



Special Olympics Coaching Quick Start Guide

# RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS



**Special Olympics**

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Special Olympics welcomes your ideas and comments for future revisions of this guide. We apologize if, for any reason, an acknowledgement has been inadvertently omitted.

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## Essential Components of a Rhythmic Gymnastics Training Session

Special Olympics athletes respond well to a simple, well-structured training routine with which they can become familiar. An organized plan, prepared before you get to the facility, will help establish such a routine and help make the best use of your limited time. A basic training plan is outlined below.

### **Warming Up**

#### **Aerobic Activity**

Music is an integral part of rhythmic gymnastics, and the aerobic section of the warm-up is a good place to teach tempo and rhythm, timing, and moving to different types of music. By choosing dance or locomotor movements that relate to lively music, you can create an aerobic warm-up that will be fun for the athletes, as well as training for essential body skills. For a sample aerobic warm-up to music, refer to the Skills section of this guide.

#### **Stretching**

The stretching portion of the warm-up can also be done to music. Choose softer music with a slower tempo to encourage long, slow stretches. You can include graceful, flowing music to practice arm and body waves during this section of the warm-up. Use transitions between the exercises to make the stretching session flow. Be sure to include stretches for all parts of the body. For a sample stretching and body waves warm-up to music, refer to the Skills section of this guide.

### **Skills Instruction**

#### **Body Skills**

Rhythmic gymnastics body skills are divided into four categories: pivots/turns, jumps/leaps, balances and flexibilities. The body positions and technique are those used in classical ballet. It is the coach's responsibility to have a good, working knowledge of the dance elements in the routines, as well as progressions for teaching those elements with proper technique and body alignment.

#### **Apparatus Technique**

There are five pieces of rhythmic gymnastics hand apparatus: rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. For each apparatus, there are basic skills specific to that apparatus. Teaching hints that will relate to all pieces of equipment are listed below:

- ♦ Coaches should practice new skills themselves before teaching the athletes. This is a good way to figure out appropriate ways to break the skill down into parts and to identify possible problems they might encounter in teaching the skill.
- ♦ When teaching apparatus skills, it is important to teach the skill correctly, with good technique, from the very first attempt. It is difficult, if not impossible, to make corrections in technique after the athlete has practiced incorrectly for several sessions. For example, when learning tosses, the athlete should focus not on the catch, but on tossing the apparatus with straight arms. When she can toss correctly with straight arms, her tosses will become consistent and the catches will be easy.
- ♦ Teach new skills in parts. First, demonstrate the complete skill. Then, break the skill down into parts and practice each part separately. For example, to learn straight jumps over the rope, the athlete must first practice swinging the rope overhead. She can also practice holding the rope in a U-shape and jumping over. Finally, in slow motion, she can swing the rope overhead to the U-shape, jump over and continue with another swing. Teaching in parts not only promotes good technique, but also allows the athlete to be successful when learning new skills.
- ♦ Apparatus skills should be taught progressively. For example, the athlete must first learn to swing a hoop forward and backward in the sagittal plane before she can learn to toss the hoop. Likewise, she must be able to



do consistently good tosses and catches, with correct technique, before she adds a body skill. The coach should choose skills that are appropriate to the level and ability of each athlete.

- ♦ When the athlete has mastered several skills with a piece of apparatus, the coach can introduce combinations. For example, with ball: toss and catch, roll in and out the arms, bounce and catch. If the athlete loses the technique when doing combinations, go back and practice each skill separately.
- ♦ Once correct technique has been learned, repetition is the key to mastery of a skill. Remember – perfect practice makes perfect!
- ♦ Creativity is important in rhythmic gymnastics, but can be detrimental if athletes are allowed to experiment on their own too much, practicing poor technique which could easily turn into bad habits.

### Competition Experience

- ♦ Taking into consideration the length of the training period, as well as the abilities of each athlete, the coach must determine the level and number of routines an athlete is capable of learning and competing successfully.
- ♦ During each training session, the coach must choose appropriate activities in the process of teaching the competitive routines.
- ♦ Teach competitive routines in parts:
  1. Teach the presentation to the judge at the beginning and end of each routine as an integral part of the routine.
  2. Teach the identified skills. The athlete should learn the body skill and the apparatus skill separately before combining the two.
  3. Teach the identified skills within sequences from the routine, one section at a time.
  4. Combine the sections to practice the complete routine without music.
  5. If a television is available, play the DVD segment showing the version of the routine that is filmed from the back, and have the athletes follow.
  6. As a training aid, have the athletes practice the routine to the music that has vocal cues.
  7. Practice the routine with music.
  8. If possible, have a practice competition. The athletes should perform in competition attire before an audience. Regardless of whether the routines are being scored, someone should sit at a judges table and acknowledge the athletes as they present themselves before and after each routine.
- ♦ The ultimate goal is to train athletes to perform routines independently, but some athletes may need visual cues, especially in the first competition. Others may always need visual cues.
- ♦ If an athlete has physical disabilities that make a skill too difficult or impossible to perform, try to find a way to alter the skill so that the athlete can include it in the routine. Remember – there are deductions for changing the routine, but the athlete should have the opportunity to compete within her abilities.
- ♦ Teach the presentation to the judge as an integral part of each routine. The athlete should know how to acknowledge the judge, walk onto the floor and assume the beginning pose for each routine and with each piece of apparatus. The athlete should also practice the salute to the judge at the completion of each routine.
- ♦ In a competition, the judges will sit by Side 1 of the floor exercise mat. Refer to the Rules section of this guide for a diagram of the competition floor.
- ♦ Athletes should be dressed neatly in appropriate attire for competition. Long hair must be securely pulled back. Remember, the judge forms a first impression as the athlete walks onto the floor!
- ♦ Special Olympics regulations follow the current FIG rules for competition attire. At the coach's discretion, seated athletes are allowed to wear workout apparel for competition.
- ♦ The athlete's rhythmic apparatus should be color coordinated with the competition attire. Apparatus is available in many colors. Decorative tape may be added to the hoop and clubs. Ropes and ribbons may be dyed to show different colors.



## Rhythmic Gymnastics Attire

Discuss with parents/guardians and athletes the types of attire that are acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. For the safety of the gymnast, no jewelry is allowed in training or competition.

### Workout Attire

For training, athletes need to wear clothes which will allow them to move freely. Leotards are appropriate and may be worn with footless tights or bike shorts. Warm-up pants and a fitted t-shirt are fine for male and female athletes. Long hair should be pulled back securely in a ponytail or bun. Athletes should not wear jewelry, with the exception of stud earrings in pierced ears. Athletes may practice in bare feet, socks, gymnastics shoes or rhythmic half-slippers.

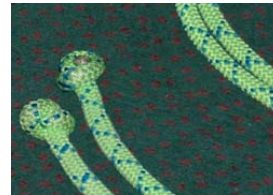
### Competition Attire

Refer to the Official Special Olympics Rules for Rhythmic Gymnastics for all regulations concerning the athlete's attire.

## Rhythmic Gymnastics Equipment

There are five pieces of rhythmic gymnastics hand apparatus: rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. Below, you will find the required dimensions for each apparatus. Athletes may use smaller apparatus as a training aid, but in competition, all apparatus must be the correct size. (Note - there is a form to complete if your athlete has a disability that necessitates their using equipment that does not meet Special Olympics specifications). The size of the apparatus can range from child size to senior equipment, based on the gymnast's size and skill level. Equipment should be color coordinated with the athlete's leotard. Refer to the Official Special Olympics rules for Rhythmic Gymnastics for apparatus specifications.

### Rope



#### Ends

Handles of any kind are not allowed, but one or two knots are permitted at each end. At the ends (to the exclusion of all other parts of the rope), a maximum of 10 centimeters may be covered by an anti-slip material, either colored or neutral.

#### How to select the appropriate size rope for your athlete

Holding one knot in each hand, the athlete stands on the middle of the rope. The knots should come up to her armpits.

### Hoop



#### How to select the appropriate size hoop for your athlete

Find a hoop that the athlete can pass through and handle easily. Generally when the hoop is placed at the athlete's side, the upper rim will come to her hip.





### Ball



How to select the appropriate size ball for your athlete  
Find a ball that the athlete can hold without gripping and catch easily.

### Clubs



How to select the appropriate size clubs for your athlete  
Find clubs that are shorter than the distance between the athlete's wrist and shoulder.

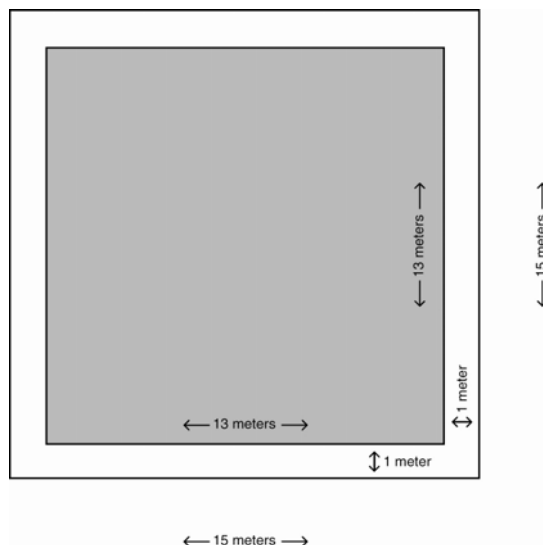
### Ribbon

How to select the appropriate size ribbon stick for your athlete  
When the athlete holds the ribbon stick down to her side, it should not touch the floor.

How to select the appropriate size ribbon for your athlete  
Find a ribbon that the athlete can use to perform the patterns easily, without knots.

### Floor

13 meters by 13 meters with a security zone of 1 meter around. A carpeted area may be used, or a floor that is neither too tacky nor slippery. The ceiling height does not need to be 8 meters (26 feet 3 inches), but should be fairly high.





## Appendix: Skill Development Tips

### Body Skills

Body Skills for rhythmic gymnastics are divided into four categories:

#### **Jumps/Leaps**

An athlete must have strength and flexibility to jump and leap well. She can develop ankle strength by doing relevés and jumping rope. For skills such as hitch kicks and split leaps, grand battements (high kicks) will increase the strength in her legs. Splits and other stretching exercises will increase her flexibility. Again, core strength is necessary for the athlete to maintain a stable upper body position during jumps and leaps. Only with a stable upper body can the athlete have control of her arm position.

#### **Pivots/Turns**

In order for an athlete to turn well, she must have good posture and body alignment. Core strength is essential for maintaining correct alignment of the torso and pelvis. For basic turns on two feet (tiptoe and chainé turns), the athlete has to maintain a straight body position. This can be practiced lying on the floor: first learning to activate the core muscles necessary to achieve the straight body position and then doing a log roll to learn to maintain that position. The next progression is to learn pivots standing on one foot (for example, passé pivots). This requires more balance and greater control over body alignment. The athlete should first practice standing flat-footed in the position of the pivot, then balancing in that position in relevé. Once the athlete can balance successfully, she can try a 180° and then 360° pivot. Remember – always teach the correct position first and then the pivot!

#### **Balances**

Good posture and body alignment are the keys to good balances. The same progressions can be used for balances as for pivots and turns. The athlete must learn to activate the core abdominal muscles to maintain correct alignment of the torso and pelvis. Pilates exercises are excellent for developing this strength. Always practice balances first flat-footed and then in relevé. Pay attention to details, such as placement of the free foot and the arms.



#### **Flexibilities**

Rhythmic gymnasts must demonstrate supple body waves, as well as elements of leg and back flexibility. Some athletes are naturally supple and must train with strength exercises in order to prevent injuries when working on flexibilities, while other athletes are naturally stiff and must stretch in order to perform the flexibilities. The coach must identify the strengths and weaknesses of each rhythmic gymnast and design an appropriate training plan.



### Arabesque (Front)



Stand on one leg with the other leg extended to the front, toe pointed on the floor. Keeping both legs straight, lift the front leg off of the ground, as high as possible with good body position. Arm position is optional.

- ♦ To achieve the correct body position, the athlete can practice the front arabesque holding onto a ballet barre.

### Arabesque (Back)



Stand on one leg with the other leg extended to the back, toe pointed on the floor. Keeping both legs straight and the torso upright, lift the back leg off the ground, as high as possible with good body position. Arm position is optional.

- ♦ To achieve the correct body position, the athlete can practice the back arabesque holding onto a ballet barre.

### Body Waves

With the three body waves listed below (front, back and side), the athlete must involve the whole body in the wave. It is incorrect to move only the arms.

#### Body Wave (Front)



- ♦ A front body wave must have a contraction, an arch and a supple wave through the body.
- ♦ Separate the movements so that the knees go forward first, then the hips go forward, the back arches and finally the body straightens.
- ♦ The athlete should finish the body wave in a balanced position.

#### Body Wave (Back)

- ♦ A back body wave must have an arch, a contraction and a supple wave through the body.
- ♦ Separate the movements so the back arches first, then the body contracts, the knees go forward, the hips go forward and then the body straightens.
- ♦ The athlete should finish the body wave in a balanced position.



### Body Wave (Side)

A side body wave must have a contraction to one side, a supple wave through the body and finish with a contraction to the other side. The athlete begins in a tendu to the side, passes through a second position pli , and finishes in a tendu to the other side.



### Cat Leap



The cat leap is done with the legs bent in a front attitude position (turned out). The athlete steps and kicks one leg in front, jumps and changes legs in a scissor-like motion.

### Chain  Turn

Keeping the feet in first position relev , the athlete performs a three-step 360  traveling turn on the toes. She should turn 180  with each step.

### Chass s

In the two types of chass s listed below (front and side), the athlete must jump high enough to point the toes and show the correct position of the feet.

#### Chass  (Front)

The athlete performs a forward gallop step. The athlete should practice the front chass  with both the right and left foot in front.

- ◆ The feet should be closed together in the air, with one foot in front of the other.

#### Chass  (Side)

The athlete performs a sideways gallop step. The athlete should practice the side chass  to the right and left.

- ◆ The feet should be together, side by side, in the air.





## Grand Battement

The athlete performs a high kick to the front, side, or back.

### Grand Battement to the front

- ♦ The Grand Battement to the front is a skill that may be used in routines for competition. In addition, this skill prepares the athlete to thrust the front leg dynamically forward for leaps, jumps and flexibilities.
- ♦ In the Grand Battement to the front, the athlete must keep both legs straight and the upper body stretched tall. It is helpful to teach this skill first with the athlete holding onto a ballet barre behind her, with the feeling that he/she is standing as tall and straight as the wall. Next, progress to holding onto the barre with one hand, for stability. Remember - the athlete's free arm must be held in a defined shape. Finally, progress to the center of the floor.

### Grand Battement to the side

- ♦ The Grand Battement to the side is a skill that may be used in routines for competition. In addition, this skill prepares the athlete to kick the leg dynamically to the side for side leaps and other jumps. The kick to the side is also a preparation for catching the leg to do advanced balances and flexibilities.
- ♦ In the Grand Battement to the side, the athlete must keep both legs straight and the shoulders and hips square. Teach this skill with the athlete holding onto a ballet barre with one hand for support.
- ♦ The position of the Grand Battement to the side is not with the leg directly to the side by the shoulder. Most athletes do not have the hip flexibility to be able to achieve this position without moving the body out of alignment. The correct position will be determined by each athlete's flexibility and will probably be a little diagonally side and to the front. Therefore, do not teach this skill with the athlete facing the barre.

### Grand Battement to the back

- ♦ The Grand Battement to the back prepares the athlete to lift the back leg straight and with dynamics during leaps and other jumps.
- ♦ In the Grand Battement to the back, the athlete must keep both legs straight and the shoulders back and square. It is helpful to teach this skill first with the athlete facing the ballet barre, keeping the shoulders square to the wall. Next, progress to holding onto the barre with one hand and, finally, to the center of the floor.

## Hitch Kick

Keeping both legs straight, the athlete steps and kicks one leg high in front, jumps and changes legs in a scissor-like motion.

## Leap

The athlete kicks one leg straight in front, takes off from the back foot and leaps forward, landing on the front foot. In the air, the athlete should show the maximum possible split of the legs. A split leap will show at least 180° split of the legs. A stride leap will show a lesser degree of split.

## Passé

The athlete stands on one foot with the toes of the free foot pointed to the knee of the supporting leg.

- ♦ In a turned out passé, the knee should be opened to the side.
- ♦ To learn the correct position, the athlete can sit on the floor to practice the passé.
- ♦ In a parallel passé, the knee will face forward.



## Passé Pivot

Standing on one leg, the athlete pivots 180° or 360° in a turned out passé position.



Use this progression to teach the passé pivot:

- ◆ Preparation: a forward lunge with the feet turned out, hips square, one arm rounded in front, one arm rounded to the side.
- ◆ Passé balance flat-footed.
- ◆ Passé balance in relevé.
- ◆ 180° pivot in the passé position.
- ◆ 360° pivot in the passé position.

## Relevé

The athlete stands high on the balls of the feet and toes.

## Straight Jump

- ◆ The athlete jumps in a straight body position.
- ◆ The legs should be extended and the toes pointed straight under the torso.
- ◆ The arms should swing forward and extend overhead during the jump.
- ◆ The jump should start and finish in a plié.

## Tiptoe Turn

With many small steps in relevé, the athlete turns in place (bourrée turn).





## Apparatus Skills

- ♦ All skills should be practiced with both the right and left hands.
- ♦ Athletes should be proficient with the apparatus skills and technique before trying to combine the apparatus skills with body skills.
- ♦ For competition, all apparatus must meet Special Olympics specifications. For training, especially at the beginning of the season, use apparatus that will allow the athletes to succeed. For example, the athletes will find it easier to control a shorter ribbon when they begin, and can learn to use longer ribbons as they progress.
- ♦ Take the time to teach good technique! It is much easier to teach apparatus skills correctly from the beginning than it is to correct basic handling errors later.
- ♦ Reward the attempt! Set the athletes up for success by breaking each skill down into parts. Know your athletes' capabilities and challenge them, but do not set goals that will be too difficult or impossible to reach.

### Axis – Horizontal and Vertical

- ♦ An axis is an imaginary line around which the hand apparatus or gymnast rotates.
- ♦ The horizontal axis is an imaginary line drawn from side to side (like the horizon). For example, the flip toss with the hoop rotates around a horizontal axis.
- ♦ The vertical axis is an imaginary line drawn up and down. For example, the hoop spin rotates around a vertical axis.

### Directions – Clockwise and Counter-clockwise

Directions for circles and rotations with the apparatus are termed clockwise and counter-clockwise. When teaching directions to the athletes, it is helpful to have a clock nearby that has minute and hour hands.

#### On the frontal plane:

- ♦ Hold the clock in front of the athlete.
- ♦ For clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will follow the direction of the hands on the clock (circling to the right).
- ♦ For counter-clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will move in the opposite direction of the hands on the clock (circling to the left).

#### On the sagittal plane on the right side of the body:

- ♦ Hold the clock by the athlete's right side.
- ♦ For clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will follow the direction of the hands on the clock (circling backward).
- ♦ For counter-clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will move in the opposite direction of the hands on the clock (circling forward).

#### On the sagittal plane on the left side of the body:

- ♦ Hold the clock by the athlete's left side.
- ♦ For clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will follow the direction of the hands on the clock (circling forward).
- ♦ For counter-clockwise circles or rotations, the apparatus will move in the opposite direction of the hands on the clock (circling backward).



### Planes – Frontal, Sagittal and Horizontal

- ♦ A plane is an imaginary, two-dimensional surface in which movements are performed.
- ♦ The frontal plane divides the body in half, front to back. For example, a large ball circle on the frontal plane will be performed in front of the athlete and can be practiced facing a wall.
- ♦ The sagittal plane divides the body in half, side to side. For example, a large sagittal circle with the ribbon will be performed on the side and can be practiced standing beside a wall.
- ♦ The horizontal plane divides the body in half, upper and lower body. For example, a hoop on the horizontal plane will be held flat (like the horizon).

### Turns, pivots and rotations in degrees

- ♦  $1/4 = 90^\circ$
- ♦  $1/2 = 180^\circ$
- ♦ Full =  $360^\circ$

### Rope

#### General Rope Technique

- ♦ The rope must always maintain a defined shape.
- ♦ The athlete should hold the ends of the rope on the knots. Different types of grips are listed below.
- ♦ On swings, rotations and jumps the rope should not hit the floor.
- ♦ On swings and rotations the rope should be on plane (frontal, sagittal or overhead).
- ♦ When the rope is held in one hand, the athlete must show a defined position with the free arm.

#### How to Hold the Rope

##### U-shape

The athlete holds one knot in each hand with the rope making the shape of a U.



##### Both knots in one hand

The athlete holds both knots in one hand and the folded end of the rope hangs free. The free arm must show a defined shape.







### Doubled

The athlete holds both knots in one hand and the folded end of the rope in the other hand; both hands are in an over-grip.



### Doubled, holding the middle of the rope with the other hand

With arms extended shoulder-width apart, the athlete holds both knots in one hand, in an over-grip, and with the other hand holds near the middle of the rope, in an under-grip.



### Quadrupled

With arms extended shoulder-width apart, the athlete holds both knots in one hand in an over-grip, and the other hand holds near the middle of the rope, in an under-grip. The athlete holds the folded end of the rope between the thumb and forefinger of the hand that is holding the knots.



## Rope Skills

The following types of rope skills will be shown: Swings, Rotations (including figure 8's), Wraps, Jumps and Release.

### Swings

#### Swings in a U-shape

- ♦ The rope must maintain the U-shape during the swing. In order to do this, the athlete should swing the rope gently.
- ♦ The athlete should keep the arms extended, but not locked.
- ♦ The rope should not touch the floor during the swing.

#### Swings in a U-shape side to side

- ♦ Hold the arms wide to the sides and swing the rope gently to maintain the U-shape.



### Swings in a U-shape front and back

- ♦ Extend the right arm to the side. Place the left hand by the right shoulder. Swing the rope gently forward and back, maintaining the U-shape.
- ♦ Reverse the skill, extending the left arm to the side.

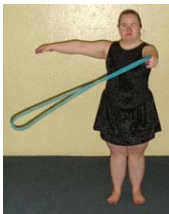
### Swings in a U-shape overhead

- ♦ The athlete must learn to swing the rope overhead forward and backward in a U-shape as preparation for jumps over the turning rope.
- ♦ The athlete should keep the arms extended, but not locked, as she swings the rope overhead either forward or backward.
- ♦ Try to keep the rope from touching the ground.

### Rotations

- ♦ Rotations must be on plane.
- ♦ The athlete should keep the arms extended, but not locked, and rotate the rope from the wrist.
- ♦ The athlete should practice with the right and left hands.
- ♦ Remember to keep the free arm in a defined position.

#### Rotations with a doubled rope on the frontal plane



Overhead rotations

#### Rotations with a doubled rope on the sagittal plane



Rotations on the sagittal plane  
holding the middle of a doubled rope



Rotations overhead holding the middle of a doubled rope





### Figure 8's

- ♦ The Figure 8's must be on plane.
- ♦ Practice rotations separately on each side of the body before attempting the full Figure 8.

### Wraps

#### Around one arm

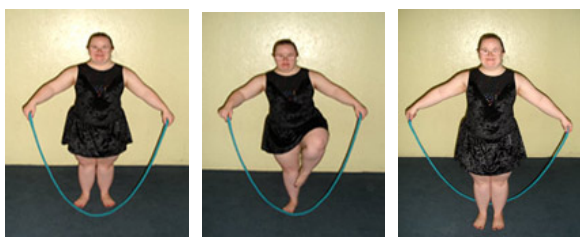


- ♦ Extend the right arm to the side. Place the left hand by the right shoulder.
- ♦ Swing the rope forward and backward in a U-shape. On the backswing, begin circling the extended arm until the rope wraps around the arm.
- ♦ Circle the rope in the opposite direction to unwrap the arm.
- ♦ Reverse the skill by extending the left arm to the side.

### Jumps

- ♦ When the athlete is jumping, the rope should not hit the floor.
- ♦ The athlete should keep the arms extended, but not locked, and turn the rope from the wrists.
- ♦ The athlete should jump high enough to extend the legs and point the toes on every jump.

#### Jumps forward and backward over a U-shape



- ♦ Hold the rope in a U-shape.
- ♦ Step forward and backward over the rope, maintaining the U-shape.
- ♦ When the athlete has mastered the steps over the rope, try a small jump over the rope with one foot, closing with the other foot.
- ♦ Jump over the rope with two feet together.



### **Straight jumps forward (with and without a rebound)**



- ♦ Swing the rope overhead in a U-shape.
- ♦ Stop the rope as it nears the floor, and jump over with both feet together.
- ♦ When the athlete can jump over the still rope, have her try jumping while the rope is swinging.
- ♦ When the athlete can jump once over the turning rope, add more jumps, with or without a rebound (2 jumps for each turn of the rope).

### **Straight jump backward (with and without a rebound)**



- ♦ Follow the same progression as for forward jumps.

### **Runs over the rope (with the same foot and alternating feet)**

- ♦ Swing the rope overhead in a U-shape.
- ♦ Stop the rope as it nears the floor and step over with one foot, then the other.
- ♦ Continue swinging the rope and stepping over as you travel across the floor, gradually making the steps into small jumps.
- ♦ When the athlete can step/jump over the still rope, have her try stepping/jumping over the turning rope.
- ♦ Practice with the same foot stepping over the rope each time, and with alternating feet.

### **Cat leap over the rope**

- ♦ Holding one knot in each hand, begin Figure 8s with the rope.
- ♦ Separate the hands, making a U-shape with the rope, and cat leap over.
- ♦ As soon as the rope passes overhead, put the hands together and return to the Figure 8s.

### **Release**

- ♦ The athlete will hold one knot, with the rope extended behind.
- ♦ Then, swing the arm forward and upward to catch the free end of the rope.



## Hoop

### General Hoop Technique

- ♦ The hoop should always be on plane.

**Frontal plane**



**Sagittal plane**



**Horizontal plane**

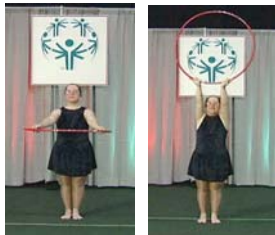


- ♦ All hoop tosses and catches should be performed with the arms extended. On the release, the arm should point in the direction of the toss.
- ♦ Swings should be performed from the shoulders, and rotations should be performed from the wrists.
- ♦ When the hoop is held in one hand, the athlete must show a defined position with the free arm.

### How to Grip the Hoop

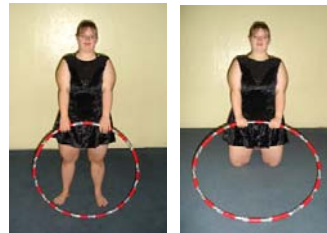
#### Undergrip

One or both hands with palms facing upward.



#### Overgrip

One or both hands with palms facing downward.



#### Mixed grip

Hold with one hand in an overgrip one in an undergrip.



#### Outside grip

Hold in an overgrip on opposite sides of the hoop.





## Hoop Skills

The following types of hoop skills will be shown: Swings, Passing the hoop around the body, Rolls on the floor, Spins, Passing through the hoop, Rotations and Tosses and catches.

### Swings

- ♦ Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arms extended.
- ♦ The swings must be on plane.
- ♦ Practice sagittal swings with the right and left hands.

#### Swing side to side in the frontal plane



- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop in an undergrip.
- ♦ The athlete must keep the arms straight, swinging from the side, down in front close to the body, and then to the other side.
- ♦ The hoop must stay on the frontal plane. The athlete should practice this swing facing a wall.

#### Swing side to side in the horizontal plane

- ♦ In an undergrip, the athlete holds the hoop on the horizontal plane and, keeping the arms extended, swings the hoop from side to side.

#### Swing front and back in the sagittal plane

- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop with one hand on the sagittal plane.
- ♦ The hoop must stay on plane during the swing. The athlete should practice standing beside a wall.
- ♦ On the forward swing, the arm must stay extended.
- ♦ Depending on the size of the hoop, the arm may relax slightly on the backswing. If the athlete has to bend her arm completely, change to a smaller size hoop.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The sagittal swings are especially important because they progress to tosses. For this reason, it is vital that the athlete swings the hoop on plane with an extended arm.

### Passing the Hoop around the Body

- ♦ The athlete starts with the leading hand in an overgrip, passes the hoop behind the back, catches with the other hand in an overgrip, and continues passing the hoop to the front.
- ♦ To explain the grips and show how the correct grip keeps the hoop on plane, teach this skill with the athlete kneeling.

### Rolls on the floor

- ♦ Rolls should be smooth. Assisted and free rolls should pass easily from one hand to the other.
- ♦ Rolls must be on plane.



### **Assisted roll**

- ♦ Using the hands to roll the hoop from one side to the other, the athlete momentarily holds the hoop with both hands in front of the body.
- ♦ At the beginning and end of the roll, when the athlete holds the hoop with one hand, the free arm must be in a defined position.

### **Free roll**

- ♦ The athlete pushes the hoop with one hand to roll it in front of the body to the catch with the other hand.
- ♦ The athlete must push the hoop straight so it rolls on plane.
- ♦ The free arm must be in a defined position.

### **Boomerang roll**

- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop with one hand on the sagittal plane.
- ♦ With a flick of the wrist to create a backspin, the athlete rolls the hoop forward and catches it when it returns.
- ♦ The farther the hoop rolls away from the athlete, the more backspin is required to make it return, so practice first with small boomerang rolls.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.

### **Spins**

- ♦ Spins on the floor must rotate around the vertical axis.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.

### **Assisted spin**

- ♦ In the assisted spin, the athlete keeps one hand on the top of the hoop.

### **Free spin**

- ♦ In the free spin, the athlete flicks the wrist to cause the hoop to spin on its own.
- ♦ On the spin, the hoop must be far enough away so it does not touch the athlete's leg.
- ♦ The athlete should catch the hoop before it begins to spin off the axis.

### **Spin the hoop to change hands**

- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop in one hand and begins a spin around the vertical axis in the direction the hoop is traveling across in front of the body.
- ♦ Continuing the spin, the athlete changes hands in front of the body.

### **Passing through the Hoop**

#### **Stepping through the hoop**

- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop low, with an undergrip, on the frontal plane.
- ♦ The athlete steps over the bottom edge of the hoop, which may be resting on the floor.
- ♦ After stepping over with both feet, the athlete moves the hoop up and over the head.

#### **Cat leap through the hoop**

- ♦ The cat leap is a progression of stepping through the hoop.



## Rotations

- ♦ Rotations must be on plane.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.

### Rotations on the frontal plane



- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop on the frontal plane.
- ♦ The hoop should rotate around the hand, with the arm extended.
- ♦ The hoop must stay on plane. The athlete should practice facing a wall.
- ♦ Practice the rotations clockwise and counter-clockwise. Imagine the clock is on the wall facing the athlete.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The free arm should show a defined position.

### Rotations on the sagittal plane

- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop on the sagittal plane.
- ♦ The hoop should rotate around the hand, with the arm extended.
- ♦ The hoop must stay on plane. The athlete should practice beside a wall.
- ♦ Practice the rotations clockwise and counter-clockwise. Image the clock is on the wall on the side the athlete is doing the rotations.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The free arm should show a defined position.

### Overhead rotations



- ♦ The athlete rotates the hoop on the hand held above the head.
- ♦ The hoop must stay on plane.
- ♦ Practice the rotations in both directions and with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The free arm should show a defined position.





## Tosses

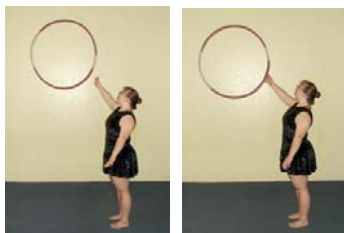
### Flip toss with 180° rotation

- ♦ The athlete holds the hoop in front of the body on the horizontal plane in an undergrip.
- ♦ With arms extended, the athlete tosses the hoop upward and catches after it has rotated 180°.
- ♦ Flip tosses must rotate around the horizontal axis. The athlete should try to make the hoop rotate slowly, because a hoop rotating fast will be difficult to catch.

### Flip toss with 360° rotation

- ♦ The athlete should be able to do the flip toss with 180° rotation easily before trying the flip toss with 360° rotation.

### Swing to toss and catch with one hand



- ♦ Tosses from a swing should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arm straight.
- ♦ On the release, the arm should point in the direction of the toss.
- ♦ With the arm extended, the athlete catches the toss with one hand on the bottom edge of the hoop.
- ♦ The athlete should catch the hoop, with the arm high, and then complete the downward swing.
- ♦ Practice tosses from a swing with the right and left hands.

### Swing to toss and catch with two hands

- ♦ The athlete catches the toss with two hands, one higher than the other.

### Swing to toss and catch with rotations

- ♦ The athlete catches with her hand inside the hoop and begins rotations on the sagittal plane.



## Ball

### General Ball Technique

- ♦ The ball should rest in the palm of the athlete's hand. The fingers should be separated, but not gripping the ball.
- ♦ The athlete should never grip the ball or press the ball against any part of the body.
- ♦ All tosses, bounces and catches should be performed with straight arms.
- ♦ When the ball is held in one hand, the athlete must show a defined position with the free arm.

### How to Hold the Ball

Correct way to hold the ball



Incorrect ways to hold the ball

#### Holding the ball close to the body



#### Gripping the ball



## Ball Skills

The following types of ball skills will be shown: Swings, Passing the ball around the body, Bounces, Rolls and Tosses and catches.

### Swings

- ♦ Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arms extended.
- ♦ The swings must be on plane.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.
- ♦ The athlete should not grip the ball.

#### Two hand sagittal swing

- ♦ The athlete holds the ball with two hands in front of the body.
- ♦ Keeping the ball close to her side, the athlete swings the ball sagittally on the right and returns to the front.
- ♦ Repeat the swing on the left side.
- ♦ The arms may relax during the swing. Make sure the ball doesn't touch the forearm on the backswing.



### **One hand sagittal swing**

- ♦ The athlete holds the ball with the right hand in front of the body.
- ♦ Keeping the ball close to her side, with the elbow leading, the athlete swings the ball sagittally on the right and returns to the front.
- ♦ Repeat the swing to the left, holding the ball in the left hand.
- ♦ Relax the elbow slightly so the ball does not touch the forearm on the backswing.
- ♦ The free arm must show a defined position.

### **Two hand swing to frontal circle**

- ♦ The athlete holds the ball with two hands, low in front of the body.
- ♦ Keeping the circle on the frontal plane, the athlete moves both arms in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction to complete either a swing from side to side or a full circle.
- ♦ The arms should be extended throughout the swing or circle.
- ♦ The athlete should practice facing a wall to keep the circle on plane.

### **Swing in front, passing the ball from hand to hand**

- ♦ With both arms extended to the sides, the athlete holds the ball in the right hand.
- ♦ Both hands move in front of the body, where the athlete passes the ball to the left hand.
- ♦ Open both arms to the sides.
- ♦ Repeat the swing, passing the ball from the left hand to the right hand.
- ♦ The ball should rest in the palm of the hand throughout this skill.

### **Swing, passing the ball from hand to hand overhead**

- ♦ With both arms extended to the sides, the athlete holds the ball in the right hand.
- ♦ Both hands move overhead, where the athlete passes the ball to the left hand.
- ♦ Open both arms to the sides.
- ♦ Repeat the swing, passing the ball from the left hand to the right hand.
- ♦ The arms should remain extended throughout this skill.

### **Passing the ball around the body**

- ♦ The ball should not rest on the forearms or other parts of the body.
- ♦ The athlete should not grip the ball.

### **Passing the ball around the waist**

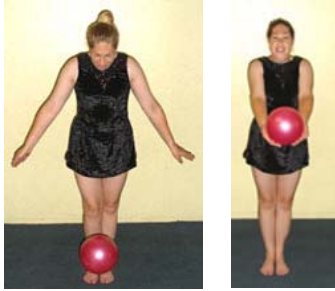




## Bounces

- ♦ The athlete should bounce and catch with straight arms.
- ♦ The athlete should bounce the ball energetically.

### Bounce and catch with two hands



### Bounce with one hand and catch with two hands



### Bounce and catch with one hand



### Bounce in a V

- ♦ Hold the ball in the right hand.
- ♦ Bounce the ball at an angle toward the left hand.
- ♦ Catch in the left hand.
- ♦ Repeat, bouncing the ball from the left hand to the right hand.

## Rolls

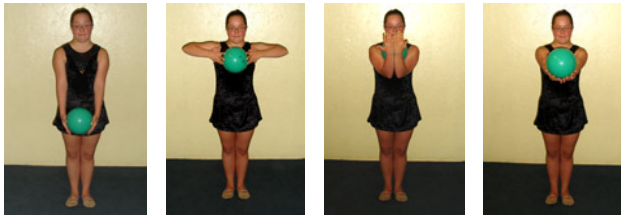
- ♦ Whether on the floor or on the body, rolls should be smooth, without bouncing.



### Rolls on the floor

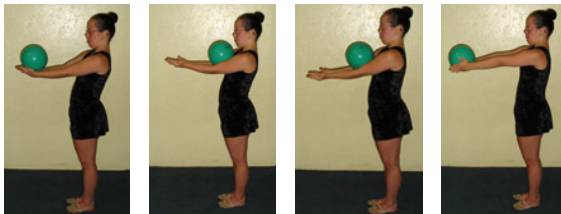


### Roll up the body and out the arms



- ◆ Hold the ball with two hands, low in front of the body.
- ◆ Using the fingers, roll the ball up the body. The elbows should open to the sides.
- ◆ Move the elbows close together and straighten the arms to allow the ball to roll out the arms.
- ◆ Raise the arms slightly at the end of the roll to catch the ball.

### Roll in and out both arms



- ◆ With the arms extended forward, hold the ball in two hands.
- ◆ Lift the arms slightly to allow the ball to roll in toward the chest. Do not flex the wrists or grip the ball against the forearm to initiate the roll.
- ◆ When the ball reaches the chest, lower the arms slightly to allow the ball to roll out the arms.
- ◆ Raise the arms slightly at the end of the roll to catch the ball.

### Roll in and out one arm

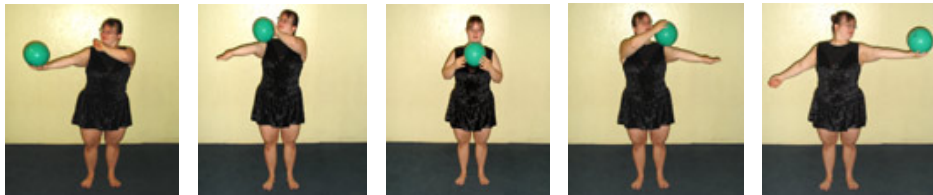


- ◆ With the right arm extended to the side, hold the ball in the right hand. Position the left hand by the right shoulder.
- ◆ Extend and lift the right arm slightly to allow the ball to roll in toward the shoulder. Do not flex the wrist or grip the ball on the forearm to initiate the roll.
- ◆ Catch the ball with the left hand.



- ◆ Push gently with the left hand to roll the ball back out the arm to the hand.
- ◆ Lift the right arm slightly at the end of the roll to catch the ball.
- ◆ Keep the elbow extended, but not locked, during the rolls.
- ◆ Repeat with the left hand.

### Roll in one arm, across chest, and out the other arm



- ◆ With the right arm extended to the side, hold the ball in the right hand. Position the left hand by the right shoulder.
- ◆ Extend and lift the right arm slightly to allow the ball to roll in toward the shoulder. Do not flex the wrist or grip the ball on the forearm to initiate the roll.
- ◆ Catch the ball with the left hand.
- ◆ Using both hands, roll the ball across the chest to the left shoulder.
- ◆ Holding the ball with the right hand, extend the left arm to the side.
- ◆ Push gently with the right hand to roll the ball out the left arm to the hand.
- ◆ Lift the left arm slightly at the end of the roll to catch the ball.
- ◆ Repeat, rolling the ball from left to right.
- ◆ Keep the elbows extended, but not locked, during the rolls.
- ◆ This skill is a progression for rolling the ball across both arms and the chest.

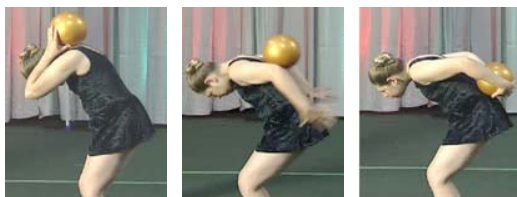
### Roll across both arms

- ◆ The athlete should be proficient at rolling the ball in and out each arm before attempting this skill.
- ◆ The roll across both arms is performed with the same technique as the previous skill, but the ball rolls freely in one arm, across the chest and out the other arm.

### Assisted roll on the legs

- ◆ The athlete sits in a pike position and uses the hands to roll the ball down the legs toward the feet and back up the legs toward the body.

### Roll down the back





**Rolling with the chest on the ball**



**Tosses**

- ♦ Tosses begin with a swing. Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arms straight.
- ♦ The athlete should swing to extend the arm in the direction of the toss.
- ♦ The athlete should catch the ball quietly, with the arm extended, and then complete the downward swing.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands.

**Toss and catch with two hands**



**Toss with one hand and catch with two hands**



**Toss and catch with one hand**



**Toss and trap the ball in the arms**



**Toss and trap the ball on the legs**





## Clubs

### General Clubs Technique

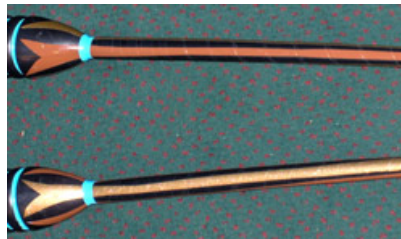
- ♦ The clubs should be an extension of the athlete's arms.
- ♦ All tosses, catches and swings should be performed with straight arms.
- ♦ All swings should be performed from the shoulders.
- ♦ Small circles should be performed from the wrists.
- ♦ When the clubs are held in one hand, the athlete must show a defined position with the free arm.

### Parts of the Clubs

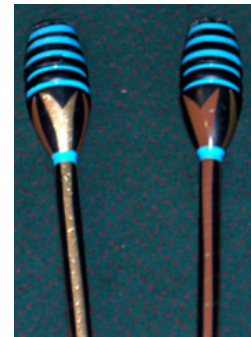
Head



Neck

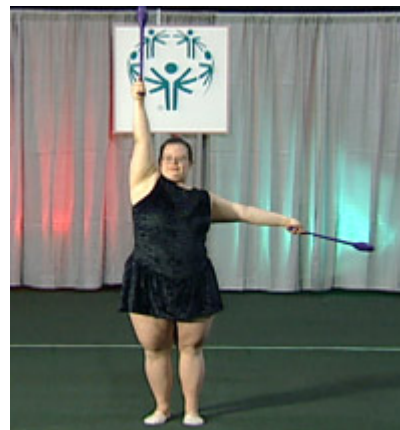


Body



### How to Hold the Clubs

The clubs should be held as an extension of the arms.







Holding the clubs by the head



Holding the clubs by the neck



Holding the clubs by the body



Holding the clubs with hands on waist



Incorrect ways to hold the clubs





## Clubs Skills

The following types of clubs skills will be shown: Swings, Tapping, Small circles and Tosses and catches.

### Swings

- ♦ Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arm straight.
- ♦ The arms must be on plane, with the clubs as an extension of the arms.
- ♦ Practice with the right and left hands separately and then with both hands together.

#### Swings side to side



#### Swings front and back

- ♦ The swings front and back are important as a preparation for sagittal circles and tosses.
- ♦ The arms must remain straight, with the clubs as an extension of the arms.
- ♦ The swings must be performed on plane. Practice standing beside a wall.

#### Circle in the frontal plane



#### Backward sagittal circle

- ♦ Keeping the arm straight, with the club as an extension of the arm, the athlete circles the arm backward on the sagittal plane.
- ♦ The arm should pass close to the ear and the hip.

#### Opposition arm circle

- ♦ Practice the opposition circle first in quarters, with four checkpoints:
  - Extend both arms overhead.
  - Move the left arm to the front at shoulder height and the right arm to the back at shoulder height.
  - Continue the circle until both arms are extended down by the hips.
  - Move the right arm to the front at shoulder height and the left arm to the back at shoulder height.
  - Continue the circle until both arms are extended overhead.
- ♦ Next, practice the opposition circles in halves, with checkpoints overhead and low by the hips.
- ♦ Finally, practice the full opposition arm circle. Make sure the arms stay fully extended and move on plane.



### Windmill



- ◆ Extend one arm up overhead and the other arm down by the hips.
- ◆ Moving at the same time, circle the arms.
- ◆ The arms must stay 180° apart, with a straight line from one club to the other.
- ◆ Practice the windmill in quarters and halves, like the opposition arm circle.

### Tapping

- ◆ Tapping is part of a swing. Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arms straight. The wrists will initiate the taps.
- ◆ The arms must be on plane, with the clubs as an extension of the arms.
- ◆ Tapping on the floor can be done in different rhythms.

#### Tapping high and low



#### Tapping behind the back

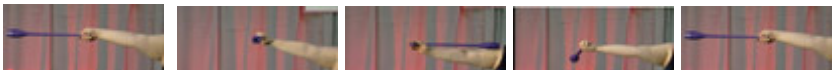


### Small Circles

- ◆ Small circles should be done from the wrist, keeping the arm extended.
- ◆ The clubs should be held loosely to allow them to circle freely.
- ◆ Practice with the right and left hands separately and then together.
- ◆ When learning the small circles and Figure 8's, do only one circle and stop. When the athlete can do one circle easily, begin continuous circles or Figure 8's.

### Horizontal circles over and under the arm

- ◆ On the horizontal circles over the arm, hold the club loosely so the circle will stay on plane.



- ◆ On the horizontal circles under the arm, hold the club loosely so the club will circle on plane, as close to the arm as possible without hitting the elbow.





- ◆ A good way to practice the horizontal circles under the arm is to kneel and circle the club, holding loosely, trying to get it closer and closer to the floor.

### Horizontal Figure 8's

- ◆ First, practice one circle over the arm and stop. Then, one circle under the arm and stop.
- ◆ Continuously, circle once over the arm, once under the arm and stop.
- ◆ Finally, perform the Figure 8's continuously many times without stopping.
- ◆ Practice the Figure 8's circling inward as well as outward with each hand. This is a progression to horizontal mills.

### Horizontal Mills



### Vertical circles inside and outside the arm



- ◆ First, practice one circle inside the arm and stop. Then, one circle outside the arm and stop.
- ◆ Continuously, circle inside the arm, then outside and stop.
- ◆ Finally, perform the vertical circles continuously many times without stopping.
- ◆ The vertical circles are a progression to vertical mills.

### Tosses

- ◆ Tosses begin with a swing. Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arms straight.
- ◆ The club will rotate by itself because one end is heavier than the other. The athlete does not need to flick the wrist to make the club rotate.
- ◆ The athlete should have control of the tosses with 180° rotation before she attempts the tosses with 360° rotation.
- ◆ The athlete should catch the club with the arm extended and then continue the downswing.
- ◆ Practice the tosses with the right and left hands.



## Ribbon

### General Ribbon Technique

- ◆ Large ribbon patterns are performed from the shoulders and must be on plane.
- ◆ Small ribbon patterns are performed from the wrists.
- ◆ The free arm should be held in a defined position at all times.
- ◆ Ribbon patterns should not touch the floor, except when specified.
- ◆ The ribbon should be moving at all times, never lying static on the floor.
- ◆ Practice all patterns with the right and left hands.
- ◆ Practice moving from pattern to pattern or changing from hand to hand without letting the ribbon stop.

### How to Hold the Ribbon Stick



## Ribbon Skills

The following types of ribbon skills will be shown: Swings, Large circles, Figure 8's, Spirals, Snakes and Locomotor movements with ribbon.

### Swings

- ◆ Swings should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arm straight.
- ◆ The ribbon must be on plane.
- ◆ Practice with the right and left hands.

### Large Circles

- ◆ Large circles should be done from the shoulder, keeping the arm straight.
- ◆ Practice with the right and left hands.
- ◆ The ribbon must be on plane. The athlete can stand by a wall to practice keeping the circles on plane.

#### Large circle on the frontal plane

- ◆ Practice the circles clockwise and counter-clockwise.
- ◆ Practice facing a wall to learn to keep the ribbon on plane.

#### Large circles on the sagittal plane

- ◆ The arm must stay straight and pass close to the ear and the hip on the sagittal circle.
- ◆ Practice the circles clockwise and counter-clockwise.

#### Large circles overhead

- ◆ To keep from getting tangles in the ribbon, keep the arm extended and make the circles as large as possible.



## Figure 8's

- ◆ Figure 8's, like large circles, should be done from the shoulder.
- ◆ When the athlete has the ribbon stick in the right hand:
  - The right arm should stay straight, passing close to the right leg and right ear, when the athlete does the large sagittal circle on the right side of the body.
  - The right arm will bend slightly when the athlete crosses over the body to do the circle on the left side.
- ◆ Practice with the right and left hands.

## Snakes

- ◆ Snakes should be done from the wrist, keeping the arm extended.
- ◆ Depending on the length of the ribbon, the pattern should show three to six snakes.
- ◆ The ribbon must not touch the floor.
- ◆ Practice with the right and left hands.

### Horizontal snakes behind the back

- ◆ Swing the ribbon up and behind the back.
- ◆ Keeping the arm extended, point the stick downward at an angle and begin a side-to-side motion from the wrist.
- ◆ If the ribbon becomes tangled in the stick, point the end of the stick farther downward.
- ◆ To move the snakes down in front of the body, leading with the elbow, lower the arm to the front, continuing the snakes.
- ◆ The free arm must show a defined shape.

### Horizontal snakes in front



### Vertical snakes



## Spirals

- ◆ Spirals should be done from the wrist, keeping the arm extended.
- ◆ Depending on the length of the ribbon, the pattern should show three to six spirals.
- ◆ The ribbon must not touch the floor.
- ◆ Practice with the right and left hands.

### Spirals in front



### Spirals on the side (with the arm crossed over)





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## Group

Whether the athletes compete in Rhythmic Gymnastics Group or not, training through group exercises has many benefits:

- ◆ Athletes learn to work together as a team.
- ◆ Athletes take on leadership responsibilities within the group.
- ◆ Athletes learn to toss, bounce and roll the hand apparatus to another athlete or coach.
- ◆ Parents, siblings and friends can join in activities with the athletes.
- ◆ Group activities are fun!

With and without the hand apparatus, athletes learn to perform elements:

- ◆ In formations.
  - The athletes perform movements in set formations, such as straight lines, learning to maintain the prescribed relationship between all members of the group.
- ◆ In synchronization.
  - The athletes perform movements in synchronization, all moving at the same time.
- ◆ In sequence.
  - The athletes perform movements in sequence, one after the other.
- ◆ With partners.
  - The athletes perform movements with a partner: holding hands, sharing a piece of equipment, or just moving together.
- ◆ With apparatus exchanges.
  - The athletes exchange one or two pieces of hand apparatus with a partner.



## Seated Activities

Athletes who use a wheelchair or have limited mobility can easily participate in rhythmic gymnastics. For competition, Special Olympics provides seated routines for these athletes. Below are several skills with each apparatus for seated athletes. Remember to find the correct size apparatus the athlete can handle easily.

### Rope

#### Rotations holding the middle of a doubled rope



#### Twist a doubled rope



#### Spin a doubled rope



#### Place a doubled rope behind the neck



### Hoop

#### Twist in the sagittal plane



#### Twist on the frontal plane



#### Tap hoop on the floor



#### Swing on a horizontal plane







Ball

**Roll on the arms**



**Roll on the legs**



**Toss and catch**



**Toss and trap in the arms**



Ribbon

**Horizontal snakes**



**Spirals**



**Overhead circles**



**Swing up, horizontal snakes down in front**





**Special Olympics**

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