



Shooting Stars Buddy/Volunteer Information

(updated 5/2025)

First, let me start with a big “Thank You!” Thank you for coming out and trying something that is exciting and challenging. Hopefully you will hear “Thank You” a lot...you will definitely deserve it. We have grown Shooting Stars in 20 years from Basketball to now offering a wide range of activities...but could not do it without you! We are continually amazed and humbled by the amazing support we receive!

Mission

Our mission is for kids to learn about sports, teamwork and social skills in a fun and engaging environment.

Our Program

1. We originally started Shooting Stars with basketball for our son Jacob, who has Autism.
2. We strive to help the players to do something we take for granted...be a part of a group or team...something they might otherwise never experience.
3. Our program is tailored to each player. One size does not fit all. Each age group/team will function differently, and each participant will have unique needs and challenges.
4. Our activities are various lengths, but we appreciate if you can commit to all the days of a program. This is a big commitment, but it is important. Our kids thrive on familiarity.
5. We understand any apprehension, but I promise, in the end, it will be incredibly rewarding.
6. Everything we do is meant to be fun and non-competitive...or at least be a “fun” kind of competitive.
7. There will be a 1:1 buddy/player pairing (for the most part, where we can, depending on the number of buddies). We will see what works but reserve the right to change anything that is not working.
8. We are open to suggestions.

Volunteers -- Your Role, Responsibilities and Working with Special Needs Kids

1. Your main job is to engage. Be a cheerleader. Be flexible. Be assertive. Learn. Try anything and everything. Be persistent. But remember to make it fun! (do it with a smile!)
2. Follow the lead of the leaders and experienced buddies.
3. Don't be afraid to ask coaches or parents for help and advice. Also, let us know if something is happening that we should know about...communication is key.
4. Help the kids have fun (1st) and learn the activity we are doing (2nd).
5. Keep the kids moving.
6. We would like to ask that you be very patient and gentle with the special needs kids. The kids will have various levels of skills and abilities. Their actions may seem a bit strange or different...or they may react to things differently than others might or that you would expect. It is important that you not "react". Please be patient and know that parents and other volunteers are always there to help. Always be supportive, using positive feedback. *What you say and how you say it makes a HUGE difference.*
7. For any sporting event, you are “buddies” and “coaches” during any warm-up and the “opposing team” for the any games. When you are the opposing team, your job is still to help your player be successful. Buddies will play “soft” on offense and defense. Your #1 job (in addition to keeping your player engaged) in either role is to protect your player from flying objects, as much as possible, as some of their reaction times may not be the fastest.
8. We will also ask for your flexibility. Your player may not be there every session or may only last a short while...for a variety of reasons. You may be asked to help out with another participant, another group or other roles as needed. Please be open to any role we ask you to do...all jobs are important...even if they do not seem like it in the moment. Just say yes!

9. Always focus on your participant first.
10. Help your player score or be as successful as possible.
11. Expectations...please expect the most from your player and push them to do a little bit more every week. Many times, they will surprise us (and themselves) with the things they can do.
12. Get to know your player. Find out from them or parents what motivates them or what their interests are.
13. It is OK to “redirect your player” by gently moving them with your hands. If you have questions on this, please ask parents or leaders how to do it.
14. You are responsible for your participant, even during breaks, until you make sure they get back to their parents/guardians at the end of the game/snack time (except restroom breaks...parents or leaders are responsible there).
15. In this role you will work. It is important that we understand this is not a hang-out time with your friends. It is 100% about the special needs players.
16. Please try to keep the crazy stuff in check and remember player safety is our #1 job.

Practice and Games...and the Rules

1. We try to teach the basic rules, but most of the time they are very lightly enforced.
2. We try to find the safest way possible to do things like pass, catch and throw.
3. We use trial and error...eventually you or we will find something that works.
4. Each game and division will look different...which may not exactly resemble the rules of the sport we are playing. Our goal is to follow the rules as closely as possible, but we go with what works and adjust on the fly.
5. The game may look like chaos at times but just go with it.

After the Game

Please stay for the after game wrap up, game balls, snacks, etc...It is very important to the kids.

Schedule, Uniforms and Communication

1. We will communicate by email your expected arrival times for our various activities...please keep an eye out.
2. Flow and time between sessions will be tight. We ask for your help in keeping on schedule.
3. Please be on time and sign in...and let me know by email, as far in advance as possible, if you will not be able to make any days (email: coachrick@shootingstarsgroup.org).
4. We may have shirts or ask you to wear certain colors. Coaches, players and volunteers can be “color coded” and could each wear a different color shirt to make it easy for spectators (and everyone else) to figure out roles. This will be communicated by email.
5. We will post information to our website www.shootingstarsgroup.org. **We prefer to send our communications by e-mail**, so please check regularly. We will also have Facebook and likely Instagram as well.

Wrap-Up

1. Sorry to throw a lot at you so quickly. I know it is quite a bit to digest. You will see as this progresses that you are on a pretty cool journey...and **You** are special people because you stepped up!
2. That being said, it will not always be easy, but seeing the kids (and their parents) happy with those great big smiles on their faces...there is nothing like it! **Savor every “small victory”!**

Thank You Again,

Rick Clark (Coach Rick)

Shooting Stars Special Needs Group President and Program Director

760-504-7242

coachrick@shootingstarsgroup.org