



## Bocce Sample PE Unit Plan

*This document is one piece in a series of Special Olympics Project UNIFY resources to conduct Unified Physical Education (referred to here as Unified PE Resources). Each document may be used individually or in combination with others as the course is implemented. They outline strategies and resources to support educators with inclusive school environments. These resources are designed as examples and samples that can be modified to meet the needs of each individual classroom or school district.*

**Bocce** is an Italian game. The basic principle of the sport is to roll a bocce ball closest to the target ball, which is called a pallina. Next to soccer and golf, bocce is the third most participated sport in the world.

### Special Considerations

It is important to encourage and to give athletes an opportunity to choose appropriate sports and events. However, the health and safety of all athletes is paramount. Sports and events must provide safe, meaningful and challenging opportunities for all athletes.

### Wheelchair/ Equipment Considerations:

Ramps can be purchased or built to non-ambulatory athletes.

Smaller, lighter balls can be used for athletes that have limited strength or gripping ability. When at all possible, these athletes should progress to larger, heavier balls as they develop their strength, skill or ability to grip.

Modified bocce sets can also be used for indoor use for instances of inclement weather.

Portable bocce courts are available for purchase and provide a simple solution to setting up multiple bocce courts in any location.

### Safety Considerations:

1. Choose a safe field area. Do not practice in areas with rocks or holes that could cause injury. Simply telling students to avoid obstacles is not enough.
2. Walk the court and remove unsafe objects. Be particularly vigilant when you are playing in cluttered indoor gyms.
3. Check that the side and end walls/lines are secured in the ground. Instruct students never to walk along the top of the court's walls.
4. When not in use, bocce balls should always remain on the ground, not tossed in the air or bounced in the hand. It should be remembered that bocce balls are heavy and can break, or otherwise injure, a toe or foot if dropped.

5. To avoid competitors slipping on bocce balls, balls should be placed in rear corner of the court when not being used. Never leave bocce balls lying around the courts or training area where someone may stand on or trip over them.
6. Instruct students to walk along the outside of the courts, never on the inside, to avoid getting hit with or stepping on a bocce ball.

**Sports Training & Competition Opportunities:**

EVENT	APPROPRIATE PARTICIPANTS
<p><b>Ramp Bocce</b></p> <p><i>*Provides opportunities for partners or higher-skilled athletes to serve as assistant coaches/helpers during training and competition</i></p>	<p>Modified bocce for athletes who are non-ambulatory; athletes participating in ramp bocce must only play against other athletes playing with a ramp</p>
<p><b>Singles</b></p> <p><i>Provides opportunities for partners or higher-skilled athletes to serve as assistant coaches/helpers during training and competition</i></p>	<p>Appropriate for athletes who are possess basic to advanced skill sets and are capable of playing an entire game by themselves; this event could be necessary if a Unified PE class has fewer partners than athletes</p>
<p><b>Traditional Doubles</b></p> <p><i>Provides opportunities for partners or higher-skilled athletes to serve as assistant coaches/helpers during training and competition</i></p>	<p>Appropriate for athletes who possess basic to advanced skill sets and are capable of playing an entire game; this event could be used if a Unified PE class has fewer partners than athletes</p>
<p><b>Unified Doubles</b></p> <p><i>*Most common and recommended for Unified PE programs</i></p> <p><i>*Can qualify for Player Development Model, but will mostly represent the Competitive Model</i></p>	<p>Appropriate for athletes and partners who possess basic to advanced skill sets; doubles teams should pair athletes and partners with similar skill levels, whenever possible</p>
<p><b>Four-Player Teams (Unified or Tradition)</b></p>	<p>Appropriate for athletes and partners who possess basic to advanced skill sets; doubles teams should pair athletes and partners with similar skill levels, whenever possible</p>

## Training Schedule:

This unit is segmented into 8 sessions, however, instructors can decide to extend or shorten skill instruction timeframes based on what best serves his/her students. As with many sports, bocce skills and understanding of the game only get better with practice, therefore the more athletes and partners practice playing games, the better they will become.

## Session 1 & 2: Bocce Introduction, Underhand Roll

### Materials:

- **Bocce Ball sets:** Ideal to have enough sets for every Unified Doubles pairing, but if not, teams can take turns. Bocce Ball set includes 8 bocce balls (4 of one color and 4 of another color) plus one pallina.
- **Bocce courts:** Ideal to have permanent or portable court that provides hard surface around perimeter, but portable soft-strap courts are a cheaper, more portable option. Courts can also be created using cones, poly spots, or other markers.

**State Standards:** #1, 2, 5, 6

**National Standards:** #1, 2, 5, 6

**Objectives:** *Student will be able to...*

- Demonstrate basic bocce skill sets including correct athletic stance, grip, backswing, arm swing, release, follow through, and aim.
- Identify bocce balls, pallina, and foul line.

### Vocabulary:

**Bocce-** Can also be spelled bocci or boccie. As with some other sports, e.g. basketball, this is a term of two meanings in that it can be the balls played with during the game or can mean that game itself

**Dead Ball** – A ball that has been ruled, by the official, as a disqualified ball due to some form of infringement or technicality.

**Foul** – Relates to either a foot foul or a like foul, sometimes also called a foot line foul. The type and frequency of the foul will determine the penalty dealt to the

player. This is usually called when a player oversteps the foul line or releases the ball after crossing the foul line.

**Foul line** – The lines on a court that the player must stay behind before the ball is released, when playing either type of delivery (pointing or hitting shot). The hitting/pointing line is 10 feet from the end board.

**Initial Point** –The first ball rolled in an end toward the pallina to establish the initial point. If some form of foul is committed by this first ball played, the same team will roll the next ball to establish the initial point.

**Live Ball (good ball)** – Can also be termed “good.” The phrase is used to explain to the players that the ball just rolled is a legitimate and legal ball and that the rest of the end can continue to be played. Consequently, if a foul is committed the ball is termed out or a dead ball.

**Out of Bounds** (*portable courts only*)– A ball (or pallina) that rolls or is hit beyond the outside line of a portable court is considered out of bounds.

**Pallina**- A 1 ¾ inch ball which is rolled down the court first and serves as the target.

### Task Analysis: Underhand Roll

Movement Sequence	Verbal Cues
<b>Athletic Stance</b> Feet shoulder-width apart; knees slightly bent with equal weight distribution for maximized balance	Get “READY”; “READY STANCE”
<b>Grip</b> Ball is resting in palm of ball, fingers spread evenly across bottom of the ball	“GRIP”
<b>Backswing</b> Arm swings straight back, close to body	“ARM BACK”
<b>Arm Swing</b> Smoothly brings arm straight forward, transferring weight to front foot	“FORWARD SWING”
<b>Release</b>	“RELEASE”; “LET IT GO”

Releases the ball onto the court surface just in front of the student	
<b>Follow Through</b> Continues moving hand forward and upward in a natural follow-through motion	“FOLLOW THROUGH”; “ANSWER THE PHONE”
<b>Aim</b> Eyes should be on the target (pallina) and attempts to release ball towards target	“AIM”

### Content Development:

- Game overview & vocabulary Instruction *(see vocabulary with definitions above)*
- Grip Skill Instruction
  - Ensure ball is sitting in the palm of hand
  - Ensure fingers are spread evenly across bottom of ball
  - Thumb is used to hold ball in place, not as pressure point
  - Slightly close all fingers evenly around ball
- Underhand Roll Skill Instruction
  - Student should bring arm straight back, close to body.
  - As smoothly bringing arm forward, student should transfer weight to front foot.
  - Student should release ball onto the court surface just in front of student.
  - Student should continue moving hand forward and upward in a natural follow-through motion.
- Underhand Roll Drills/Practice (for breakdown of proper stance and underhand roll see below)
- Underhand Roll Rules Instruction
  - Foul line
  - Out of bounds
  - Placing the pallina
  - Live ball
  - Dead ball

**ASSESSMENT:**

**Facilitator Instructions:** Position student at the end of bocce court (or simply at a marked line). Each student should then throw out the pallina then roll each bocce ball, providing the 4 attempts for the assessment chart below.

Student Demonstrated...	Attempt #1	Attempt #2	Attempt #3	Attempt #4
<p>Athletic Stance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Student's feet should be shoulder-width apart; knees bent with equal weight distribution for maximized balance</i></li> </ul>				
<p>Grip</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Ball is resting in palm of hand, with fingers spread evenly across bottom of the ball</i></li> </ul>				
<p>Backswing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Student swings arm straight back, staying close to his/her body</i></li> </ul>				
<p>Arm Swing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Student brings arm straight forward while transferring weight to front foot</i></li> </ul>				
<p>Release</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Student releases the ball onto the court surface</i></li> </ul>				
<p>Follow Through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Student continues moving hand forward and upward in a natural follow-through motion</i></li> </ul>				
<p>Aim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Student focuses eyes on pallina and releases bocce ball in the direction of it.</i></li> </ul>				

## Session 3 & 4: Getting Started with a Game

### Materials:

- **Bocce Ball sets:** Ideal to have enough sets for every Unified Doubles pairing, but if not, teams can take turns. Bocce Ball set includes 8 bocce balls (4 of one color and 4 of another color) plus one pallina.
- **Bocce courts:** Ideal to have permanent or portable court that provides hard surface around perimeter, but portable soft-strap courts are a cheaper, more portable option. Courts can also be created using cones, poly spots, or other markers.
- **Measuring Device** (to measure distance between bocce balls and pallina when the differences are too close to judge by look at it)
- **Score keeping supplies:** such as clip board, score sheets and pencils per court.
- **Stop watches** (if using time limits for games)

**State Standards:** #1, 2, 5, 6 **National Standards:** #1, 2, 5, 6

### Objectives:

*Student will be able to...*

- Demonstrate basic bocce skill sets including correct athletic stance, grip, backswing, arm swing, release, follow through, and pointing.
- Identify bocce balls, pallina, and foul line.
- Demonstrate how to start and play a game of bocce, determining pallina advantage and taking turns among players.

### Vocabulary:

**Pallina Advantage** – The team that holds the pallina advantage is the team that rolls the pallina down the court to start the game. After rolling the pallina, they then roll the first ball down to establish the initial point. The term “advantage” is given as this team can determine by the distance the pallina is rolled along the court, i.e. short end or long.

**Pointing** – Also called rolling or lagging. Unlike the hitting shot, this shot is played to get the ball close to the target ball, rather than trying to scatter the balls to displace other balls. This is a shot that is usually played with a soft smooth release and with finesse and a gentle motion. It is usually from a standing position rather than a running/moving one. Players must release the ball before crossing the hitting/pointing line.

## Content Development:

- Starting Game Instruction
  - Coin Toss/Rock Paper Scissors
  - Rolling the Pallina
  - Pallina Advantage
- Game Play Instruction
  - Taking Turns
    - After both players have rolled (pointing), farthest away continues to roll until; a) they become closer to the pallina, b) they have rolled all their bocce balls
    - In the event that the second roller has become closer to the pallina the process above continues until all players have thrown all their bocce balls

## Session 5: Game Strategy

*\*Bocce balls will break/crack if hit together too hard!*

### Materials:

- **Bocce Ball sets:** Ideal to have enough sets for every Unified Doubles pairing, but if not, teams can take turns. Bocce Ball set includes 8 bocce balls (4 of one color and 4 of another color) plus one pallina.
- **Bocce courts:** Ideal to have permanent or portable court that provides hard surface around perimeter, but portable soft-strap courts are a cheaper, more portable option. Courts can also be created using cones, poly spots, or other markers.
- **Measuring Device** (to measure distance between bocce balls and pallina when the differences are too close to judge by look at it)
- **Score keeping supplies:** such as clip board, score sheets and pencils per court.
- **Stop watches** (if using time limits for games)

**State Standards: #1, 2, 5, 6 National Standards: #1, 2, 5, 6**

### Objectives:

- Demonstrate basic bocce skill sets including correct athletic stance, grip, backswing, arm swing, release, follow through, pointing and possibly hitting, when appropriate for student.
- Identify bocce balls, pallina, and foul line.
- Demonstrate how to start and play a game of bocce, determining pallina advantage and taking turns among players.

## Vocabulary:

**Hitting** – Also called spocking, popping or shooting. It is a shot usually played to displace other balls around the target ball, rather than playing a slow gentle roll to gain the advantage/point. The ball is usually played with such force as to reach the far end of the court. A player playing this type of shot may release the ball from anywhere up to the 10-foot hitting/pointing line.

**Live Ball (good ball)** – Can also be termed “good.” The phrase is used to explain to the players that the ball just rolled is a legitimate and legal ball and that the rest of the end can continue to be played. Consequently, if a foul is committed the ball is termed out or a dead ball.

**Dead Ball** – A ball that has been ruled, by the official, as a disqualified ball due to some form of infringement or technicality.

## Content Development:

- Strategy Instruction
  - Hitting
  - Out of Bounds, Live ball, Dead ball, Replacing the pallina

## Session 6: Team Play & Scoring

### Materials:

- **Bocce Ball sets:** Ideal to have enough sets for every Unified Doubles pairing, but if not, teams can take turns. Bocce Ball set includes 8 bocce balls (4 of one color and 4 of another color) plus one pallina.
- **Bocce courts:** Ideal to have permanent or portable court that provides hard surface around perimeter, but portable soft-strap courts are a cheaper, more portable option. Courts can also be created using cones, poly spots, or other markers.
- **Measuring Device** (to measure distance between bocce balls and pallina when the differences are too close to judge by look at it)
- **Score keeping supplies:** such as clip board, score sheets and pencils per court.
- **Stop watches** (if using time limits for games)

**State Standards:** #1, 2, 5, 6 **National Standards:** #1, 2, 5, 6

### Objectives:

- Demonstrate basic bocce skill sets including correct athletic stance, grip, backswing, arm swing, release, follow-through, pointing and possibly hitting, when appropriate for student.

- Demonstrate how to start and play a game of bocce, determining pallina advantage and taking turns among players.
- Demonstrate how to accurately keep score, when appropriate.

### Vocabulary:

**Doubles/Pairs** – A game played with teams of two players in opposing teams, sometimes called pairs or two-player team.

**Teams** – A game played between a team of four players, sometimes called Fours or a four-player team.

**Singles** – A game played between two players, one-on-one, sometimes called a one-player team.

**Unified** – Where a two-player or four-player team is made up of an equal number of Special Olympics athletes and Unified Partners on the same team. The same number of balls are played by each member of the team from the same end of the court. The ability of the Unified Partner should always be as similar as possible to that of the Special Olympics athlete he/she is to partner with.

**Frame** – Period of time in the game when each player has played all of his/her balls. There is no minimum or maximum to the number of frames that make up a complete game or match.

### Content Development:

- Singles Scoring
  - Closest bocce to the pallina gets a point. Each similar colored ball closer to the pallina than the opponent's bocce also receives a point. A person can score a maximum of 4 points per frame
  - In the event of a tie after all balls have been rolled no player receives points and the frame is replayed.
  - The game ends when the first player scores a total of 12 points.
- Doubles Game Play Instruction & Scoring
  - Each team member gets two bocce balls of the same color
  - Turn Taking
    - Pallina Advantage remains the same
    - Team 1 player rolls bocce ball, team 2 player rolls bocce ball
    - After the first two bocce balls have been rolled (pointing), the team with the farthest away continues to roll (alternating players) until; a) they become closer to the pallina, b) they have rolled all their bocce balls



- **Measuring Device** (to measure distance between bocce balls and pallina when the differences are too close to judge by look at it)
- **Score keeping supplies:** such as clip board, score sheets and pencils per court.
- **Stop watches** (if using time limits for games)

**State Standards:** #1, 2, 5, 6      **National Standards:** #1, 2, 5, 6

### Objectives:

- Demonstrate basic bocce skill sets including correct athletic stance, grip, backswing, arm swing, release, follow-through, pointing and possibly hitting, when appropriate for student.
- Demonstrate how to start and play a game of bocce, determining pallina advantage and taking turns among players.
- Demonstrate how to accurately keep score, when appropriate.
- Demonstrate an understanding of proper bocce court protocol and etiquette

### Content Development:

- Continue Games Rules & Strategies Instruction, as needed
- Continue Scoring Instruction, as needed
- Begin pairing teams according to skill/ability level, and set up scrimmages with skill level in mind
- Emphasize bocce court protocol and etiquette, to prepare teams for upcoming local or state competitions (*see below*)

### Basic Rules for a Special Olympics Bocce Competition

1. Divisioning scores will be used to determine divisions for establishing sections.
2. The format for the competition can vary from a single elimination, double elimination or a round robin.
3. "Full tournament sized" balls, usually green and red, are used for the tournament.
4. Flags/bats/paddles of the same color as the balls are used.
5. In singles, players will play four balls each and the winning score will be first to 12 points.
6. In pairs/doubles, players will play two balls each and the winning score will be first to 12 points.
7. In fours/teams players will play one ball each and the winning score will be first to 16 points.
8. Athletes will follow the direction of the court officials at all times.
9. Ten-foot foul line, thirty-foot halfway lines are to be used during a competition.
10. All foul line violations are to be called as violations and penalties imposed.
11. All incorrect numbers of balls played or incorrect order of play are called as violations and penalties imposed.

12. Once all bocce balls have been rolled from both teams points will be awarded based on number of balls closer to the pallina than the opposing teams. (Only one team can be awarded points per end played.)
13. Games will be completed at the completion of the end in which a team scores the appropriate total number of points.

If for any reason coaches are unsure on any of the above rules, please contact the Tournament Director for bocce before the tournament starts.

## Coaching Tips

Rules of the bocce court area are the rules you make for your program. These would include such things as:

- Athletes will remain outside the court area ready to play as soon as indicated by the court official.
- No food or drink, except water, when training and playing.
- Individuals should be designated to assist the lower ability players into and out of the court.

## Unified Sports® Rules

There are few differences in the rules for Unified Sports® competition and the rules as stipulated in the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules Book and modifications outlined in the rules book. The additions are highlighted below:

### Unified Sports Team

- Each Unified Sports doubles team shall consist of one athlete and one partner.
- Each Unified Sports team event shall consist of two athletes and two partners.
- Each game shall commence with a coin toss. Either member of the team that wins the toss starts the game by throwing the pallina and the first ball. The second ball is thrown by either member of the opposing team.

## BOCCE PROTOCOL & ETIQUETTE

While casual or fun games of bocce can be full of banter, laughter and frivolity, whenever serious bocce is played, as in a tournament or competition, there need to be certain rules of good sportsmanship and conduct that each competitor must follow. This will allow the athletes to compete at their best without any distractions.

Whether during practice or competition, athletes should be encouraged to abide by the following:

### “Rules of the Court”

1. When it is not your turn, you should stand quietly out of the court.
2. Remain as quiet as possible from the time the other player has taken his/her stance until after he/she has delivered the ball.
3. Wait until the frame has been completed before moving to the other end of the court.
4. Always walk up the side of the court rather than up the middle of the court.
5. While waiting for another player to deliver the ball, always remain as motionless as possible.
6. Wait until the other player has delivered his/her ball and is about to move off the court before you step into the court to take your turn.
7. Always leave the balls as they lie until the official has instructed you to move them.
8. After you have delivered your ball, leave the court without undue or unnecessary delay.
9. Always observe safety rules when playing.
10. Always observe the instructions given by the official.
11. Always give your opponent the respect he/she deserves.
12. Always give the officials the respect they deserve.

Interested in more unified sports?

Contact [Jennifer@specialolympicsarkansas.org](mailto:Jennifer@specialolympicsarkansas.org) for more resources and information!

