

People with Visual Impairments

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.

Coaching people with visual impairments can provide varying levels of challenge as every person will have varying levels of sight. Some people may see nothing; some may see outlines; some may see a small area in detail but nothing around that area; some may see best in good light; some in poor light; some may have seen in the past and have a memory of how people move; and some may never have seen and have to learn everything by description.

Communication is key when coaching visually impaired people. Talk to the participant prior to the session, to understand their personal support needs.

People with Visual Impairments May Have Associated Difficulties, Such as:

- gross motor skills not being as well developed
- a lack of motivation to explore the environment
- being unaware of unacceptable body movements and mannerisms
- difficulties with orientation.

Coaching Considerations

- People with a severe visual impairment cannot learn by imitation. As this is the usual way in which most people will learn movement from an early age, be aware of using different methods of communication.
- Be aware that some visually impaired people's sight may vary from day to day or at different times of day. It is therefore important to check with your participant prior to each session.
- To fully understand the outcomes, some participants may need to experience practices, events and routines repeatedly.
- It is very important that trust is developed quickly between the coach and participant.
- The coach should make links and connections between sessions.



Including People with Visual Impairments in Your Coaching Sessions

- Use the individual's name to get their attention.
- Allow time for touch instead of continued verbal description.
- If possible, you, as the coach, should picture the skill and describe it as accurately as possible; communication and patience are key.
- Ensure a quiet learning environment so the participant is able to interpret, locate and identify different sounds.
- Try to use tactile markers on the floor and walls, where appropriate.
- In swimming, people with visual impairments may find backstroke difficult, and may feel very uncomfortable when starting to do backstroke. Ensure the participant has complete water confidence before backstroke is attempted.
- As the coach, you should wear a different coloured top, in a colour the participant can see.
- Avoid low-hanging objects in the coaching environment and keep the floor space as free from equipment as possible.
- Prior to the session, allow time for the visually impaired participant to walk around the coaching environment, or explain to them the layout, using the clock method (ie bench at 1 o'clock).
- If guiding a visually impaired participant, hold your arm out for the person to hold, and keep your guiding arm relaxed and still. Do not grab hold of the participant yourself, unless you have their permission to do so.
- Advise the visually impaired participant that you are going to put them into a correct position/correct their stance, and how you are going to do this, prior to touching them.



- If moving alongside the participant, ensure you keep to their pace and don't try to bring them up to your pace.
- It can sometimes be difficult for a participant to recognise their success in a coaching session so provide ongoing feedback and praise, where appropriate.

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For further information and support, visit:

British Blind Sport

www.britishblindsport.org.uk

Email: info@britishblindsport.org.uk

Tel: 01926-424 247

Goalball UK

Goalball is a disability sport developed for people with visual impairments.

www.goalballuk.com

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

Also, visit www.sportscoachuk.org/inclusion-coaches for further useful information.