

Athletics Events

MINI JAVELIN



Mini Javelin (MJ) is a field event that resembles generic javelin throw, but instead is performed using a modified javelin that is much smaller (.7m), lighter (300 to 400g) and includes soft tip for a safer environment. Although technique is very similar, mini javelin flight is much different than generic javelin and is affected by windy conditions.

SO mini javelin competitors use the same competition area as generic athletes and must land their mini javelin with the tip touching first in the regulation area. One of the main rules of this discipline, is that athletes must throw the mini javelin over their shoulders, a difficult thing to do for some SO athletes.

The vast majority of SO competitors have trouble with mini javelin flight. MJ are difficult to throw as the javelin has a tendency to lose control and spin sideways. In many cases, unless basic skills are acquired, an SO athlete will not be able to register a legal throw. Basic technique for correct flight is the aim of basic skill acquisition and depends on the following elements:

- Correct grip
- Javelin position
- Wrist and arm motion
- Body motion and shoulder action
- Rotation, step, throw angle

These skills must all be acquired before a mini javelin has a controlled flight and hits the ground tip first. A 20-hour program is necessary just to learn throw technique. Once throw technique is acquired, athletes can add a shuffle and a

run to increase velocity before throws and start strength training for more powerful arms, core and legs.

Skills required for adequate MJ deliveries are listed in the basic skill (next page). These sheets can be used as a guide, and when all skills are marked “yes”, athletes can consistently and correctly throw mini javelins. They are then ready for more advanced intermediate skills that include shuffle steps, a longer run phase before delivery, and additional strength development.

Guidelines for using the skill sheet for MJ



1. Athletes must have proper MJ grip and this is what is first acquired.
2. When the grip is adequate (usually very fast), it is then time to start on correct starting position and general stance.
3. Repeat all skills together as they are acquired. For example, an athlete can be working on MJ flight angles but would have correct grip and starting position revisited every times.
4. Follow each step of the skill sheet (next page) until MJ basics are acquired. Progress will be directly related to the amount of focused practice time.

***** Most Important Learning Concept for SO athletes *****

My numerous years of experience with skill acquisition in Special Olympics have shown that focus on results (external focus) while learning is many times more effective than focus on movements (internal focus). Most skills have “external” objectives such as flight of javelin and percentages of successful correct tries instead of complicated technical instructions difficult to process for individuals with an intellectual disability. Follow the skill sheets with this in mind and use lots of demonstrations.

Athletics: Mini Javelin Basic Skills

Basic Skill: Mini Javelin tip landing with correct flight (10/10)

	YES	NO	Comments
Sub Skills (No pre-delivery strides)			
Correct grip	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			
Correct starting position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			
90° to javelin direction – Feet shoulder width apart – Tip lined with eyes			
Throwing elbow leads toss	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Aiming arm point up before toss	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Aiming arm swing down During toss	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Javelin flight angle (45°) Perfect Arch Flight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Follow-through	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Javelin flies correctly 10/10 No tumbling or side motion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Javelin lands tip first 10/10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**When athletes achieve all “YES”, they have acquired basic skills.
Expectations are critical to skill acquisition.**

Changing Expectations in Special Olympics

20-hour acquisition

Skill Breakdown: Examples of priority elements to focus on during practice

Spend time on each one until acquired

Before starting with throws, ensure proper grip and javelin placement

Grip:



Javelin placement:



1. Static Throws/Delivery: Wrist - Arm motion – Follow-through
2. Simple Shuffle Steps: Leg motion – Body position – Leg plant -

Delivery can take up to 20 hours to acquire. Simple shuffle skills can be added up at the basic level after static delivery is acquired.

It is best to practice one skill at a time, not worrying about throw length, and doing as many correct movements as possible in a 20 minutes session. For example, if practicing mini javelin placement, a practice is set up only for this skill, and for 20 minutes, athletes are picking up the javelin, adjusting their grip and placing the javelin correctly. This action is repeated until acquired. Once acquired, follow up with standing throw technique.

SO athletes are visual learners, and therefore, having a correct demonstration or a video of correct motion will be of great value during skill acquisition. Slow down the demonstration when introducing a new skill, and use hands to guide movements when necessary.

Home training:

Learning correct grip and placement should be done with a real mini javelin. Throwing motion and shuffle throws can be practiced with “nerf” type of javelin but the path and feeling will not be the same as the real thing. Using home sessions to concentrate on gaining strength to throw further is possibly the best training as unsupervised mini javelin throws can be dangerous. However if supervision is possible, practice as often as possible. Fitness sessions such as Club Fit are also designed to build strength and power applicable to mini javelin throws.

Home Practice: Strength example

(25' = 25 minutes)

25' Warm up running and stretching

15' Strength training

- 15 push ups
 - 15 sit ups
 - 15 lunges
 - 15 squats
 - 1 minute plank
- Repeat all 2-3 times

5' cool down jogging

Conclusion:

Mini javelin is a technical event. The basic objective is to propel mini javelins properly in the air, and when athletes have acquired basic technique, the javelin flies effortlessly. At SO javelin events, the vast majority of athletes can't throw properly and cause javelins to wobble and spin sideways in the air.

Using the skill sheet is an excellent way to learn basic javelin skills and encourage athletes to practice often. Mini javelin can be practiced throughout the year and the more time spent on focused training, the better each SO athlete will become.

Lesson Plan
Basic Skill Acquisition Program
(weekly or monthly)

Sport _____ Athlete Name: _____

Program Expectations

1- Weekly Practice (attend all practices)

Day (S) _____ Time _____

Location _____

“What the group is working on”:

2- Club Fit 100% attendance (Including Functional Testing exercises)

Day _____ Time _____

Location _____

“What you need to concentrate on”:

3- Basic Skill Development Homework (4 times per week - 1 hour per day)

Skill _____

“Individual Home Practice Objectives”

ATHLETICS EVENTS

SHOT PUT



What makes shot put special is the way shot put is used in SO competitions. Because shot put seems such a natural easy thing to do, and at first glance it does not seem to require much training, it is the choice of many competitors and coaches. After all how difficult is it to “throw” a three kg (four kg for male) ball forward?

Although shot put seems like an easy thing to do and to learn, it is in fact a highly technical event. The vast majority of SO competitors do not meet basic regulation requirements during competitions. This is generally not because of intellectual disability, but mainly because basic skills have never been developed. Shot put involves a great deal more than “throwing” a weight forward.

I have observed two major elements of shot put that SO athletes and coaches have trouble with:

- Athletes must rest the shot in between the neck and shoulder and keep it tight to the neck while throwing.
- At the end of the throw, the thrower must push the throwing arm straight (with the thumb pointing down)



Failure to do so should result in disqualification but it rarely does in SO competitions. The consequence is that SO athletes stay at the same level year after year. I have observed many SO shot put with a baseball motion or just dropping the shot in front of the circle. This event has a lot of room for improvement.

I believe that basic shot put skills should be learned before athletes can compete, and in reality, basic shot put skills are not hard to learn. Changing expectations for shot put events is another objective of this book, as it is an event where so many SO athletes compete and so many fall outside of the rules.

Skills required for consistent legal deliveries are listed in the shot put basic skill (next page). These sheets can be used as a guide, and when all skills are marked “yes”, athletes have legal shots and are ready for intermediate skills that include glide, rotation deliveries and strength training.

Guidelines for using the skill sheets for shut put




1. Athletes must enter and exit the circle legally and pick up the shot with proper grip.
2. When this is acquired (usually very fast), it is then time to start on correct placement of the shot on the neck and general stance.
3. Repeat all skills together as they are acquired. For example, an athlete can be working on shot delivery but would have to enter/exit the circle properly, have correct grip and shot placement.
4. Follow each step of the skill sheet (next page) until shot put basics are acquired.

***** Most Important Learning Concept for SO athletes *****

My numerous years of experience with skill acquisition in Special Olympics have shown that focus on results (external focus) while learning is many times more effective than focus on movements (internal focus). Most skills have “external” objectives such as percentages of successful correct tries and distance to throw instead of complicated technical instructions difficult to process for individuals with an intellectual disability. Follow the skill sheets with this in mind and use lots of demonstrations.

Athletics: Shot Put Basic Skills

Basic Skill: Shot Put (legal throw 2 times the athlete height)

	YES	NO	Comments
Sub Skills (No Glide) All skills to be execute correctly 10/10			
Enter/ exit circle (according to rules)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Correct hold Fingers on shot (not palm)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Correct stance and placement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Weight transfer (back to front)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Shot stays on neck during Motion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Body rotation 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Elbow stay high	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Thumb is down at release (No baseball throw)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Angle of flight 40° 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Follow through 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Legal throw (10/10)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Distance = 2 x athletes' height	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**When athletes achieve all “YES”, they have acquired basic skills.
Expectations are critical to skill acquisition.**

20-hour acquisition

Skill Breakdown: Examples of priority elements to focus on during practice

Spend time on each skill (one at a time) until acquired.

Before delivery is started:

Grip: Finger vs. palm – Finger apart – Wrist position

Shot placement: Under chin – Pressure on the shot – Elbow raised – Thumb down – Palm forward

1. Delivery: Eye up – Push forward – Elbow high – Thumb down – Palm forward – Wrist finish – Body block – Opposite arm placement

2. Glide/Rotation: Stance – Weight distribution on feet – Arm action – Leg movement – Glide – Ready to push - Pivot - Release angle – Body and arm follow through

Delivery learning can take up to 20 hours. “Glide/rotation” learning starts after delivery is at basic skill level.



Practice one skill at a time and don't worry about perfect executions, but respect all rules and do as many repetitions as possible in a 20' session. For example, if practicing shot placement, a practice is set up only for shot placement. Therefore for 20', athletes are picking up the shot and placing it correctly on the neck. This action is repeated until acquired. Make sure to always include previously learned skill when learning a new one, for shot placement, ensure that athletes enter the circle correctly and use correct grip every times.

SO athletes are visual learners, and therefore, having a generic example or a video of correct motion will be of great value during skill acquisition. Slow down the demonstration when introducing a new skill, and use hands to guide movements when necessary.



Home training:

Shot putting at home with a four kg shot might not be the best idea, but it is possible to practice correct placement, delivery, and even glide technique with small sand bags. The idea is to learn correct skills whenever possible. Shot put is considered a strength sport and will demand additional training. Combining technical skills and training for shot put is possible at home and at Club Fit.

Home Practice: Shot put example

(15' = 15 minutes)

15' Warm up running and stretching

15' Placement and release with small sand bags

15' Strength training

- 15 push ups
 - 15 sit ups
 - 15 lunges
 - 15 squats
 - 1' plank
- Repeat all 2-3 times

5' cool down jogging

Conclusion:

Focused sessions on basic shot put skills and techniques are necessary before starting a training program. Too many athletes compete in this discipline without proper technique, and they are at the mercy of sympathetic officials that might let people with ID break the rules to be successful.

Acquiring proper shot put technique is relatively simple to achieve, and using the skill sheet is an excellent way to learn basic shot put skills and encourage athletes to practice often. The more time spent on focused training, the better each SO athlete will become. There is no real reason why SO athletes should have illegal throws and poor technique.

Lesson Plan
Basic Skill Acquisition Program
(weekly or monthly)

Sport _____ Athlete Name: _____

Program Expectations

1- Weekly Practice (attend all practices)

Day (S) _____ Time _____

Location _____

“What the group is working on”:

2- Club Fit 100% attendance (Including Functional Testing exercises)

Day _____ Time _____

Location _____

“What you need to concentrate on”:

3- Basic Skill Development Homework (4 times per week - 1 hour per day)

Skill _____

“Individual Home Practice Objectives”