

Active for Autism

Engaging people with autism in sport and physical activity: Good Practice

- Try to make your communication clear, concise and direct. People on the autism spectrum communicate in different ways and many find eye contact difficult.
- Try to reduce distractions and adopt a low arousal environment to reduce anxiety and aid concentration.
- Be mindful of sensory differences and adapt sessions when required.
- Be vigilant in checking for injuries as autistic people may carry on participating, unaware that they have sustained an injury.
- Many people on the autism spectrum are visual learners, try to accompany verbal instructions with a demonstration and visual aids.
- Don't assume that all people on the autism spectrum dislike team games. For some people on the autism spectrum team games may be daunting but this does not always stop people from participating and it does not apply to everyone.
- It is important to recognise participant's success and achievements, but it can be equally important to make sure that praise is not exaggerated or 'over the top'. Feedback should be fair and constructive – by permanently giving praise the real meaning behind it can be lost.
- Try to engage with the participant's special interest as a means of incentive and/or feedback.
- Many people on the autism spectrum may have a limited sense of danger. With this in mind, ensure that you clear boundaries for each session.
- Implement a consistent structure for each session
- People on the autism spectrum tend to 'live in the moment', confidence can be very negatively affected if an individual has a negative experience of sport or physical activity. Make sure they are enjoying 'the moment!'

These top tips offer a brief insight into what to expect from the Active for Autism training. For information about our training courses on autism and sport and details of the Active for Autism project visit:

www.autism.org.uk/active