**How to support students with physical activities**

Students with autism have a variety of physical skills, abilities, interests, communication and learning styles. An individualised and collaborative approach should be used when working with students with autism.

* **Introduction:** At the start of a session, provide an outline of the activities and the focus areas.
* **Instructions:** Keep instructions clear, precise and concrete. Repeat instructions or directions if/as needed.
* **Processing time:** Allow more time to process instructions, or to respond to a question.
* **Visuals:** Use visuals to assist with verbal instructions.
* **Language:** Provide positive reinforcementand use positive language. Emphasise what a student can do, rather than what they can’t do.
* **Feedback:** Where possible provide 1:1 feedback that is timely/in context (i.e. immediately after activity) and specific (e.g. technique).
* **Ask:** Seek feedback after a session – what went well, what could be improved next time.

Communication

Learning and Teaching

* **Preparation:** Be aware of other medical conditions (e.g. asthma, epilepsy, heart conditions) or developmental difficulties/delays that may impact on participation.
* **Teaching skills:** Break down skills or tasks into smaller steps or components.
* **Visual teaching:** Use demonstrations to assist learning (e.g. teacher or peer modelling).
* **Structure:** Where possible provide a consistent structure to each lesson, even if the activities are different (e.g. consistent order of warm up, drills, game practice, cool down). Advise students of upcoming changes where possible (e.g. lesson location, topic, change in teacher).
* **Supporting success:** Modify task requirements where needed to facilitate participation and experience of success.
* **Phasing out:** Modifications may only be necessary when first teaching a skill or activity, and others may need to remain in place for longer, or for the duration of the activity.
* **TREE:** Use the TREE model for modifying physical activities in terms of the teaching style, rules and regulations, environment, and equipment.
* **Plan B:** Prepare a backup plan e.g. if the activity is too difficult or too easy.
* **Endurance and fatigue:** Consider modifications such as breaks, player substitutions/rotations, smaller playing areas, and/or zones within playing areas.
* **Equipment:** Consider simplified equipment when learning the techniques, then re-introduce authentic equipment when students’ skills have developed.

Modifications

**References:**

* Autism Inclusion Webinar Series (webinar/online learning), Special Olympics Australia
* Australian Sports Commission, Using the TREE Model - <https://www.sportaus.gov.au/sports_ability/using_tree>
* Fournier, KA., Hass, CJ., Naik, SK., Lodha N & Cauraugh JH. (2010). *Motor coordination in autism spectrum disorders: a synthesis and meta-analysis*. Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders 2010, 40 (10). <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20195737/>