



Special Olympics
youngathletes™

Special Olympics Mission

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

For more information visit

www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes
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Children's Foundation™

Young Athletes is possible thanks to the generous support of the Mattel Children's Foundation, the Lynch Family Foundation and The Gang Family Foundation.

Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation for the Benefit of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities.



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Off to a Great Start



Young Athletes is an innovative sports play program for children with intellectual disabilities, designed to introduce them to the world of sports prior to Special Olympics eligibility at age eight. Since its inception in 1968, Special Olympics has established itself as a preeminent global organization offering sports training and competition opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities ages eight and above. Over the years, families of children too young to compete looked for avenues to join the movement. Thanks to the generous support of the Mattel Children's Foundation, Lynch Family Foundation and Gang Family Foundation, Special Olympics can now welcome these future athletes and families through Young Athletes™ — a developmentally appropriate play program for children with intellectual disabilities ages two through 7.

Young Athletes introduces children with intellectual disabilities and their families to the world of Special Olympics by pursuing the following goals:

- Engage children with intellectual disabilities through developmentally appropriate play activities designed to foster physical, cognitive, and social development;
- Welcome family members of children with intellectual disabilities to the Special Olympics network of support;
- Raise awareness about the abilities of children with intellectual disabilities through inclusive peer participation, demonstrations and other events.

Young Athletes is a versatile program that can work in various learning situations. The program is designed for families to play with their young athletes at home in a fun atmosphere. It is also appropriate for preschools, schools and playgroups to use with small groups of young children with and without intellectual disabilities. The flexibility of Young Athletes ensures the opportunity to welcome families and their young children into the Special Olympics family.

Developing Skills for Success as a Future Special Olympics Athlete

- Foundational skills
- Walking and running
- Balancing and jumping
- Trapping and catching
- Throwing
- Striking
- Kicking
- Advanced skills

The Young Athletes program includes several resources to guide family members, educators and other professionals as they conduct Young Athletes activities with their children, brothers, sisters, cousins, grandchildren, students or patients.

- Young Athletes Activities Guide — descriptions of the official Young Athletes activities;
- Training DVD — instructional video of children performing the Young Athletes activities;
- Young Athletes Equipment Kit — equipment needed to perform the activities;
- www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes — further resources, materials and information.

