
SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD GAMES

Football



ABOUT SPECIAL OLYMPICS

The Special Olympics Unified Sports programme brings people with and without intellectual impairments together in team sports.

This means that people who have different abilities play together on the same team. By training and playing together, players develop friendships and a better understanding of each other.

Unified Sports include athletics, basketball, football and X-Games. Special Olympics estimates that there are 1.4 million athletes participating in Unified Sports worldwide.

Schools can create their own unified programmes by including mixed-ability teams in competitive school sports – perhaps through school partnerships.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS FOOTBALL

- In Special Olympics competitions, there is 7-a-side football and 5-a-side futsal.
- In the 7-a-side game, the pitch and goal dimensions are smaller to reflect reduced player numbers.
- Both 7-a-side and futsal can be played indoors or outdoors.
- Games are 20 minutes each way.



PRACTICES

Football skills can be roughly divided into 3 areas: passing, controlling or dribbling and shooting. And, of course, goalkeeping skills are a specialised area. You can practise all of these skills in your school football programmes.

PASSING

- This can start by just rolling a ball along the ground towards a partner using your hand(s) – or against a wall.
- Progress to one partner rolling the ball, the other passing it back by kicking it with the inside or outside of the foot.
- Note! Always control the ball first before passing it to your partner. A static ball is always easier to kick than a moving one.
- Then try passing with both partners kicking the ball along the ground. Don't kick the ball too hard – pass it gently at first so that your partner will be able to control it. If you have to stop the ball with your hands initially – that's ok.

Passing game – Through the gate

- Place 2 cones or markers between you and your partner – to form a 'gate'. Start with a wide space and pass the ball to each other 'through the gate'. As you improve, make the gate narrower.

CONTROLLING AND DRIBBLING

- Practise walking with a ball at your feet, controlling it by gently guiding it with the inside and outside of your feet. Keep the ball within your personal space – always within reach of the next touch.
- Increase your speed gradually. If you lose control of the ball, slow down a bit!

Controlling and dribbling game – Collect the gates

- Place a number of pairs of cones or markers, arranged to form 'gates', around the playing area.
- Practise dribbling the ball around the area, moving through the gates as you go. Try to 'collect' as many gates as you can on the way round. (You can go through the same gate twice, but only if you move through it in the opposite direction).
- Try going against the clock. Time how long it takes you to go through 10 gates. Have a rest, then try and go faster next time.

SHOOTING

- Practise striking the ball against a wall.
- To begin, concentrate on using different parts of the foot to kick the ball. Work out which way of kicking generates the most power.
- Try shooting into an undefended goal (could be just 2 markers against a wall). Shoot from different directions and distances.
- Try then with some obstacles – like cones – in the goal. Try to score past the obstacles.
- Finally, a goalkeeper can go into the goal. But... shooting along the ground only!

Shooting game – Shrinking target

- Place two markers, spaced well apart, against a wall. Shoot between the markers until you can score every time.
- Then shrink the target by moving the markers closer together. Try shooting again until you are consistently successful. And so on!

Use the STEP adaptation tool to make changes to these activities and ensure that everyone is included.

SPACE

- A bigger playing space encourages more movement; a smaller space develops more interaction between players.
- In target games – like shooting practice – increase the distance from the target if you are successful; decrease the distance when you miss.

TASK

- Try controlling the ball in as many ways as you can – inside and outside of the foot, using both sides of the body; find what works best for you.
- Practise individual skills (dribbling, shooting) but as football is a team game, make sure that you work with partners and small groups (passing, shooting drills).

EQUIPMENT

- Try using different sized and different density balls. A larger ball may be easier to control, for example.
- Wheelchair users can participate by using a large ball (which will not get trapped under their wheels); the chair can be used to bump the ball along or to pass and shoot.

PEOPLE

- Players who use mobility aids, for example, wheelchairs, sticks, walking frames, can take part in football by using these aids to help control the ball.
- A ball containing rattles, seeds, or bells can be used to support the inclusion of vision or spatially impaired players.

SAFETY

- Never strike the ball forcibly towards another person.