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# Runninghour Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

A Practical Guide for Safe, Respectful & Inclusive Sports Activities<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Welcome to Runninghour

Runninghour is an inclusive sports community that brings together persons with special needs (PWSNs), volunteers, and caregivers to participate in physical activity safely, respectfully, and meaningfully.

As our community grows, clear shared practices help us:

- Protect everyone's safety and dignity
- Respect each other's time and effort
- Create positive and inclusive experiences
- Sustain our programmes in the long term

## 2. Roles & Expectations

### Buddies (PWSNs)

- Participate at your own pace
- Communicate discomfort or needs where possible
- Respect others' boundaries

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<sup>1</sup> Updated as of January 2026

## Guides

- Accompany assigned Buddies during activities and aim to know their whereabouts at all times
- Follow the guidelines and tips outlined in **section 4** and prioritise safety at all times
- Follow instructions from Team Leads
- Seek help from Runninghour staff or management committee members onsite if unsure
- Guides are not expected to diagnose conditions or handle issues alone

## Caregivers

- Follow the registration and session SOP
- Share relevant information (e.g. the Buddy's fitness level, any potential injuries, preferred communication style etc.) to ensure a safe and enjoyable session
- Work with Guides and Team Leads to ensure safety

Everyone plays a part in creating a safe and welcoming environment.

## 3. Registration, Participation & Session Operations

As our community grows, structured processes help ensure:

- Respect for Buddies' and Guides' time
- Safe and accurate pairing
- Reduced administrative burden
- Smooth and positive sessions



Your cooperation with the following practices is essential.

### 3.1 Sign-Up & Registration

- Sign-up is mandatory for all activities
- Cut-off time is 12pm the day before the activity
- Reminders may be sent before the cut-off
- Sign-up must be done via the official registration form only
- Text messages, or calls are strictly not used for sign-ups, except in response to official call-outs by official Runninghour staff
- Walk-ins will not be accommodated

These steps help ensure fair and safe pairing for everyone.

### 3.2 Pairing List

Pairing is done carefully with safety, needs, and experience in mind.

- Tuesday session pairing list: released on Monday evening
- Saturday session pairing list: released on Friday evening
- Any further adjustments will be handled on-site during the session

### 3.3 Event Day & Session Expectations

To respect everyone's time and effort:

- Sessions start promptly at the scheduled time



- Late arrivals may be re-paired or adjusted
- If you are unable to attend after signing up, please inform the team as early as possible

Late changes affect Buddies and Guides who are prepared and waiting.

### 3.4 Tuesday Session Grouping & Assembly

To improve safety, efficiency, and overall session flow, Tuesday runs will be conducted in separate groups (Group A to Group D).

#### **Group-Based Running Format**

- Runs will start in separate groups (A–D) rather than as one large group
- This helps manage:
  - Group size
  - Pace differences
  - Clear communication
  - Safer warm-ups and run-offs

#### **Monthly Full-Group Session**

- Once a month, Tuesday runs may have one whole group photo before separating into the respective A–D groupings for warm-up
- This is typically done for birthday celebrations or special occasions
- Announcements will be made in advance during such occasions

#### **Team Lead Identification**



- Each group will be led by a Team Lead
- Team Leads may have visual indicators:
  - Hold a laminated alphabet sign (A, B, C, or D), or
  - Wear a headband or visible marker to indicate their role

The Runninghour Support Staff will be giving clear descriptions on the gathering point and who the Team Leads are for easier identification.

### **All Guides, Buddies, and Caregivers should:**

- Look out for their assigned Team Lead
- Assemble with the correct group before warm-up

### **Announcements & Warm-Up**

- Please listen carefully to announcements made by the Team Lead
- Warm-up will be conducted by or under the direction of the Team Lead
- Participants are expected to follow instructions given during assembly and warm-up

### **Pairing on Event Day**

- Guides and Buddies should locate their assigned partner and group before warm-up
- If you are unable to find the person you are paired with:
  - Please approach the Team Lead or Runninghour Support Staff for assistance
- If a participant is not present, the Team Lead will:



- Reassign pairings as needed
- Make adjustments to ensure safety and group balance

Please do not self-assign or reassign without checking with the Team Lead.

### **Arrival Time**

- All participants are strongly encouraged to arrive at least 10 minutes before the start of the activity
- This allows time to:
  - Find the person you are paired with
  - Locate your Team Lead and group
  - Hear announcements and instructions

Arriving early helps ensure a smooth, safe, and respectful start for everyone.

## **4. Responsibilities & Practical Tips for Guides**

This section provides a non-exhaustive set of guidelines for Guides supporting Buddies during Runninghour activities. Guides play a key role in ensuring safety, dignity, and a positive experience.

### **4.1 Core Responsibilities of a Guide**

As a Guide, your primary responsibilities are to:

- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of your assigned Buddy at all times
- Accompany your Buddy throughout the activity
- Support participation at a pace suitable for the Buddy
- Create a respectful, encouraging, and inclusive environment

- Be alert to signs of distress or health concerns and flag them promptly
- Seek help when unsure — you are not expected to manage everything alone

## 4.2 Guiding Approach

Runninghour prioritises experience over performance. A good session is one where the Buddy feels safe, included, and supported — not necessarily one where they run the farthest or fastest.

Guides are encouraged to:

- Be patient, observant, and calm
- Build rapport gradually
- Encourage independence where appropriate
- Adapt pace and approach to the Buddy's needs, mood and capacity that day
- Be responsive to changes in energy levels, emotional state, or physical cues (e.g. limping, breathlessness, zoning out)

## 4.3 Communication Tips

Effective communication builds trust and ensures safety:

- Use **simple, short, and clear instructions**
- Allow time for the Buddy to process and respond
- Break tasks into small steps
- Use encouragement and positive reinforcement
- Check in regularly on comfort and fatigue
- Avoid sensitive or personal topics as much as possible

## 4.4 Physical Contact

- Physical contact should only occur when necessary for guidance or safety

- Always ask for consent and respect it if withdrawn
- **Holding hands should be kept to a minimum** and only done when necessary for immediate safety
- **Tether holding and verbal cues are recommended** as the preferred guiding method, particularly for Buddies with visual impairments. When in doubt, choose caution and seek support.

#### 4.5 Guiding Buddies with Autism and/or Intellectual Disabilities

Each Buddy is unique. Take time to understand their preferences and needs (communication preferences, fitness level, running pace, health issues) by asking caregivers or regular Guides.

Tips:

- Give instructions clearly and calmly. Demonstrate where possible
- Be patient if responses are slower
- Use visual or physical cues if helpful (gestures, pointing, demonstrating)
- Respect sensory needs and adjust tone/approach based on Buddy's comfort levels — some Buddies are sensitive to loud noise, crowds, or touch
- Encourage and celebrate effort and small wins
- Support social interaction awareness gently (eg. greeting, personal space)
- Avoid doing everything for them — guide and support instead
- Stick to familiar routines and explain changes ahead of time
- If a Buddy appears withdrawn, overstimulated or unusually reactive, pause and check in or alert a Team Lead or Runninghour Support Staff

#### 4.6 Guiding Buddies with Visual Impairments

Guides act as the Buddy's eyes during the activity.

Tips:



- Stay with your Buddy at all times, including during announcements, warm-up, cool-down, and rest breaks
- Use clear **verbal cues** to describe surroundings, obstacles or changes in terrain, direction, elevation or pace (eg. “Speed bump ahead”, “We’re turning left in 3, 2, 1”)
- Avoid sudden stops or abrupt movements — always signal in advance (e.g. “Slowing down now”, “Stopping in 3 steps”)
- Do not assume what the Buddy can or cannot see — every Buddy has different levels of vision; ask and adapt accordingly
- Run in single file in crowded or narrow areas, with the Guide leading and the Buddy behind (especially when there’s insufficient side-by-side space)
- Communicate how to overtake others — use cues like “Runner passing on your left” and ensure there’s enough space
- Maintain a consistent rhythm — erratic movements can disorient your Buddy
- Guide with confidence and calmness — your presence offers assurance

## 4.7 Do's & Don'ts for Guides

### Do

- Be punctual and reliable
- Follow instructions from Team Leads
- Check that the Buddy feels well enough to participate
- Encourage hydration and appropriate pacing
- Stay alert to weather, ground conditions, visibility, obstacles, and other users (eg. cyclists, vehicles)
- Ensure appropriate gear is used (eg. suitable footwear, tether where required)
- Treat everyone with respect and patience
- Ask for consent before assisting

- Carry a mobile phone for emergencies (but avoid distractions such as phone use or music while guiding)
- Speak up and ask for help in case of unusual behaviour or signs of distress

### Don't

- Abandon your Buddy
- Use unnecessary physical contact
- Force participation or pressure buddies
- Share personal contact details, lend money, or give gifts
- Criticise, mock or ignore Buddy discomfort
- Panic if they wander away or sprint off - keep visual contact and catch up calmly
- Handle concerns and incidents (eg. meltdown, sensory overload, behavioural or medical issues) alone

## 4.8 When to Seek Support

Approach the Team Lead or Runninghour Support Staff immediately for guidance if:

- The Buddy appears distressed, unwell or unsafe
- Instructions are not understood despite repeated attempts
- Behaviour becomes challenging or unpredictable
- Physical or emotional boundaries feel unclear
- You are unsure, uncomfortable, or unable to manage the situation

## 5. Managing Safety & Behavioural Concerns & Incidents

### 5.1 Types of Incidents

Incidents at Runninghour can be broadly categorised as:

- **Behavioural:** Actions that cause discomfort, distress, or disrupt the safety and experience of others (see below for examples).
- **Safety/Medical:** Physical incidents such as falls, injuries, or signs of distress or illness.

## 5.2 Identifying & Responding to Behavioural Issues

If you observe any of the following behaviours (non-exhaustive list):

- Repeated boundary-crossing (e.g. excessive hugging, holding hands without consent)
- Ignoring instructions related to safety or pairing
- Persistent lateness affecting operations and safety
- Verbal remarks that cause discomfort
- Resistance to redirection by Guides or Leads
- Behaviour that creates confusion, unease, or emotional distress in others

Please:

- Inform a Team Lead or Runninghour Support Staff
- Do not confront, investigate, or manage the situation alone.

If you feel unsure whether something is “serious enough”, raise it anyway. Early action helps prevent escalation and is not about blame.

## 5.3 Identifying & Responding to Safety or Medical Issues

If a Buddy or participant:

- Appears physically unwell (eg. pale, dizzy, overheated, in pain)
- Falls or sustains injury
- Signals distress (verbally or non-verbally)

Please:

- Prioritise immediate safety (eg. stop activity, move to shade if needed)
- Get help from a Team Lead or a first aid-certified Guide
- Do not attempt treatment unless trained and necessary
- Stay calm and reassuring; reduce stimulation (lower voice, avoid crowding the person)
- Ensure someone stays with the Buddy while help is called

Some Guides are certified in first aid and may carry portable first aid kits. Team Leads and Runninghour Support Staff will coordinate response where necessary.

## 5.4 Escalation & Follow-Up

For both behavioural and medical incidents:

- Team Leads and Runninghour Support Staff will escalate matters to the Runninghour Management Committee where appropriate
- Further steps (eg. caregiver communication, documentation, or involvement of authorities) will be handled centrally
- Volunteers are **not expected** to manage escalation or investigation on their own

## 5.5 Importance of Speaking Up

Runninghour encourages everyone to:

- Raise concerns early
- Ask questions when unsure
- Speak up in good faith

Raising concerns helps keep our community safe and supportive.



## 6. Safe Sport Training

Runninghour is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all. All participants must:

- Respect personal boundaries
- Communicate appropriately
- Protect the safety and dignity of others

**Inclusion does not mean tolerating behaviour that causes harm or discomfort.**

Guides, Buddies (where capable), and caregivers are therefore required to take the relevant **Safe Sport modules** offered by Safe Sport Commission Singapore:

- For Guides: [Coach](#) or [Volunteer module](#)
- For Buddies: [Athlete module](#)
- For caregivers: [Parent module](#)

***\*After completion of course, please send a screenshot to the Runninghour Support Staff (9050 5398)***

## 7. Acknowledgement

By participating in Runninghour activities, you acknowledge that you have:

- Read this SOP
- Understood your role and responsibilities
- Agreed to uphold safe and respectful conduct