



NEURODIVERGENT LEARNERS 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 to support coaches in successfully coaching neurodivergent learners.

NEURODIVERGENT LEARNERS COACHING RESOURCE:

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project, please contact letsskate@iceskating.org.uk



1 WHAT IS NEURODIVERGENCE?



DIFFERENT TYPES OF NEURODIVERGENCE



**AUTISM OR AUTISM
SPECTRUM DISORDER
(ASD)**



**ATTENTION DEFICIT AND
HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER
(ADHD OR ADD)**



DYSLEXIA



DYSPRAXIA



**SENSORY PROCESSING
DISORDER (SPD)**

2 GENERAL INFORMATION ON NEURODIVERSITY

People who are neurodivergent may find difficulty in learning some skills to the same level or at the same speed as their peers.

The level of success will be unique to each individual and you should not make assumptions about an individual's ability.

When coaching people who are neurodivergent, remember the following:

- For any specific information, ask the participant. Sometimes, people who are neurodivergent may be unable to supply this information themselves – only then would it be appropriate to speak to a parent/carer or personal assistant.
- Treat people by their age, not by their apparent level of ability. Never assume based on appearance.
- Use simple, straightforward language, free of jargon. Use gestures and changes in the volume or tone of your voice to draw attention to what you say.
- Use demonstrations given by yourself or other participants.
- Check the person understands and is not merely copying the demonstration (eg, ask “What should you do now?” rather than “Have you understood?”).
- Give time for skills to develop and repeat them often and in a variety of ways.
- Break skills down into easily learnt steps.



3 UNDERSTANDING HOW TO SUPPORT NEURODIVERGENT LEARNERS

Neurodivergent learners are individuals whose brains function differently from the societal norm, encompassing a wide range of learning differences, including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and dyspraxia. They may experience the world and learn differently, and it's crucial to understand that there isn't a single "right" way of thinking or learning.

Supporting Neurodivergent Learners:

Inclusive teaching:

Designing courses and assessments that accommodate diverse learning styles and needs is essential.

Understanding individual needs:

Each neurodivergent learner is unique, and their needs may vary. It's important to be flexible and adaptable in your teaching approach.

Utilising various learning methods:

Offering options like visual aids, multi-sensory learning, and project-based learning can be beneficial.

Clear communication:

Ensuring that instructions are clear and explicit, providing written support alongside oral instructions can be helpful.

Creating a supportive environment:

Promoting understanding and respect for neurodiversity, and avoiding labeling or stigmatising neurodivergent individuals, is crucial.

Recognising and addressing challenges:

Neurodivergent learners may struggle with executive functioning, social communication, or emotional regulation. Providing support in these areas can help them succeed.



4 FIVE TIPS TO SUPPORT NEURODIVERGENT LEARNERS

In general, communicating with people with a disability is exactly the same as with any other person.

However, there are special considerations coaches should be aware of that will help them support people who are neurodivergent in their sessions to make them feel more comfortable and confident.

1

Speak slowly and use simple sentences. It's best to avoid complex words and sports jargon.

2

Give skaters extra time to process what you're saying. If you can, use demonstrations and visual aids to help explain things.

3

Say skaters' names first when speaking to them. This will focus their attention. But don't be patronising. Talk to them the same as any other skater the same age.

4

Give lots of praise. An achievement that seems small to you could be big for the skater.

5

Take the time to listen. Don't assume nor guess what your skaters are saying.

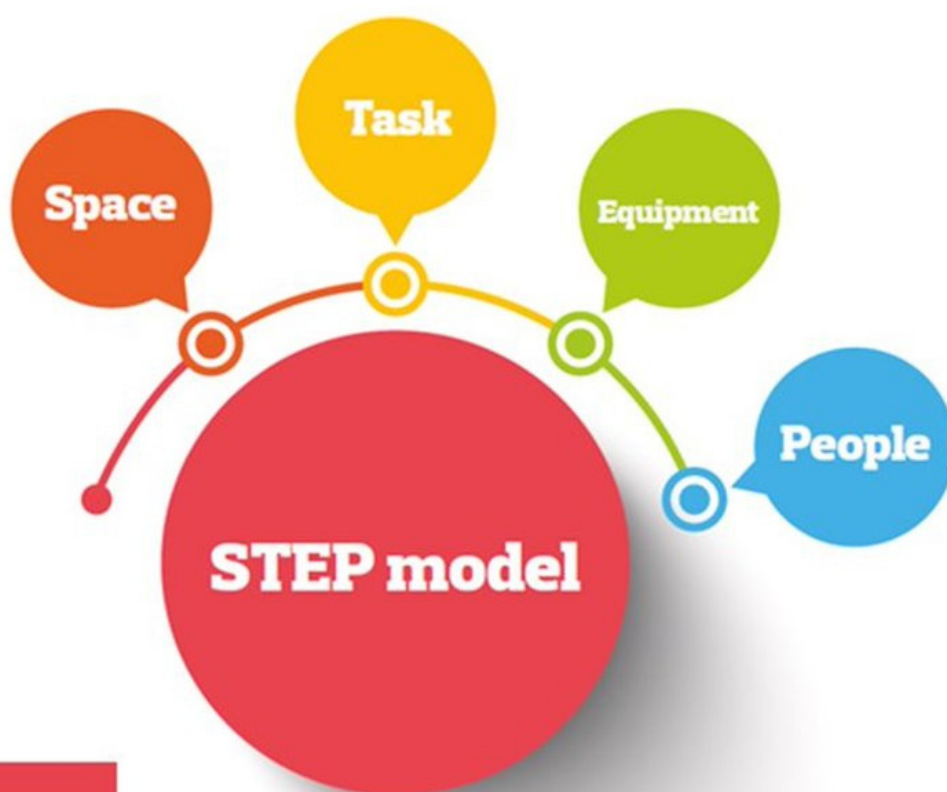
5 COACHING NEURODIVERGENT LEARNERS (STEP MODEL)

Advice on how to adapt sessions using the STEPS principle:

The STEPS principle (Space, Task, Equipment, People and Safety) provides guidance on how to make your sessions more inclusive.

Every coach should modify their areas of focus according to the skills, abilities and needs of the individuals in the group. The STEPS framework will help you do just that, with the five letters representing these explicit areas of focus.

Some adaptations and safety considerations are given below that, put into practice, will allow every person to feel included in sessions.



Space

Change the space in which the activity is taking place...
e.g. larger / smaller...
different shape?

Task

Change the type of activity taking place
e.g. rules / roles for everyone or individuals

Equipment

Change the type / size of equipment being used
e.g. smaller / larger ball...

People

Change the people who are involved
e.g. number of taggers / defenders

6 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.



7 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.



8 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. Please use this at your own discretion - 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

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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