Two Players**

1. Begin with basic forehand or backhand strokes.
2. Emphasize following through on the stroke and proper ready position and footwork.
3. Players can advance to hitting crosscourt counter-drives (forehand or backhand) and alternating hitting one backhand and one forehand from the backhand corner to their partner's backhand corner. These drills will greatly improve the players' footwork.
4. Remind the athletes that it is the intent during these drills to maintain a steady rally not win a point.
5. The goal is to improve the consistency of the athlete's shots and to increase the number of consecutive shots hit by the athlete.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**



### Common Forehand and Backhand Errors

Error	Correction	Drill/Test Reference
Difficulty recognizing the spatial relationship between the racket and the ball, resulting in missed hits	Encourage the athlete to watch the ball and to keep their head steady when making contact	The athlete should practice with just a table tennis ball and his/her hand without using a racket
The racket angle is too open and the ball is going out	Show a demonstration of the correct movement. Show a difference in the trajectory of the ball in flight, depending on the angle of the racket	Imitate exercises without the ball. Have athletes mirror exercises with a coach. Use multi-ball and target exercises
The racket angle is too close and the ball is going into the net	Demonstrate correct movement. Show a difference in the trajectory of the ball in flight, depending on the angle of the racket	Imitate exercises without the ball. Have athletes mirror exercises with a coach. Use multi-ball and target exercises
Reactions are too late to hit the ball	Use a slower stroke and prepare/backswing earlier	Use a balloon or 44 mm ball. The athlete should start the backswing/preparation on the coach's signal

### Skill Progression: Forehand and Backhand Strokes

#### Your Athlete Can:

**Never   Sometimes   Often**

Recognize the spatial relationship between the racket and the ball			
Proficiently make contact with the ball without misses			
<b>Totals</b>			

### Teaching Points

Encourage athletes to stay in control and concentrate on consistent repetitions rather than speed. If an athlete loses control of the ball, start over and stress repetitions. The key is developing stroke consistency.

Athletes who are experiencing difficulties may be better suited using balloons or foam balls. These objects slow down the speed of the ball and allow athletes the opportunity for greater success in newly introduced drills. Always stress to the athlete to follow through and to come back to a ready position before hitting their next shot.



When feeding balls, give a variety of heights and speeds so the athletes learn not all balls are at racket level. Initially, athletes should be given verbal cues as to where and at what speed the ball will be in order to help them react.

### The Serve

Every point in a match begins with a serve. In competition, players are only allowed one attempt to successfully serve the ball.



The serve can be one of the most difficult strokes for beginners to master. Since the proper technique is developed through repetition, beginning players will need time to develop this skill.



#### Teaching the Skill

- Service shall start with the ball resting freely on the open palm of the server's stationary free hand. The hand must be flat before tossing the ball vertically in the air a minimum of 16 cm. The ball must be struck as it descends. The ball should hit the server's side of the table first, then the opponent's.
- When striking the ball on the serve, the wrist is more relaxed than usual, allowing for better range of motion, which can create more spin.
- Encourage athletes to watch the ball, and to keep their heads steady when making contact.
- Using the basic forehand stroke, demonstrate the basic serving technique and have the athletes copy or "mirror" the technique. Develop the technique through regular practice.
- The best serve is one that is short and controlled. The serve can be slow. The idea is to set up your next shot, which will be offensive.
- The athlete should try to learn to serve from both sides: forehand and backhand, short and long, backspin and topspin (overspin).
- Intermediate players can be taught a backspin, topspin or no-spin serve as their game develops. They should be taught to vary the spin, speed and placement of the serve. This keeps the opponent from anticipating what the player will do next.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Drills for the Serve

##### Beginners Serve

1. Develop proper technique for the forehand stroke through repetition.
2. As the beginner's serve improves, more attention should be placed on observing the service rules.

##### Forehand Serve

1. Keep your wrist relaxed with the index finger and thumb controlling the grip when serving.
2. With the racket face open, contact the ball at a point on the racket far from the handle by using a short backswing.
3. The wrist will have a snapping motion, and the ball will graze the rubber surface of the racket.
4. Toss (put the ball on the non-playing palm, the palm of the hand should be in the open position), the ball must be tossed at least 16 cm up.

##### Backhand Serve

1. Place your right foot slightly forward and your left foot slightly back (in a shake-hand grip you can also stand in parallel position); turn the body slightly to the left; do the toss up.
2. When the ball is dropping down make a swing forward and up in the right direction.
3. Hit the middle-upper part of the ball, with the first bounce around the middle position on your table.
4. To play down-the-line (long) you need to use more power in the forward direction.



#### Backspin (short) Serve

1. A backspin serve is usually a short serve that will keep your opponent from attacking.
2. To practice a short serve, place a small object (a plastic cup, broken ball, wallet, etc.) 15-30 centimeters on the opposite side of the net as a target. Try to hit the target 10 times and then place your target in a different location.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Topspin Serve

1. Most topspin serves are deep serves. Practice the topspin serve by placing a target several centimeters in front of the far end of the table.
2. Try hitting the target when it is near each corner of the table and at the center of the far end.
3. Contact the ball with a forward motion with the racket slightly closed. To get more spin on the ball, contact the ball with the part of the racket farthest from the handle. To get less spin, contact the ball near the handle of the racket.





### Common Serve Errors

Error	Correction	Drill/Test Reference
The serve bounces too high	The ball should be contacted lower on its decent.	The athlete should try to strike the ball slightly above the height of the top of the net
The serve is too long	The first bounce should be close to the net	Try to hit the ball with a backspin or no spin. Practice good technique with the coach.
Players lose points due to mis-hit serves and are penalized for illegal serves	Concentrate on serve technique	Practice serve drills focusing on technique

### Skill Progression: The Serve

#### Your Athlete Can:

Never Sometimes Often

Demonstrate a proper forehand serve			
Demonstrate a proper backhand serve			
Demonstrate a proper backspin serve			
Demonstrate a proper topspin serve			
<b>Totals</b>			

### Teaching Points

1. Remind athletes to relax the arm that tossed the ball. They should also move the racket and arm quickly when striking the ball.
2. Explain to the athletes that they can serve with multiple variations of spin, speed and placement (depending on the racket angle and direction, the power of the serve, and their movement).
3. Modifications such as using a self drop forehand stroke and allowing the player to have more than one attempt on the serve can be used to allow beginners to hit the ball in play. The modifications are not allowed in competition, but will help athletes learn.



### Serve Return

The athlete should establish themselves in a ready position as they wait for their opponent to stroke the ball. The athlete should be ready to quickly position themselves to hit a forehand or backhand return shot.

In the ready position, the athlete's feet should be shoulder width apart or slightly wider, their knees should be bent, their body leaning slightly forward and their weight on the front part of the foot. This provides balance and readiness for movement.

In table tennis the forehand is usually the most powerful shot. Therefore, it is important to allow as much space as possible for it. Once the athlete is in the ready position, they should reach forward a racket's length. Their racket should barely touch the table. From this distance, the athlete will not be too close or too far away from the table.

At the basic level, athletes should return the serve two different ways, with a push and attack. Short serves can be returned using a short push, long push, or flick/flip. Long serves should always be returned with a topspin or fast attack/drive-for attacking players. Returning of a sidespin is difficult for beginners and requires an understanding of how to create rotation. Always watch where the action of a serve started, the direction of the racket, and the angle of the racket.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

### Common Serve Return Errors

Error	Correction	Drill/Test Reference
Grip is stiff or very loose	Just relax and hit it!	Do the exercises with a racket and ball at the table. Change the tenseness and observe the reaction of the ball
Too strong a hit	Do not hit too hard, or too soft, but just right. Adjust the angle of the racket and try to hit the ball to the target	The coach can hold the athlete's hand as they hit the ball together
Pushing against a long serve	Concentrate and focus on the opponent's movement, always maintaining steady and agile footwork by standing mostly at the center – so as to be able to move to any corner or side	Try to attack all long balls by topspin or fast attack (drive). Use multi-ball training with a coach.



#### Teaching Points

The athlete must constantly be reminded to watch the server and the oncoming serve. It is often necessary for athletes to move quickly and re-position themselves to properly strike the ball. This may be a difficult concept for athletes to master but are essential for them to understand.

#### Hitting with Movement

For many Special Olympic table tennis players, moving to the ball and then executing a stroke can be difficult. It is important for coaches to teach athletes that the ball is not going to come directly to them in a match. Therefore, they must go to the ball. Movement to the ball is critical for competition. Practices should be structured to prepare athletes for match play.

#### Teaching the Skill

There are six steps to teaching effective movement:

1. Preparation – athletes should stand in a relaxed but ready position
2. Proper and quick one step or side-to-side movement – so the athlete is in position to strike the ball
3. Seeing and following the direction and speed/spin of the ball
4. Being balanced and in proper position to stroke the ball (squarely facing the opponent)
5. Making contact with the ball and remaining balanced when the stroke is finished
6. Returning to a neutral position after the stroke so the athlete is ready for the next shot

#### Drills for Hitting with Movement

##### Jump-step Drill

Teach athletes the jump-step as the most effective method for quick side-to-side movement. Have them repeat the jump-step.

##### Shadow Drill

Call out “running forehand/backhand” and have the players move on cue to hit an imaginary ball.

##### Tossing/hitting Drill

Toss or hit balls to alternating sides of the table and have players move to hit the ball.

##### Agility Drill

Have one player stand in the ready position on one side of the table and another on the opposite side. Designate one player as the leader. The leader should move quickly from side-to-side using small jump-steps, never moving more than one meter outside the table. The leader’s partner should follow the movements, trying to keep his/her shoulders even with the leader. This drill can be performed in alternating 10-second intervals.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**



### **Skill Progression: Serve Return**

**Your Athlete Can:**

**Never   Sometimes   Often**

Stand in a ready position			
Watch the server and the oncoming serve			
Hit with movement			
<b>Totals</b>			

### **Teaching Points**

- Beginners typically do not like to run to the ball. They would rather reach from the waist, extend their arms and then flick their wrist at the ball rather than move their feet.
- The intermediate player will move more readily to the ball but may not always be in the best position, resulting in instances of reaching for a ball that is too far away or getting “jammed” with a ball that is too close.

### **Advanced Techniques**

After your players master the basic strokes, you may wish to work with them on more advanced techniques that will apply to actual competition. These strokes will require more accurate timing and better footwork.



#### Backhand Block

The block is a defensive shot used mostly against topspin or the loop shot. The backhand block is similar to the backhand drive but is a much shorter stroke.

This stroke uses the power of the opponent's shot and needs little extra power. Well-placed blocks can be devastating to an attacking opponent, who may be slightly unbalanced after making a strong shot.

#### Teaching the Skill

- Starting from the ready position, teach the athlete to use a short backswing and contact the ball as it raises from the table. They should bend their upper body slightly forward and keep a relaxed grip on the racket.
- Depending on the spin and speed of the opponent's shot, the athlete will need to adjust the racket angle. If the shot has a lot of spin, close the blade more (cover the ball with your racket).
- When blocking, it is important that the forearm is slightly forward. Make sure the player is not reaching too far from the body when attempting a block.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Forehand Block

The technique of blocking with the forehand is a little different from the backhand block. The racket angles are the same, but the ball is contacted much further away from the middle of the body.

#### Teaching the Skill

- The leg position in the forehand block is similar to the forehand drive, though a little closer to the table to take the ball early.
- The forearm moves from the ready position to the right side by rotating the upper arm. Instruct the athlete to adjust the angle of the racket to account for the spin and speed of their opponent's shot. There should be almost no backswing and almost no body movement. After the ball bounces up, the player should gently adjust the angle and grip to contact the ball. When the block is completed, their arm should be relaxed and returned to the ready position.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Forehand Topspin

The topspin stroke is the most popular shot in the sport of table tennis. The topspin creates a tremendous amount of spin on the ball, causing it to arch and then fall faster forward and downward to the table. In order to perform a topspin shot properly, the player must learn how much power and spin to apply. The power comes from the forward motion of the racket and the body, and the spin comes from brushing the surface of the ball.

#### Teaching the Skill

- The forehand topspin stroke is similar to the forehand drive. As the ball approaches, the racket should be brought down near the thigh, extending the forearm to the right. The racket should be lower than for the counterhit. The right foot is slightly farther back than for the counterhit. In the backswing, the waist should turn to the right, and the athlete's weight should be transferred to



the right leg. The racket should be to the right of the body, not behind the leg. Make sure the player is not reaching too far from the body to contact the ball. Swing the forearm upward and forward by bending the elbow. At the same time, the wrist should snap upward in the same direction the forearm is moving. The ball should be contacted as the player is moving their forearm and wrist, brushing the outer surface of the ball with the racket providing the spin on the ball.

- The player's body weight should transfer to the left foot during the follow through. The player may need to step forward with the right foot due to the force of the stroke.
- The forehand loop can be used in many situations, and the stroke must be adjusted depending on the opponent's shot. If the opponent hits a counterdrive to the forehand, the ball should be contacted at the top of the bounce or as it starts to fall. The racket angle should be slightly more closed than for a forehand drive.
- If an opponent topspins to the forehand, the ball should be contacted at the top of its bounce and a much more closed racket angle should be used (counterspin).
- For a heavy backspin (chopped) ball, contact should be made as the ball is falling, using an open racket angle and an upward stroke. If the backspin is light, the racket angle should not be as great. Regular practice will allow the player to learn to adjust the racket angle and stroke based on the speed and spin of the ball.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

### Backhand Topspin

The backhand topspin is often used in order to take the offensive. It is commonly used against deep serves to the backhand corner. A spinning backhand topspin can be an effective way to return serve. For most people, it is more effective to develop a consistent, slow, spinning backhand than a powerful one.

### Teaching the Skill

- As with the forehand loop, positioning is a key factor. When the ball is crossing the net towards the player, they should have their body in position so that the ball will be just to the left of the stomach area. The waist should be turned slightly and the wrist and racket are held slightly downward. The weight should be on the balls of the feet and body should be lifted as the ball is contacted. The racket is brought forward by pivoting at the elbow, as you would when throwing a Frisbee. The upper arm should be held near the side with the elbow stationary.
- Spin is produced by accelerating the wrist and forearm and brushing the ball. As the player strikes the ball, they should turn to face their opponent and lift upward, extending the arm up and forward. When finishing the stroke, the elbow should not be higher than shoulder level. This stroke should be attempted as the ball falls from the top of its bounce. As in the forehand loop, regular practice will allow the player to learn to adjust the racket angle and stroke based on the speed and spin of the ball.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**



#### Chopping

The chop stroke is used primarily in defensive situations.

#### Teaching the Skill

- For a forehand chop, the weight should be on the right foot with the right knee bent. The stroke is similar to a forehand push but with a much larger backswing. During the backswing, the waist is turned to the right, the racket is brought to head height, the forearm and wrist move forward and down, brushing the bottom part of the ball. The follow-through should be finished in front of the body but not across the body.
- Remind the player to change the racket angle and follow through to adjust for an opponent's spin.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**

#### Hitting Against a Lob

The lob is a defensive stroke that travels in a high arc. It is generally struck from well behind the table. A well-executed lob can reach a height of 7.5 meters, and when the ball descends from this height and strikes the table, it will often bounce to a height well above the reach of the player.

#### Teaching the Skill

- Although the lob looks like an easy ball to hit, many top players still have difficulty smashing the lob. The key to success in playing the lob is proper footwork and technique. Some lobs have sidespin, so it is important to anticipate the direction of the ball once it lands on the table.
- Many players wait too long to move their feet into the correct position. When the ball is in the air, the player should move their feet in small steps to get their body as close to the ball as possible to smash the ball correctly. An overhead tennis-like stroke is not a correct stroke. Instead of contacting the ball above the head, the player should wait for the ball to fall after the bounce to eye level, and then smash the ball. Another option is to smash the ball early to give the opponent less time to react.
- After contacting the ball, the athlete's weight should shift to the left leg. The player should not take their eye off the ball, and must remain ready to quickly adjust their position to react to the movement of the ball.

**VIDEO  
COMING  
SOON**



**Skill Progression: Advanced Technique**

<b>Your Athlete Can:</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>
Perform a Backhand Block			
Perform a Forehand Block			
Perform a Forehand Topspin			
Perform a Backhand Topspin			
Perform a chop stroke			
Hit against a lob			
<b>Totals</b>			





## **Coaches Tips for Table tennis – At-A-Glance**

### **Tips for Practice**

- ☐ Teach your athletes to move naturally and efficiently
- ☐ Teach your athletes to use their entire body in a coordinated manner while playing table tennis
- ☐ Use a variety of drills and incorporate game play into your skills lessons
- ☐ Make the skill practice relevant to playing table tennis
- ☐ Repeat the skills to ensure that athletes improve on each
- ☐ Use mini-games to teach skills
- ☐ Demonstrate when you are showing a new skill (demonstrate slowly at first)
- ☐ Explain how the skill you are demonstrating is part of the game.
- ☐ Provide no more than two or three new points at one time
- ☐ Make sure everyone can see your demonstration
- ☐ Since grip is the foundation for all table tennis movement, focus on grip exercises
- ☐ Use multi-ball training to help form basic techniques (balls should be fed to a set position at a slow rate)
- ☐ Develop individual strokes
- ☐ Concentrate on ball-racket contact to “brush” or “hit” the ball
- ☐ Practice specific match situations
- ☐ Train until strokes are automatic
- ☐ Hold more practices than competitions

### **Tips for Competition**

- ☐ Discuss how to cooperate with the opponent throughout the match.
- ☐ Cooperate with players on other tables during the match.
- ☐ Discuss the importance of never giving up. The match is never over until the final point is won.
- ☐ Discuss table tennis etiquette. Compliment the opponent on a good shot, do not disturb other players during a match.
- ☐ Always commend athletes when they demonstrate good sportsmanship.
- ☐ Give periodic awards for good sportsmanship.



### Sample Workouts

There are many ways to design table tennis workouts and many ways to put practice sessions together. Following is a sample of 15 lessons to be taught during your workouts. Feel free to tailor the lessons to the individual skills and needs of your athletes.

Workout/Lesson	Activity/Skills Taught
1	Basic Table Tennis Skills and Rules
2	Forehand and Backhand Drive
3	Doubles and Practice Match
4	Forehand Push Stroke, Backhand Push Stroke and Practice Match
5	Footwork and Practice Match
6	Topspin and Practice Match
7	Games, Skills and Strategies
8	Practice Singles Tournament
9	Skills Test
10	Practice Tournament
11	Footwork Drills
12	Topspin Against Backspin
13	Smash and Lob
14	Overall Training
15	Doubles Tournament



### Understanding Table Tennis

Awakening a strong interest in table tennis is the most important factor for coaches to focus on when athletes are first learning to understand table tennis. Early training sessions can highlight the following in order to accomplish this:

- Learn table tennis and master table tennis skills
- Have enthusiasm for training
- Train with awareness and persistence

Coaches should teach young players basic table tennis skills and encouraging progress in their individual abilities. Specific examples include:

- Information about the ball (there are white balls and yellow balls, the diameter of the ball is 40mm but sometimes we can use a little bit bigger 44mm)
- Information about the table (tables are always the same size but can be blue or green)
- Information about the location of the ball and racket angles
- Information about the ready position
- Information about the importance of footwork
- Differences between spin and non-spin

Do not assume that lower ability players will know even the basic aim of the game. Such players may have difficulty with simple concepts.



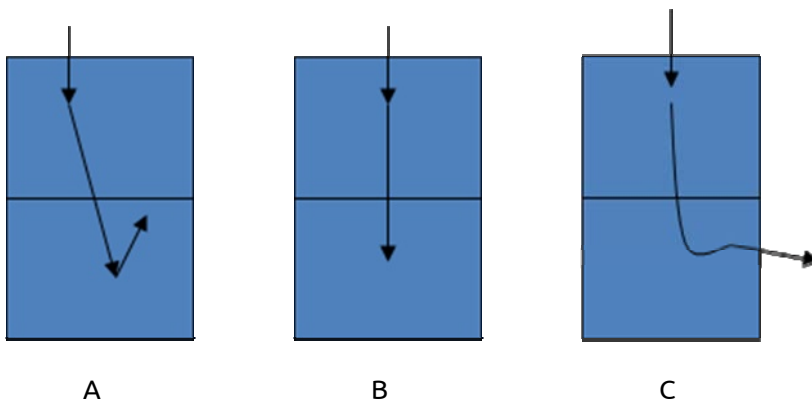
## Modifications and Adaptations

Basic table tennis technique should be achieved as much as possible and then adapted according to the needs of each particular player. Sometimes technical perfection is replaced by effectiveness. A lack of ability in performance should not be confused with “defect of a basic technique,” instead it should be viewed as a technical adaptation or personal style.

In competition, it is important that the rules not be changed to suit athletes’ special needs. There are, however, a limited number of approved modifications to table tennis rules that do accommodate the athlete’s special needs and are permitted.

Service for wheelchair players is not correct if:

- A. After touching the receiver's court it returns in the direction of the net
- B. It comes to rest on the receiver's court
- C. In singles, it leaves the receiver's court after touching it by either of its sidelines



In doubles, when at least one player of a pair is in a wheelchair due to a physical disability, the server shall first make a service, the receiver shall then make a return but thereafter either player of the disabled pair may make returns. However, no part of a player's wheelchair nor a foot of a standing player of this pair shall protrude beyond the imaginary extension of the center line of the table. If it does, the umpire shall award the point to the opposing pair.

Coaches can modify training exercises, their communication methods, and sport equipment to assist athletes in achieving success.

## Modifying Exercises

Modify the skills involved in an exercise so that all athletes can participate. For example, during service practice when it is not possible to show the ball in a flat palm, as in amputees or hemiplegia, the player can put the ball on a side of the racket or toss the ball with the racket hand. Such athletes must notify the umpire before the match if they are not able to do a good service due to a physical disability. Generally, it is not a difficult technique, but people with several problems in their hands will take more time to learn it because they must find a way to take the ball in the free hand, to toss the ball, and to coordinate the complete movement.



### Modifying Your Communication Method

Different athletes require different communications systems. For example, some athletes learn and respond better to demonstrated exercises, whereas others require greater verbal communication. Some athletes may need a combination – to see, hear and even read a description of the exercise or skill. If you work with deaf athletes always demonstrate exercises and explain what to do in front of him/her.

### Modifying Equipment

Successful participation for some athletes requires equipment modifications to suit their particular need. Examples include the following:

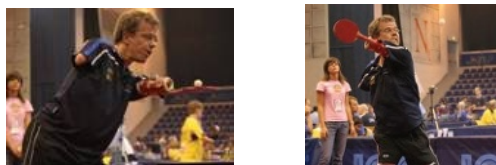
- A. Modification of the racket for left-hand player who has no muscle power



- B. Modification of the racket for left-hand player who has only 2 fingers because of dysmelia



- C. Modification of the racket for left-hand player who has no forearm



- D. Modification of the table for wheelchair players follow ITTF rules, the legs of the table should be at least 40cm from the end line of table





## Mental Preparation and Training

Mental training is important for the athlete, whether striving to do his or her personal best or competing against others. Mental imagery, what Bruce D. Hale of Penn State calls "No Sweat Practice," is very effective. The mind cannot tell the difference between what is real and what is imagined. Practice is practice, regardless of whether it is mental or physical.

Ask the athletes to sit in a relaxed position, in a quiet place with few distractions. Tell the athletes to close their eyes and picture performing a particular skill. Each is seeing themselves on a large movie screen in a table tennis match. Walk them through the skill step by step. Use as much detail as possible, using words to elicit all the senses - sight, hearing, touch, and smell. Ask the athlete to repeat the image, picture rehearsing the skill successfully - even to the point of seeing themselves scoring.

Some athletes need help to start the process. Others will learn to practice this way on their own. The link between performing the skills in the mind and performing the skills at the table may be hard to explain. However, the athlete who repeatedly imagines themselves correctly completing a skill and believing it to be true is more likely to make it happen. Whatever goes into one's mind and one's heart comes out in their actions. Therefore, it is important that players be able to watch elite players. You can either use video recordings and table tennis movies available online.



### Cross Training in Table Tennis

Cross training is a modern day term which refers to the substitution of skills other than the skills directly involved in the performance of an event. Cross training came about as a result of injury rehabilitation and is now also used in injury prevention. When runners sustain injuries in the legs or feet that keeps them from running, other activities can be substituted so that the athlete can keep up his/her aerobic and muscular strength.

There is a limited value and cross over to the specific exercise. A reason to "cross train" is to avoid injury and maintain muscular balance during a period of intense sport specific training. One of the keys to success in sport is staying healthy and training over the long haul. Cross training allows athletes to do event-specific training workouts with greater enthusiasm and intensity, or less risk of injury.

Fun activities such as bicycling, running, skating and even walking can improve the athlete's overall fitness and thereby help their table tennis game. Sports that use hand-eye coordination can be a great asset to improving table tennis skills. Examples are tennis, badminton, softball and volleyball.

In modern table tennis important features are: endurance, strength and power, speed, flexibility, agility and of course coordination, so every activity that increases the level of these components is good. How can we improve general, special and specific fitness? By participating in sport's games, swimming, nordic walking, mountain climbing, endurance fitness machines, ball games, gymnastics, rope skipping, pair exercises, footwork and strokes imitations, slaloms etc.



### Home Training Program

1. If athletes only train once a week with their coaches and do no training on their own, progress will be very limited. There are training kits available for most sports that can be purchased that include most of the equipment you would need to practice at home.
2. To be effective, coaches should run a home training orientation for family members and/or training partners. This should be an active session where partners get hands-on experience with the different activities.
3. As a motivational tool, a coach may want to award a certificate of Achievement to athletes and training partners who complete a set number of home training sessions during the season.





***Special  
Olympics***

## **TABLE TENNIS COACHING GUIDE**

Table Tennis Rules, Protocol & Etiquette



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### Teaching Table Tennis Rules

Table tennis is a fast sport that requires excellent eye and hand coordination. Every athlete aims to pass the ball to the opponent side of the table over the net, striking it with a table tennis racket. In addition to traditional events, Special Olympics competition includes individual skill events that allow the athletes to work and compete in the basic skills of table tennis. The development of these basic skills is necessary for the athletes to take part in the events. These skills include bounce of the ball, volley and backhand.

The best time to teach the rules of table tennis is during training. For example, correct service of the ball is crucial to the game of table tennis. By teaching these rules during practice, the athletes will have a more successful experience during competition.

As a coach, it is your responsibility to know and understand the rules of the game and to teach these rules to your players and other coaches. To assist you with this responsibility, select rules that govern the sport of table tennis are provided below.



### Official Events

The following is a list of official table tennis events available in Special Olympics.

1. Target Serve
2. Racket Bounce
3. Return Shot
4. Singles
5. Doubles
6. Mixed Doubles
7. Wheelchair Competition
8. Unified Sports® Doubles
9. Unified Sports Mixed Doubles
10. Individual Skills Competition

The range of events is intended to offer competition opportunities for athletes of all abilities. Programs may determine the events offered and, if required, guidelines for the management of those events. Coaches are responsible for providing training and event selection appropriate to each athlete's skill and interest.

### Rules

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Table Tennis shall govern all Special Olympics competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) rules for table tennis, including the Para TT Division (for wheelchair competitions). ITTF or National Governing Body (NGB) rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Table Tennis or Article I. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Table Tennis shall apply.

Following are select rules for Special Olympics Table Tennis that differ from ITTF rules. Please refer to the official Special Olympics Sports Rules, which can be found at [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org) for the complete listing of table tennis rules as modified and approved by Special Olympics International.

#### Individual Skills Competition

1. **Hand Toss** - Athlete uses one or both hands to toss the ball in the air for a period of 30 seconds. The athlete may catch or slap the ball and is awarded one point each time the ball hits his/her hand. If the athlete loses control of the ball, give him/her another ball and continue the count.
2. **Racket Bounce** - Athlete scores one point for each time he/she uses the racket to bounce the ball upward in the air over the course of 30 seconds. If the athlete loses control of the ball, hand him/her another ball and continue the count.
3. **Forehand Volley** - Athlete stands on his/her side of the table with another player (feeder) on the other side. Using a total of five balls, the feeder tosses each ball to the athlete's forehand side. The athlete scores one point for hitting the ball back to the feeder's side of the table. The ball must hit the table to count as a point. The athlete scores five points for hitting into either service box.
4. **Backhand Volley** - Same as forehand volley, except the feeder sends the ball to the athlete's backhand side.
5. **Serve** - The athlete shall serve five balls from the right side of the table and five balls from the left side of the table. A ball that lands in the correct service box will count as one point.
6. **Final Score** - A player's final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of the five events which comprise the Individual Skills Contest.



### **Unified Sports Doubles and Mixed Doubles**

1. Each Unified Sports doubles team shall consist of one athlete and one partner.
2. Each team shall determine its own order of service.

### **Target Serve**

The athlete shall serve five balls from the right side of the table and five balls from the left side of the table.

### **Racket Bounce**

1. Using the racket, the athlete attempts to hit the ball upwards into the air as many times as possible during a 30-second time limit.
2. If the athlete loses control of the ball, the official may hand him/her another ball and continue the count.
3. The athlete is given two 30-second rounds. The highest score from either of the two rounds shall be recorded.

### **Return Shot**

1. The athlete stands on one side of the table with the official, who is acting as a feeder, positioned on the opposite side.
2. The feeder tosses the ball to the athlete's forehand side.
3. One point is awarded to the athlete if he/she successfully returns the ball to the feeder's side of the table. The ball must hit the table in order for a point to count. If the ball hits the net and falls back onto the athlete's side of the table, no point is given.
4. The athlete attempts to return a total of five balls.
5. The maximum score that can be achieved is 25 points.



### **Athlete Leadership Program (ALPs)**

Athlete Leadership Program (ALPs) allows athletes to demonstrate their talents and interests, to receive training and to learn new skills that they can apply to SO as: team captains, volunteers, assistant coaches, committee member, public speaker, media representative, officials.



### **Athletes as Officials Program**

The Athletes as Officials Program is designed to assist with the development of Special Olympics athletes to be trained in skills necessary to officiate at variable levels of responsibility, consistent with the ability of the athlete. Typically, the athlete will have a “mentor” official who teaches the athlete how to officiate. Special Olympics Programs should work with the mentor official, along with a local representative of the national governing body, to guide Special Olympics athletes participating in this program to become certified.



### Optional Modifications to Competition Rules

Special Olympics Table Tennis follows ITTF Para TT rules and regulations for Wheelchair Competition.

#### Wheelchairs

- Wheelchairs must have at least two large wheels and one small wheel.
- In all competitions, no part of the body above the knees may be attached to the chair. However, should a player require strapping or binding for medical reasons, this will be noted on his/her international classification card (ICC).
- The height of 1 or maximum 2 cushions is limited to 15cm in playing conditions with no other addition to the wheelchair.
- Should additions of supporting structures be made to the wheelchair, whether attached to the wheelchair or not (except cushions), players must be classified or re-classified in this modified wheelchair. All additions to the wheelchair without authorization written on the ICC, shall be considered illegal and the player will be disqualified.

#### The Order of Play

In doubles, when at least one player of a pair is in a wheelchair due to a physical disability, the server shall first make a service, the receiver shall then make a return but thereafter either player of the disabled pair may make returns. However, no part of a player's wheelchair, nor a foot of a standing player of this pair, shall protrude beyond the imaginary extension of the center line of the table. If it does, the umpire shall award the point to the opposing pair.

#### A Let

A let occurs if the receiver is in a wheelchair owing to a physical disability and in service the ball, provided that the service is otherwise correct:

- After touching the receiver's court returns in the direction of the net;
- Comes to rest on the receiver's court;
- In singles leaves the receiver's court after touching it by either of its sidelines.

#### A Point

A point occurs:

- If both players or pairs are in a wheelchair due to a physical disability and his or her opponent does not maintain a minimum contact with the seat or cushion(s), with the back of the thigh, when the ball is struck;
- His or her opponent touches the table with either hand before striking the ball;
- His or her opponent's footrest or foot touches the floor during play.
- As provided under the order of play (see above).

#### Equipment and Playing Conditions

- Table legs shall be at least 40 cm from the end line of the table for wheelchair players. For wheelchair events, the playing space may be reduced, but shall not be less than 8m long and 6m wide.





## Divisioning

Athletes in every sport and event are grouped by age, gender, and ability – giving everyone a reasonable chance to win. At Special Olympics there are no World Records because each athlete, whether in the best or worst division is valued and recognized equally. In every division, all athletes receive an award, from gold, silver, and bronze medals, to fourth through eighth place ribbons. This idea of equal ability groupings is the foundation for competition in Special Olympics and can be witnessed at all events.

Divisioning is the method for verifying that athletes are placed in the correct ability level for competition.

Athletes and teams are divisioned using the following criteria:

1. By Sex (Gender)
2. By Age

Individual	Team Sports
8-11	15 and under
12-15	16-21
16-21	22 and over
22-29	
30 and over	

3. By Ability (most important)

- 15% performance guideline
- Pre-competition (entry) scores – in SO TT “Athlete Profile Form”
- Preliminary (on-site) performance
- Observed games and ISC - observe the players during the divisioning (sometimes during warming up); Fill in the observer’s sheets; Rating the players
- Minimum 3; maximum 8 players per division



## **Unified Sports® Team Competition**

1. The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners.
2. Unified Table Tennis offers the following events:
  - Unified Sports Doubles
  - Unified Sports Mixed Doubles

Each Unified Sports doubles team should consist of one athlete and one partner. Each team shall determine its own order of service.

3. Each team shall have an adult non-playing coach responsible for the lineup and conduct of the team during competition (although coaching is prohibited during the competition).

The key to success is to require similar age and ability levels for all teams. Suggestions for recruitment of players/partners include:

- Local special, mainstream and/or inclusive schools
- Local table tennis clubs (ideally with lower/average level players)
- Local, regional, national TT federations; institution for people with ID



### **Unified Sports® Rules**

There are no differences between the rules for Unified Sports® competition and the rules outlined in the official Special Olympics Sports Rules and modifications outlined in the rules book.

Unified Sports table tennis is designed to contribute further to the mainstreaming of individuals with intellectual disabilities by bringing together individuals with intellectual disabilities and those without on the same team as equal partners. The equality among all teammates is enhanced when the teammates are roughly the same age and ability. The selection of athletes and partners of similar age and ability is essential for Unified Sports Table Tennis training and competition.

It is very important that the Unified Sports partners know their role on the team and in Special Olympics in general. Player dominance by Unified Sports partners does not meet the intent and goals of the program and does not allow the athletes to showcase their talents. A good partner is one who competes right alongside the athlete and has a similar ability. In a perfect world, it would be impossible to differentiate between the contributions of an athlete and a Unified Sports partner.



## Protests

Protest procedures are governed by the rules of competition. The role of the competition management team is to enforce the rules. As coach, your duty to your athletes is to protest any action or events that occur while your athletes are competing that you think violated the official table tennis rules. It is extremely important that you do not make protests because you and your athlete did not get your desired outcome. Protests are serious matters that impact a competition's schedule. Check with the competition manager prior to competition to learn the protest procedures for that competition.

In the event of a protest, the head coach must complete the Protest Form, which should be available at the Sport Information Desk (SID). The protest must be submitted no later than 30 minutes after the conclusion of the match.

## Protests and Appeals Procedures

Only the head coach or designated registered coach (in the absence of the head coach) can protest. All forms must be fully completed and should contain the following information:

- Date
- Time submitted
- Sport, Event, Age Group Division
- Athlete's name, Delegation
- Reason for protest (specific rule violation from Official Special Olympics rules)
- Coach's signature

Once the protest is submitted, a ruling will be made by the Sports Specific Jury, which consists of the Technical Delegate, Sport Manager, and Chief Official. Once the Jury makes a decision, the coach can either accept the ruling or appeal the ruling to the World Games Jury Appeal. Jury Appeals will consist of a representative of the Game's Organizing Committee (GOC), a representative of Special Olympics, and a Technical Official. All decisions made by the Jury of Appeal are final. Any protest involving the judgment of the Chair Umpire will not be given consideration.



## Table Tennis Protocol & Etiquette

### During Practice

Good table tennis etiquette and protocol start at practice. Teaching your athletes good sportsmanship and respect for officials, teammates, opponents, and volunteers will carry over to when an actual competition takes place. Your role as coach sets the standard that your team will follow. Always strive to set a good example.

When practicing, make sure your athletes follow the rules they will expect to have enforced in competition. The better your athletes understand the rules, the better equipped they will be to understand why a given call was made. Being consistent in applying calls in practice will reduce confusion and frustration in competitions. Teaching respect for both officials and other competitors begins in practice. The coach needs to set high standards of sportsmanship.

### During Competition

Table tennis is a highly competitive sport that is best performed with a lot of positive emotions. Keeping emotions under control and channeled into good sportsmanship can be a challenge to the coach. Below are some important tips to share with athletes:

1. Remember and respect the Rules of the Games
2. Respect opponents, Team-Mates, Referees, spectators, officials, coaches, Unified Partners
3. Try to get substituted occasionally, because table tennis is a high energy sport
4. Try to drink water, or sports drinks frequently during the game
5. Always follow the rules of fair play



### **Sportsmanship**

“Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

Good sportsmanship is both the coach and athletes’ commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes.

### **Competitive Effort**

- Put forth maximum effort during each event.
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition.
- Always finish the competition – never quit.

### **Fair Play at All Times**

- Always comply with the rules
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times
- Respect the decision of the officials at all times

### **Expectations of Coaches**

- Always set a good example for participants and fans to follow.
- Instruct participants in proper sportsmanship responsibilities and demand that they make sportsmanship and ethics their top priority.
- Give positive reinforcement of athlete performance.
- Respect the judgment of officials, abide by rules of the event and display no behavior that could incite fans.
- Treat opposing coaches, directors, participants and fans with respect.
- Shake hands with officials and opposing coaches in public.
- Develop and enforce penalties for participants who do not abide by sportsmanship standards.

### **Expectations of Athletes & Partners in Unified Sports®**

- Treat teammates with respect.
- Encourage teammates when they make a mistake.
- Treat opponents with respect: shake hands prior to and after contests.
- Respect judgment of contest officials, abide by rules of the contest and display no behavior that could incite fans.
- Cooperate with officials, coaches or directors and fellow participants to conduct a fair contest.
- Do not retaliate (verbally or physically) if the other team demonstrates poor behavior.
- Accept seriously the responsibility and privilege of representing Special Olympics.
- Define winning as doing your personal best.
- Live up to the high standard of sportsmanship established by your coach.



#### **Coaching Tips**

- Teach your athletes to respect the officials and their decisions.
- Teach your athletes to play hard within the rules.
- Teach the general rules of table tennis to the athletes.
- Give sportsmanship awards or recognition after each match or practice.
- Always commend the athletes when they demonstrate sportsmanship.

#### **Remember**

- Sportsmanship is an attitude that is shown by how you and your athletes act before, during and after competition.
- Be positive about competing.
- Respect your opponents and yourself.
- Always stay under control even if you are feeling mad or angry.



## Table Tennis Glossary


Term	Definition
Backhand	Left side of right-handed player and right side of left-handed players  <b>VIDEO COMING SOON</b>
Block	Defensive technique against topspin and fast attack  <b>VIDEO COMING SOON</b>
Chop	Defensive stroke played well back from the table with backspin or no spin  <b>VIDEO COMING SOON</b>
Doubles	A match played by teams of two players (male or female)
Drive	"basic" skill" for smash, block and topspin
Flip (Flick)	An attacking stroke against short ball (over the table)
Forehand	Right side of right-handed players and left side for left-handed players
ITTF	International Table Tennis Federation
Let	A rally of which the result is not scored
Lob	Defensive stroke played well back from the table, very high with maximum topspin
Mixed Doubles	A match played by teams of two players: male and female versus male and female team
Obstruction	A player obstructs the ball if he/she or anything he/she wears or carries, touches it in play when it has not passed over the playing surface or the player's endline, not having touched his/her court since last being struck by the opponent.
Pivot	Forehand attack from backhand side
Point	A rally of which the result is scored
Push	Predominantly a defensive technique used for placement and control
Rally	The period during which the ball is in play
Racket Hand	The hand carrying the racket
Receiver	The player due to strike the ball second in a rally
Referee	The official in charge of tournament
Server	The player due to strike the ball first in a rally





## Special Olympics Table Tennis Coaching Guide

### Table Tennis Rules, Protocol & Etiquette

Singles	A match played by two players (male-male or female-female)
Smash	A power stroke used to finish the rally, usually used to killing the high ball - lob
Strike	A player strikes the ball if he/she touches it with the racket held in the hand or with his/her racket hand below the wrist
Topspin	An attacking stroke with great overspin 
Umpire	The person appointed to control a match
Unified Sports Doubles	A SO event played with a double team. Consists of SO table tennis player and partner.