

**The Special Olympics coaching philosophy:
Athletes first, Winning second.**

Coaches play a unique and indispensable role in Special Olympics programs around the world. More than 50,000 certified Special Olympics coaches in the United States provide Special Olympics athletes with the sports skills and competitive spirit that define a true athlete.

Coaches not only provide skills training for athletes, but they are also role models and character builders. Coaches give Special Olympics athletes the most immediate awareness of their own worth, ability, courage and capacity to grow and improve.

As a coach, your attitude toward sports and competition will directly affect your athletes. Special Olympics believes that the athletic experience and the camaraderie shared by teammates is what benefits an athlete the most. Coaches should be aware of how they influence their athletes and should follow the guidelines presented in this section in all aspects of their interactions with athletes.

As you accept the role of a Special Olympics coach, you hold the key to a promising future for so many athletes. This section gives specific insight on the responsibilities of being a coach as well as some valuable information to make your experience rewarding for both you and your athletes.

What Makes a Successful Coach?

Knowledge of the sport - The more knowledge you have of the basic skills of a sport, and the more you know about teaching these basics in the proper sequence, the more fun you and your athletes will have.

Motivation to be a good coach - You can have all the skills and knowledge in the world, but without motivation you will not be a successful coach.

Empathy - The ability to readily understand the thoughts, feelings and emotions of your athletes and convey this to them. Successful coaches possess empathy. They are able to understand athletes' emotions of joy, frustration, anger and anxiety. The successful coach can channel these emotions into positive experiences.

Communication - The coach must be able to communicate with athletes, parents and assistant coaches. Everyone works together better when goals and objectives are clear.

Assessing - Watch your athletes to assure rewarding and positive experiences. It is possible that a given sport is not fun or appropriate for a given athlete. If this is the case, make appropriate changes.