

## Learning Disability

The following information has been written by those with a great deal of experience in this area. The information is provided as **guidance** only, allowing you to be more informed in your approach to being a more **inclusive** coach. No two people are the same; as such, please ensure your first step is always to speak to the person - understand their **abilities** and goals, and never assume.

### What is Learning Disability?

Mencap defines learning disability as a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities, which affects an individual for their whole life; for example, in carrying out household tasks, socialising or managing money.

### General Characteristics of Learning Disability

People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need support to develop new skills, understand complex information, and interact with other people.

The level of support an individual needs depends on specific factors, including the severity of their learning disability. For example, a person with a mild learning disability may only need support with simple tasks such as joining a sports club. However, someone with a severe or profound learning disability may need full-time care and support with every aspect of their life – they may also have physical disabilities.



## Learning Disability or Learning Difficulty?

Learning disability is often confused with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and some forms of autism. Mencap describes dyslexia as a learning difficulty because, unlike learning disability, it does not affect intellect.

It is important to remember that, with the right support, most people with a learning disability in the UK can lead independent lives. Sport provides invaluable life skills and social contact, as long as a positive and informed environment is available to people.

## Including People with Learning Disability in Your Coaching Sessions

- Use a range of coaching styles, including lots of visual demonstrations.
- Stay away from writing down complex terms or drawing tactical approaches on a board.
- Strive to have a predictable, consistent and organised coaching environment.
- Where relevant, provide accessible and easy-to-read information, and consider other non-verbal communication techniques.
- Demonstrate specific coaching drills one element at a time, and build up slowly.
- Give simple, clear instructions, and repeat them frequently, breaking more complex tasks into simple steps.
- If possible, pair up your participant with a supportive fellow participant who has the ability to explain concepts clearly, concisely and patiently.
- Do not single out the participant in view of the group to explain more difficult concepts. Try to include further coaching while other participants are otherwise engaged.

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**For further information and support relating to sport for people with learning disability, contact:**

Mencap Sport

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For a two-hour workshop aimed at increasing awareness and confidence of coaching disabled people in sport, visit [www.sportscoachuk.org/coach-disabled-sport](http://www.sportscoachuk.org/coach-disabled-sport)

Also, visit [www.sportscoachuk.org/inclusion-coaches](http://www.sportscoachuk.org/inclusion-coaches) for further useful information.