



OVERVIEW: BASIC MECHANICS OF RUNNING

Special Olympics athletes are, first and foremost, athletes. The basics of running mechanics are the same as for any athlete. Remember that some of your athletes may have physical impairments. You may need to work with them to adapt their running technique. As a coach, you may also need to adapt your coaching methods. You can best support your athletes learning by:

- Recognizing and understand their abilities.
- Making simple change to techniques and drills.
- Continue to challenge them AND give them a chance to experience success.



Sprinter



Distance Runner

Coaching Points – Basic Running Mechanics

1. The quicker the foot strikes the ground, the faster the athlete runs.
2. When running fast, the heel must be lifted high under buttock.
3. Leg turnover and stride length determine the speed at which an athlete runs.
4. Getting Into Proper Running Form
5. Take a Hips Tall position with your trunk and head directly above the hips.
6. Let arms hang loosely at the sides of your body.
7. Close hands loosely with the thumbs up.
8. Lean forward slightly; bend ankles until body weight is centered on balls of feet.
9. Bend arms; bring hands to top of hips forming a 90-degree angle between lower and upper arms.
10. Keep head in a neutral position, looking forward, with facial muscles relaxed.



Top Tips for Coaching Basic Running Mechanics (Skill Development)

1. Demonstrate the ideal running position. Ensure you keep the hips tall position and emphasize relaxed shoulders and arms.
2. Ask your athletes to walk with quick steps on balls of their feet.
3. Emphasize the foot striking the ground under the runner's body, not ahead of it.
4. Ask your athletes to run straight at you. Watch to ensure their shoulders stay parallel to ground and their upper body is not twisting back and forth
5. Invite athletes to stand facing you or a partner. Ask them to mirror your body position.
6. Use a stick or broom handle to demonstrate upright position.
7. Video playback can be a great tool to review your athletes' body position. Show your athlete footage of themselves running and point out areas for praise and for improvement.
8. You can never do too much basic running drill work.
9. Encourage your athletes to train at least 2-3 days at home.
10. Be patient.