

3 APPLYING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES



DISABILITY & INCLUSION

WHAT IS INCLUSION?

- Inclusion of people with disabilities is about providing a wide range of options within a sport
- The goal of inclusion is to provide opportunities for all people to participate in the most appropriate manner possible.
- Coaching children with disabilities is no different, however it is important to have an awareness of different disabilities and how you can adapt programs and activities to suit the different needs of participants.
- Making small adaptations can often make a big difference in a participants enjoyment of an activity, especially if it increases the ability to successfully complete tasks.



TIPS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

COMMUNICATING WITH BLIND/LOW VISION CHILDREN

- Always address the child by name and introduce yourself by name.
- Speak clearly and in a normal voice. There is no need to raise your voice or speak slowly.
- Remember that visual cues and facial expressions will most likely be missed. Make sure you verbalise any thoughts or feelings.
- Always ask before physically handling the child, offer assistance but don't assume they want/need this.

COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN WHO ARE HARD OF HEARING/DEAF

- Some deaf children use Auslan (Australian Sign Language). If Auslan is the preferred language, arrange for an Auslan Interpreter to be present if necessary.
- Gain the child's attention before speaking. Try a gentle tap on the shoulder, a wave or some other visual signal to gain attention.
- Face the child directly and maintain eye contact.
- Make sure your mouth is visible. Remember not to cover your mouth with your hand or any other object as you talk.
- Look directly at the child while speaking and speak evenly, not too fast or slow.
- Don't exaggerate your mouth movements, as this will make it more difficult to lip-read.
- Use short sentences.
- Keep your volume up and natural. Don't shout.

COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN WHO ARE NON-VERBAL OR HAVE LITTLE/NO SPEECH

- Look at and talk to the child, not their friend/companion/parent.
- Establish a yes or no response eg. Head nod, thumbs up.
- Let the child communicate how they wish to – they may use their speech, communication cards, text to speech communication devices or pen and paper.
- Don't pretend you understood them if you did not – if you do not understand find a method that works for both of you.
- Be patient, give the child plenty of time to communicate and finish what they want to say. Don't finish their sentences.
- It is okay to have silences, don't walk away or do something else.
- Ask questions to make sure you have understood the child.
- Don't presume that a child with little or no speech is lacking intelligence.



COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

- Before talking, ensure you have the child's attention. Try using their name or eye contact to make sure you have their attention.
- Keep your questions simple and your answers easy to understand.
- Remember that your body language is important, as children with an intellectual disability often rely on visual cues.
- Be prepared to use visual information or to receive visual information from someone with an intellectual disability.
- Be specific and direct. Avoid talking using abstracts, acronyms, metaphors or slang.

WHAT ARE INVISIBLE DISABILITIES?

“What are invisible disabilities?”

The term Invisible Disabilities used to describe disabilities that are not immediately noticeable when looking at someone. The term applies to a wide spectrum of conditions including physical, mental, and neurological disorders that may impair daily functioning.

These can include but are not limited to chronic pain and fatigue, cognitive conditions, allergies, brain and/or spinal injuries, hearing and vision impairments, learning differences and mental health conditions.

Because of their hidden nature, invisible disabilities can go unacknowledged or may be misunderstood.

ADAPTATIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY - FOCUS ON ABILITY NOT DISABILITY



SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITY ADAPTATIONS

- Make smaller groups or similar activities – this allows for individual progress at different levels
- Mark large groups of different abilities
- Use language that is appropriate to the group
- Make use of specifically designed equipment to assist in learning
- Always check for understanding of instructions
- Use circuit activities to allow participants to progress at their own level and pace
- Substitute players regularly
- Have fewer players per activity to allow freedom of movement
- Reduce the competitive element
- Change running to walking
- Reduce the size of the game playing area
- Use indoor surfaces as well as grass, turf
- Minimise distractions in the surrounding area
- Make the activity as inviting as possible so that participants want to “Give it a go”



EQUIPMENT ADAPTATIONS

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITY ADAPTATIONS

Depending on the ability of each person with a disability (not all disabilities are the same) you may or may not need to adapt the equipment used.

Here are some tips that may assist coaches/volunteers:

EQUIPMENT: GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

Different bats:

- Size and weight – ensure that the participant has a bat that is appropriate to their individual size, strength and skill level
- Lighter – easier to manipulate with one arm or lack of physical strength
- Larger – larger striking surface makes it easier to make contact with the ball
- Longer – longer bat may assist with reaching the ball
- Shorter – easier to manipulate or hold if only using one hand

Different balls:

- Lighter – travels slower giving more reaction time and assists with lack of physical strength
- Larger – easier to hit and see
- Softer – travel more slowly and easily to control
- Different colours – may assist with visual impairment/colour blindness
- Internal bell – helps to judge location of the ball



For further information on inclusive practices workshops and resources, visit <https://www.sport4all.com.au/>

DEVELOPING A ROUTINE

*APPLYING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Below is an example of a visual schedule based of the Week 1 (Block 1) Junior Curriculum activities and how it fits into a broader routine. Developing a consistent routine for practices creates predictability and supports player engagement.



**Specific activities may change week-to-week, but the overall format and structure of the session remains largely the same, creating a predictable routine.*

VISUAL SUPPORTS

*APPLYING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

WHAT IS A VISUAL SUPPORT?

A concrete cue that provides players with information about:

- What to expect (e.g., a visual practice schedule or sequence of steps in a new drill)
- What to do (e.g., drawing of where each position is on the field or colour-coded organisation system for packing away equipment)
- How to do it (e.g., visual boundaries for where to be or a picture of how to hold the bat)

WHY USE VISUAL SUPPORTS IN COACHING?

Visual supports are an invaluable tool for any coach. Unlike spoken language, visuals are permanent and can easily be referenced and referred back to by players and coaches. Using visual supports can:

- Increase meaning and understanding by helping players see what you mean
- Cater to different processing and learning styles
- Increase predictability and reduce anxiety
- Support player initiation, sequencing and transitions
- Help players learn new skills





For Reference: This information relates to the following sections of the handbook;
 HOW TO TEACH THE BASICS - pg8
 FUN & ENJOYMENT - BEST PRACTICES - pg16
 LANGUAGE - pg29

VISUAL SUPPORTS CONT.

1. Visual Supports for Routines

a. Session Plans / Practice Schedule

Example: Visual schedule for a practice/session

Names Up Instructions	
1. Stand next to a cone	
2. Catch the ball	
3. Say your name	
4. Throw or roll the ball to another player	

1		Team Huddle
2		Names Up
3		Sharks & Sardines
4		Water Break
5		Bat Basics
6		Players' Choice Game

2. Activity-Specific Visual Supports

a. Instructions

Example: similar to a visual schedule, visual instructions can be used to break down the steps, rules and expectations of an activity, drill or game.

Pack Away / Clean up		
Balls in the Basket	Stack Cones	Bats in the Bag
		

b. Placement and Positioning

Example: using cones or bases as visual cues for player positioning or activity boundaries

c. Set-up or Pack Away

Example: image of how to set up for a new game

Example: visual cues for where to put equipment (symbol or colour-coding)

d. Sequencing

Example: breaking down a multi-step activity or game in smaller steps, using numbers or symbols to support understanding

e. Timing

Example: using a stopwatch or sand timer to show players how long an activity is and when it will be finished, supporting transitions from one activity to the next.

Note: time can be an abstract concept without much meaning, particularly for younger players or those with different learning styles. Using visuals helps to make this more concrete. Another strategy to support players in knowing how long an activity is or when it will be finished is to use a quantity other than time (e.g., "two more rounds," or "everyone will get 2 hits").

VISUAL SUPPORTS CONT.

3. Visual Supports for Communicating Choices

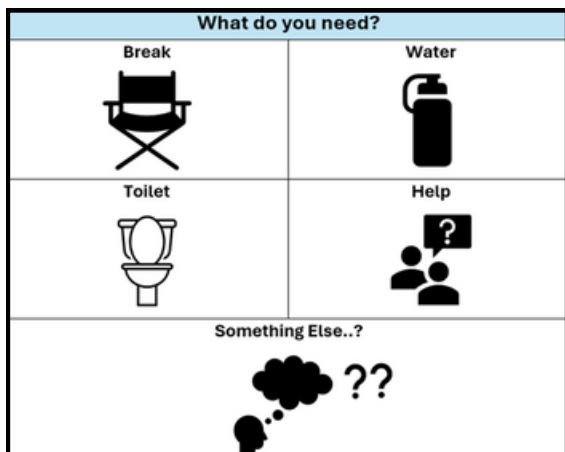
a. Visuals to support player choice and player voice.

Example: visual choice board of different games players can choose from.



b. Visual cues to support player voice, regulation, and self-advocacy

Example: a What do you need? choice board or cards (e.g., break, water, toilet, help, something else...)



IMPLEMENTING VISUAL SUPPORTS IN COACHING

Using visual supports is one way to create more inclusive and effective learning environments for all players, accounting for different learning and communication styles and enhancing overall understanding and skill development. Some visual supports may be created in advance, while others are made on the fly, in response to player needs or as strategy to support understanding.

BEST PRACTICES

Keep visuals simple and clear:

- Use bold colours and simple designs
- Limit text, focusing on key words or phrases

Consistency is key:

- Use consistent terminology and symbols
- Regularly reference and model the use of visual supports

Combine visual and verbal instruction:

- Point to visuals while explaining
- Allow time for players to process visual information

Be responsive to player needs:

- Consider different learning styles and different types of visual supports (e.g., drawings, symbols, images, videos, etc.)
- Regularly review and update visuals
- Adapt visuals based on player feedback and effectiveness

WHEN TO USE VISUAL SUPPORTS

Introducing new concepts or activities:

- Show step-by-step instructions
- Provide visual examples of proper form or techniques

Supporting communication differences:

- Offer choice boards for player input
- Use visual cues for player needs (water, break, help)

Reinforcing verbal instructions:

- Display key points alongside verbal explanations
- Use visuals to clarify complex or new ideas

Supporting transitions between activities:

- Show visual timers or activity counters
- Display the practice schedule

PREPARATION AND TOOLKIT

Create a core set of commonly used or referenced visual supports. For example:

- Practice schedule templates
- Field position diagrams
- Basic activity or drill instructions
- Equipment organisation images or charts
- Choice cards

Keep materials on hand for creating visuals on-the-fly:





- Whiteboard and markers
- Tablet or smartphone for digital visuals
- Different coloured cones or field markers
- Stopwatch or timers

MODIFYING & ADAPTING ACTIVITIES

There are many reasons for modifying or adapting activities including to support:

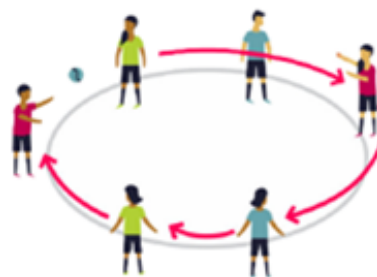
- Different types of player engagement or participation
- Different skill levels
- Different types of communication
- Different sensory needs or preferences

Consider the Names Up activity:

Names Up Instructions	
1. Stand next to a cone	
2. Catch the ball	
3. Say your name	
4. Throw or roll the ball to another player	

WARM UP (10 MINUTES)

Names up: Have the kids form a circle and introduce themselves everytime they catch the ball by saying their name and favourite type of animal. Change to favourite colour or food.



- Use of cones or visual markers for where and how to form the circle (supportive of different learning styles, provides additional visual cues for positioning)
- Option to roll the ball instead of throwing it (supportive of different skill levels)
- Modify to pass the ball in one direction instead of random to increase predictability and understanding
- Use of a visual support to break down steps/instructions and to supplement verbal instructions, e.g. below,
- *Option to act out the animal rather than say it (supportive of different engagement and communication needs)*
- *Option to point to name or sign name (supportive of different communication styles or preferences)*
- *Option to observe the first round or help the coach mark the attendance (supportive of players who may be unsure or hesitant to engage initially, providing an alternative way to participate and still be part of the activity)*

UNDERSTANDING PLAYER BEHAVIOUR & TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON SCENARIOS

UNDERSTANDING PLAYER BEHAVIOUR

On the surface, behaviour is simply any observable action (e.g., running around, shouting, sitting quietly, interrupting, not participating, etc.), but behaviour is also a message, a form of communication. When a player's actions seem unsafe, unexpected, or disruptive to the team, it is usually a signal that something else is happening underneath the surface - an unmet need or unexpressed feeling.

Viewing behaviour as a message to be decoded rather than non-compliance to be punished or fixed, builds trust, supports the development of lifelong skills, and creates a safe and positive team culture. By asking 'What is this player trying to tell me?' rather than 'How do I stop this behaviour?' you will uncover the real needs and address causes, not just symptoms.

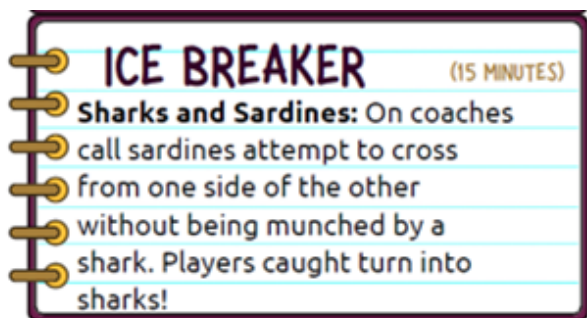
TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON SCENARIOS

The following scenarios provide examples of player behaviour that is often misinterpreted as disengagement or challenging to the team dynamics. However, by viewing behaviour as communication, we can:

- Look beyond the action
- Observe without judgment
- Get curious and ask, "What is this player trying to tell me?"
- Respond with empathy and seek to understand the deeper needs
- Support players more effectively, creating safe and inclusive environments
- Build a stronger, more connected team



The scenarios below relate to the game Sharks and Sardines:



SCENARIO 1: PLAYER DISENGAGED, SITTING ON THE SIDE, RELUCTANT TO PARTICIPATE

WHY MIGHT THIS BE HAPPENING?

- The player may feel unsure about the rules or expectations of the game.
- They might be anxious about being tagged or running in front of others.
- Physical fatigue or sensory overwhelm could be contributing to their reluctance. They may have had a poor sleep the night before or an emotionally draining day at school.

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT:

- Check in privately: Ask the player how they're feeling and if there's something they need. Example: "Hey, I noticed you're sitting out. Is everything okay? Would you like to join in or take a break?" Consider using a visual support to assist players in identifying and communicating their needs.
- Offer a role with less pressure: Suggest an alternative way to participate, such as helping set up boundaries or being the coach's assistant.
- Break the game into smaller steps: If they're unsure about the rules, explain them visually or demonstrate how to play.
- Provide reassurance: Let them know it's okay to sit out if they need time to watch and get comfortable or if they need a break.

SCENARIO 2: PLAYER UPSET THAT THEY WERE TAGGED BY THE SHARK

WHY MIGHT THIS BE HAPPENING?

- The player may feel frustrated or embarrassed about being tagged first or repeatedly.
- They might interpret being tagged as "losing" and struggle with the competitive dynamics.
- The player may be sensitive to and/or dislike physical touch.
- They could be experiencing difficulty managing emotions like disappointment.

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT:

- Validate their feelings: Acknowledge their frustration without judgment. Example: "I know it can feel disappointing to get tagged. That's okay—it happens to everyone."
- Reframe the experience: Emphasise that getting tagged is part of the fun and not a failure.
- Encourage resilience: Model positive self-talk and praise effort over outcome. Example: "You did a great job running fast! Let's try again next round."
- Adapting the activity: If tagging or "getting out" feels too overwhelming, consider modifying the game (e.g., sharks can tag with soft foam balls instead of hands or trying a version of freeze tag).

SCENARIO 3: PLAYER ONLY WANTS TO BE THE SHARK

WHY MIGHT THIS BE HAPPENING?

- The player may prefer roles where they feel in control.
- They may be less confident in the sardine role or find it less predictable.
- They may have difficulty with flexibility or taking turns.
- They may have a fear of “losing” or perceived losing.

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT:

- Set clear expectations: Explain that everyone will get a turn as the shark if they want one. Example: “We’re taking turns so everyone gets a chance. You will be the shark after two rounds.”
- Offer choices: Provide options that allow them some control while still following game rules. Example: “Would you like to go first as the shark next time, or second?”
- Highlight other roles: Help them see value in being a sardine by focusing on skills like teamwork and running fast. Example: “Being a sardine is fun too—you get to practice dodging and sprinting!”
- Use visual supports for turn-taking: Create a simple chart showing who will be the shark each round.

SCENARIO 4: PLAYER REFUSING TO PLAY, SHOUTING “I HATE THIS GAME”

WHY MIGHT THIS BE HAPPENING?

- The player may feel frustrated by aspects of the game (e.g., difficulty understanding rules, sensory overwhelm, or feeling excluded).
- The player may have had a negative experience with a similar game in the past.
- There may be external factors impacting the player (e.g., bad day at school, hungry, lack of sleep, family stress, etc.).
- Emotional regulation challenges might make it hard for them to express their feelings or communicate their needs.

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT:

- Stay calm and empathetic: Avoid reacting negatively; instead, validate their feelings and offer support through co-regulation. If feasible, have another adult facilitate the game so you chat 1:1 with the player.
- Problem-solve together: Ask what would make the game more enjoyable for them and offer adjustments if possible. Example: “What’s something we could change about the game to make it better for you?”
- Offer alternatives: If unable to re-engage in the moment, provide options for what they can do instead (e.g., take a break, assist the coach, an independent drill, etc.)
- Reflect after emotions settle: Once they have calmed down, revisit their concerns and discuss ways to make future games more inclusive. This is also an opportunity to support their development and explore alternative, positive ways they can get their needs met in the future. Example: “What do you think you could do differently next time when we’re playing a game that you don’t like?” or using a visual support, you might work through “Instead of shouting, next time I can...” with choices like “Tell you I’m frustrated,” or “Give you a special hand signal” or “Take a break” that the play can circle, point to, or create their own options.

AUTISM AUS - RESOURCE APPENDIX

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Restorative practices aim to repair and rebuild relationships that have been damaged by harm or misunderstandings. Instead of focusing on punishment or retaliation, these practices seek to identify and heal the harm, fostering greater understanding, empathy, and equipping those involved with better skills for the future.

Incorporating restorative practices both proactively and reactively supports the person(s) and their support team to repair and restore relationships and trust.

Proactive strategies may include:

- Check-ins
- Restorative 'circles'
- Inclusive decision-making
- Regulation support

Reactive supports involve collaborating during conflict and may include:

- Classroom/ small group conferences
- Community conferences














Autism Australia

For further information on inclusive practices workshops and resources, visit <https://autismqld.com.au/>











AUTISM AUS - RESOURCE APPENDIX

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES - RESOURCE

What happened?

 Pushed	 Hit	 Kicked	 Took something
 Bad/nasty words	 Spat	 Ignored	 Upset someone
 Ran away	 Broke	 Scratched	 Made a mess










What were you thinking? What did you want to happen?

 Angry	 Go away	 Frustrated	 Don't like/ don't want to
 Confused	 Want to play	 Worried	 Want to go home
			













AUTISM AUS - RESOURCE APPENDIX

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES - RESOURCE

Who has been affected or hurt?

 Student/child	 Teacher	 School helper
 Teacher Aide	 Whole class	 Mum/Dad
 Grandparents	 Bus driver	 Principal

How?

Outside?	 Hurt head/face	 Hurt arm	 Hurt leg
	 Broke something	 Made a mess	 Hurt ears
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Inside?	 Made someone scared	 Made someone cry	 Made some embarrassed
	 Made someone worried	 Hurt someone's feelings	 Made someone sad



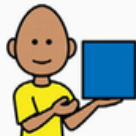
AUTISM AUS - RESOURCE APPENDIX

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES - RESOURCE



What needs to happen to fix things up?

 Give/give back	 Say something nice	 Check if ok	 Fix
 Help	 Clean up	 Say I will....	 Something else


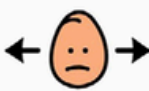

Sorry...

 Say	 Write	 Show
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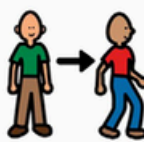


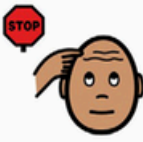





For...

	
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Accepted?

 Yes	 No	 Not Yet
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Next time...

 Be safe	 Ignore	 Walk away	 Keep hands, feet and objects to myself
 Get help	 Stop and think	 Advocate	 Share/ take turns
 Calm down	 Follow the rules	 Follow adult instructions	