

PLANNING & DESIGNING A SESSION

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional coaching models often rely on fixed structures and repetitive drills, which can create pressure, induce stress, and limit engagement for neurodivergent participants. Enjoyment is the biggest driver of participation and the main reason young people keep taking part in sport. By moving away from rigid instruction and designing sessions that are flexible, playful, and game-like, coaches can create an inclusive environment where all participants are empowered to explore, adapt, and succeed in a way that matches their strengths.

2. KEY INFORMATION

A well planned, neuroinclusive session balances a predictable routine with engaging variety. Focus on interaction and decision making rather than isolated drills. A great session structure includes:

**1**

Warm-up:

Use task-led movement games (such as mirror drills or tag variations) that encourage participants to notice and respond to what is happening around them, rather than following a strict pattern.

**2**

Main activity:

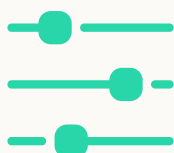
Avoid long, repetitive drills. Instead, use small-sided games or modified challenges that mirror real play so participants can explore how their movements affect the game.



Cool-down:

Finish with a simple, low demand reflective task. Ask participants to show or describe which solutions worked best for them and why they made certain choices.

3. HIGH LEVEL HINTS AND TIPS



Use Constraints to Shape, Not Control:

Instead of instructing every movement, guide learning by making three simple adjustments: change the space (make it bigger/smaller), change the numbers (add/remove players), or change the scoring rules.



Offer Choice and Autonomy:

Encourage ownership by providing meaningful choices. Give participants 2–3 different ways to achieve the same goal (e.g., scoring with a pass, dribble, or shot).



Make Information Clear and Visual:

Reduce reliance on long verbal explanations. Support understanding by using coloured markers, physical demonstrations, or simple visual cue cards.



Simplify When Needed:

If a task isn't working or participants seem overloaded, reduce the information rather than increasing your explanation, and return to a simple game.

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