

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



Tennis is a popular recreational activity enjoyed by many people. This is a reason for promoting it among students with disabilities. After receiving instruction, practice, and acquiring the skills of tennis, 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 ability, each student can benefit and effective inclusion can be achieved.

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 level of 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. Present activities according to the student's physical characteristics and capabilities, as well as his/her mental age.
2. Visual impairment: Use bright colored equipment when students are partially sighted. Be sure to establish audio signals for beginning and ending points.
3. Orthopedic impairment: Be sure that the courts are free from obstacles and the students have appropriate equipment, adapted if necessary, to play with.

### Instructional Adaptations

The following ideas are designed to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities into general physical education during instruction in tennis. Successful participation for some students requires equipment which has been adapted to their particular needs. Requests for purchase of 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 may include:

1. Use kinesthetic teaching
2. Employ buddy system.

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 outline of what is to be covered in class written out.

### *Mental Retardation*

1. Present instruction slowly and clearly.
2. Use demonstrations and emphasize imitation.
3. Give brief instructions and repeat them.
4. Enhance successful experiences.

### *Visual Impairment*

1. Have lines that student can feel.
2. Provide beeping tennis ball.

## **Psychomotor Disabilities**

### *Orthopedic Impairment*

1. Use proper equipment like wheelchair.
2. If severely impaired have play with buddy.

### *Other Health Impairment*

#### Asthma

1. Avoid or reduce exposure to cold.
2. Make sure inhaler is present if needed.

#### Cardiovascular Condition

1. Slow game down or consider playing doubles with a specific area to cover.
2. Do not rush or push student to a high intensity.
3. Have a buddy retrieve missed balls.

Barriers to participation in 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 carrying skill levels. Being an informed professional is half the battle in allowing students with disabilities to gain access to lifetime sports like tennis.

## Resources

Darst, P. W., & Pangrazi, R. P. (2006). *Dynamic physical education for secondary school students* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Pearson Benjamin Cummings.

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

Schmottloch, N., & McManama, J. L. (2006). *The physical education activity handbook* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Pearson Benjamin Cummings.

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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.