

# Coaching tips

## Supporting athletes with diverse participatory needs

### Start here: The basics for every athlete

**Every athlete is different.** The most effective coaching comes from:

- Getting to know the person first.
- Asking questions about how they like to learn or communicate.
- Always speak directly to the athlete.
- Ask what works best for their body, fatigue levels, mobility aids, and comfort.
- Ensure activities have multiple ways to participate, not just one “right” technique.
- Trying things together, adjusting as you go.

Ultimately, **be flexible, patient, and person-centred!**

It's normal to use a bit of trial and error. The more prepared and curious you are, the easier things become for both you and the athlete.

## Athletes who are D/deaf or hard of hearing

### Communication

- **Demonstrate** skills rather than relying on verbal instructions.
- **Use visuals:** whiteboards, written drills, diagrams.
- **Rephrase** if something isn't understood.
- **Position yourself** where the athlete can see you clearly.
- **Replace whistle-only** cues with clear visual signals (e.g., arm up/down, coloured flags).
- Learn simple **sport-specific signs**.
- **Brief teammates and umpires** on how to support communication.

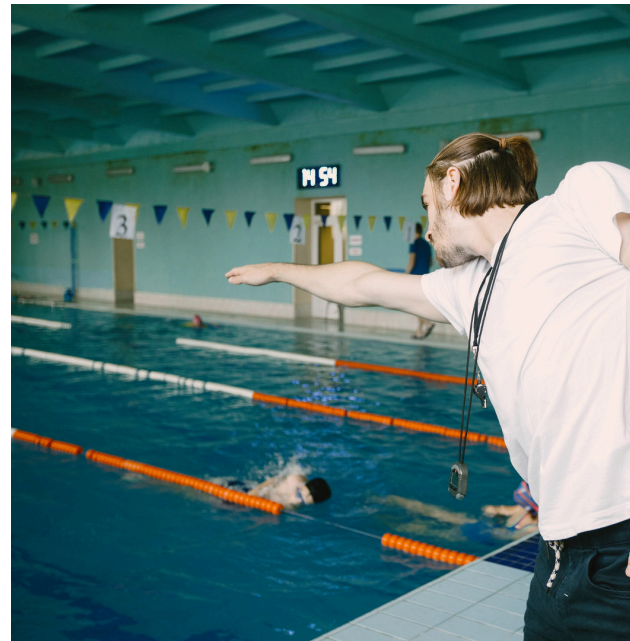
### Practical example: netball

Instead of a whistle to rotate stations, use a bright **visual card** or **hand signal**.

## Autistic athletes/Athletes with autism

### Instructions and communication

- Break instructions into **clear, short steps**.
- Give **one idea** at a time.
- Use **concrete language** (“run fast” vs “fly”).
- **Demonstrate** visually.
- Use **visuals or written cues**.
- Provide **explicit feedback** (“good job at keeping your feet apart”).
- Allow some **time for processing** before repeating.



### Sensory needs and predictability

- **Reduce noise and harsh lighting** where possible.
- Ensure athletes know and **consent to hand-over-hand touch to guide** if necessary.
- **Keep routines consistent** (e.g., warm-up → drills → game → cool-down).
- **Warn about transitions** with a timer or countdown.
- **Provide a cue** for “we’re almost finished.”



### Practical example: swimming

Provide a **visual card showing the warm-up sequence** as well as verbal guidance; give a 5-minute and 1-minute transition warning before moving to kickboard work.

## Athletes with low vision

### Communication and guiding

- Use the **athlete's name** and **clear verbal directions**.
- Let them know when you're **leaving** or **approaching**.
- Provide **information in accessible formats** (e.g., large print, audio, Microsoft Word, Image descriptions/Alt text online, etc.).
- Check how they prefer to be guided (**don't assume**).
- Offer your **elbow**, walk **half a step ahead**.
- **Ask** which side they prefer.
- **Describe movement** clearly (e.g., "slight uphill", "door on the left").

### Environment

- **Remove clutter** and hazards.
- **Describe** steps, surfaces, handrails, or obstacles.



### Buddy system

- **Pair with a teammate** who can call cues (e.g., "ball coming!", "your turn next"), help navigate transitions, and reinforce instructions.
- **Rotate buddies** so everyone in the team gets involved.

#### Practical example: soccer

Use a ball with a bell for training; place a beeping cone at the goal for dribbling drills.

## Athletes with intellectual or cognitive disability

### Communication

- **Keep language simple**; avoid slang and metaphors.
- Use **visuals** and **demonstrations**.
- **Allow extra time for processing** and responding.
- Use **consistent words, signals, and routines**.

### Instruction

- **Be specific** (e.g., “keep your feet shoulder-width apart”).
- **Break instructions** into clear steps.
- **Repeat skills** to reinforce learning.

### Structure

- Keep sessions **predictable**.
- Provide **transition warnings**.
- Offer **equipment choices** (e.g., soft balls, lighter bats, flat markers).
- Keep athletes engaged with **short rotations** or **side activities**.



### Practical example: athletics

Teach a chest pass in three steps:

- Hold the ball at your chest,
- Step forward,
- Push the ball to your teammate.

**Demonstrate each step, have athletes copy one step at a time, then put the steps together.**

Keep using the same words and show the steps each time until the skill feels familiar.

## Athletes with physical disability

### Instruction

- **Ask how they like feedback:** verbal, visual, tactile cues, or demonstration.
- Demonstrate movements in **smaller parts** if coordination is impacted.

### Equipment

- **Offer different equipment** depending on the athlete's needs (e.g., soft balls, larger targets, balls with handles).
- **Stabilise objects** (e.g., anchors for cones or tees).
- **Use modified versions** (e.g., ramp for throwing/rolling, grip aids, wrist supports).

### Drills

- **Reduce** distances.
- **Build in** short breaks.
- Allow **seated** or **standing** options.
- Widen the **space for turning** if athletes use mobility devices.
- Offer **alternative movements** with the same objective. For example, if others are doing sprints, a seated athlete might push a wheelchair drive for the same time interval.

### Environment

- Ensure **accessible routes** between stations.
- Place equipment where it's **easy to reach**.



### Practical example: tennis

Allow two bounces if needed, use a **larger or low-compression ball**, and **adjust serving positions** or allow **underarm serves**.