



8-Week Training Plan - Swimming

The following swimming 8-week season plan should be used as a *guideline*. Utilizing other resources and adapting to the individual needs of the athletes and your personal coaching style is welcomed. In addition to specific sport skills and conditioning, review the **sport specific rules and guidelines** that will be followed at the local, regional, and state competitions. Integrate skills that will best prepare the athletes for success in all aspects of the competition. Note, if the team only practices together once per week, this plan may be modified for training at home between practices. Also, this plan is integrated and includes the full range of swimming events.

Preseason

Four weeks before season:

1. Begin final preparations for the season: Confirm practice location, dates, and times; begin scheduling competition; create agendas for coaches' meeting and orientation and parents', guardians', caregivers' meeting, and orientation.
2. Send out promotional flier or brochure to the athletes and coaches.

Two weeks before season:

1. Conduct orientation and first meeting with coaches.
2. Conduct social get-together for orientation and first meeting with parents, guardians, and caregivers and athletes; involve assistant coaches.
 - a. Provide practice schedule and competition schedule of major events.
 - b. Go through home training program of overall fitness that parents, guardians, and caregivers

One Week before season:

1. Inventory and Review for quality all athlete Attire and Equipment including but not limited to:
 - Swimsuits – athletes' own for practice / team regulation compliant suits and warm-ups for competitions
 - Towels
 - Caps
 - Goggles, (+ optional ear plugs, nose clips)
 - Timing equipment that may be available: Touch Pads, Pace Clock, Timers, Starting devices
 - Swimming Aids such as pool noodles, floats, fins, kickboards, belts, and other practice aids used for conditioning and stroke development, with the exception of regulation kick board and floatation devices for official developmental events.
2. Inventory and assess venue/facility amenities including but not limited to:

Starting blocks/ platforms	Changing Areas and Lockers
Backstroke flags	Entrances and Exits
Lane ropes and numbers	Emergency Plans
Lighting	Water Qualities and Depths

Week 1 - Season Overview and Swimming Skills and Abilities Assessment

1. Warm-up, 10-20 minutes (See attached swimming warm-ups and cool-down pages at the end of this document)
2. Assess the swimming experience, abilities, and skills of the athletes. For larger groups of athletes, swimmers can be divided into new and returning athletes and also by stroke abilities. It is helpful to review the events that returning athletes did in prior seasons to see if repeating these events is advisable or if it would be better to set a new goal or make other changes.
3. Overall, event and stroke review. Again, dividing athletes into groups with assistant coaches is helpful. Developmental athletes utilizing a shallow pool or shallow area of the main pool is helpful.
Note: Many athletes may not necessarily practice off-season. This will impact their performance more than most sports as breathing and endurance are easily impacted by inactivity.
4. Start with a 25-meter freestyle and look for technique, breathing, stamina, kicking, and other factors indicative of stroke proficiency. Some athletes may verbalize that they are able to execute skills that they are not yet ready for and conversely, some athletes are able to do more than they believe they are ready for, therefore, the best assessments are in the water.
5. Review the Events available for Special Olympics Competition:

Developmental Events	Individual Events	Team Events
15M Walk	25M Freestyle	4 x 25M Freestyle Relay
15M Flotation	50M Freestyle	4 x 50M Freestyle Relay
15M Kick Board	100M Freestyle	4 x 100M Freestyle Relay
25M Flotation	200M Freestyle	4 x 200M Freestyle Relay
15M Assisted Swim	400M Freestyle	4 x 25M Medley Relay
15M Unassisted Swim	800M Freestyle	4 x 50M Medley Relay
25M Assisted Swim	1500M Freestyle	4 x 100M Medley Relay
	25M Backstroke	4 x 25M Freestyle Unified Sports Relay
	50M Backstroke	4 x 50M Freestyle Unified Sports Relay
	100M Backstroke	4 x 100M Freestyle Unified Sports Relay
	200M Backstroke	4 x 200M Freestyle Unified Sports Relay
	25M Breaststroke	4 x 25M Medley Unified Sports Relay
	50M Breaststroke	4 x 50M Medley Unified Sports Relay
	100M Breaststroke	4 x 100M Medley Unified Sports Relay
	200M Breaststroke	
	25M Butterfly	
	50M Butterfly	
	100M Butterfly	
	200M Butterfly	
	100M Individual Medley	
	200M Individual Medley	
	400M Individual Medley	



6. The first practice is a great time to give athletes opportunities to progress through the events from the most basic, through all the strokes in order of difficulty, to the most technically advanced (freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly). Note the highest skill level event is the individual medley (IM) which is 1 athlete performing all 4 strokes in 1 event. Additional levels of difficulty are added with the increased distance of each event. Athletes are often able to increase their distance ability within 1 training season if they are committed to working on their stamina and conditioning throughout the week with aerobic exercise, additional swim practices and shorter rest periods between swimming times or lengths

7. Game play or Free Swim time
8. Cool down for 20 minutes and stretch.

Week 2 – The “4 Bs” Basics of Swimming

1. Warm-up, 10-20 minutes (See attached swimming warm-ups and cool-down pages at the end of this document)
2. Review the 4-Bs: Breath Control, Buoyancy, Balance, and Body Position assess specific abilities through demonstration/instructions followed by drills as follows:

Breath Control

Demonstrate inhale through mouth and exhale through nose. This is different than most breathing patterns used during exercise. Use humming as a helpful reference.

- **Controlled Bobbing:**
 - Teacher’s Hold
 - Wall Hold
 - Unassisted push off from bottom, no hesitation
 - Body rotation hold
- **Floor push-offs or vertical floats into:**
 - Back Float
 - Front Float
 - 3 Strokes Free and roll to back
 - 3 Strokes Back and roll to front

Buoyancy

Understand how buoyancy affects people differently. It is important to know and understand what natural buoyancy is and how to affect and make changes to buoyancy.

- Positive buoyancy
- Neutral buoyancy
- Negative buoyancy

Be able to explain verbally and demonstrate buoyancy positions and good body positions in the water.

- Vertical buoyancy test
- Prone position face down (front float)
- Prone position face up (back float)



Balance

Demonstrate dryland exercises and drills to be used in teaching various balance and swimming skills in the water.

- Standing balance
- Use of center of gravity shift
- Front balance
- Back balance (5 points: ears, chin, chest, ribs/belly, hips)
- Side balances
- Roll overs
- Head position
- Purge through nose
- Shift of center of gravity
- Maintaining body position

Body Position

Demonstrate dryland Front Streamline:

- Lower body superman
- Head position facing the floor

Demonstrate in-water, Front Streamline:

- Head position facing the bottom of the pool
- Ears submerged
- Arms extended
- Legs extended together
- Kick (look for dropped knees which will throw the body out of the streamlined position)
- Push-offs from seated position or standing on steps:
 1. Arms behind ears
 2. Face in water first
 3. Then push
- Push-offs from wall in water:
 1. Feet on wall
 2. Drop Down
 3. Hand Over
 4. Push
 4. Streamlined

Demonstrate in water Back

Streamline:

- 5-point back float w/ arms extended (5 points: ears, chin, chest, ribs/belly, hips)
- Face facing ceiling
- Ears submerged
- Legs together extended
- On land positioning
- Front quad
- Side - front - side maintaining body position



***Demonstrate in water Side Balance
with kick:***

- Positioning
- Front quad
- Side – front - side maintaining body position

Understand the relationship between breath control, buoyancy, balance, and body position. Integrate the 4 B's into free swim and stroke specific drills and observe athlete self-corrections.

3. Cool down for 20 minutes and stretch.

Week 3 – Stroke Development

1. Warm-up, 10-20 minutes (See attached swimming warm-ups and cool-down pages at the end of this document)
2. In Circuit Groups break-up practice time by Stroke: Freestyle, Back, Breast, Fly. For Each Stroke, breakdown and focus on key points as follows:
 - Body Position
 - Leg Action
 - Arm Action
 - Propulsion or Pull
 - Recovery
 - BreathingSafety and Rules of Competition (Common DQs)

For full stroke breakdown refer to the SOI Sports-Essentials Swimming Coaching Guide Pages 77-110, [Click Here For Swimming Coaching Guide](#)

3. Free swim time or game play
4. Cool down and stretch

Week 4 – Entry, Turns and Starts

1. Warm-up, 10-20 minutes (See attached swimming warm-ups and cool-down pages at the end of this document)
2. Like week 3's Stroke development theme, this week, focus on proper techniques for entry, starting the race and turning for events over 25 yards or meters as follows:

In Circuit Groups break-up practice time by Stroke: Freestyle, Back, Breast, Fly. For each stroke, breakdown and focus on key points as follows:

- Body Position
- Leg Action
- Arm Action
- Propulsion or Pull
- Recovery
- Breathing
- Focus of sights and sounds (what signals a start, turn, etc. bell tone, flags, etc.) Coaches should make note of any special accommodations that will need to be included in their event registrations so that the athletes' needs are communicated clearly. For example, *how does a visually impaired athlete prepare to turn in the 50-meter backstroke?*
- Safety and Rules of Competition (Common DQs)

Note that there are three types of starts permitted in Special Olympics Competition:

- Standing - Block Start **or** Standing on Concourse/Pool Edge
 - Sitting on the Concourse/Pool Edge
 - In the water
3. Free swim or Game Play
 4. Cool down and stretch



Week 5 – Finishes and Exits

1. Warm-up, 10-20 minutes (See attached swimming warm-ups and cool-down pages at the end of this document)
2. Like week 4's Entry, Turns and Starts theme, this week focus on proper techniques for finishing the race, finishing a relay leg, and exiting the pool as follows:

In Circuit Groups break-up practice time by Stroke: Freestyle, Back, Breast, Fly, and relay if time allows. For Each Stroke, breakdown and focus on key points as follows:

- Body Position
- Leg Action
- Arm Action
- Propulsion or Pull
- Recovery
- Breathing
- What happens after the race? Scenarios are helpful for roleplay to prepare athletes for either returning to the team or proceeding directly from the pool to awards.
- Safety and Rules of Competition (Common DQs)

Note that safety is crucial when athletes are exiting the pool.

5. Free swim or Game Play OR Relay practice drills can be done for fun at the end of practice before cool downs.
6. Cool down and stretch

Week 6 – Advancing Techniques and Increased Stamina

1. Warm-up, 10-20 minutes (See attached swimming warm-ups and cool-down pages at the end of this document)
2. Focused Event-based Drills
 - Stroke Refinement
 - Reducing rest periods between drills
 - Refine turns
 - Practice alternate breathing
 - Relay transitions

This week is also a good time to re-assess an athlete's skills and abilities in preparation for competition. Note if there are habits in place that are common sources of DQs in meets. It may be difficult to "relearn" in time for the competition. Event selection is important.

An example is: an athlete performs the breaststroke well except flutter kicks at the start or coming out of a turn. This simple action will result in a DQ at competition. The athlete should be able to demonstrate the whole event cleanly, or possibly choose another event, extending the training for the more difficult stroke for the following season with off-season goals set in place to prepare for advancement next season.

3. Game Play and/or Free Swim – Incorporating encouragement for goals reached and observed, peer-encouragements and "high-fives" work well here.
4. Cool down and stretch



Week 7 – Competition Readiness and Common DQs (Review DQ slips available in the Rules and Guidelines)

1. Warm-up, 10-20 minutes (See attached swimming warm-ups and cool-down pages at the end of this document)
2. Common Violations for Each Event are presented in a positive manner such as in a drills game, or a quest to capture “clean swims”. The DQ slip, included in the **Rules and Guidelines** can be used as a reference. Common DQs for Special Olympics include:

All:

- False start
- Did not finish
- Delay of meet

Freestyle:

- No touch on the turn
- Head not breaking surface by 15m mark

Back:

- No touch at turn
- Not on back on start
- Head not breaking surface by 15 meters
- Improper turn

Breast:

- Improper kick – alternating, butterfly, scissors
- Arms past hipline
- Arms not simultaneous
- Touch – 1 handed, non-simultaneous, not separated
- Head not up
- Double pulls or kicks

Butterfly:

- Improper kick – alternating, breast, scissors
- Arms – non simultaneous or underwater recovery
- Touch – 1 handed, non-simultaneous, not separated

IM:

- Stroke infraction
- Out of order

If possible, at this practice it is helpful if athletes can execute their swim events in the same order as they will be doing in competition. This will differ from the following week’s practice during which athletes will execute a “mock competition” which will add the element of waiting for their event. For this week, athletes can still be in their groups and be executing different events side by side, following their individual order of events.

3. Relay practice with competition assigned teams if possible.
4. Cool down for and stretch. Reflection and Q & A conversation during cool down.



Week 8 – Mock Competition

1. Warm-up, 10-20 minutes (See attached swimming warm-ups and cool-down pages at the end of this document)
2. Coach comes to the practice with the athletes' order of events in place and runs the sequence of events as it will take place at the competition. Athletes should practice waiting for their event and heat to be called and practice following directions from start to finish, putting all the event elements together and asking questions for clarification. Practicing waiting is very helpful to prepare for competition. Athletes should be reminded that at the actual competition, they will have to wait even longer for their events sometimes.

Free swim and games for fun are encouraged as a celebration of completing their mock swim meet. Coaches and assistant coaches and families discuss any further questions or concerns.

3. Cool down for 20 minutes and stretch.

Postseason

1. Meet with coaches to evaluate the season and each athlete in preparation for next year.
2. Conduct end-of-season celebration to include all constituents: parents, guardians, caregivers; athletes; coaches; and any other school or support personnel who have helped your program.
 - a. Provide certificates and acknowledgement of improvements to all athletes and volunteers.
 - b. Show video highlights or PowerPoint with pictures highlighting season.
 - c. Finish with food and beverages and music.
 - d. Provide postseason fitness program to athletes.
3. Review uniform and equipment inventory; make notes as to what needs to be replaced for next year; store.
 4. For those athletes not participating in the next sport season, communicate and suggest a fitness plan.



Warm-Ups and Cool Downs

Purpose of a Warm-Up

- Gradual increase in body temperature
- Gradual increase in heart rate
- Gradual increase in breathing rate
- Increase in blood flow to working muscles
- Increase in range of motion of primary muscle groups for sport
- Mental preparation

Note: *If conducting a warm-up on the pool deck, you first must ensure it is clear of any trip hazards, pools of water, and is not slippery underfoot. Ensure athletes are several feet/meters away from the pool.*

Sample Warm-up 1:	
Aerobic Activity:	- Jog In place (Endurance Level 2- Fitness Cards) - Quick punches (Endurance Level 1- Fitness Cards) - High Knees Job In Place (Endurance Level 4- Fitness Cards)
Dynamic Stretching:	- Side Stretch (Flexibility Level 4- Fitness Cards) - Hamstring Kicks (keep balance against the wall or partner) (Strength Level 1- Fitness Cards) Should & Arm Swings (Single arm & Double arm) - Chest Hugs
Sport Specific Movements:	- Flutter Kicks (Lying on your back) - Arm Strokes with emphasis on breathing

Sample Warm-up 2:	
Aerobic Activity:	- Skipping (Jump Rope)/ Shadow Skipping (without rope) - High Knees & Butt Kicks
Dynamic Stretching:	- Lateral reaches - Leg Swings - Arm Circles - Arm Swings
Sport Specific Movements:	- Sumo Squats- Slow Down- Explode back up - Arm strokes with emphasis on breathing



Cool-Downs

- When your training, practice or sport session is complete, you should always cool-down. It is just as important to have a good cool-down as it is to have a good warm-up. A good cool-down allows the body to gradually return to a state of rest.
 - A typical cool-down includes light aerobic activity followed by stretching. The aerobic activity should gradually decrease in intensity/difficulty. It could be a few laps at 50% intensity with a kickboard or pull buoy, or a freestyle swim.
 - The cool-down can be carried out in or out of the pool to bring the heart rate down, but we do recommend performing the stretching exercises out of the pool.
- Cool-downs are perfect opportunities for coaches to carry-out a debrief session with their athletes and review the session they have just had. Ask your athletes some open, informative questions that will make them think about the session and what they would have learned. In addition to the athletes reinforcing the coaching points you have given them, it also gives you, as a coach, the opportunity to see what works for each athlete as an individual.
 - Open Questions – Questions that cannot be answered with ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, for example: “What part of the training session did you find challenging today?”
 - Informative Questions – Questions that provide useful information for you, as a coach, and for the athlete.

Sample Cool-Down 1:

Low Intensity Swim:	- Swim 200m slowly while alternative strokes -Strokes and Glide (Drill 1.4)
Stretching:	- Side Stretch -Calf Stretch (Flexibility Level 1- Fitness Cards) -Childs Pose (Flexibility Level 1- Fitness Cards) - Quadriceps Stretch (Flexibility Level2- Fitness Cards) -Modified Hurdler’s Stretch (Flexibility Level 2- Fitness Cards) - Butterfly Stretch (Flexibility Level – Fitness Cards) - Triceps Stretch (Flexibility Level 3- Fitness Cards) - Seated Rotation Stretch (Flexibility Level 5- Fitness Cards) - Shoulder Rotation Stretch (Flexibility Level 6- Fitness Cards)

Sample Cool-Down 2:

Low Intensity Swim:	- Swim 200m slowly while alternative strokes - Catch up (Drill 1.2) - Floating Exercises
Stretching:	- Side Stretch -Calf Stretch (Flexibility Level 1- Fitness Cards) -Childs Pose (Flexibility Level 1- Fitness Cards) - Quadriceps Stretch (Flexibility Level2- Fitness Cards) -Modified Hurdler’s Stretch (Flexibility Level 2- Fitness Cards) - Butterfly Stretch (Flexibility Level – Fitness Cards) - Triceps Stretch (Flexibility Level 3- Fitness Cards) - Seated Rotation Stretch (Flexibility Level 5- Fitness Cards) - Shoulder Rotation Stretch (Flexibility Level 6- Fitness Cards)