

Including Everyone in Your Sessions



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Introduction

In coaching terms, an 'inclusive coach' has the ability to positively and effectively coach a group of people who may have very different needs. **This is not specific to coaches working with disabled children, players and athletes – good coaches will always be working inclusively because they want everyone in their session to have fun and improve.**

In any session you run, everyone will have different abilities, irrespective of whether they have an impairment or not. In a session of non-disabled people, there will be different needs within a group.

With any new starter to your session you must speak to them and ask what has brought them here, what do they want from being here and do they have any specific support needs. It is ok to ask disabled people this and they will be happy that you want to make the activity the best you can for them.

An inclusive coaching session cannot be planned without knowledge of the individuals that make up the group. You can make changes to your session as it runs – don't be afraid to change things to make sure everyone is involved and having fun. The following information will give you some guidance on how you can change the activity.

Some people need little, if any, change to the activity and can easily articulate and communicate their needs with the coach.

There is no magic formula for inclusive coaching. The key is to keep communicating with everyone taking part and being confident to change the activity either for the whole group or individuals to make their experience of being active as positive and fun as possible. That way they will keep coming back!



The Inclusion Spectrum

The Inclusion Spectrum is an activity-based model that is widely used to help inform coaches how disabled people can be included in sport or physical activity sessions. However, it is now widely accepted that it is a useful tool for any coach to include people of many different abilities in their session. For example, sessions that constantly welcome new participants – how do you make sure new starters, improvers and your long-term attendees all get a great session?

The Inclusion Spectrum consists of five approaches to the delivery of physical activity programmes, ranging from fully open activities to totally segregated participation. The focus is on what individuals can do rather than what they can't.

Each approach aims to encourage and empower everyone in your session, irrespective of their ability, in order to enhance the quality of their involvement. The type of delivery should suit the needs of everyone in the session, and all the approaches covered are valuable ways of delivering high quality and meaningful opportunity in sport and physical activity.

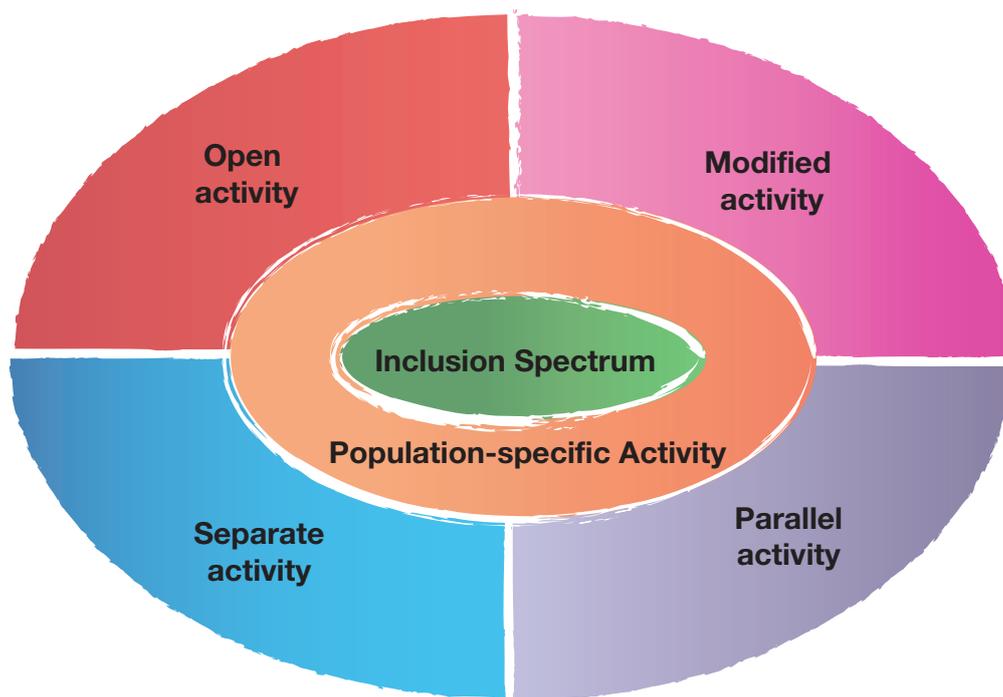


Figure 1: The Inclusion Spectrum
© Stevenson and Black (adapted from Stevenson, 2007¹)

¹Stevenson, P. (2007) *Including Young Disabled People and SEN Pupils in FUNDamentals and Multi-skill Opportunities*. Loughborough: Youth Sport Trust (unpublished draft document).

Open activity – A simple activity based on what the entire group can do, with little or no modification.

In an open activity, everyone does the same thing, without adaptation or modification. It is an activity that includes everyone. A great example of this is a warm-up or cool-down.

Modified activity – Everyone does the same activity with adaptations to challenge the more able and support the inclusion of everyone.

In a modified activity, everyone does the same task but with changes to rules, areas or equipment (eg in tennis, allowing people with mobility difficulties an extra bounce before having to return the ball).

Parallel activity – Participants are grouped according to ability, each doing the same activity but at appropriate levels.

In a parallel activity, everyone participates in the same type of activity, but different groups participate in different ways and at different levels. Participants can be grouped according to skill, fitness or the way in which they play the game (eg a group of participants can be split into three smaller groups for a ball passing game such as netball). The rules, equipment and playing area can be different in all three groups to suit the requirements of the group that is playing.

Separate activity – An individual or group do a purposefully planned different activity.

In a separate activity, you would separate your group depending on what skill or activity they need to practise, depending on their ability level, or in sport, if they need to focus on different team tactics (eg attack and defence).

Population-specific activity – Sessions delivered to meet specific sport programme needs.

Some groups may request sessions to be run specifically for them to cater for their personal or cultural choices or needs. Examples include disability sport activities, or sessions for Muslim women.



STEP

The STEP formula provides a framework for coaches to make changes to their coaching, in the areas of space, task, equipment and people. The changes can be made for the whole group or just an individual who uses different equipment, new to the group and needs some initial extra support, or likewise someone who has been coming along for a while and needs to be challenged further to keep them engaged.

You would modify an activity in relation to your participant's 'functional ability' (ie what they are able to do). For example, if you take a group of people and ask them to sit on the floor and reach forward to touch their toes, all will get to different distances (some will only be able to reach their knees and some will be able to touch the soles of their feet). This will be for many different reasons, and could impact on what they can do within your session, and what you decide to work on with them to help them improve. As with the inclusion spectrum, this model can help you deliver a session that keeps everyone engaged, and should not just be used when including disabled people.

Here are some examples of what we mean:

S pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase or decrease the size of playing area.• Vary distances covered to suit different abilities.• Use zones to match people of similar ability.
T ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Break down complex activities into simpler parts.• Ensure appropriate time for people to learn new skills as an individual and in pairs before including in larger group activities.• Be prepared to slow down an activity if the athlete is not as flexible, or can't move as quickly, as other athletes (eg increase the time the ball can be held in netball to allow a wheelchair user to get into position to shoot or pass).
E quipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changing the size of equipment can make things easier or harder.• Provide a variety of equipment that suits different needs and preferences.
P eople	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider how people are partnered or grouped – similar ability, different abilities, friendship groups, similar motivations or goals.• Teams could have unequal numbers to develop skills or maximise participation and activity levels of different people.

The following tables divide considerations into those that may be applicable where a person has a primary impairment that is physical, learning, social or sensory (hearing or visual).

Considerations where primary impairment is **LEARNING**

S pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zones can assist in matching players with similar ability and imposing specific rules.
T ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give small amounts of information at a time and repeat demonstrations.• You may need to slow down an activity, but this is not always the case.• Be prepared to repeat a session drill a few times if necessary.
E quipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tactile markers can assist comprehension of floor patterns for skills and drills.
P eople	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small-sided games may assist inclusion of people with learning disabilities.• Give people time to observe others performing a task before they attempt it.

Considerations where primary impairment is **SOCIAL** (eg autistic spectrum conditions [ASC])

S pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a large amount of personal space around athletes and clearly mark out any boundaries of the area.
T ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visual signs and pictures can assist some people with ASC to access mainstream environments.• Use clear, concrete and concise language with minimal words to convey tasks.• Work at a speed where the athletes are happy to contribute and play.
E quipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing a piece of equipment for the athlete to hold while waiting in line can sometimes help alleviate anxiety.
P eople	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the negative effect of physical contact, 'hustle bustle' and partner changes.

Considerations where primary impairment is HEARING

S pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure your position allows the hearing impaired (HI) person to lip-read if applicable.
T ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide printed copies of complex drills and/or the coaching plans. The speed of the activity should not be affected, but be aware of delays in response times if the athlete has not seen a signal to stop play or finish the drill.
E quipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace the whistle with visual cues (eg use a flag in team sports).
P eople	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the whole group are aware of the HI person's different needs, in terms of basic communication. The speed of the activity should not be affected, but be aware of delays in response times if the athlete has not seen a signal to stop play or finish the drill.

Considerations where primary impairment is VISUAL

S pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting the coaching space out in the same way for each session can assist orientation.
T ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give clear oral explanations and/or provide copies of complex drills in large print/Braille/electronically (so that a screen reader can be used). Slow the play or practice down to ensure the skill is practised effectively by the visually impaired athlete.
E quipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use auditory balls. Use a guiding rope in athletics. Indicate the pool end to blind swimmers using poles with a ball on the end.
P eople	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In partner drills, rotate partners frequently, providing the blind or partially sighted athlete with specialist equipment if necessary. In some sports, for example swimming and athletics, explore using a sighted training partner.

Inclusive coaching considerations

Here are some quick tips to help you create an inclusive coaching environment. It is of paramount importance that the following factors are addressed to ensure everyone has a positive first experience, and continues to participate in an inclusive and welcoming environment.

Initial contact

- **Welcome**
If a new participant/attendee feels welcomed a positive experience is much more likely.
- **Content of first session**
Gearing the first session around a new participant will cement the welcome.
- **Gelling with the group**
You may need to do a little work with the rest of the group in a sensitive way if the new participant has specific needs.
- **Ignoring versus highlighting impairment**
When a disabled participant has specific needs, you need to find a balance between ignoring the differences completely and highlighting them in an appropriate way.

Practical considerations

- **Equipment**
Sometimes, getting the whole group to explore new and different equipment before an individual uses it can help demystify it, and can add additional ways of challenging existing skills.
- **Individual preferences**
You may need to balance allowing individuals to have personal choice and the need for them to conform to what the group is doing.
- **Safety**
You may need to check medical considerations for new participants, but common sense is the most useful tool. Common sense and background knowledge can help people with different impairments be more active – communicate with the participant rather than making isolated judgements about what might create 'safety'.
- **Venue**
There may be additional considerations to your choice of venue. Consider what wet weather and winter venues are appropriate, based on accessibility, facilities, environment and conditions.

Content of session

- **Style of delivery - Inclusion Spectrum**
The Inclusion Spectrum can give you options to deliver in different ways, thus balancing the different needs of the group.
- **Flexible delivery - STEPS**
Adapting and modifying all aspects of the session can help you include participants of all abilities.
- **'Bag of activities' to assess needs**
Building up a menu of simple activities that participants with different levels of skill can take part in can assist you in assessing the needs of new participants.
- **Ensure challenge**
Disabled participants need to be challenged in the same way as anyone else. Don't assume that they need to have things made easier in order for the challenge to be appropriate. Many disabled participants will be as skilled as their non-disabled friends in the group.

Signposting

- **Pathways available**

Some disabled participants may need a high level of support in finding the appropriate 'next step' on their player pathway. Do your homework and contact your local County Sports Partnership to find out where local disability teams are. This way you will be equally prepared in supporting your disabled participants to develop and compete as you are your non-disabled participants.

- **Other opportunities**

Certain disabled participants will not have an obvious 'next step' in their chosen sport, and it may be appropriate to consider a change of sport.

Evaluations

- **Coach**

A review of, and reflection on, the session by you is essential to provide continued high quality inclusive coaching.

- **Speak to your participants**

Your participants are a very useful source of information and feedback. Just ask them how they enjoyed the session and if they would change anything.

- **Ask for advice**

County Sports Partnerships, governing bodies of sport, sports coach UK and other coaches can provide useful hints and tips to develop your skills. Don't be afraid to ask for help and information.

Where can you go for further information?

sports coach UK workshops will enable you to learn more about inclusive coaching and also share ideas and experiences with other coaches.

If you want to access some face-to-face training, have a look into the following:

- 1st4sport Level 1 Award for Activators (Multi Skills)
- Sainsbury's Inclusive Community Training
- How to Coach Disabled People in Sport.

Visit the sports coach UK website for further information on dates and locations of the workshops: www.sportscoachuk.org

For further information, contact your relevant HNDSO:

- English Federation of Disability Sport (see UK DIT or 'Typhoo' course): www.efds.co.uk
- Scottish Disability Sport: www.scottishdisabilitysport.com
- Disability Sport Wales: www.disabilitysportwales.com
- Disability Sports Northern Ireland: www.dsni.co.uk