



# UNIFIED

## FITNESS CLUBS



**Special Olympics**  
Indiana

## **Program Overview**

Fitness Clubs provide inclusive, year-round opportunities for athletes and community members of all abilities to stay active, build healthy habits, and strengthen their understanding of wellness. The program is designed to be flexible and easy to implement in both schools and community settings. Clubs blend physical activity, health education, and teamwork so participants can develop lifelong skills that support their physical, mental, and social well-being. Each club builds a welcoming environment where members encourage one another, celebrate progress, and learn how small daily choices can contribute to a healthier lifestyle.

## **How to Participate**

Starting a Fitness Club is simple and adaptable to your community's needs. Begin by recruiting athletes and unified partners who are interested in staying active and working together. Clubs should establish a regular meeting schedule that meets the needs of participants. Most sessions last between 20 and 45 minutes, with approximately 30 minutes of activity recommended. Clubs can meet weekly, before or after sports practices, during homeroom or advisory periods, or in community spaces such as gyms, classrooms, cafeterias, sports fields, or virtual platforms. Each club decides on its size based on available participants; a typical starting group is 20–30 members, with a 1:1 ratio of athletes to Unified Partners ideal for fostering meaningful inclusion. Larger clubs may benefit from additional leaders, while smaller groups may need only one or two. Program Leaders can be adults, paraeducators, parents, community volunteers, or youth leaders under adult supervision.

To officially join the program, complete the online registration form for your school or county. During the first meeting, program leaders collect basic participant information, including name, date of birth, email, athlete or partner status, and preferred method of tracking activity. Attendance should be tracked at every meeting to monitor participation and engagement. Clubs are encouraged to share photos, stories, and successes with the Director of Health and Fitness to highlight accomplishments across the community.

## **Data Collection**

Clubs may choose to collect basic health information, such as height, weight, and blood pressure, using the provided spreadsheet. These measurements are optional. During the first meeting, athletes set personal health goals to guide their participation and monitor progress. Program leaders record these goals and revisit them regularly, helping athletes adjust strategies and celebrate achievements. Participants are encouraged to track daily steps or activity minutes using their preferred method,

whether a pedometer, watch, or phone app. Attendance and activity records help demonstrate the impact of the program and support healthy routines.

Wheelchair users can convert distance traveled into steps, using the approximate conversion of 1 km (0.62 miles) = 1,250 steps. Activity minutes can also be converted: 10 minutes of moderate activity  $\approx$  1,000 steps, and 10 minutes of vigorous activity  $\approx$  2,000 steps. Tracking activity helps participants stay motivated and see progress over time.

## **Implementation Checklist**

### **Getting Ready:**

Program Leaders should review this Program Guide, the Lessons for Life content, and submit the online registration form before the first meeting.

### **Day 1:**

- Optional: Collect health data.
- Participants set personal health goals using the tracking template.
- Introduce methods for tracking activity and submitting step counts.
- Assign unified pairs or fitness captains to support group activities.
- Share meeting dates and schedules with participants.

### **Week 8:**

- Participants review their personal health goals and reflect on progress.
- Optional: Collect health data again.
- Share collected information with the Director of Health and Fitness for program reporting.
- Clubs may continue beyond eight weeks, revisiting goals and tracking data every eight weeks as desired.

## **Lessons for Life**

Lessons for Life provides weekly topics that help participants explore health, nutrition, fitness, and wellness. These lessons cover personal hygiene, hydration, healthy food choices, sleep, stress management, and teamwork. Each lesson is flexible and can be adapted to meet the unique needs of your club. Unified pairs may lead parts of the lesson or present an entire session, giving participants opportunities for leadership and engagement. Lessons create a structured space for learning while reinforcing practical strategies for everyday healthy living.

## Goal Setting

Goal setting helps participants understand what is important to them and provides direction for healthy behavior. Program Leaders support athletes in creating meaningful, achievable goals related to health, fitness, or wellness. Participants identify a personal health or fitness goal, write it down, and share it with the group to foster accountability. Program Leaders record all goals in the tracking spreadsheet and revisit them regularly to celebrate progress, help adjust strategies, and encourage ownership of personal growth.

### Setting S.M.A.R.T. Goals

- **S – Specific:** Clearly define the goal.
- **M – Measurable:** Make it possible to track progress.
- **A – Achievable:** Ensure the goal is realistic for the athlete.
- **R – Relevant:** The goal should matter to the athlete’s health or fitness.
- **T – Time-bound:** Set a timeline for achieving the goal.

### Examples of S.M.A.R.T. Goals

- **Fitness Goal:** “I want to be able to do 15 toe push-ups by the end of 8 weeks in my Unified Fitness Club. I will increase the number of push-ups I do each week to build up to 15.”
- **Nutrition Goal:** “This week, I want to eat at least 1 fruit and 1 vegetable each day. I will keep a food diary to track my progress.”



# \_\_\_\_\_ 's Personal Health Goal

**My Personal Health Goal is:**

**To reach my goal, I will do these things:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**I will know I have reached my goal when:**

## **SMART Goal Checklist:**

- Specific** – What exactly will I do?
- Measurable** – How will I know I did it?
- Attainable** – Can I do this goal?
- Relevant** – Why is this goal important to me?
- Time-Bound** – When will I reach my goal?