

ADAPTING RACQUETBALL INSTRUCTION: INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION



Racquetball is a popular recreational activity enjoyed by many people. This is a reason for promoting it among many students with disabilities. After receiving instruction and practice, they can take part in one more physical activity with family and friends.

The activity can be adapted for individuals with various skill levels. With instructional emphasis on personal skill development and a classroom environment that encourages everybody to participate to the best of their abilities, each student can benefit and inclusion can flourish.

It is in physical education at the junior/senior high school level that the foundation of sport skills are established and then applied during intramural and community recreational programs. Whether students with disabilities go on to join a disability sports program in the community or recreate with family and friends, they need the same instructional opportunities without disabilities.

Assessment

Evaluate each student's present level of racquetball skill for probability of success. Assess previous experiences, fitness level, motor functioning, attitude toward his/her disability, and willingness to participate.

Safety Considerations

1. Present activities according to the student's physical characteristics and capabilities, as well as his/her mental age.
2. Make sure everyone participating wears safety goggles and has the strap on the racquet on their wrist.
3. Deafness and hearing impairment: If there is a student with a hearing loss present, it is imperative that he/she be notified when the ball is being served.
4. Asthma: Let the student know that this is a physical sport they will need to have their inhaler or other medications close by to use when needed.
5. Visual impairment: Use a bright colored ball for students who are partially sighted. Make sure the student knows when the ball is being served.
6. Know the difference between insulin shock and diabetic coma and how to administer first aid.

Instructional Adaptations

The following ideas are designed to include students with disabilities into general physical education during instruction in racquetball. Successful participation for some students may require that the equipment be adapted to their particular needs. Requests for special or specific equipment to be purchased or constructed can be made through

the Individualized Educational Program (IEP). If special equipment is necessary, then it should be identified in the Case Conference and included on the IEP.

General adaptations can include:

1. Using kinesthetic teaching.
2. Employing the buddy system.
3. Allowing two bounces of the ball between returns for beginning students or students with limited mobility.
4. Allowing the ball to be played only off the front wall.

Specific adaptations for associated disabling conditions are listed below. The adaptations are provided in categories by disability in order to facilitate easy access to the information. However, each student with a disability is unique and capable and should not be limited within a category.

Cognitive and Sensory Disabilities

Deaf/Hearing Impairment

1. Establish basic hand communications.
2. Have a general outline of what will be done in class made in advance.
3. Speak at a normal amplitude, even speed, and always facing the student.
4. Make sure the student knows when the ball is being served.
5. Make sure the student is ready to play.

Mental Retardation

1. Present instruction slowly and clearly.
2. Use demonstrations and emphasize imitation.
3. Give brief directions and repeat them often.
4. Provide a larger racquet, like a tennis racquet.
5. Use a softer ball, a tennis ball, or a Nerf ball.

Visual Impairment

1. Use a yellow or orange ball.
2. Use a slower ball, a tennis ball, to adapt to the slower reaction time.
3. Make sure the student wears the protective eyewear.
4. Place a bell or have a ball the rings while it is in the air so the student knows where it is at all times.
5. Have a larger racquet so there is a better chance of the student hitting the ball.
6. Make sure the student is ready and aware that the ball is being served.

Affective Disabilities

Autism

1. Make sure the student wants to participate.
2. If the student is willing, have them play with a partner or play doubles.

Psychomotor and Affective Disabilities

Orthopedic Impairment

1. Students using a Wheelchair
 - a. Allow two or more bounces of the ball between returns.
 - b. Impose that the ball may only be played off the front wall.
 - c. Have the student play with a partner.
 - d. Serve with the wheelchair facing the wall at an angle.
 - e. The ball may be served with either the serving hand or the non-serving hand.
 - f. Have the racquet be strapped to the hand for additional support and stability.
 - g. Emphasize the use of the underhand stroke when playing.
2. One Arm Involvement
 - a. Allow two or more bounces of the ball between returns.
 - b. Impose that the ball may be only played off the front wall.
 - c. Have the student play with a partner.
 - d. To serve
 - i. Have the student drop the ball with the serving hand and then hit the ball on the second bounce.
 - ii. Balance the ball on the racquet before dropping the ball then serving it subsequently.
 - e. Depending on how he/she likes to hit the ball, sidearm stroke or underarm stroke, position the student in the correct place on the court.
 - f. If the student has a prosthesis, strap the racquet to it or the arm in some way.
3. Two Arm Involvement
 - a. Make a harness to strap the racquet to the student's shoulder or prosthesis.
4. One Leg Involvement
 - a. Have the student with crutches (prop) be in the back of the court so there is more time to get to the ball.
5. Two Leg Involvement
 - a. Use the adaptations that are listed for the student using a wheelchair.

Other Health Impairment

1. Asthma
 - a. Keep the student's inhaler or medication close by.
 - b. Have the student play with a partner or play doubles.
 - c. Let the ball bounce twice or more before returning it to reduce the activity level.
 - d. Play the ball off of the front wall only.

2. Cardiovascular Condition
 - a. Have the student play with a partner or play doubles.
 - b. Let the ball bounce twice or more before returning it to reduce the activity level.
 - c. Play the ball off of the front wall only.
 - d. Let the student rest when he/she feels it is needed.

3. Diabetes
 - a. Be sure that the student rests occasionally.
 - b. Make sure there is some source of sugar close by.
 - c. Make sure the student's medication is close by.

Barriers to participation in racquetball or other sports by individuals with disabilities are decreasing. More than ever, physical education teachers must find ways to adapt to their students' learning needs by reading professional journals, attending conferences and workshops, and joining professional organizations.

Resources

Dunn, J. M., & Leitschuh, C. A. (2006). *Special physical education* (8th ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Schmottlach, N., & McManama, J. L. (2006). *The physical education activities handbook* (11th ed.) San Francisco, CA: Benjamin Cummings.

Virtual Library Project. (2008). *Special considerations: Adaptations for sports and recreation* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.oandplibrary.org/alp/chap24-02.asp>

This information was developed by Robin Steinman,
Adapted Physical Activity student at Manchester College, Spring 2008.
The adaptations and teaching strategies contained in this document are only suggestions. Each student must be considered individually, and in many cases, a physician's written consent must be obtained.