

OVERVIEW: STARTS

A good start is vital in any track event. It does not matter what the distance is. The basics of a start in Special Olympics is the same as any athletics event. However, you may need to vary how you coach the start to meet your athletes' learning needs. The type of start your athlete uses may also be impacted by their ability.

Sprint races usually begin with a block start. In Special Olympics sprint events (up to 400m), athletes may use a stand up start or a block. Some athletes may not be able to use blocks due to balance or mobility limitations. Assess each athlete individually. Identify the start type that is best for them.

Remember to challenge them too! In distance events, all athletes use the stand-up start. Make sure you know the specific rules related to starts.

The start involves 2 or 3 fundamental commands:

1. On your mark
2. Set (only in races from 400m upwards)
3. Go

****Note that "Go" is usually a starter's pistol or whistle. You may need to adapt the start for visually or hearing impaired athletes.**

Block Start

Each athlete should set the blocks in a way that is comfortable to him/her. Coaches and athlete should discuss whether to use blocks. If they will use blocks they should agree when and how often to train on the blocks. Communication between athlete and coach, as ever, is vital. Coaches should always remember that an athlete's physical ability and range of motion may impact their ability to use a block start.

SETTING THE BLOCKS

1. Align the blocks in the direction of start.
2. Place the Starting block 1 foot length from the Start line (Block Start 1)
3. Place the front pedal 2 foot lengths from the start line (Block Start 2, Block Start 3)
4. Place the rear pedal 2 and a half to 3 foot lengths from the start line or 1 foot length from the front pedal (Block Start 4)



Block Start 1



Block Start 2



Block Start 3



Block Start 4

NOTE: You may need to adjust the blocks based on your athletes' preference. This describes a good starting point for block setting. With practice you can help your athlete to identify and record how to set up their blocks.

Coaching Points - Block Starts

1. Special Olympics athletes use the same standard block setting as other athletes. Coaches should consider the ability of athletes to set their own blocks. You can develop a strategy or routine with your athletes to help them set their own blocks.

Athletes must be able to remain still in "On Your Mark" position.

2. Athletes should distribute weight evenly over their hands and back knee.
3. Athletes must be able to take and hold a balanced "Set" position. This includes holding his/her weight on their hands behind the start line.
4. On the Starter pistol athlete steps forward with rear foot first into run.





Coaching Points - Stand Start Training

Using a 2 command Start: “On your Mark”, Starter Pistol

1. Before the “On your mark” command, the athlete’s weight should be on their back foot.
2. On the “On your mark” command, the athlete shifts their weight to the front foot.
3. Athlete assumes the racing position and awaits the starter pistol.
4. On the Starter pistol signal they run.

Using a 3 command Start: “On your Mark”, “Set”, Gun

1. Athlete assumes the same initial position (weight on back foot).
2. Between the “On Your Mark” and “Set” commands, the athlete shifts their weight from back to front foot.
3. Athlete assumes the racing position and awaits the starter pistol.
4. On the starter pistol signal they run.