

ADAPTING TABLE TENNIS INSTRUCTION: INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION



Table tennis is a lifetime sport that anybody at any age can play. It resembles the game of tennis, but can be less strenuous. Because it is less physically demanding, many individuals with disabilities are able to play. By learning the skills of table tennis, they will be able to practice this activity year round.

Table tennis is an activity that can be adapted for a variety of ability levels. With the proper instruction, everyone can be encouraged to play this game and participate to the best of their ability. Each student can benefit from learning the skills of table tennis.

It is in physical education at the junior high/middle school level that the foundation of sport skills are established and then applied during intramural and community recreation 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 as their classmates without disabilities.

Assessment

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

Safety Considerations

1. All tables should be assembled correctly to ensure safety to everyone.
2. Tables and net brackets should be checked for sharp edges and stability.
3. Activities should be situated so that students have adequate space free from obstacles and other students. The teacher should ensure that the number of tables is appropriate to the available space.
4. Have students standing away from table, while another game is going on, so that no one ends up getting hurt.
5. Present activities according to the student's physical characteristics and capabilities, as well as his/her mental age.

Instructional Adaptations

The following ideas are designed to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities into general physical education during instruction in table tennis. Successful participation for some students requires equipment which has been adapted to their particular needs. Requests for purchase or construction of equipment can be facilitated through the Individualized Education Program (IEP). If special equipment is necessary

to help a student progress in physical education, then it should be identified at the Case Conference and included on the IEP form.

General Adaptations can include:

1. Employ the buddy system.
2. Modification of game rules should not be discouraged and should be regulated to meet the needs of the group.

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. Speak at a normal amplitude, even speed, and always facing the student.
3. Have a general outline of what will be covered in class written out in advance.
4. Give adequate visual instruction with labeled cue cards that help tell the students exactly what to do.

Visual Impairment

1. Place paper on the parts of the court not being used so that players will be able to tell by the difference in the sound of the ball striking the surfaces if the ball is good or out of bounds.
2. If a sighted player is the opponent for the beginning player with limited vision, the former may be required to play the full court while the latter plays half the court.
3. The ball can be played by pushing it with a paddle so that it rolls beneath a string that is used in place of the net. Boards are attached along the sides of the table to prevent the ball from rolling off the table.
4. Use brightly colored balls and bigger paddles.
5. Grasp the paddle in each hand and hold it in front of the body ready for play. A space ball net may also be substituted for the regulation paddle.
6. The student may start the game by gently tossing the ball over the net to the opponent.

Psychomotor Disabilities

Orthopedic Impairment

1. For play by a student in a wheelchair, the table should be situated in an area

with sufficient room to accommodate the movement of the chairs and the table must be high enough to provide for knee clearance.

front of the end line if it is necessary to maintain balance.

3. The player in a wheelchair will keep the center position but will stay closer to the table. One hand is placed on the rim of the wheel to maneuver the chair into position to play the ball. Some players prefer office chairs with free rolling casters because they are more maneuverable.

One Arm Involvement

1. Players with one hand serve by grasping the ball between the extended forefinger and thumb after the grip has been taken.
2. For those students who have difficulty holding or grasping, the table tennis paddle can be strapped to the forearm.

One Leg Involvement

1. Students can either play the ball from a chair or they can use crutches to support their weight.
2. The table or playing area can be made smaller to accommodate limited mobility, so that they are able to move freely.

Two Leg Involvement

1. Make sure that the table is low enough for them to reach over it and hit the ball.
2. Position the front of the wheelchair parallel to the opponent across the table.

Other Health Impairment

Asthma

1. The table and playing area should be on a surface that is as dust free as possible.
2. Avoid cleaning the table with certain chemicals that the children could be allergic to.

Cardiovascular Condition

1. Have the student hit the ball from a chair or have a chair available for him/her to sit down if rest is needed during play.
2. Do not rush students into finishing the game.
3. Have a buddy retrieve the balls that are hit past the table a great distance.

Barriers for participation in table tennis and other sports by individuals with disabilities are decreasing. More than ever, physical education teachers must endeavor to read professional journals, attend conferences and workshops, and join professional organizations to avail themselves of information on how to teach specific sports to their

students of varying skill levels. Being an informed professional is half the battle in allowing students with disabilities to gain access to lifetime physical activities like table tennis.

Resources

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

Hodges, L. (1993). *Table tennis: Steps to success*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

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

This information was developed by Tyler Smith,
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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.