

Top tips:

Communicating with disabled players



First things first

No two individuals are the same.

Even if people have a similar disability or impairment, it will impact them in different ways. This means that what works for one person may not work for another.

The best thing to do?

Get to know your players. Don't be afraid to ask them – or their parents – what works.

They're the experts.

Once you understand your players' needs, you'll be able to decide how to use the tips below. This isn't an exhaustive list, but it'll help you get to grips with some basics.

1 Communicating with blind players

- Always address each player by their name.
- If you need to walk away, explain that you're leaving the area.
- Until players are familiar with your session, ask friends or family to act as guides.
- If you need to use touch, always ask first.
- Make sure verbal information is concise, accurate and easily understood.

2 Communicating with partially sighted players

- Find out what each player can see – don't assume.
- Make sure verbal information is concise, accurate and easily understood.
- Consider the type and amount of light available, and whether this will change.
- Think about where you should stand in relation to the light.
- Watch out for background noise.

3 Communicating with deaf or partially deaf players

- Ask each player how they prefer to communicate.
- Face players at all times.
- Don't chew, shout or cover your mouth while talking.
- Keep sentences simple and avoid jargon.
- Ensure your face can be seen (e.g. stand in the light if it's dark).
- Don't assume players can lip read.
- If relevant, provide written instructions – but don't speak while players are reading.
- Consider using an interpreter (e.g. parent, friend, other) or learning some basic sign language.

4 Communicating with players who have cerebral palsy

- Consider that some players may prefer to communicate in different ways.
- If the player has a speech impairment, don't assume they also have a learning disability.

5 Communicating with players who have a learning disability

- Get to know your players and how much they understand.
- Use simple and concise language.
- Don't patronise players – speak to them as you would others their age.
- If players can't communicate verbally, find out if they use a signing system.