



VISUAL IMPAIRMENT ICE SKATING COACHING RESOURCE



Let's Skate is an exciting project from British Ice Skating funded by Sport England, which will deliver opportunities for disabled people to get involved in ice skating – whether that's skating on the ice, volunteering, coaching or officiating.

We will be supporting rinks across the UK to deliver inclusive ice skating sessions, led by qualified coaches. British Ice Skating will showcase the impact of the Let's Skate project to celebrate our success and inspire prospective new skaters to try ice skating; with the aim of consistently developing new opportunities for everyone to be involved in the sport.

Throughout the project we will be working with rinks, coaches, officials, volunteers and skaters to gather feedback to shape future work and help us realise our potential. Overall, we will make ice skating welcoming, safe and accessible for all – with a view to offering pathways to competition, volunteering, coaching or officiating.

You can find out more about the project at iceskating.org.uk/lets-skate

Participation statistics tell us that there is still much work to be done to support disabled people in sport. The number of disabled people taking part in sport or physical activity is significantly lower across all age groups than the overall population.

Inspire and motivate disabled people to continue to play sport and take part in physical activity with the help of this advice:

- Involve disabled people in all of your sessions.
- Recognise a disabled athlete as an individual, not an impairment.
- Have a shared vision with your participants in terms of coaching goals and expectations.
- Communicate and work together to achieve their goals.
- Talk to your disabled participants about their impairment to plan effective coaching sessions and adapt practices.
- Know the sport you coach. Have a passion to develop yourself as a coach.

This resource has been put together by British Ice Skating in collaboration with British Blind Sport to support coaches in successfully coaching skaters with a visual impairment.

VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS COACHING RESOURCE:

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1 GENERAL INFORMATION ON VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Sight is classified in more than one measure. The main measures are 'visual acuity' and 'visual field'.

Visual acuity is a person's ability to see fine detail. Visual field is the boundaries of what a person can see in one instant i.e. the entire area which can be seen without moving the eyes.

There is often confusion between the terms blind, visually impaired and partially sighted.

Sight loss is on a continuum but is broken down into two main categories; severely sight impaired and sight impaired:

Severely sight impaired

This category is also known as blind:

- Under government legislation, a person who is severely sight impaired would be unable to perform a job for which eyesight is an essential element for the task.
- They will not be able to see a demonstration.
- They may become quickly disorientated during an activity.

Sight impaired

This category is also known as partially sighted:

- Partially sighted people will have some useful vision that they can use to navigate the world.
- They may not be able to see a demonstration.
- They may not be able to recognise you from a distance.

Severely sight impaired (blind) and sight impaired (partially sighted) are collectively known as visually impaired (VI) or people living with sight loss.

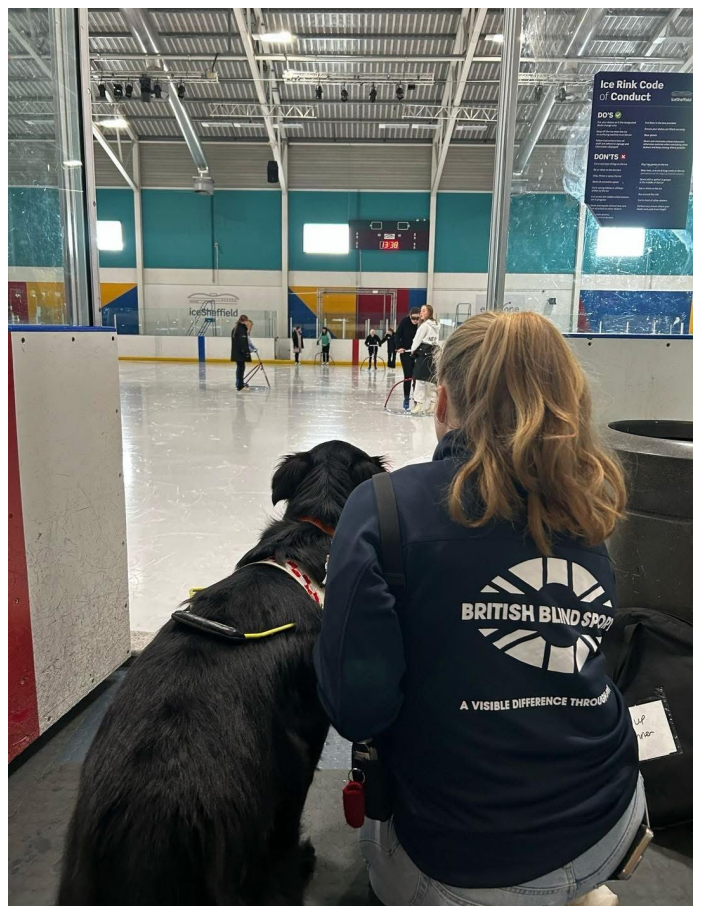


2 TOP TIPS TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH A VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Top tips for including people with a visual impairment in your coaching sessions, in association with British Blind Sport.

This resource contains a few ideas to help you ensure that they have a great first session and that you're able to meet their needs.

- As coaches, we often talk about meeting participants where they're at. This is especially important for a visually impaired participant.
- Use the person's name to gain attention.
- Use clear, accurate verbal instructions and check for understanding.
- Make sure the participant knows when you have finished and are moving away from them.
- Make sure the area you are working in is kept free of obstacles and clutter.
- Supply any written information, if necessary, in a suitable format such as audio recording, large print or Braille copy.
- Agree a method of communication (specific words or gestures) that works for you and the person with the visual impairment, and review it as necessary.
- If leading a person who is blind or partially sighted, ask their advice. Most visually impaired people prefer to be led by holding the guide's elbow while walking half a step behind; this gives information about direction.



3 COACHING SKATERS WITH A VISUAL IMPAIRMENT: PRE-SKATE PREPARATION

- Introduce yourself with your name and role. If you work with someone who has a visual impairment regularly, they may begin to recognise your voice therefore removing the need to introduce yourself as your relationship builds.
- Ask the participant questions about their impairment, this will help you work out the best coaching strategy. 'Have you acquired your visual impairment or were you born with it?' 'How much can you see?' 'How does light affect you?' This will determine if they have any useful vision and where that is so that you can coach from that space. Help you to understand if you can refer to anything they may have seen in the past for example if you say stand tall like a tree, this only works if they have previously had a visual representation of a tree.
- Make sure any written information is accessible via screen readers, add Alt text to any images describing what they are showing. Use contrasting colours on any posters and a larger clear font.
- Don't be afraid to get tactile with your coaching, Placing the participant in the position you are looking for and getting them to feel it. Ask permission and explain what you are going to do beforehand.
- Use audible cues instead of visual. If you are asking a group to come towards you to go through some teaching points, instead of guiding each participant in say come towards my voice or clap your hands steadily and ask them to follow the clap in towards you.
- Ask if the participant would like to be guided, if yes ask them how they like to be guided, this is usually either by holding/ touching your elbow or placing a hand on your shoulder. Warn them of any changes in surfaces, steps going up or down, or any hazards you are potentially guiding them around. Don't be afraid to describe things along the way and paint a picture for the participant.



4 INCLUSIVE COACHING PRACTICE

It is well understood that multiple methods can be used in coaching. The following information should set out strong fundamental practices and principles that coaches should use through varied methods of coaching.

Fun and Engaging

Coaches first must understand their passion for the sport. Having a strong drive for the sport enormously influences your energy and ability to motivate skaters. Passion is contagious. If one skater or one assistant coach comes to practice excited and fired up, that emotion and passion easily is transferred to every other member of the team.

Coaching then is a fine balancing act. Sessions must be fun but also educational. They must be inclusive, encouraging the less competent skaters, but without quashing the innate competitive instinct that everyone thrives on.

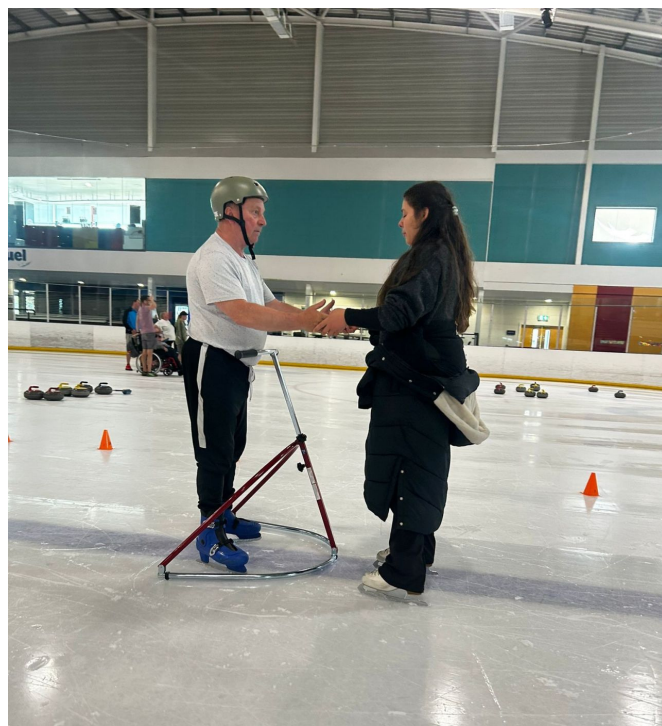
Disabled people face numerous barriers when trying to access sport - an ice skating session could provide many life-changing physical and mental benefits.

Encouraging and Supportive

Find something positive to say to every skater at every practice. This satisfies the skaters' need for attention, recognition and appreciation. Be specific with your praise — specific praise is used to reinforce the why of practice. Always attempt to find more positives than negatives while constantly praising effort.

When a skater finally masters a skill or concept don't hesitate to momentarily stop practice to recognise the achievement. Praise their effort and remind your skaters why mastery of the skill is so important.

The majority of disabled people will be trying ice skating for the very first time - support and reassure them throughout sessions to make them feel safe, comfortable and included at all times. Use the dispensation model at your discretion to encourage progress and inclusion.



5 INCLUSIVE COACHING PRACTICE: TOP TIPS

Ice Skating should be safe, inclusive and fair. Every effort must be made for participants with broadly compatible physical development in conjunction with ability and/or experience should be able to skate and enjoy their skating journey.

The safety of all participants must be the primary consideration in all participation decisions, overriding all other considerations.

You should have been made aware via the venue, of any individual within your group that has any medical conditions or impairments, if you have to adapt any of your activities, you should:

- Make sure you as the coach read & update the lesson plans and risk assessments every month or when any changes occur.
- Introduce yourself in a “clear and confident” manner.
- Ask if anyone has any prior skating ability.
- Identify learning objectives.
- Make skaters feel at ease, explain how the lesson will progress and what is involved.
- Go through sit and stand (if applicable and safe to do so).
- Go through how to get on and off the ice safely and lead your group in a line onto the ice in a controlled manner one by one.
- Start to build a rapport with the skaters, be approachable, to gain their trust and make them feel safe on the ice.
- Be patient and helpful toward the skaters who have a slower ability to learn.
- Always ask a skater/parent if it is ok touch them/hold them prior to assisting them.
- Be prepared to adapt activities for people of different abilities.



6 SKATE UK DISPENSATION MODEL

British Ice Skating Association is committed, as a service provider, to promoting Equality within Ice Skating, eliminating unfair discrimination. We believe that Equality is defined by the terms fairness, justice, inclusion and respect for diversity.

It is about making sure that everyone has an equal chance to participate in and contribute to the aspects of ice skating that interest them, and that no one is discriminated against unfairly for any reason, including – but not limited to – sex, gender, race, disability, age, religious or political belief, sexual orientation, social background, ethnic origin, language, marital or civil partnership status or pregnancy.

Sports Equality is also about recognising and acknowledging that inequalities do exist in sport, taking positive and proactive steps to overcome these inequalities, and making sure that any barriers standing in the way of people who are traditionally not involved in ice skating are removed.

The Dispensation Model, developed in collaboration with Activity Alliance and built into British Ice Skating's learn to skate program Skate UK, is a key part of our commitment to building Sports Equality. It's designed to make ice skating more accessible for people with disabilities.



**Find out more
about Skate UK:
iceskating.org.uk/skateuk**

Examples of the dispensation pathways options for learning Skate UK skills:

Exercise	Dispensation A (Reduced skill)	Dispensation B (Aided)	Dispensation C (Combined)
1. MOVING FORWARD	Move forward half distance (i.e half width of rink surface instead of full width)	Move forward aided (i.e full width of rink)	Both A & B
2. MOVING FORWARD (10 steps) & TWO-FOOT GLIDE (with dip)	Move forward 5 steps with a half dip (reduced dip movement)	Move forward 10 steps & two foot glide (with dip) aided	Both A & B
3. SIT & STAND INDEPENDENTLY	Stand up only (coach to place skater down on ice)	Sit & stand aided	Both A & B
4. STATIONARY SNOWPLOUGH STOP	Use only one foot instead of two to show an understanding of a sliding technique	Stationary snowplough holding onto barrier, skating aid etc (aided)	Both A & B
5. MOVING SNOWPLOUGH STOP	Use only one foot instead of two and reduced stopping technique and distance (as long as the skater stops)	Moving snowplough aided	Both A & B
6. MOVING FORWARD (10 steps) & TWO-FOOT GLIDE INTO A FORWARD LEMON	Move forward 5 steps with reduced lemon shape	Move forward 10 steps & two foot glide into lemon shape aided	Both A & B

CASE STUDY: VICKI SMART (MY JOURNEY)

7

I first learnt to skate in 1996-97, aged 6-7. In 18 months I passed a grand total of 3 levels in the learn to skate programme, as it was then. I'm not going to say it was due to bad coaching, but in a group that size, I was an outlier and there wasn't the time or resources to support me. I left the sport age 7 as other activities needed to take priority.

Fast forward to 2012, and having moved to a town with no ice rink in 2000, a new rink opened in Uttoxeter, a place that would soon become my second home. I knew I had to get back on the ice - despite the challenges, there was just something I loved about being on skates. I started private lessons, with the aim of at least getting back to where I left off. Then when that happened, it was "oh I'll just get to level 5". Then it was "well, I'm halfway through, I'll try and complete Skate UK".

Several coaching changes later, for various reasons, I met my current primary coach, David. He's helped me complete Skate UK, and Skate UK Star, and now we're aiming to have my Level 1 Skills passed. I never thought I'd get this far.

"6 year old me didn't think any of this was possible with my disability, so I'm immensely proud of everything I've accomplished so far."

I've achieved a lot in skating, some of it through the charity Inclusive Skating, where I was able to compete at an event in Finland and where I've won many championship medals, and some of it in British Ice Skating events. I'm learning jumps, spins, and now work on solo dance with my other coach, Sarah Carter. I've taken part in shows at both Uttoxeter and Telford rinks, attended skate camps and competed numerous times.

Physically, skating has helped my balance and coordination off the ice (although it's still not spectacular!) and mentally has boosted my confidence no end, and really helps my mental wellbeing.

I think more people with visual impairments should get involved with skating because it really does help with balance, coordination and proprioception. It's also more accessible than you might think, because so many skills can be done with the support of a balance aid or a willing coach.

It's a great way to make friends too - the adult community in particular have been so welcoming, but I skate with people of all ages, so I think this applies to younger people too.



CASE STUDY - VICKI SMART (ADVICE FOR COACHES)

8 Key things for coaches to keep in mind are that firstly, every visually impaired person is different, so it's really important to keep a dialogue going about what's working and what isn't. It's also important to remember we're putting our trust in you, and that takes time to build, so if you're met with resistance when introducing a new skill at first, again, talk to us to find out why we're apprehensive and go from there.

Bear in mind we also need to hear you clearly, as we may not always be able to see your demonstrations. That may mean turning down the music in a session, or insisting on quiet during a rehearsal when learning choreography. We need the auditory information as well. It may even be necessary to physically help us achieve the desired position or movement. It goes without saying to ask before you do this, but it's even more important when someone has a visual impairment because unexpected touch can be really frightening.

"I think if 6 year old me had met a coach who could say "I know it's hard, I deal with this too" it would've meant the world. I'd love to be that person for future generations."

Busy sessions can be scary, and we need the help of skaters around us to ensure we stay safe - that starts with you as coaches. Model the behaviour that's expected when sharing the ice with a visually impaired skater - again, ask the skater what would help them, and what makes them nervous. For example, for me, I dislike going backwards on busy sessions due to poor peripheral vision, and really appreciate a verbal heads up if someone is passing on my worse side. So model those behaviours and the other skaters will hopefully follow.

As for me, the thing I'd like to achieve in skating is to become a coach myself. I love skating and sharing that love with others makes me so happy. I want others with a visual impairment to see that it doesn't have to be a barrier to the sport.



9 MEET THE LET'S SKATE TEAM

The Let's Skate team is here to support people on their journey into ice skating – we are dedicated to making the sport more accessible for everyone. Please get in touch if you require further support or have any questions:
letsskate@iceskating.org.uk.



Finally, if you have any feedback on something you have experienced within the project, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will work together to create a better environment for all.



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