



## ADAPTING AND MODIFYING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY – PART ONE

*Including and challenging everyone while maintaining the integrity of the activity*

### How do you adapt or modify sport?

Being inclusive is about providing a range of options to cater for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds in the most appropriate manner possible. Inclusion encompasses a broad range of options in many different settings. Sometimes this may mean modifying a sport to provide a more appropriate version for particular participants.

Modifying the rules or even the competition structure of a sport is nothing new. Most national sporting organisations in Australia provide modified versions of sports for their junior program, making the sport more inclusive, safe and fun for younger players (For example, Basketball Australia's Aussie Hoops and AFL's Auskick).

Modifying sport to include people with disability is no different. In some situations, people with disability can be included with no modifications at all, and in other situations modifications may be needed. Modifications may only be minor, such as a change in a rule or piece of equipment which is straightforward, yet may provide significant assistance to an individual. Sometimes major modifications are necessary, particularly for people with high support needs. Rather than modify the game's rules or equipment for everybody just to include one person, it may only require a change for that person and depending on the extent of the change, it can either be done on the spot or require extensive planning.

The purpose of adapting and modifying sport is to minimise or eliminate disadvantage caused by the environment in which a sport is played. This strategy also enables new rules and equipment to be introduced as players mature and their skills improve. All modifications should be continually reviewed and, if appropriate, phased out over time. However, some modifications may become accepted as part of the regular program, making a program that is suitable for all abilities, such as the modified junior sport programs.

### The TREE model

The TREE model is a practical tool designed to help you modify your activities or programs. There are four essential elements of an activity that can be modified to make it more inclusive.

*Teaching style*

*Rules*

*Equipment*

*Environments*



## Teaching style

Teaching style refers to the way the sport or activity is communicated to the participants. The way an activity is delivered can have a significant impact on how inclusive it is. Strategies you may use include:

- being aware of all the participants in your group
- ensuring participants are correctly positioned (for example, within visual range)
- using appropriate language for the group
- using visual aids and demonstrations
- using a buddy system
- using appropriate physical assistance – guide a participant's body parts through a movement
- keeping instructions short and to the point
- checking for understanding.

## Rules

Rules may be simplified or changed and then reintroduced as skill levels increase. Strategies you may use include:

- allowing for more bounces in a game such as tennis or table tennis
- allowing for multiple hits in a sport such as volleyball
- having a greater number of players on a team to reduce the amount of activity required by each player
- reducing the amount of players to allow greater freedom of movement
- regularly substituting players
- allowing substitute runners in sports such as softball and cricket or shortening the distance the hitter needs to run to be safe
- reducing or extending the time to perform actions
- allowing different point scoring systems
- varying passing styles: try bouncing, rolling or underarm toss, instead of overarm throw
- reducing competitive elements.

## Equipment

Strategies you may use include:

- using lighter bats or racquets and/or shorter handles
- using lighter, bigger and/or slower bouncing balls, or balls with bells inside
- using equipment that contrasts with the playing area – white markers on grass, fluorescent balls.

## Environments

Strategies you may use include:

- reducing the size of the court or playing area
- using a smooth or indoor surface rather than grass
- lowering net heights in sports such as volleyball or tennis
- using zones within the playing area
- minimising distractions in the surrounding area.

## Things to consider

- Changes do not have to be permanent – some may be phased out over time as skills and confidence increase.
- Try as much as possible to include all the members of your group in the game. Be conscious of keeping all participants challenged.
- Engage individuals in modifying the activities when appropriate, as they will be your best source of solutions.
- It may not be necessary to modify the game's rules or equipment for everybody just to include one person, it may only require a change for that one person.
- There are situations where including everybody all the time may not be possible. Safety considerations are always a priority for each individual and the entire group. Use your common sense.
- Always maintain the integrity of the game – do not modify a game so much that it no longer resembles the game you were playing at the outset

