Being inclusive means adapting and modifying coaching practices and activities to ensure that every participant — regardless of age, gender, ability level, disability and ethnic background — is included (that is, has the opportunity to participate if they choose to). The onus of inclusion rests with the coach.

Good coaches adapt and modify their coaching and create an environment that caters for individual needs and allows everyone to take part.

**Basic coaching skills**

Coaches do not need ‘special’ skills or knowledge to include all participants. Many people, for example, think that you need special skills or knowledge to coach participants with a disability. This is not the case. The basic skills of good coaching, when applied with an inclusive philosophy, will ensure that the inclusion of all participants including people with a disability becomes a natural part of coaching.

**Four key areas for the coach**

A useful tool for ensuring inclusive coaching is the TREE approach. It highlights four key areas that a coach can adapt or modify to better include all participants, including those with a disability:

- Teaching / coaching skills and style (for example, verbal instructions, visual demonstrations)
- Rules and regulations
- Environment
- Equipment.

Provided a coach is prepared to accept each participant as an individual, coaching a participant with a disability (or participants of varying ability levels or backgrounds) is not a difficult task. Every person is unique.

**Effective coaches adjust to accommodate individuals.**

Adopting an inclusive philosophy to coaching will benefit both the coach and the participants.

When including participants with disabilities, try to consider all the possible options for inclusion.

Participants with a disability should be given a choice about how they are included. The participant may elect to be involved in a sport with total inclusion, for example, where an athlete with a disability trains and competes alongside athletes without disabilities (examples include a cyclist with a mild level of cerebral palsy or a track and field athlete who has a vision impairment or a mild intellectual disability).

**In some sports, some minor adjustments to rules or equipment may need to be made so that the participant with a disability can compete.**

An example would be in a shooting competition where the participant who uses a wheelchair does not need to have their feet on the ground or in swimming, where a swimmer with one hand is not required to touch the wall with two hands.

Participants with a disability might also compete in events for people with a disability at an event at which there are also separate events for participants without disabilities.

Another option is participation in disability-specific sports and activities. These are sports that are designed for people with a specific disability (such as goalball, boccia, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby).

Sometimes participants without disabilities also take part in disability-specific sports and activities. There are many options in...
There are very few disabilities or medical conditions that completely preclude participation in sport.

People with a disability take part in sport and physical activity for the same reasons as other people: to improve fitness, develop new skills, increase social contacts, and to have the chance to achieve and receive recognition.

**Tips for coaches working with participants with a disability**

- People with disabilities have the right to participate in sport. They are very capable of being involved and can tell the coach what they are able to do.
- The basic principles of coaching apply when coaching participants with a disability. Provided the coach is prepared to accept each participant as an individual, coaching participants with a disability is not a difficult task.
- The needs, strengths and weaknesses of individuals will differ. The coach should assess each person’s aspirations, needs and ability and plan a training program accordingly.
- It is not necessary to acquire extensive knowledge of the disability. The coach needs to understand how the impairment affects the participant’s performance and be able to plan and deliver a training program that best suits the participant.
- Effective communication is essential, especially for participants who have sensory or intellectual disabilities.
- Do not under-estimate ability — set realistic and challenging goals as you would for all participants.
- Medical conditions, such as diabetes, epilepsy, asthma and heart disease, should not preclude people participating in sport. Sensible precautions should be followed and the coach needs to be aware of the coaching implications of the person’s condition and what to do in case of an emergency.

**Important note**

Not all people with disabilities have medical conditions such as those mentioned above. In addition, some people without disabilities may have one of the above medical conditions. Do not restrict your medical screening to people with a disability!