

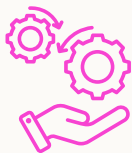
COACH COMMUNICATION & DELIVERY

1. INTRODUCTION

The coach is the biggest factor in determining whether a young person has a good sports experience. For neurodivergent participants, the way a coach communicates and adapts a session can be the difference between them feeling supported and engaged, or overwhelmed and excluded. When communication isn't clear, participants can easily feel anxious or as though they are participating in a game without knowing the rules. Adjusting your delivery is essential because it builds trust, develops movement skills, and creates a safe space where participants feel ownership over their experience and are encouraged to stay engaged in sport long-term.

2. KEY INFORMATION

Creating an inclusive environment requires shifting your coaching style to prioritise exploration, autonomy, and interaction over strict control.



Facilitate, Don't Dictate:

Set up the activity and then step back to let participants self-correct. Intervene briefly, as over-coaching can disrupt their focus and engagement.



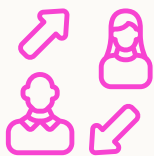
Observe More, Talk Less:

Give participants the space to try again. Watch for emotional and behavioural cues before offering feedback, using silence as an effective teaching tool.



Use Questions, Not Instructions:

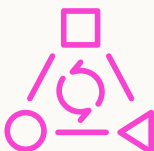
Replace direct commands with simple questions (e.g., "What did you notice when you slowed down?") to encourage reflection and build confidence.



Leverage Peer Learning:

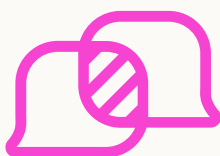
Many neurodivergent participants learn best by seeing rather than listening. Use simple peer demonstrations to reduce the cognitive load of long verbal explanations.

3. HIGH LEVEL HINTS AND TIPS



Adapt Your Delivery:

Keep verbal instructions short and clear, and pair them with hand signals, gestures, or visual cues. Maintain a calm tone and open body language.



Have Meaningful Conversations:

Build trust by asking open, curious questions about their needs over time. Ask things like, "What helps you feel comfortable?" or "How do you prefer people to explain things to you?".



Implement a '5-Minute Break':

Give everyone a stigma-free way to self-regulate. Allow participants to hold up five fingers to signal they need a 3-5 minute break in a designated quiet zone, with no questions asked.



Tweak Constraints in Real Time:

If a participant is disengaging, adjust the activity's rules, space, or time to keep them involved, rather than correcting them verbally and adding pressure.



Understand Meltdowns:

Recognise that meltdowns are neurological responses to overwhelming sensory or emotional stress, not intentional misbehaviour. Respond by staying non-judgemental, reducing demands, and giving the participant time and space to recover.

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