



OPEN

for all

**DISABILITY TENNIS
COACHING RESOURCE**



**TENNIS
FOR BRITAIN**

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Change people's lives



83%

of disabled people say that
playing tennis has improved their
sense of self-confidence

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The LTA is the national governing body for Tennis in Britain and our vision is 'Tennis Opened Up. We want to grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable for everyone, including those from underrepresented groups.

We believe anybody can play tennis no matter what your age or background and we exist to create more opportunities for people to play and enjoy tennis. We're doing this by engaging all parts of the community by acknowledging diversity and actively championing inclusion.

Why do we do it? Because tennis is a great sport, yes. But it's so much more than that, it's a powerful force in people's lives that can help them stretch, grow and flourish in so many unexpected ways. It's not just about what happens on the court, whatever wider potential someone has inside them, tennis can help bring it out.

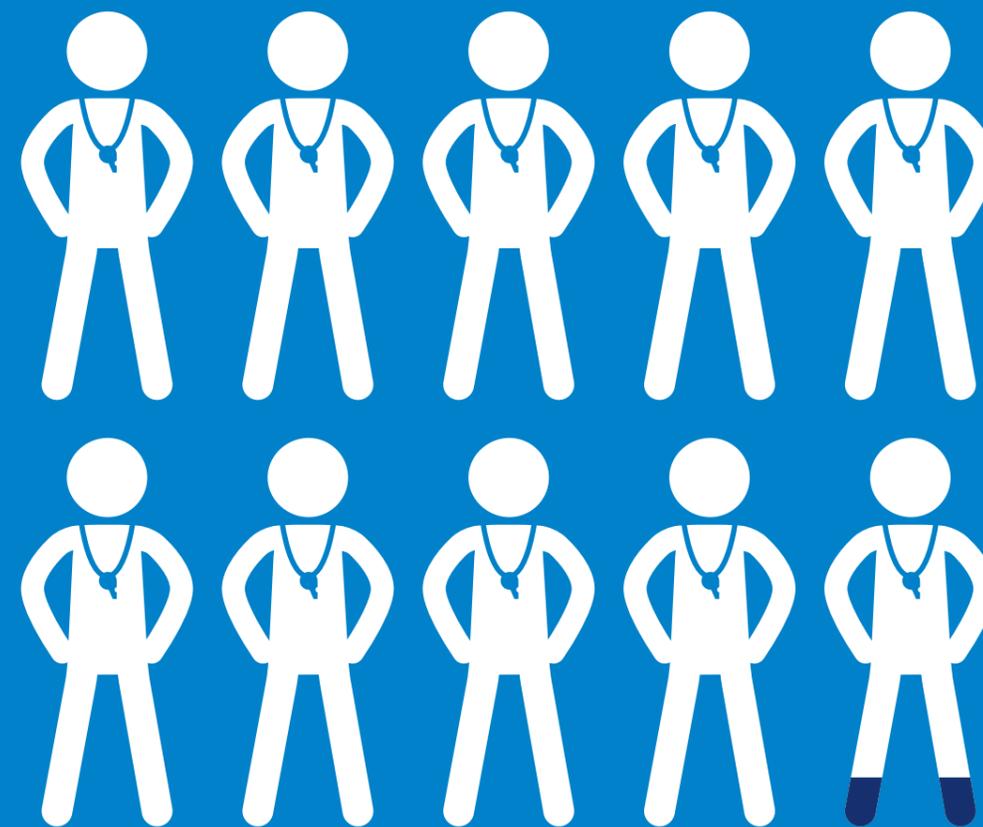
We are working a wide range of other partners to deliver our vision of truly opening up the sport to a more diverse range of people.



COACHING CAN HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

*on disabled people's
enjoyment of tennis.*

Coaches can benefit too.



97%

of coaches report a positive impact of coaching disability tennis on their professional development, saying it has improved their ability to coach general.

DISABILITY TENNIS

Tennis offers a range of opportunities for disabled people to play with and against both disabled and non-disabled players. You can take a modified approach to integrate players together or a disability specific approach, the key here is to offer choices for disabled people to play the game in an environment that suits them best.

Within disability sport you will find players with:

- A physical impairment.
- A learning disability.
- A sensory impairment such as a visual or hearing impairment.

You need to consider whether their impairment is minimal or severe, congenital or acquired, progressive or non-progressive. You then need to consider how the impairment may affect their participation and the additional barriers that particular player may face.



PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS

Physical impairments include:

- Amputation.
- Spinal cord injury.
- Brittle bones (osteogenesis imperfect).
- Cerebral palsy.
- Muscular dystrophy.
- Multiple sclerosis (MS).
- Dwarfism.
- Epilepsy.
- Pulmonary disease.
- Respiratory disorders.
- Spina bifida.

It is important to realise that a physically disabled person may be ambulant (able to walk) or use a wheelchair. Those that are ambulant may use a wheelchair to play tennis but not everyone will feel comfortable using a sports chair if they don't use a wheelchair on a daily basis, so you may need to look at other suitable adaptations.

PARTICIPANT GROUPINGS

(as percentage of disabled population)

- Physical – 6%.
- Learning Disability – 19%.
- Sensory – 7%.

It's important to remember there is a large overall population percentage with other disabilities or long-term limiting illnesses.

LEARNING DISABILITY

Players with a learning disability, for example those with Down's syndrome or autism, will usually have an intelligence quotient (IQ) of less than 70. However, not all individuals on the autistic spectrum will have a learning disability, e.g. those with Asperger's syndrome have a learning difficulty as opposed to a learning disability (but they are included within the learning disability category for the purposes of this resource). Think about the practical implications for individual players depending on their own specific learning disabilities.

Learning difficulties include, but are not limited to:

- Autism spectrum disorders, including Asperger's syndrome.
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS

Sensory impairments include hearing and visual impairments.

- Visual impairments will vary in severity from partially sighted to totally blind.
- Hearing impairments will vary in severity from mild to total deafness.

MAKING TENNIS 'INCLUSIVE'

Research from 'Activity Alliance' shows that it's likely that disabled people would prefer to join in an existing tennis session with non-disabled people, rather than a specific one. As a coach, your most likely scenario will be adapting your session to include them, rather than having enough demand to put on a whole new session for a specific impairment group.

There are some simple considerations to make as a useful starting point for working in a more inclusive manner. Key considerations include the type of illness, impairment or disability, the severity of the illness, impairment or disability and whether it is congenital or acquired.

The Functional Approach and STEPS provide useful frameworks to follow in preparing tennis sessions for disabled people and those with a long-term limiting illness. In every circumstance as coaches, we want to provide the Optimal Challenge for the individual we are working with.

FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

- Consider the functional ability of the player.
- Assess the impact of this on their chosen sporting activity.
- Determine how the environment affects a person's functional ability.
- Look at what other factors can impinge on a person's ability to participate.

STEPS

(considerations for inclusive tennis)

- **Space** – what is required to make the activity successful?
- **Task** – how can it be adapted to make it appropriate?
- **Equipment** – how can it be adapted to make it appropriate?
- **People** – are additional coaches or volunteers required?
- **Safety** – what is required to ensure the session is safe for all participants?

You can view STEPS for specific impairments in the relevant sections later in the resource.



ADAPTATIONS

When adapting an activity there are four considerations to make. Are there activities that are sufficiently open to include and remain beneficial to all abilities; does the activity need to be modified to include all participants; can the activity be run with parallel groupings to ensure it is delivered at an appropriate level to all; or does the activity need to be specific and run separately for the group or individual? For example:

OPEN ACTIVITY

requires no alteration to the tennis session, e.g. single-arm amputee joining in with existing activity and competition.

MODIFIED ACTIVITY

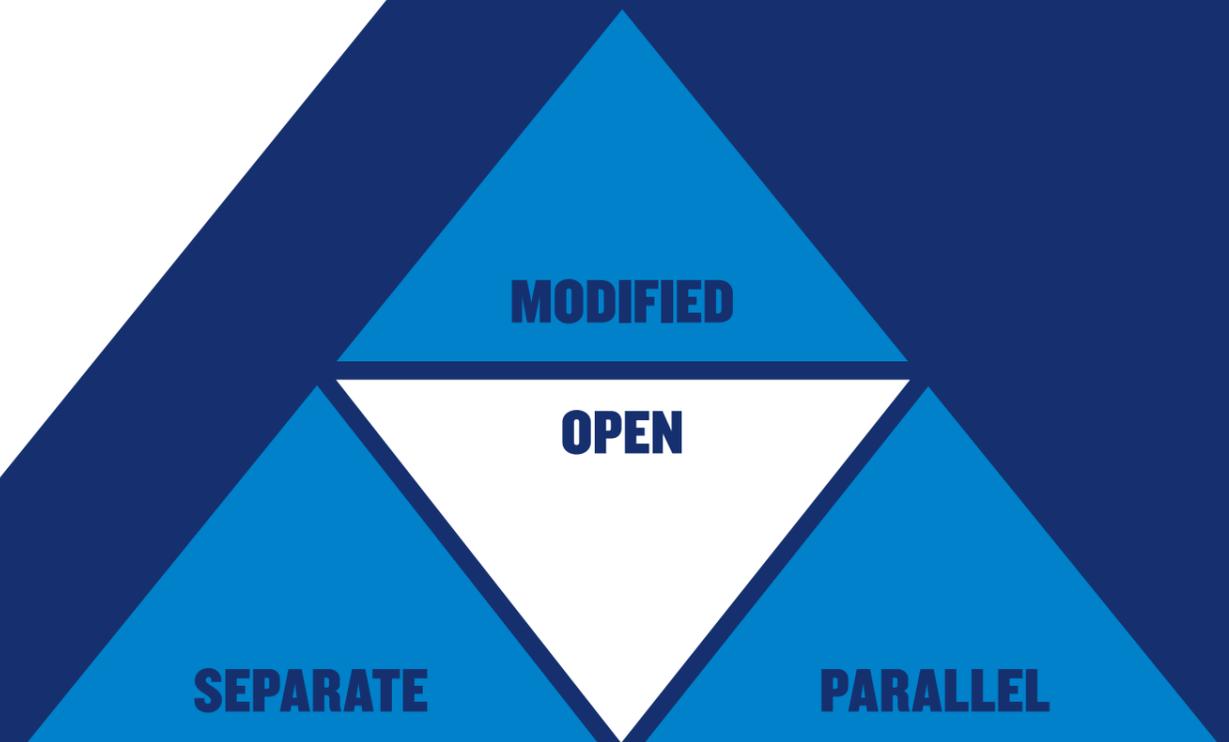
uses adaptations and modifications to ensure session challenges and supports all abilities, e.g. integrating wheelchair tennis player into existing activity and competition, and allowing wheelchair player two bounces.

PARALLEL ACTIVITY

use differentiation in sessions ensuring that players complete similar tasks but are grouped by ability/impairment, e.g. grouping special school pupils by ability to ensure enjoyment by all.

SEPARATE/DISCRETE ACTIVITY

tennis session's specific to disabled persons' requirements and rules for specific impairment groups, e.g. visually impaired tennis is played within service boxes with an audible ball and multiple bounces.



GENERAL ADAPTATIONS

General adaptations that may help you deliver tennis to disabled people include the following:

- Change the size of the court/playing area.
- Change the size or type of targets being used in some activities and games.
- Change the scoring method – Mini Tennis uses simple tiebreak scoring (i.e. first to 10 points, rather than traditional tennis scoring).
- If wheelchair players are involved, ensure each activity is able to be completed from a seated position.
- Ensure each activity is practised from a static position, before introducing movement.
- Give players more time to react, by allowing more than one bounce before the ball is caught/hit.
- Shorten the distance the ball has to be hit/thrown/rolled.
- Use a 'sound ball'.
- Use non-verbal communication.



ADAPTING EQUIPMENT

A wide range of innovative equipment is available to make the delivery of tennis fun, exciting and achievable for all. In general, you could:

- Use softer and/or larger balls to make hitting, catching and throwing activities easier.
- Use alternatives to balls – beanbags, balloons, fluff balls, ‘sound balls’.
- Use brightly coloured balls or those with bells inside to assist players with a visual impairment.
- Use alternatives to rackets – ‘hitting hands’ or ‘smiley face hitting pads’.
- Use rackets with shorter handles, but large hitting areas, to enable people to quickly achieve success.
- Use tape or straps to assist players with limited grip to hold the racket.
- Use additional grips to make it easier for people to hold and control the racket.
- Use a tee to enable the ball to be served or hit from a stationary position in some activities.

DISABILITY TENNIS EQUIPMENT

There are resources available to coaches to assist in delivering disability tennis. Some of these are outlined later but please contact the LTA Disability Development team if you require further information.

The following items are included in the Disability Tennis Equipment pack that has been distributed to a number of venues. For more information please contact the LTA Disability Development team.



MINI TENNIS RACKETS

Mini Tennis rackets have shorter handles and large faces, making it easier for people to make contact with the ball successfully.



JUGGLE SQUARES

Juggle squares can be used by players with limited functional ability and their tactile, colourful nature makes them an ideal tool to assist with catching activities.



MINI TENNIS BALLS

Sponge Mini Tennis balls are ideal for use indoors, with low-compression felt Mini Tennis balls better for use outdoors. They both travel slower through the air, making it easier for players to track and receive the ball successfully.



ARROW MARKERS

These can be used quickly and effectively for a range of different activities including demonstrating the direction of travel.



HITTING HANDS

Hitting hands are an alternative to using rackets. They simply slip onto a player's hand to increase the hitting area available.



FLUFF BALLS

Fluff balls can also be used by players with limited functional ability and their tactile nature makes them an ideal tool to assist with catching activities.



MINI TENNIS NETS

Mini Tennis nets are quick and easy to assemble and a great way to aid playing tennis. Barrier tape is also a cost-effective and quick way of creating additional nets.



BALLOON BALLS AND SMILEY FACE HITTING PADS

These are ideal for practising throwing and hitting activities. A balloon is inserted inside the machine-washable material ball and they are caught on the Velcro smiley face hitting pad.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is key to all coaching and this is particularly the case when coaching disabled players as you may have players on court with a variety of different considerations to take into account. It is important you find these out before you start a session. Here are some top tips to help you.

THINKING ABOUT WHAT WE SAY

Positive Behaviour

In considering the rules that guide positive behaviour, don't assume that:

- Disabled people either want or require your assistance.
- Saying 'no thanks' to your offer of assistance (no matter how well-meaning your offer was) is meant as a personal affront.
- If the disabled person does accept your offer of assistance that you then know exactly what to do, and proceed to do it for them without further discussion.
- A person who appears to have a particular disability also has an additional impairment.
- Disabled people are worse off than non-disabled people, and therefore should be pitied ('Ah, bless them').
- A person who does not have an obvious or visible disability, or who uses assistive devices intermittently instead of all the time, is faking, imagining, or pretending to have a disability.
- If someone isn't using a wheelchair, that they are not really disabled.
- Companions accompanying a disabled person are solely there to assist; it may be that someone with a disabled person is their partner or friend, not their 'carer'.
- Disabled people (particularly people with learning disabilities) are not capable of finishing their own sentences.
- Disabled people should be treated as children (whether in the way you talk or the things you do, e.g. patting people on the head).

Additionally, there are some golden rules, which you should adhere to (these are written under the assumption that the interaction is occurring between a disabled person and a non-disabled person, or two disabled people with different impairments):

- When asking questions, pose them to the person you are talking to (i.e. the disabled person), not the people accompanying them (e.g. a parent, carer or interpreter).
- Give change, bills or receipts to the disabled person if they have paid for the product or service.
- Only ask personal questions regarding development or acquisition of the person's disability if you know them well enough to do that. (There may well be exceptions to this if you are working within a coaching environment and specific knowledge relating to the person's disability will allow functional ability to be identified, or to ensure that individual's or others' safety)
- If you are talking to someone who uses a wheelchair, do not bend over them or squat down. If it is appropriate to sit on a chair/bench next to the person then do so, but do not make an extra-special effort to go and get a chair or bench so that you can sit down because the person you are talking to is using a wheelchair.
- Do not lean on, hold on to, start moving (i.e. pushing backward or forward), or tap with your toes, a disabled person's wheelchair. And if the person is not sitting in their wheelchair, do not sit in it yourself!
- When you enter a room, and you know that at least one of the people in the room has a visual impairment, always introduce yourself.

DEAF TENNIS

Deaf tennis has a long history in Tennis in Britain and playing the sport requires no adaptations apart from making sure communication is clear between players, coaches and officials. People can play against other deaf tennis players, and alongside or against non-disabled friends and family.

STEPS

SPACE/ ENVIRONMENT	TASKS	EQUIPMENT/ RULES	PEOPLE/ COMMUNICATION	SAFETY
Reduce noise levels where possible and be aware of indoor echo.	Demonstrate constructively and keep it simple. Don't overload people with too much information.	Provide written information for player to read after coaching sessions.	Find out how a person communicates, e.g. by lip-reading, through an interpreter, by sign language.	Depending on the needs of the players, it may be appropriate to ensure there are additional coaches and volunteers on hand to help run the session.
Do not stand with light or the sun behind you, so player can see your face properly.	Position yourself so deaf people can see your face and lips. Be expressive and use body language.	Provide a pad and pen to write things down during a session if needs be. Or you can use modern technology, such as a tablet or smartphone.	Deafness is a hidden disability and it is easy to forget that a person might have additional communication requirements.	Make sure there is plenty of space for drills to take place as deaf players can't hear balls or other players coming near them.
Use visual aids wherever possible to demonstrate drills and practices.	Be patient and, if you are having difficulty communicating, try another approach, e.g. rephrase, gesture, write down, draw.		It can be more difficult for a deaf person to socialise and develop confidence, due to communication difficulties. Ensure deaf players are involved in all activities, including social time.	Ensure you have a procedure in the event of a fire alarm, for e.g. raising both arms or flashing lights.
Remove sunglasses when communicating as players need to see your eyes.	Check engagement and understanding regularly.		Remove sunglasses when communicating so the player can see your whole face when lip-reading.	
	If needs be, gain attention by tapping on shoulder, waving, or asking another person to get their attention.		Learn basic fingerspelling (or even British Sign Language if you can).	

COACHING TENNIS TO DEAF PEOPLE

The aim of this section is to give tennis coaches or volunteers an insight into deafness, the barriers deaf people face to play tennis and the various communication methods you can use to deliver effective and productive tennis coaching to deaf players.

Deaf people have different levels of hearing, from mild to total deafness. This could include temporary deafness such as glue ear. For the purposes of this resource we are using the term 'deaf' to mean all types of deafness; this includes those who may consider themselves 'hard of hearing'.

Deafness is a hidden disability and it is sometimes hard to know whether someone has a hearing impairment and may require additional communication requirements. It is important to bear in mind that it may be more difficult for a new player who is deaf to acquire the confidence to mix with new people and to learn a new sport due to potential communication barriers.

Some deaf people may have additional physical disabilities but most have the same physical capabilities as any other person. Those who are deaf will have varying levels of hearing and may or may not choose to wear their hearing aid during your coaching session. Please remember that wearing a hearing aid (or cochlear implant) neither corrects language nor restores perfect hearing. Coaching deaf people is essentially down to your communication skills as a coach. As with all new participants, speak to them before the start of their first session to establish a mutually acceptable method of communication. There are a variety of ways to communicate, and each deaf person is best placed to tell you what works best for them. To get things started, try communicating through basic gestures or use a pen and notepad if needed.

Communication is vital for effective coaching to deaf players

VISUAL SIGNALS

Visual signals are vital for activities involving deaf players. The benefits of the signals are twofold. Firstly, for practical reasons, as deaf players may not be able to hear or understand a leader speaking or hear a whistle being blown whilst they are concentrating on an activity or game, a visual signal would therefore help a player to fully understand what is going on. Secondly, visual signals are used for health and safety reasons, such as when an activity needs to be stopped due to a danger or injury.

You should check with the player first, but some suggested visual signals include:

- Raising an arm to signify players should stop what they are doing and pay attention to the leader.
- Raising and waving a brightly coloured bib/ cone/flag/shirt if you want the session to stop immediately or for them to change direction, etc. (Always use the same colour so players know exactly what it means.)

DEMONSTRATING

Very little adaptation is needed from the coaching of physical activities involving hearing players. It is simply a case of using common-sense communication techniques and using clear visual signals to ensure you are communicating clearly with the group. When delivering any activities, it is always best to demonstrate what you wish the group to do beforehand and keep it simple and brief. By using demonstrations, the group will have a visual representation of how to do each activity. This helps deaf players understand what to do – and it's a particularly useful tool for all players, deaf and hearing.

TRY USING THE FOLLOWING SIMPLE STEPS:

1. Briefly explain what the activity involves and what you wish the group to do.
2. Demonstrate the activity, but remember – do not speak while doing the demonstration.
3. Check for understanding (repeat if anyone has not understood and check their facial expressions and body language to see if they have understood).
4. Start the activity. Have a practice run first so no one gets upset if they do it wrong the first time.

COMMUNICATION TIPS

When communicating with deaf people it is important not to make preconceived assumptions about how that person may wish to receive information. In order to ensure that the communication process is appropriate, consider some of the following pointers:

TOP TIPS: DEAF TENNIS

You should not assume that because someone identifies themselves as deaf that they have no hearing. It is important to establish how much hearing an individual has if you are both going to communicate effectively. Bear in mind these top tips when communicating with deaf players:

DO:

- ✔ Get a deaf player's attention before you start speaking. Try waving, visibly knocking a table or tapping their shoulder lightly.
- ✔ Determine your player's preferred method of communication (lip-reading, sign language, interpreter, etc.). Don't be afraid to ask a player for their preferred method of communication or for any advice on how best to communicate with them. Encourage the player to ask if they need any additional communication support.
- ✔ Make sure your face is in the light and that you face the person when you are talking. You must be close enough for the player to clearly see your face/lips (3–6 feet away).
- ✔ If you are struggling to communicate initially with a deaf player use a pen and paper, a mobile phone or written instructions.
- ✔ Ensure that if the person uses an interpreter/signer that you talk to the person, not the interpreter/signer.

- ✔ Learn some basic fingerspelling or sign language (visit the LTA website for links to some British Sign Language tennis videos).
- ✔ Always check the individual's understanding of any instructions/information given.
- ✔ Speak clearly and naturally. Try to use an expressive face.
- ✔ Use visual cues, where possible. Point to what you're talking about.
- ✔ Make it clear what the topic of conversation is – and let the person know if it's changed.
- ✔ Use whole sentences to help deaf players pick up clues to what's being said.
- ✔ Remember group conversations can be difficult for deaf people.
- ✔ Try to keep the deaf person involved, and avoid all speaking at once.

DON'T:

- ✘ Speak too slowly or shout – this will distort your lip patterns.
- ✘ Move your head or walk around while you're talking. Speech movements can easily be missed.
- ✘ Have lots of noise in the background, e.g. from a TV or washing machine. Hearing aids amplify all noises, not just your voice.
- ✘ Take forever to get to the point.
- ✘ Cover or put anything in your mouth while talking. Eating or smoking while talking is a definite no-no.
- ✘ Make a deaf person lip-read for too long without a break.
- ✘ Give up. If stuck, try explaining in a different way or writing it down. Or, if you have a mobile to hand, text it on your screen.

REMEMBER

Every deaf person is different and deafness can range from mild to total. Some people may sign, some may lip-read, some may listen and some may speak. Some may do all these things. Always ask how the player prefers to communicate.

INVOLVE THE TEAM

It will be useful to discuss the guidance described above with squad members, parents/partners/friends/carers and/or coaching assistants prior to, or shortly after, the deaf participant joining the team. The coach can also educate umpires about what can be done to assist the participant. Combine clapping with a double-handed wave to congratulate or praise. When we see something good, the natural reaction is to clap. The deaf community will use a raised double-handed wave to show the same appreciation, so use both methods for a mixed group.

COMMUNICATION OPTIONS AND APPROACHES

The information below describes the variety of communication options that are used by deaf people. Most deaf people will use a combination of these when communicating:

AUDITORY-ORAL TECHNOLOGY

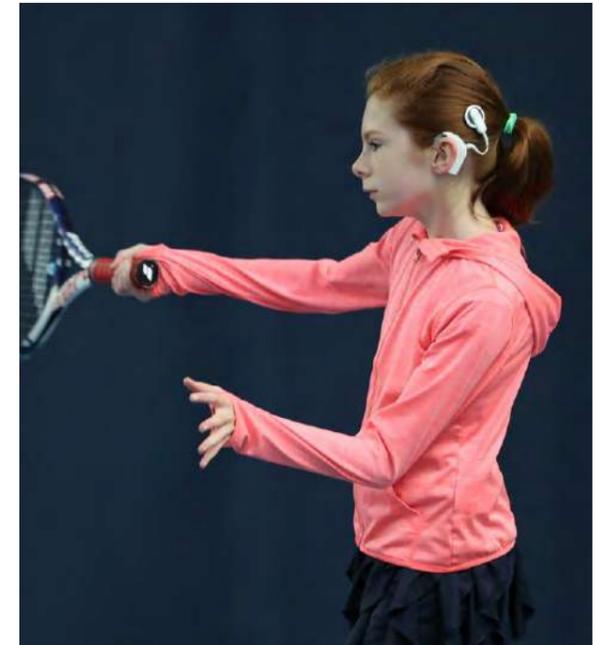
With the use of technology such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, many deaf people develop listening skills and spoken language.

LIP-READING

This involves the ability to read lip patterns. However, many speech sounds look the same when spoken (e.g. 'pat' and 'bat') so it is difficult for deaf people to rely solely on lip-reading to communicate. Lip-reading is usually used alongside other communication approaches.

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL)

Over 70,000 people within the British Deaf Community use BSL. It is a visual language using handshapes, facial expressions, gestures and body language to communicate. BSL is an independent and complete language with a unique vocabulary. It has a structure and grammar different from that of written and spoken English. As with other languages, it has evolved over time and developed regional dialects. On 18 March 2003 the government officially recognised BSL as a minority



language. A number of videos and images of tennis-specific BSL signs can be found on links from the LTA website.

FINGERSPELLING

This is where each letter of the alphabet is indicated by using the fingers and palm of the hand. It is used for 'signing' names and places or for a word that doesn't have a sign.

SIGN-SUPPORTED ENGLISH (SSE)

SSE uses signs taken from BSL. It is used in English word order but does not attempt to sign every word that is spoken. This may be an easier way to become familiar with sign language as it means that you can use signs together with your own language. As it uses the same signs as BSL, it can be helpful to children, parents and coaches who wish to develop BSL skills at a later stage.

SIGNED ENGLISH (SE)

SE is an exact representation of the English language through the use of signs, where a sign is used for every spoken word. It is usually used in educational settings to develop written and spoken English skills.

If a child uses only BSL to communicate they may not be able to fully understand SSE or SE due to the structural or grammatical changes.

MAKATON

Makaton is a sign system that is used with children and adults (deaf and hearing), who may have communication and/or learning disabilities (for example, children with Down's syndrome). It uses speech together with signs (taken from BSL) and symbols, and is grammar-free.

Makaton can help children and adults who have difficulty with:

- Communicating what they want, think or feel.
- Making them understood.
- Paying attention.
- Listening to and understanding speech.
- Remembering and sequencing.

Makaton is a visual way to develop communication skills and helps stimulate sounds and words. This in turn helps to encourage language development, i.e. putting words together. Makaton helps understanding by giving the recipient a black-and-white symbol as an extra visual clue. Symbols are lasting and permanent, and give a child or adult more time to take in information.

REMEMBER

Every deaf person is different and deafness can range from mild to total. Some people may sign, some may lip read, some may listen and some may speak. Always ask the player prefers to communicate.

When using Makaton:

- Only use the sign or symbol for the important word in the sentence.
- Remember to speak and sign at the same time.
- Use clear, short sentences.
- Remember to make eye contact and use facial expression, body language and gesture.
- Use real objects and mime to give reference and meaning. For example, when talking about a tennis racket, point to the racket; when talking about serving the ball, mime doing it.
- Use the sign and symbol for 'Good' to give praise.
- Have fun!

TO LOOK

TO LISTEN

AGAIN

HELLO

GOOD

NEXT/YOUR TURN

TO DRINK

YES

NO

WORKING WITH BSL COMMUNICATORS

If there is a deaf player whose first language is BSL attending your activity or tennis venue then they may require the support of a volunteer communicator, communication support worker (CSW) or BSL interpreter to ensure they can fully communicate with the leader and other participants.

When working with communicators, it is important to be aware of the following points:

- Make sure that you let the communicator know in advance what you plan to do during a session – perhaps hand them a copy of the session plan. This will allow the communicator time to prepare and ask any questions about any aspects of the session that they may not understand.
- Position yourself so the player can see both you and the communicator clearly. Standing beside the communicator is usually the most effective way to do this.
- Talk to the group/player direct rather than to the communicator. Even if all the group members are deaf and are all looking at the communicator, you are still there to lead the players, not the communicator.
- Speak clearly and not too fast – it is hard work listening to someone speaking and then translating their words into BSL!
- Plan activities that give the communicator and the player(s) a break from watching. This could include scheduling regular drinks breaks or activities where less intervention is required from the leader.
- If you ask the group a question and you want a response, wait until the communicator has finished signing before allowing a response. This gives the players the chance to respond and the communicator more time to interpret.
- A deaf person cannot look at two places at once so, when demonstrating or working from a whiteboard or flip chart, build in a time lapse so that the players can look at you and then turn their attention to the communicator or whiteboard, otherwise they will miss the explanation.
- Try and use basic sign language yourself, even if the communicator is present. This will help you communicate direct to the player(s) and help build the same relationship with them as you would with a hearing player or group.

If you would like to learn BSL and communicate with BSL users then the best place to start is to take a course taught by a qualified sign-language teacher. Local courses can be found at www.signature.org.uk. You can also learn a few basics direct from a deaf person, or by viewing online learning tools or applications on your smartphone.

COMMUNICATION DO'S AND DON'TS

DO:

- ✓ Be brief
- ✓ Keep still
- ✓ Have good light
- ✓ Make eye contact
- ✓ Speak one at a time
- ✓ Stay fairly close
- ✓ Stick to one point at a time
- ✓ Ask if you are being understood
- ✓ Take your time
- ✓ Speak clearly
- ✓ Write it down if you get stuck

DON'T:

- ✗ Shout
- ✗ Be too far away
- ✗ Mutter
- ✗ Rattle on and on
- ✗ Eat
- ✗ Hurry
- ✗ Obscure your mouth
- ✗ Look away or down
- ✗ Lean too close
- ✗ Be embarrassed
- ✗ Talk too fast
- ✗ Give up
- ✗ Speak with the sun behind you

PLAYER CLASSIFICATION

- Deaf players who meet the required hearing-loss level (see below) can compete in mainstream tennis activities and competitions, or in specific deaf tennis activities and competitions, or in a combination of both.
- Players may choose to play in specific deaf competitions as this provides an opportunity to socialise and meet other deaf people. Other players may choose to play in mainstream competitions as this may provide a higher level of competition and a wider variety of opponents.
- For international and national level deaf competitions, players must have a hearing loss of at least 55 decibels (dB HL) in the better ear.
- Hearing aids and cochlear implants must be removed to compete in international and national level deaf competitions.
- Players may want to train without hearing aids, to get used to the environment during a deaf tennis competition. Alternatively, players may wish to train with their hearing aids as this may support them to understand instructions, technical detail and feedback. Some players may also feel disorientated without their hearing aids.
- In the lead-up to deaf tennis competitions it is important that players practise and gain match experience of playing without their hearing aids or cochlear implants. Playing without hearing aids can affect orientation and balance, which is why this is recommended.
- Eligible players can compete in the Deaflympics, which are held every four years, and other major international deaf events.
- The LTA manages training camps for national-standard players and organises events such as the annual National Deaf Tennis Championships.



LEARNING DISABILITY TENNIS

Learning disability tennis is played with no adaptation to the rules of tennis. There are a number of learning disability tennis sessions available for beginner and developing players across the country and the game can be adapted according to a player's ability. For example, playing Mini Tennis with softer balls and smaller courts can build confidence on court.

STEPS

SPACE/ ENVIRONMENT	TASKS	EQUIPMENT/ RULES	PEOPLE/ COMMUNICATION	SAFETY
Allow extra space on courts for safety.	Break things down into simple tasks.	Could use larger sponge balls and Mini Tennis rackets.	See the ability in front of you, not the disability.	Take into account any medical or behavioural considerations. For example, dehydration can be more of an issue for some disabled people.
Place players into positions on court.	Use plenty of visual demonstrations.	Use colourful equipment and visual aids.	Players need same skills as any other player.	Ensure you are aware of all of the players' whereabouts at all times as attention spans may be shorter and players could wander away from the court.
Increase targets and decrease distances to make tasks easier.	Repeat steps of task frequently and allow more time for assimilation.		Need to set boundaries for behaviour.	
Adapt play to use zones, so everyone can join in.	Body language is important in getting messages across.		Use lots of positive praise and feedback.	
Consider evacuation procedures in an emergency.	Use trigger words to aid movement.			
Be aware of players' whereabouts at all times. Watch out for the wanderer.				

WHAT IS LEARNING DISABILITY?

Learning disability is defined as a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities, which affect an individual for their whole life; for example, in carrying out household tasks, socialising or managing money.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING DISABILITY

People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need support to develop new skills, understand complex information, and interact with other people.

The level of support an individual needs depends on specific factors, including the severity of their learning disability. For example, a person with a mild learning disability may only need support with simple tasks such as joining a sports club or getting directions to a venue. However, someone with a profound learning disability may need full-time care and support with every aspect of their life – they may also have physical disabilities.

LEARNING DISABILITY OR LEARNING DIFFICULTY?

Learning disability is often confused with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and some forms of autism. Mencap describes dyslexia as a learning difficulty because, unlike learning disability, it does not affect intellect.

In performance sport learning disability is defined as having an IQ of 75 or less, having significant limitations in adaptive behaviour, and this being evident before the person is 18 years old. This does not automatically exclude those with autism or other conditions. However, if autism or another condition is the primary or only diagnosis, then it is unlikely they would meet this particular definition to be eligible to compete in a learning disability event.

It is important to remember that, with the right support, most people with a learning disability or difficulty in the UK can lead independent lives. Sport provides invaluable life skills and social contact, as long as a positive and informed environment is available to people.

For the purposes of this resource, when we refer to learning disability tennis at a recreational level, we are including learning difficulties.

INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY IN YOUR COACHING SESSIONS

- Use a range of coaching styles, including lots of visual demonstrations.
- Don't write down complex terms or draw tactical approaches on a board.
- Strive to have a predictable, consistent and organised coaching environment.
- Where relevant, provide accessible and easy-to-read information, and consider other non-verbal communication techniques.
- Demonstrate specific coaching drills one element at a time, and build up slowly.
- Give simple, clear instructions, and repeat them frequently, breaking more complex tasks into simple steps.
- Find a mechanism, appropriate to your participant, to ensure that they understand your instructions and what they should do – don't just assume they have understood.
- If possible, pair up your participant with a supportive fellow participant who has the ability to explain concepts clearly, concisely and patiently.
- Do not single out the participant in view of the group to explain more difficult concepts. Try to include further coaching while other participants are otherwise engaged. You could also provide them with some straightforward coaching tips written down to take away with them after the session.

The level of support needed depends on specific factors including the severity of the learning disability

TOP TIPS: GENERAL COMMUNICATION

It is always good practice to ensure information is clear and concise. This may become particularly significant when transferring information or instruction to individuals who have a learning disability.

Consider these Top Tips when communicating with players who have a learning disability:

- Ensure that you do not deliver large blocks of information – provide information in small, useable blocks.
- Do not finish the person's sentences, or presume that you know what they mean before they have finished talking. Allow an appropriate amount of time for the individual to consider their response and give you their answer.
- Do not presume that because the person has a learning disability, they will not be able to answer your questions – they probably will. If the individual has a more severe degree of learning disability then it may be appropriate to speak to the parent, partner, friend or carer as well.
- Treat someone who has a learning disability according to their age, rather than presumed IQ.
- Use simple, uncomplicated language, and learn to use gestures and subtle changes to the tone and volume of your voice. This will play an important part in communicating your message.
- Always check for understanding. Do not use 'do you understand?', because they may say 'yes' and actually not understand. Ask the individual to demonstrate that they actually do understand by asking questions where they have to offer a clear response, e.g. 'where do you go when you get to the red sign?'
- Repeat information if necessary and use different forms of communication if appropriate. Demonstrations will speak a thousand words.



TOP TIPS: SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

People with speech or language difficulties may not use the spoken word as a primary form of communication, or you may find it difficult to understand what they are saying. You should not assume that people who have speech or language difficulties have other impairments, or that they are unintelligent.

Bear in mind these Top Tips:

- Do not ask for information and then finish their sentences. Ask the question and then allow time for the person to answer.
- Do not pretend you understand what has been said if you do not; ask them to repeat the question or response.
- If you still do not understand, apologise and use a more visual form of communication: write it down, draw it, point it out, use sign language or Makaton (more information in deaf tennis section), show them the way or ask them to show you what they mean.

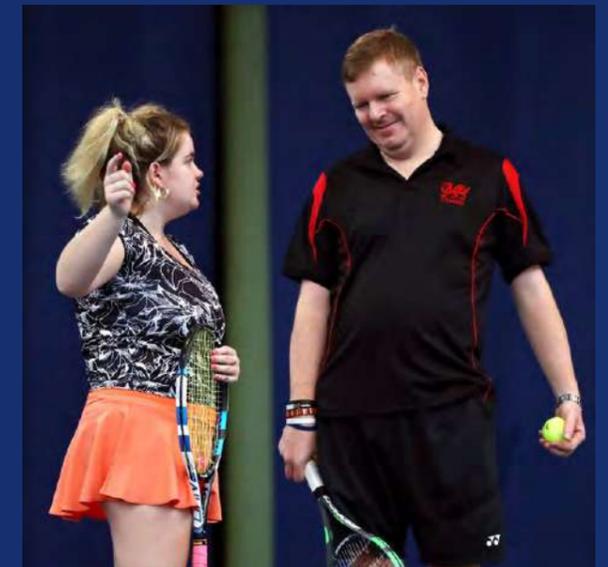
Clarity of verbal information is very important, but becomes particularly important for people who may base a significant proportion of their actions on that format of communication.

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

ADHD is an impairment of either activity or attention control, or both.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WITH ADHD

1. Predominantly inattentive type, where symptoms may include:
 - a. Being easily distracted, missing details, forgetting things and frequently switching from one activity to another.
 - b. Having difficulty maintaining focus on one task.
 - c. Becoming bored with a task after only a few minutes.
 - d. Having difficulty focusing attention on learning something new or completing tasks.
 - e. Not seeming to listen when spoken to.
 - f. Daydreaming, becoming easily confused and moving slowly.
 - g. Having difficulty processing information as quickly and accurately as others.
 - h. Struggling to follow instructions.
2. Predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type, where symptoms may include:
 - a. Fidgeting and squirming in their seats.
 - b. Talking non-stop.
 - c. Dashing around, touching or playing with anything in sight.
 - d. Being constantly in motion.
 - e. Having difficulty doing quiet tasks or activities.
3. Combined type, which also includes:
 - a. Being very impatient.
 - b. Blurting out inappropriate comments, showing their emotions without restraint and acting without regard for consequences.
 - c. Having difficulty waiting for things they want or waiting their turn in games.



INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH ADHD IN YOUR COACHING SESSIONS

- Be firm with rules, but remain calm and always have a positive approach.
- Match your coaching style to your participant's learning style; understand this by speaking to them or their parent/partner/friend/carer prior to the session.
- Know when to 'back off' if the participant's level of frustration or anxiety begins to peak.
- Look at the participant when communicating.
- Strive to have a predictable and organised coaching environment.
- Provide immediate and consistent feedback regarding positive behaviour.
- Try to develop a private signal system with the participant to notify them when they are off-task or acting inappropriately.
- When speaking or giving instructions to a group, use the individual's name if needs be to attract attention. (When asking everyone to 'come here', some individuals may need you to tell them specifically by name that you mean them too.)

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

WHAT IS ASD?

ASD is a lifelong developmental disability that can affect the way a person communicates and relates to others.

It is called a spectrum as it shows itself in such a wide variety of ways, ranging from individuals who are pedantic about certain things to those with Asperger's syndrome (see separate section on Asperger's syndrome).

POINTS TO BE AWARE OF WHEN COACHING PEOPLE WITH ASD

The following points summarise many of the characteristics of people with ASD. It is important to understand that not everyone on the autism spectrum will have all of these characteristics; they may present only one or two of the following.

By understanding what ASD is, you will feel supported to make your sessions a more positive experience for all your participants.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WITH ASD

- Difficulty with social interaction/relationships.
- May appear aloof and indifferent to others.
- May avoid eye contact.
- Difficulty in interacting with others.
- Unaware of others' feelings towards them and the impact of their own behaviour on others.
- Apparent insensitivity to peers.
- No concept of their role within a group.
- Little or no perception of danger.
- Resistant to change.
- Possess special interests.
- May have sensory difficulties such as under- or over sensitivity to noise or light.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WITH ASD

General:

- Poor physical/motor skills.
- Obsessions, usually with toys or objects.
- High levels of anxiety.
- Lack of motivation.
- Depression and low self-esteem.
- Inability to transfer skills from one situation to another.
- Vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation.
- Challenging behaviour.
- Self-injury/self-harm.

Social Communication:

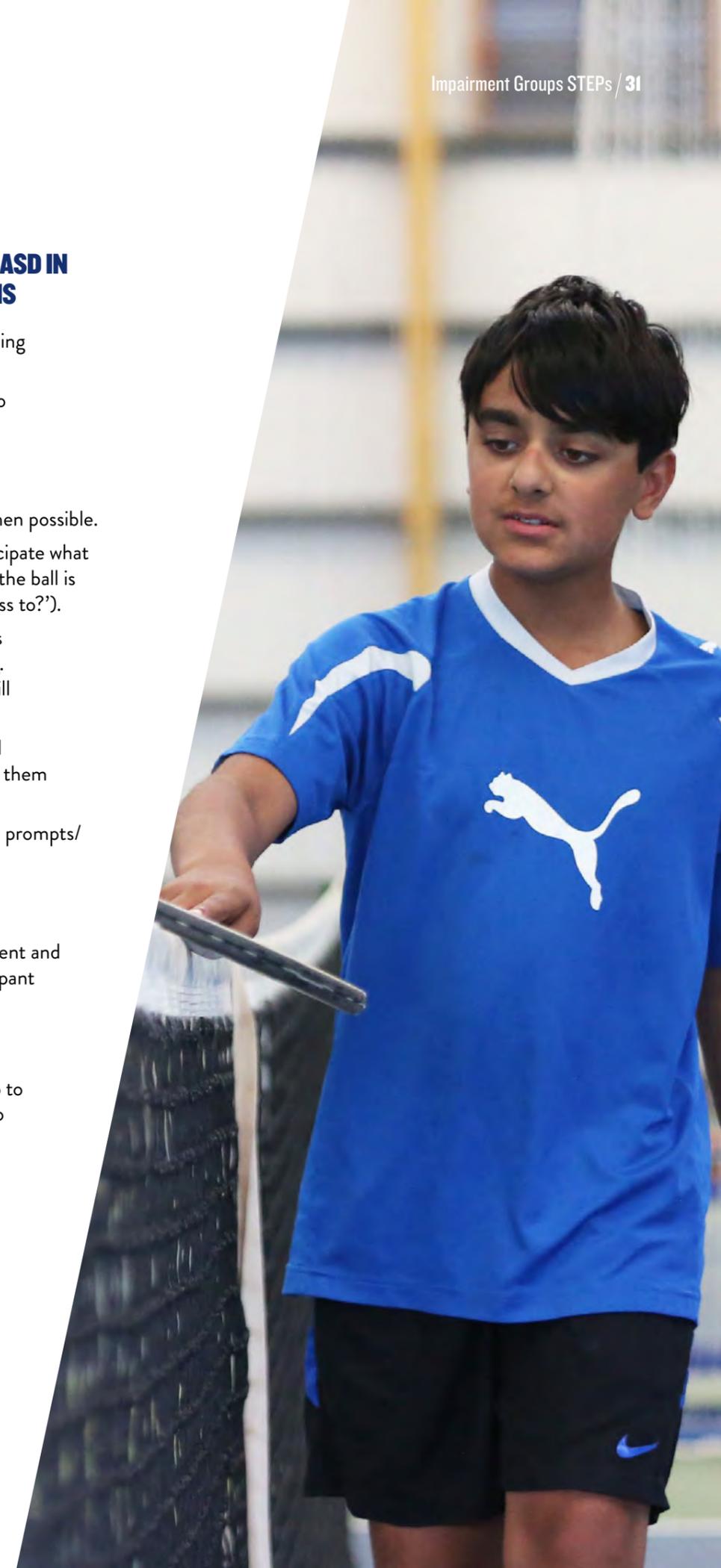
- May repeat/echo words or phrases.
- Inappropriate laughing or giggling.
- No or inappropriate response to sounds.
- Difficulty with expression, and so may need to use gestures.
- One-sided communication.
- Failure to respond to their name (unless looking at them).
- Failure to comply with general instructions when given to a whole group.
- Difficulty in understanding verbal communication.
- Difficulty in understanding non-verbal communication such as gestures, tone of voice and expressions.

Imagination:

- Limited imagination; but some individuals can be over-imaginative and will 'know everything'.
- Limited understanding of concepts of playing or sharing and taking turns.
- Unusual or inappropriate playing behaviour.
- Inappropriate attachments to objects.
- May spin objects or themselves.

INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH ASD IN YOUR COACHING SESSIONS

- Use their name at the beginning of an instruction or question.
- Tell the participant what to do rather than what not to do.
- Use face-to-face interaction when possible.
- Use visual communication when possible.
- Help your participant to anticipate what will happen next (e.g. 'When the ball is passed to Bill, who will Bill pass to?').
- Give warnings of any changes that are about to happen (e.g. 'John, in a few minutes, we will be moving on to a game').
- Control the environment and don't overstimulate (e.g. face them away from any distractions).
- Teach them the rules and use prompts/reminders to reinforce them.
- Provide a definite beginning and end to activities.
- Reduce anxiety with a confident and positive approach; the participant will feel safer knowing that if they lose control, you won't.
- Provide a safe place and/or person the participant can go to when a situation becomes too much for them to cope with.



ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

WHAT IS ASPERGER'S SYNDROME?

Asperger's syndrome affects people in three specific areas:

- Social interaction.
- Social communication.
- Social imagination.

There are similarities with autism, but, on the whole, people with Asperger's syndrome have fewer problems speaking and have average or above-average intelligence.



IN GENERAL, PEOPLE WITH ASPERGER'S SYNDROME:

- Have poor physical/motor skills.
- Have difficulty understanding gestures, facial expressions or tone of voice.
- Have difficulty knowing when to start or end a conversation, and choosing topics to talk about.
- Use complex words and phrases, but may not fully understand what they mean.
- Are very literal in what they say and can have difficulty understanding jokes, metaphors and sarcasm; for example, a person with Asperger's syndrome may be confused by the phrase 'that's cool'.
- Struggle to make and maintain friendships.
- Do not understand the unwritten 'social rules' that most of us pick up without thinking; for example, they may stand too close to another person, or start an inappropriate topic of conversation.
- Find other people unpredictable and confusing.
- Become withdrawn and seem uninterested in other people, appearing almost aloof.
- Behave in what may seem an inappropriate/antisocial manner.
- May imagine alternative outcomes to situations and find it hard to predict what will happen next.
- May misunderstand or interpret other people's thoughts, feelings or actions; the subtle messages put across by facial expression and body language are often missed.
- May have a limited range of imaginative activities, which can be pursued rigidly and repetitively; for example, lining up objects or collecting and organising things related to their interests.
- May have rules and rituals that must be followed.
- Have a love of routine.
- Possess special interests.
- May have sensory difficulties.
- May have sensory difficulties such as under- or over sensitivity to noise or light.

INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH ASPERGER'S SYNDROME IN YOUR COACHING SESSIONS

- Be very literal in your explanations. Try not to use slang phrases, sarcasm or metaphors.
- Keep your explanations simple and concise.
- Use their name at the beginning of an instruction or question.
- Tell the participant what to do rather than what not to do.
- Use face-to-face interaction when possible.
- Use visual communication when possible.
- Help your participant to anticipate what will happen next (e.g. 'When the ball is passed to Bill, who will Bill pass to?').
- Give warning of any changes that are about to happen (e.g. 'John, in a few minutes, we will be moving on to a game').
- Control the environment and don't overstimulate (e.g. face them away from any distractions).
- Teach them the rules and use prompts/reminders to reinforce them.
- Provide a definite beginning and end to activities.
- Reduce anxiety by adopting a confident and positive approach. The participant will feel safer knowing that if they lose control, you won't.
- Provide a safe place and/or person the participant can go to when a situation becomes too much for them to cope with.
- Manage situations with other people you are coaching. Ensure they understand that this participant is not being rude if they don't, for example, respond to conversation.
- Allow the participant 'time out' as and when they need it.
- Try to accommodate the need for structure and routine. Show the person your session plan and try to keep the structure the same for each session.
- Support their interest in the sport. Provide useful website addresses and books that might be interesting. Your encouragement may help develop the interest and skill of that person.

DOWN'S SYNDROME

ABOUT DOWN'S SYNDROME (DS)

- DS is a genetic condition which occurs by chance.
- It is the result of an extra chromosome (number 21).
- It is both a learning and physical disability.
- It is the most common form of learning disability.
- One in every 1,000 babies is born with DS.

You may have heard that people with DS:

- Have a short life expectancy.
- Are always happy and affectionate.
- Are extremely strong.
- Are only born to older mothers.
- All look the same.

In reality, people with DS:

- Can and do live long and rewarding lives.
- Experience the same range of emotions as anyone.
- Are likely to be weaker due to hypotonia (decreased muscle tone).
- Are born more often to younger mothers.
- Are more likely to look like their family than another person with the condition.

COACHING PEOPLE WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME

It is best to adapt your methods as opposed to abandoning your coaching style.

- Some people may have physical implications, others have cognitive ones. Many have both.
- Many players will struggle with short-term memory, and retention of skills may take some time.
- Many players will struggle to deal with changes and progressions, and some may inadvertently forget them.
- Many players will struggle/excel in comparison to their peers due to physical, technical or cognitive ability.

Many, but not all, children with DS will exhibit the following factors that facilitate learning:

- Strong visual awareness and visual learning skills.
- Ability to learn/use sign, gesture and visual support.
- Ability to learn and use the written word.
- Ability to learn practically, with hands-on activity and demonstrations.
- Tendency to model behaviour and attitudes on peers and adults.
- Keeness to communicate and socialise with others.

Many, but not all, children with DS will exhibit the following factors that inhibit learning:

- Auditory and visual impairment.
- Speech and language impairment.
- Short-term and working memory problems.
- Shorter concentration span.
- Delayed motor skills which can cause clumsiness and manipulation issues.

When coaching players with Down's Syndrome, coaches should attempt to:

- Teach the fundamentals of tennis as with any group of players, including technical and tactical play.
- Concentrate on the group as a whole, yet aid players who may be struggling physically or mentally.
- Treat the players like any other as much as possible, including reprimanding unruly behaviour.
- Take into account specific learning profiles and focus on the visual side of coaching.
- Start with singular commands or points to allow players to fully grasp and subsequently retain information.
- Make progressions slight and easily recognisable. To change a game/drill fully, change the surroundings.
- Ensure that the session is always achievable for each player, and for advanced players add individual rules or tests.



COMPETITIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

The LTA runs an annual National Competition, and there are other events run locally and regionally across the country.

In addition, players can register with a Special Olympics Great Britain (SOGB) sports club in their local area and have the opportunity to compete at their level for their region, or in national or international Special Olympics Games. Remember this level of competition is open to all athletes of all standards and Special Olympics events are all participation events, not elite-level competitions.

Special Olympics GB is the largest provider of year-round sports training for children and adults with a learning disability:

- They are a recognised member of the Olympic family.
- Since their formation in 1978 as part of the global Special Olympics movement, SOGB has improved the lives of thousands of people with a learning disability through sport.
- There are an estimated 1.2 million people in Great Britain with a learning disability.

- There are currently 135 Special Olympics clubs in Great Britain providing training and competition in 26 sports.
- The programmes are delivered by hundreds of qualified coaches and volunteers, with over 8,000 athletes benefiting from their sports programme.
- Their programmes are designed to allow athletes of all ages to learn enjoy and benefit from participation in individual and team sports.
- Currently competitions run on a four-yearly cycle, like all Olympic-family events. These include National Special Olympics Games, European Special Olympics Games and World Special Olympics Games.

For those players who have the ability, there is the potential to progress to a performance pathway through the UK Sports Association and Inas (see below).

Please note that the term 'learning disability' is used in the UK, but the term 'intellectual disability' is used internationally.



UKSA

UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability

UKSA promotes, supports and facilitates talented athletes with a learning disability to excel in national and international sport. UKSA is responsible for classification of athletes with a learning disability from the UK and is the only official British member of Inas (see next page).

UKSA has four members: Scottish Disability Sport, Welsh Sports Association for People with Learning Disability, Disability Sports Northern Ireland and Mencap in England. It also works closely with the English Federation of Disability Sport and Disability Sport Wales.

UKSA supports and collaborates with the LTA in its selection and management of the GB Team to Inas events (see next page). UKSA is the only conduit through which athletes with learning disability across a number of sports, including tennis, can compete in high-performance European and World Championship events, including the Inas Global Games.

INAS

International Federation for Sport for Para-Athletes with an Intellectual Disability

Inas is a global organisation that promotes inclusion and is a full member of the International Paralympic Committee, representing intellectual disability:

- Formed in 1985.
- Has a membership now of more than 50 nations.
- Represents thousands of athletes with an intellectual disability.
- Competition is not played in rating groups, so is based more on the higher-standard athlete.
- Has an office base in England and is supported by a huge volunteer workforce around the world.
- Inas became a member of the ICC – the International Co-ordinating Committee – which later in 1992 became the International Paralympic Committee.

- The '1st World Games for Athletes with an Intellectual Disability' were held in Sweden in 1989.
- Ahead of the Barcelona Olympic Games in 1992, the first Paralympic Games were held in Madrid for 'Persons with a mental handicap'; 70 nations competed.
- A small programme for athletes with an intellectual disability was included in the Paralympic Games in Atlanta in 1996 and in Sydney in 2000.

The Inas sports programme has grown to incorporate more than 10 sports and reaches across five continents. Today the programme includes 15 annual events, including the World Global Games held every four years, and has over 2,500 athletes registered to compete at international level.

PLAYER CLASSIFICATION

Any athlete, regardless of their tennis standard, can enjoy the opportunity to compete. This is because the competition structure uses a learning disability tennis rating form to assess a player's tennis ability, rather than their disability, and can then group them to compete with athletes of a similar ability, giving them an achievable and positive match-play experience.

The learning disability tennis rating form (below) enables coaches to assess their athletes prior to competition. Coaches can observe the player during a coaching or match-play session and choose the appropriate statement in each category that matches the player's ability. (Please note Level 1 is not used in competition as this is for players who cannot hit a ball yet).

Ratings also determine what level of tennis a player should practice during a coaching session:

RATED 1 - 3
Red ball on a Tennis Red court

RATED 3 - 4
Orange ball on a Tennis Orange court

RATED 4 - 5
Green ball on a full-size court

RATED 5 - 8
Yellow ball on a full-size court



LEARNING DISABILITY TENNIS PATHWAY

1. Club/County sessions, LTA Events and Talent ID
2. Talent Selection
 - a. Talent selection camps and LTA training camps
 - b. Special Olympics and LTA competitions
3. Talent Development
 - a. Performance development camps
 - b. Inas and Special Olympics events and LTA national competitions
4. Talent Confirmation
 - a. Performance Development camps
 - b. Inas and Special Olympics events and LTA national competitions
5. Performance Programme
 - a. Performance camps
 - b. Inas events and LTA national competitions

LEARNING DISABILITY TENNIS RATING FORM

LEVEL 1

Athletes at this level should complete the ISC Skills Testing

- Player just started to play tennis (1)
- Appropriate competition would be ISC (1)

Score:

A. FOREHAND *

- Has difficulty hitting FH shots (2)
- Hits inconsistent, weak FH shots (3)
- Hits FH shots with little directional control (4)
- Sustains a short rally using FH shots (5)
- Sustains a rally with directional control (6)
- Sustains a rally with consistency and depth (7)
- Sustains an extended rally (8)

Score:

B. BACKHAND *

- Has difficulty hitting BH shots (2)
- Hits inconsistent, weak BH shots (3)
- Hits BH shots with little directional control (4)
- Has directional control of BH shots, but shots lack depth (5)
- Returns difficult shots defensively (6)
- Has difficulty only with high and hard shots (7)
- Controls FH and BH shots with direction, pace and depth (8)

Score:

C. MOVEMENT *

- Stationary position; does not move to ball to hit shots (2)
- Moves only 1-2 steps toward ball to hit shots (3)
- Moves towards ball; but court coverage is poor (4)
- Movement allows sufficient court coverage of most shots (5)
- Exceptional court coverage (6)
- Exceptional court coverage and hits defensive lobs but inconsistent overheads (7)
- Exceptional court coverage and hits defensive lobs and consistent overheads (8)

Score:

*N.B. One choice – should be the most representative of the athlete's skill level

D. FIRST SERVE *

- First serve is weak (2)
- First serve faults are common (3)
- Hits first serves in at a slower pace (4)
- Hits first serves with pace (6)
- Hits first serves with pace and control (8)

Score:

E. SECOND SERVE *

- Double faults are common (2)
- Pushes second serve with control (4)
- Hits second serve with control (6)
- Hits second serve with control and depth (7)
- Hits second serve with spin, control and depth (8)

Score:

F. RETURN OF THE SERVE *

- Has difficulty returning serve (2)
- Returns serve occasionally (3)
- Returns second serve consistently (4)
- Returns some first serves, returns second serves consistently (5)
- Returns first and second serves consistently (6)
- Aggressive return of second serve; weak return of first serve (7)
- Aggressive return of first and second serves (8)

Score:

G. VOLLEYS *

- Avoids net (2)
- Does not hit volleys; avoids net (3)
- Hits inconsistent volleys; avoids net (4)
- Hits consistent FH volleys; BH volley inconsistent. (5)
- Hits aggressive FH volleys; hits defensive BH volleys (6)
- Hits aggressive FH and BH volleys (8)

Score:

TOTAL SCORE:

Divide Total Score by 7 to determine the overall rating (Round off to the nearest tenth i.e. 4.97 = 5.0 or 3.53 = 3.5)

OVERALL RATING:

VISUALLY IMPAIRED TENNIS

Visually impaired tennis (VI tennis) was first conceived in Japan in 1984 and has since been played in many countries around the world and is now part of the LTA's 'Open Court' Disability Tennis Strategy.

STEPS

SPACE/ ENVIRONMENT	TASKS	EQUIPMENT/ RULES	PEOPLE/ COMMUNICATION	SAFETY
Ensure court is free of obstacles and watch out for equipment stored at the back of the court, e.g. scoreboards and the umpire's chair if not in use.	Explain that the best way to coach a visually impaired person is to guide them through strokes. Hold head of racket with player holding handle.	Game is played with an audible sound ball.	One-to-one support may be required.	Ensure there is an appropriate and quiet place for any guide dogs, with water provision.
Walk the player around the courts, fire exits, toilets and changing room areas.	Visual demonstrations may not work so use clear verbal communication and guide their racket if appropriate.	For B1 and B2 players the ball can bounce a maximum of three times. For B3s twice and for B4s once.	Consider the number of coaches required and the use of volunteers.	Consider transport to and from the venue. Players may require assistance to organise this.
Create a tactile court area, using floor tape, string or 'throw down lines', and try to reduce background noise.	Develop skills, including serve, return, and tactics.	Think about court and ball colours, e.g. a dark floor and yellow ball work well, and vice versa.		Ensure access to and from the court is free from obstacles.
B1s play within the service boxes, B2s, B3s and B4s on an Orange size court.	Use sound awareness exercises, e.g. ball rolling or throwing a ball against a wall and trying to catch it.	Racket size for B1s is a maximum of 23 inches, for B2-B4 players it is a maximum of 25 inches.		Keep players who are waiting for their turn well away from the hitting area and court.

WHAT IS VISUALLY IMPAIRED TENNIS?

Visually impaired tennis is one of the fastest growing VI Sports in the UK, and one of the newer versions of the game. It is played on a smaller tennis court using smaller rackets, an audible ball and raised lines.

Players who are totally blind are allowed three bounces while partially sighted players are allowed two bounces. Tape can be put on the court to create raised lines and players communicate at the start of each point to make sure their opponent is ready.

Coaching people with visual impairments can provide varying levels of challenge, as different people will have varying levels of sight. Some people may see nothing; some may see outlines; some may see a small area in detail but nothing around that area; some may see best in good light; some in poor light; some may have seen in the past and have a memory of how people move; and some may never have seen and will therefore have to learn everything by description. As a result, communication is key when coaching visually impaired people and you will need to talk to the participant prior to the session to understand their personal support needs.

As the sport is in the early stages of development, there aren't yet formalised ITF rules for VI tennis competitions. But there is a generally accepted set of rules used in Great Britain and internationally in an increasing number of visually impaired events and competitions.

More information about various eyesight conditions can be found on the RNIB website: www.rnib.org.uk

COACHING CONSIDERATIONS

When setting up your session think about an accessible venue, provision for guide dogs, keeping the court as de-cluttered as possible and ensuring as quiet an environment as possible. Artificial lights may affect players in different ways so check with them in advance and use tactile markers where necessary.

It is important when planning your sessions or competitions to take into account other visually impaired sports, so check local, regional and national calendars for clashes with sports such as goalball and blind football.

Try to ensure there are accessible transport networks nearby as this may be a barrier to the success of your VI tennis session. Players may be able to share lifts or taxis from home, or meet at a station and travel together from there to the venue.

It is preferable to play VI tennis indoors as it is easier to control light and noise conditions. VI balls also work better in dry conditions without wind, so indoor tennis or badminton courts are good options.

Consider 'colour contrast' for players and the coach on court. For example, if there are dark green curtains ask players to wear light colours, or if it is a white sports hall then ask players to wear dark colours.

Depending on the participants, it may be beneficial to use assistant coaches or volunteers to help with any additional requirements.

Keep challenging your players on their movement, this is key to good performance

TOP TIPS: VISUALLY IMPAIRED TENNIS

- Find out how much sight an individual has – do not be afraid to ask how well an individual can see. This will enable you to make sure your communication and coaching provision are appropriate.
- Ensure the player knows what is around them and who is present. Ask them if they want to be shown or guided around the environment. If a visually impaired participant asks to be guided on to the court, hold your arm out for the person to hold and keep that arm relaxed and still. Do not take hold of the participant yourself, unless you have permission to do so.
- Advise the participant that you are going to put them into a correct position or stance, and explain how you are going to do this, prior to touching them.
- Keep background noise to a minimum and make sure you are clear and precise in your provision of verbal information. Try not to overcomplicate instructions or information and always check for understanding by the participant.
- Take the opportunity to learn from players' different eye conditions, as they will each find different strategies to compensate for their particular type of impairment, and this way you will be able to help another player with the same eye condition.
- The provision of promotional material must be in clear, large, and easy-to-read format, with simple imagery. Word documents usually work best for screen readers and you can find help to create accessible promotional materials on the Activity Alliance website.



PLAYER CLASSIFICATION

Players are classified according to their visual field or visual sharpness, so someone completely blind is permitted more bounces of the ball than someone with a less severe visual impairment.

BI PLAYERS **3 BOUNCES**
(totally blind)

B2 PLAYERS **3 BOUNCES**
(partially sighted)

B3 PLAYERS **2 BOUNCES**
(partially sighted)

B4 AND B5 PLAYERS **1 BOUNCE**
(partially sighted)

Sight classifications are important as they promote fair and equal competition. Success at competitions should be defined by an athlete's skill and ability, not their impairment. The sight classifications should give all athletes the confidence that they are competing against others on an equal basis. Players only compete against other players of the same sight classification.

To compete in national tournaments, players must have a classification from British Blind Sport. For international competitions, players must have an International Blind Sports Federation (IBSF) classification.

RULES

VI tennis follows standard ITF rules for tennis, as well as the following additions:

- A yellow or black VI ball, often referred to as a sound ball, is used as it makes a noise when it bounces to alert the player to its location. There are different manufacturers of VI balls but they all have the sound feature.
- To start, the server must call "Ready?" and await a response of "Yes". Then the server calls "Play" before serving the ball to begin the point.
- If the ball hits the server's opponent inside the playing area before the first bounce, it is a point for the opponent.
- If the ball hits the server's opponent outside the playing area before the first bounce, it is a point for the server.

BI PLAYERS

- Play is on a Mini Tennis Red court. For specific sizes please refer to the ITF website.
- Tactile lines should be used on all lines except for service boxes.
- Players have up to three bounces of the ball before returning a shot.
- During competition players must wear eyeshades.
- Maximum size of racket is 23 inches.

B2, B3 AND B4 PLAYERS

- Play is on a Mini Tennis Orange court.
- B2s are allowed three bounces of the ball before returning a shot, B3s are allowed two, and B4s are allowed one.
- Maximum size of racket is 25 inches.

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

One of the fastest growing wheelchair sports in the world, wheelchair tennis integrates very easily with the non-disabled game since it can be played on any regular tennis court, with no modifications to rackets or balls.

STEPS

SPACE/ ENVIRONMENT	TASKS	EQUIPMENT/ RULES	PEOPLE/ COMMUNICATION	SAFETY
Are the courts and facilities wheelchair accessible? Make sure wheelchair players can get off court in an emergency.	Can integrate with non-disabled players (only difference is that wheelchair players are allowed two bounces of the ball).	Specialised tennis wheelchairs, both manual and powered.	Recognise that wheelchair players have different abilities.	Get to know your individual or group to help assess their ability.
Is there enough room for everyone to move around?	Teach player to push and turn holding the racket.	Balls, rackets, courts and scoring the same as nondisabled, but player is allowed two bounces of the ball.	Don't be afraid to ask what player can and can't do.	Take into account any medical or behavioural considerations. For example, dehydration can be more of an issue for some disabled people.
Consider the surface. Grass and carpet are difficult surfaces to push a wheelchair on, especially for higher- level disability.	Adapt the drills you do already with non-disabled players and give clear demonstrations.	Use regular equipment such as cones, lines, targets, etc.	Try not to be patronising and speak down to a player.	
Work in zones to enable people of similar ability to be matched.	Consider chair movement and turns as part of game-play and tactics.	Can use a mitt and no racket if having problem holding racket and propelling chair at the same time.	Select team roles carefully to challenge but not frustrate.	
Consider safety in mixed groups of non-disabled players and wheelchair users, especially during warm-up periods, and use adapted equipment including orange and green balls and smaller courts.		Larger, lower compression balls and smaller rackets might help beginners.		



See more detailed STEPS guidance for wheelchair users on page 46.

Wheelchair tennis players are allowed two bounces of the ball and can easily play against other wheelchair tennis players, as well as alongside or against non-disabled friends and family.

There are opportunities for players to enter tournaments from beginner level right up to the ITF Wheelchair Tennis Tour, where the world's top players compete in three divisions – men, women and quad, which is for those with a disability in three or more limbs. As well as a number of events in Great Britain on the ITF Tour, there is a Wheelchair Tennis Development Series run by the LTA - open for absolutely anyone who would like to compete.

COACHING CONSIDERATIONS

These coaching considerations may not apply to all wheelchair users, but are common characteristics for this impairment. For greater clarity, it is recommended you ask the participant.

- Check participants' range of movement; they may, for example, find it difficult to raise their arms above their head.
- There is a common assumption that if a participant is in a wheelchair, they cannot bear weight on their legs. Participants may be able to bear weight, depending on their impairment.
- Participants may tire easily during a session due to their lack of motor-skill efficiency.
- Participants may have a decreased breathing efficiency due to only their diaphragm supporting their breathing.
- Participants may struggle with temperature regulation – both hot and cold. For example, a tetraplegic may not be able to perspire and will, therefore, require water to be sprayed on them to avoid overheating.
- Make sure participants take in plenty of fluid during sessions.
- There may be a decrease in a participant's range of movement due to, for example, a rod in the spine.
- Be aware of hot and cold surfaces, as participants may have a lack of sensation in their touch.
- Be aware and minimise the risk of common injuries that arise from propelling the wheelchair, such as blisters, abrasions and lacerations.
- There is the potential for damage such as cuts and bruises due to lack of sensation.
- Be aware that some participants may have equipment for bowel and bladder control.
- If transferring to a different wheelchair, participants should do this independently or with the help of a parent/partner/friend/carer, or with a trained individual. With higher levels of impairment, a hoist may be required for transfer.

INCLUDING WHEELCHAIR USERS IN YOUR COACHING SESSIONS

- Every wheelchair user is different; it is recommended you ask the participants about their needs before the session. For example, check their range of movement.
- If participants are not using a sports wheelchair, they may not have an anti-tip system fitted to their chair. If this is an option on their chair, ensure it is fitted. If no anti-tip is fitted, reduce the risk of the chair tipping back during an activity (e.g. by reducing speed and quick turns), as this may cause head injuries.

Along with the STEPs outlined in the previous table, below are some additional tips to take into account.

SPACE

- What is the effect of the size of the play area chosen?
- Can you change the surface so it is suitable for a wheelchair?
- Is the facility accessible, including access to toilets and changing rooms?
- If appropriate, decrease targets and distances to make things easier.
- Working in zones enables people of similar ability to be matched.
- Is there room to move around?

TASK

- Ensure the demonstrations/communication methods used will enable understanding.
- Adapt rules for the whole group or for individuals.
- Adapt the task for some participants so they can use adapted equipment.
- Adapt a game to use zones, so everyone can play.

EQUIPMENT

- A larger ball is easier to hit and receive.
- Can you make the length of a handle shorter/longer on a racket/bat?
- Can you reduce the height of targets (e.g. a lower net)?
- Is sport-specific specialist equipment available?
- Does the wheelchair have an anti-tip fitted?

PEOPLE

- Ensure group dynamics – working in pairs and small groups.
- Vary groups – use mixed-ability groups and similar pairings, and ensure these are not the same for every session.
- Let them try – never assume they can't do it, and work with them on adaptations; what works and what doesn't?
- As a coach, your positioning is important for people to be able to hear and see you.

SAFETY

- Know your individual/group, their ability and potential.
- Know what precautionary action to take (e.g. medical, behavioural).
- Be aware of additional potential heat loss and dehydration with some groups.



PLAYER PATHWAYS AND CLASSIFICATIONS

- Players are classified by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).
- Players compete in a sports chair.
- Players compete in one of three divisions (men's, women's or quad) on the ITF tour and at Paralympic Games.
- Both men and women compete in the quad division (this is not just for quadriplegics but anyone with a disability in three of more limbs as classified by the ITF).
- Players can compete in over 150 ITF-sanctioned events around the globe.
- Wheelchair tennis is now played as part of all the Grand Slam events.
- The ball is allowed to bounce twice in wheelchair tennis.
- The LTA manages camps, competitions and the performance programme for players domestically.

“When coaching wheelchair tennis it is important to be aware of individual needs but also to ensure players are being helped to reach their potential as with any other athlete. I have found coaching wheelchair tennis has improved my understanding and the ability to listen and adapt to the player in front of me. It has also been great to get the chance to look at the sport from another angle.”

Phil Martin, Disability and Outreach Coordinator, Gosling Sports Park

TALENT IDENTIFICATION

The overall aim of the LTA's Wheelchair Tennis Talent Programme is to identify and confirm a number of targeted individuals who already possess or, with fast-track support, are capable of developing the skills required by an elite wheelchair tennis athlete.

All LTA Open Court wheelchair tennis activities, whether camps or tournaments, provide an opportunity for players to be fairly assessed and for those selected to receive the appropriate levels of support.

At the competitive level, wheelchair tennis is open to players who have a medically diagnosed permanent mobility-related physical disability, which must have resulted in a substantial loss of function in one or both lower extremities.

This can include:

- Spinal injuries.
- Spina bifida.
- Limb loss.
- Hypermobility.
- Cerebral palsy.
- Other illness or injury that causes disability in the lower extremities.

Athletes that typically perform well at the elite level are:

- Those who retain core muscle function.
- Those with lower-limb loss.
- Those with prior competitive tennis experience.
- Those with experience in other wheelchair sports.

But a broad range of people can excel at wheelchair tennis, so please contact the LTA's Performance Team for more information about the talent pathway in the UK.

You can further develop your knowledge by attending a Wheelchair Tennis CPD course.

To book on the Wheelchair Tennis CPD course, please log in with your British Tennis Member number to the LTA website and visit the coaches' area: www.lta.org.uk.



WHAT TO TEACH

CHAIR MOBILITY

The most important aspect of competitive wheelchair tennis is mobility (the ability to move and control the chair). For the new player this is also the most important part of getting fit and having fun.

GAMES/DRILLS

Anything you do with non-disabled players you can do with wheelchair players. Often Mini Tennis coordination and movement games can work well for beginners to get them used to using a tennis chair.

IDEAS

1. Propel the chair with 2 pushes and then roll (repeat using 2 pushes, 3, 4, etc). Also try propelling the chair and then keep moving with no hands on the wheel rims.
2. Practise small and large turns left and right. Also practise stopping and starting quickly.
3. Same as No. 2 above then throw the players a ball – they must catch it while chair is rolling. Have them catch it after one and two bounces to get them making decisions on the appropriate number of bounces.
4. Make this harder by catching using only one hand.
5. Do this again and when they catch the ball they have to throw it back.
6. Repeat exercise but when they throw it back they should make the shape of a forehand or backhand.
7. Get used to holding a racket while moving the chair by dribbling the ball as they move and trying exercises such as hit, bounce and then push to get into position for the next ball.

RELAY RACES

1. Push up to a designated point; turn the chair and sprint-push back before the next person takes their turn.
2. Slalom race – the same as above but push in and out of obstacles or around balls; make sure the chair is always moving.

MOVING AND LOOKING

- Players must always be looking at the ball or at their opponent, so make sure the player always looks over their shoulder when pushing away from the opponent or coach.
- Moving the chair and looking at the ball: stand with a ball behind your back while the player is in front facing you. Without them knowing which way you are going to point the ball, they must when they see the ball push towards the direction of it (left or right). Advance this one by pointing the ball left or right and/or forward or back.
- Figure of 8: players have to continuously push in a figure of 8 pattern left and right – the coach rolls a ball either left or right and the player rolls it back. You can do this with a throw and catch and also one or two bounces.

SHOT PRODUCTION

FOREHAND

- Grip – semi-western is most widely used and provides the most versatility, but many players use different grips; e.g. full-western or continental. Use what works for the player.
- Swing from low to high.
- Follow through up and across with varying degrees of extension depending on the intended ball flight.
- Watch the ball.
- Breathe out through contact.

The player should concentrate on the following things for the first three to six months:

- Semi-western forehand grip with small pre-swing loop and good extension, and completed follow-through. Contact with the ball should be just in front of the knees with the elbow in front of the body.
- Correct swing paths on the forehand so as to add more variety of top spin on the forehand side; the hand pulls the racket up and across the ball at contact.
- Loop shots, arc shots and a flatter put-away shot. These are all forehands but with different heights and weights of spin. If the player can identify them and start to see their tactical uses whilst learning them, technically it will help the player to become competitive more quickly.
- Forehand focus should be on a good swing path from below the ball (contact with a square racket face) to spin the ball, sending it higher than 3 feet over the net.



REVERSE BACKHAND

- Same grip as forehand but inverted.
- Semi-western is best, but many players use different grip; e.g. full-western or continental. Use what works for the player.
- Aim to keep elbow level or higher than racket head and finish.
- Swing from below the height of the ball using arm extension followed by the shoulder rotation.
- Follow through out, up and across.
- Watch the ball.
- Breathe out through contact.



SHOT PRODUCTION

SLICE BACKHAND

- Grip: continental is best for controlling the angle of the racket face (when working with quad players who need to tape, improvising with forehand grip is more common).
- Swing from above the ball, striking the back of the ball with a descending path (racket face slightly open). Shorter stroke than in non-disabled tennis.
- Stay on the ball as long as possible.
- Watch the ball.
- Breathe out through contact.



SERVE

- Types: flat/slice/topspin.
- Grip: continental.
- Underarm serve may be needed for some players limited by disability.
- Physical and technical limitations.
- Every player is different.
- Balance (may need to take the wheel with arm after the toss for stability).
- Ball toss (straight and controlled), above eyeline for most serves.



INCLUSION AND INTEGRATION

There are some simple considerations to make as a useful starting point for working in a more inclusive manner. These take account of the type and severity of a player's disability or long term limiting illness.

The following 'Functional Approach' and 'STEPS' provide a useful framework to follow in preparing tennis sessions for disabled people and those with a long-term limiting illness. In every circumstance as coaches we want to provide the optimal challenge for the individual we are working with.

FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

- Consider the functional ability of the athlete
- Assess the impact of this on their chosen sporting activity
- Determine how environment affects a person's functional ability
- Look at what other factors can impinge on a person's ability to participate

STEPS

(considerations for inclusive tennis)

- **Space/environment** – what is required to make the activity successful?
- **Tasks** – how can they be adapted to make them appropriate?
- **Equipment and rules** – how can they be adapted to make them appropriate?
- **People/communication** – are additional coaches, volunteers or skills required?
- **Speed** – how quickly if at all should you progress?



WORKSHEET 5

Below are 25 words/phrases that are often used when referring to disability and disabled people.

Underneath each word/phrase is an empty box. For those words/phrases you find acceptable put a tick in the box, for those you find unacceptable put a cross in the box, and if you are unsure put a question mark.

You have five minutes to agree a group response.

Handicapped	Disabled person	Deaf	Non-disabled	Impairment
Mental-health difficulty	Partially sighted	Invalid	Cripple	Person with a disability
Mute	Deaf and dumb/ Dumb	Visually impaired	Physical disability	Retarded/Retard
Wheelchair user	Suffers from	Spastic	Hard of hearing	Blind
Normal	Learning disability	Wheelchair-bound	Non-disabled	Dwarf

THE EQUALITY ACT 2010 FACT SHEET

The Equality Act 2010 is a legislative requirement placed on any organisation that employs staff or carries out a public function or delivers a service to the public.

In contrast to previous protection measures, it puts all strands of equality in a single piece of legislation. It provides protection within employment, education and access to goods and services for the protected characteristics below.

The Equality Act 2010 covers the following areas:

age
disability
gender reassignment
marriage and civil partnership
pregnancy and maternity
race and ethnicity
religion or belief
sexual orientation

The Equality Act takes a proactive approach and focuses on taking active steps to tackle discrimination and promote equality. The Act requires public bodies or organisations carrying out a public function to act pro-actively on equality issues and to tackle institutional equality-related discrimination.

The Equality Act focus is on the following issues:

- Elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Promotion of equality of opportunity
 - Removal of disadvantage
 - Meeting of diverse needs
 - Encouragement of participation
- Promotion of good relations
 - Tackling of prejudice
 - Promotion of understanding
- Strategic duty for public bodies to address socio-economic disadvantage.

For more information, please go to the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (www.equalityhumanrights.com) or that of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) (www.acas.org.uk)



FURTHER INFORMATION

This resource has been put together by a number of experts in disability sport. Thank you to all of the individuals and organisations who have contributed.

For further information on disability tennis please contact the LTA:

E: disabilitytennis@lta.org.uk
T: 0208 487 7000
www.disabilitytennis.org.uk

You can contact our partner organisations using the details that follow:

ACTIVITY ALLIANCE

www.activityalliance.org.uk
Tel: 01509 227750

BRITISH BLIND SPORT

www.britishblindsport.org.uk
E: info@britishblindsport.org.uk
T: 01926 424247

BRITISH PARALYMPIC ASSOCIATION

www.paralympics.org.uk
T: 020 7842 5789

DOWN'S SYNDROME ASSOCIATION

www.downs-syndrome.org.uk
E: info@downs-syndrome.org.uk
T: 0333 1212 300

INTERNATIONAL TENNIS FEDERATION (ITF)

www.itftennis.com/wheelchair
E: wheelchair@itftennis.com
T: 020 8878 6464

MENCAP SPORT

www.mencap.org.uk/sport
E: sport@mencap.org.uk
T: 0121 722 5900

THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

www.autism.org.uk
E: nas@nas.org.uk
T: 020 7833 2299

NATIONAL DEAF CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

www.ndcs.org.uk
E: helpline@ndcs.org.uk
T: 020 7490 8656

SPORTS COACH UK

www.sportscoachuk.org/inclusion-coaches
T: 0113 274 4802

WHEELPOWER

www.wheelpower.org.uk
E: info@wheelpower.org.uk
T: 01296 395995

UK DEAF SPORT

www.ukdeafsport.org.uk
E: office@ukds.org.uk

“Whatever wider potential someone has inside them tennis can help bring it out.”



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