

# ADAPTIVE SPORTS EDITION



HEALTHY CHOICES,  
HEALTHY CHILDREN





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# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THE CAL RIPKEN, SR. FOUNDATION

During his 37-year career with the Baltimore Orioles organization, Cal Ripken, Sr. taught the basics of the game and life to players big and small. After he passed away, his sons Cal and Bill recognized that not every child is lucky enough to have such a great mentor and role model. In this spirit, they and their family started the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, in 2001.

By teaching kids how to make positive choices no matter what life throws at them, the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation strives to help underserved youth fulfill their promise and become healthy, self-sufficient, and successful adults.

## ABOUT *HEALTHY CHOICES,* *HEALTHY CHILDREN*

The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation provides programs, resources, training, and support to community-based organizations across the country that directly impact the lives of at-risk youth. A primary component of this support is the *Healthy Choices, Healthy Children* (HCHC) program—a comprehensive character and life skills curriculum that provides youth development professionals and mentors with a vehicle to begin meaningful conversations with kids who need it the most.

Through discussions about choices today and the consequences to which they lead tomorrow, combined with activities demonstrating these lessons, youth learn to make productive decisions for their futures.

# INTRODUCTION

## THE RIPKEN WAY

Cal Ripken, Sr. was a player, coach, and manager in the Baltimore Orioles organization for nearly four decades. He developed great players and, more importantly, great people through his style of coaching—which we call “The Ripken Way.” No matter what you are teaching, you can use these four key tenets as your guide:

### Keep it simple

Lessons on the field and in life are best learned when presented in a simple manner. Teach the basics and keep standards high.

### Explain why

By helping kids understand the connections between everyday decisions and real life outcomes, we can help them make smarter choices for brighter futures.

### Celebrate the individual

When kids are encouraged to be themselves, respected for their opinion, and are encouraged to share it, they are more likely to have a higher self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.

### Make it fun

If kids aren't paying attention or participating, how much are they learning? Whether it's using a game to teach a concept or motivating kids with a little friendly competition, keeping kids engaged is essential.

*Want to hear Bill Ripken explain “The Ripken Way”? Go to [CRSFPortal.org](https://CRSFPortal.org) and sign up for a free account today!*

# INTRODUCTION

## KEEPING KIDS ENGAGED

Here are some tips to help you structure activities that keep kids engaged, excited, and coming back:

- Have a plan
- Keep activities structured
- Use visual tools (diagrams, cones, props, etc.)
- Provide feedback
- Encourage, encourage, encourage
- Set parameters and stick to them
- Assign groups/teams
- If you use captains, be sure to rotate them often
- Set achievable goals
- Let kids be silly – they're kids!
- Use short time increments
- Rotate activities frequently
- Let kids have input in the activities they like best
- Stay consistent and create routine
- Affirm kids when they do well
- Group kids by age and gender when possible



# NOTES



# GETTING STARTED

## ABOUT HCHC: ADAPTIVE SPORTS EDITION

*“We constantly have to adjust and readjust to the situation and the condition.” – Cal Ripken, Sr.*

*Healthy Choices, Healthy Children (HCHC)* has, and always will be, a vehicle to help young people make smart decisions on their path toward a productive adulthood. The *HCHC: Adaptive Sports Edition* is a guide for both coaches and kids to learn how to adapt and adjust to different abilities, resulting in an inclusive sports program and a richer life.

Remember the pride you felt the first time you hit a ball, scored a goal, or shot a 3-pointer? Remember the joy of celebrating with your teammates? The friendships you made and the sense of belonging you felt from being part of a team?

As a coach, you can nurture and enable *all* kids to experience tremendous joy, spirit, and a sense of accomplishment, fairness and cooperation much the same way you teach sports skills. By teaching sportsmanship, other important life skills are developed such as social and communication skills. Participating in sports as a member of a team can raise self-esteem, improve confidence levels, foster new friendships, help with overcoming fears, and lead to an overall improvement of physical and emotional well-being.

The greatest value of our sporting world is the wonderful opportunity we have as a society to learn how to treat each other, especially people with disabilities.

As a coach, you have a unique opportunity to benefit and foster that sense of belonging for *all* kids. By modifying sports and other activities, we can make it fun for everyone. By creating an inclusive environment, not only can you raise awareness of inclusivity for children with special needs, but you can break down barriers and instill in athletes a strong connection to the community as a whole.

# GETTING STARTED

## USING THIS WITH THE HCHC COACHES MANUAL

*If you are using the HCHC: Adaptive Sports Edition by itself, skip this and go directly to the next page.*

The concepts of sportsmanship, inclusion, and learning to work with other people are relevant for all youth. If your group does not include children with special needs, consider teaming up with an organization that serves people who have disabilities, and vice versa. Participating in sports together increases awareness and understanding of those with disabilities—paving the way for a more inclusive society and enriching the lives of all.

If you are using *HCHC: Adaptive Sports Edition* together with the *HCHC Coaches Manual*, follow the recommended implementation steps below.

### Recommended Implementation

1. Start by using the *HCHC Coaches Manual* to teach the lesson on “Sportsmanship.”
2. Use Lesson 1 in the *HCHC: Adaptive Sports Edition* as a bridge. If you are teaming up with a new group of kids, invite them to participate in this discussion.
3. Instead of using the activity from the Coaches Manual, have all of the kids complete the activity following Lesson 1 to come up with a Sportsmanship Code of Conduct for the entire group.
4. Continue using the lessons and activities in this edition to encourage discussion, interaction, and friendship among all of the participants.

# GETTING STARTED

## THE BASICS

This edition of HCHC is a guide to help you build an inclusive sports program for kids of all abilities. To learn how to effectively coach kids who have special needs, it helps to have a basic understanding of common disabilities and how to adjust for them.

### **Biggest Misconceptions about Working with Kids Who Have Disabilities**

Kids who have intellectual and physical disabilities will vary greatly in terms of their physical abilities and their sport skill proficiency. The degree of the disability generally does not determine their performance level.

The majority of people with an intellectual disability have a mild intellectual disability and generally are outwardly indistinguishable from their peers without an intellectual disability.

However, kids with more severe disabilities will be more challenged by the tactical aspects of competition. These kids will also experience a greater incidence of secondary impairments, such as cerebral palsy or other physical limitations affecting motor skills. Yet, given the proper coaching and sufficient practice time, most youth with intellectual disabilities can successfully compete or enjoy recreational activities alongside youth without disabilities. With modifications and the use of adaptive equipment, so can most kids with physical disabilities.

Therefore, the focus should not be on one's disability, but rather on the possibilities. We must do our very best as coaches to provide a healthy, safe, and fun environment for all of our kids. Regardless of whether the kids you coach have disabilities or not, patience, respect, adaptability, and knowledge are all essential to adapting your coaching to meet the specific needs of every participant.

# GETTING STARTED

## Appropriate Terminology: Person first!

A person has an intellectual or physical disability, rather than is suffering from, afflicted with, or a victim of intellectual or physical disabilities. In addition, referring to someone as “disabled” labels this person by their disability rather than recognizing that he or she is a person who happens to have a disability.

While terminology evolves over time, the simplest way to be respectful is to put the person first—when speaking and when coaching.

Some examples of “people first” language:

- A person with...a physical disability, muscular dystrophy
- A person who uses...a wheelchair, an interpreter, an assistive device
- A person who is...deaf, blind, autistic
- A person who has...cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis

As a coach, you are in a unique position to be able to shape the public image of people with disabilities. By putting the person first, you can convey a positive, objective view of an individual rather than a negative, insensitive label.

**COACHING TIP:** Lead by example. While kids with special needs may be used to being ignored by their peers, greet them with good eye contact and start by saying hello and talk to the person you are greeting as you would anyone else their age. People with disabilities are people first, so treat them like you would treat anyone else. Encourage others to do the same.

## Common Disabilities and Conditions

Kids with special needs may have difficulty with any of the following:

- Cognitive (thinking and learning) skills
- Communication skills
- Emotional regulation/self-control skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Physical and motor skills

# GETTING STARTED

In some conditions, individuals have symptoms that affect multiple types of skills. They may also have more than one condition or disability. What follows is a list of some common disabilities and conditions that affect youth, and some resources where you can find additional information.

**COACHING TIP:** Celebrate the individual! In all cases, the combination and severity of symptoms will vary, and thus, so will an individual's abilities. Take the time to speak with the participant, if possible, as well as family members, caregivers, and other teachers or coaches in order to understand how best to work with each individual athlete.

## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- [chadd.org](http://chadd.org)

## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- [autismspeaks.org/what-autism](http://autismspeaks.org/what-autism)
- [pathfindersforautism.org](http://pathfindersforautism.org)

## Cerebral Palsy

- [cdc.gov/ncbddd/cp](http://cdc.gov/ncbddd/cp)

## Down Syndrome

- [cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/DownSyndrome.html](http://cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/DownSyndrome.html)
- [specialolympics.org/Sections/Who\\_We\\_Are/Down\\_Syndrome.aspx](http://specialolympics.org/Sections/Who_We_Are/Down_Syndrome.aspx)

## Fragile X Syndrome

- [cdc.gov/ncbddd/fxs](http://cdc.gov/ncbddd/fxs)
- [specialolympics.org/Sections/Who\\_We\\_Are/FragileX.aspx](http://specialolympics.org/Sections/Who_We_Are/FragileX.aspx)

## Hearing Impairment

- [www.nidcd.nih.gov](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov)
- [asha.org/public](http://asha.org/public)

## Multiple Sclerosis

- [nationalmssociety.org/What-is-MS](http://nationalmssociety.org/What-is-MS)

## Muscular Dystrophy

- [cdc.gov/ncbddd/musculardystrophy](http://cdc.gov/ncbddd/musculardystrophy)

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## Physical Disabilities

- [adaptedsports.org](http://adaptedsports.org)
- [disabledsportsusa.org](http://disabledsportsusa.org)

## Speech and Language Disorders

- [www.nidcd.nih.gov](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov)
- [asha.org/public](http://asha.org/public)

## Spina Bifida

- [cdc.gov/ncbddd/spinabifida/index.html](http://cdc.gov/ncbddd/spinabifida/index.html)
- [spinabifidaassociation.org](http://spinabifidaassociation.org)

## Spinal Cord Injuries

- [spinalcord.org](http://spinalcord.org)

## Visual Impairment

- [afb.org](http://afb.org)
- [usaba.org](http://usaba.org)

## General

- [cdc.gov/ncbddd](http://cdc.gov/ncbddd)
- [parentcenterhub.org/topics/disability](http://parentcenterhub.org/topics/disability)
- [shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/teachingtools/coachtoolbox/disabilities.cfm](http://shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/teachingtools/coachtoolbox/disabilities.cfm)
- [unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf](http://unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf)

See the Resources section for more websites.



# GETTING STARTED

## GAME PLAN

Sportsmanship is all about controlling how we respond to the ups and downs in life, especially responding in a positive manner. The lessons include some key points and discussion questions to help you talk with your kids about how we can adapt and adjust to whatever comes our way—whether it’s a ground ball that skips, a medical condition, or a teammate who has different abilities.

Your first priority as a coach is making sure that all your kids can participate safely and have fun. Use the lessons and activities in this guide as a starting point, but make whatever adjustments are needed or use the components that work best for your group.

Adaptations to activities occur in four distinct areas:

- instruction
- rules
- equipment
- environment

### Coaching Kids with Special Needs

Coaching kids with special needs requires an understanding and appreciation of the differences that may exist among them. Listed here are various functional and/or behavioral characteristics, not labels, followed by strategies you can use.

*NOTE: When possible, talk to parents, providers, teachers, former coaches, etc. about a participant’s behavior and stressors, as well as strategies that have been successful in the past.*

Whenever structuring activities for kids with disabilities, it is vital to ensure that the ratio of coaches/buddies/assistants to the participants is increased so that all may participate safely in the activities.

*NOTE: Some participants may need one-on-one assistance due to their specific needs.*

# GETTING STARTED

## 1. Learning occurs at a slower rate

Before introducing a new activity, first teach and allow the kids to practice the individual skills needed to play the game. Break down skills into smaller parts. Use short, simple sentences. Allow for repetition and review, which also helps confirm that kids have understood your instruction. While some games may be played by groups of mixed abilities, it may be helpful to group together kids who have similar abilities during instruction and skill work.

## 2. Short attention span

Train for shorter amounts of time, provide repetition and review, and work one-on-one to gain a kid's full attention.

## 3. Verbal expression difficulties

Be patient! Allow kids more time to express thoughts. Use picture boards or other assistive devices if he or she is non-verbal.

## 4. Verbal interpretation difficulties

Model or demonstrate skill followed with a physical prompt/physical assistance. Keep verbal instructions to a minimum. Use key words/cues, sign language or pictures to communicate.



## 5. Behavior problems (acting out, mood swings)

Kids with special needs such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) or bipolar disorder may experience severe mood swings.



# GETTING STARTED

*Be proactive:* Set clear rules, expectations and limits. Always speak calmly. Allow more time when necessary to complete a task. Adjust expectations by reducing stressors whenever possible until symptoms improve. Reinforce and reward positive behaviors.

*If a kid acts out or gets distressed:* Set up a procedure that allows the participant to quickly and safely exit from an overwhelming situation. Identify a staff member who is available when a participant needs to de-stress prior to returning to the activity. (They can also fill in for another adult helping with the activity if the child is more comfortable with a particular person.) Or simply designate a quiet zone for use as needed.

*Get them back in the game:* Enforce rules and conditions to come back to the activity if removal was necessary. Give clear alternatives to acting out. For example, say, “I need you to” rather than “You need to” when giving choices. Avoid using “You” messages that will diminish a kid’s ability or opportunity to participate in a solution or fix the misunderstanding. “I” centered statements are much more effective. Give the participant cues or use language to redirect the participant when acting out.

## 6. **Difficulty with balance, coordination or stability, physical limitations**

Provide a safe, flat environment. Be prepared to provide physical support and/or allow additional time with one-on-one support. If a participant is able, let him or her tell you what they need assistance with. Since you may not know an individual’s ability level or the safest way to assist, it is best to ask, “What can I help with?” Utilize those skills or parts of skills that a participant can perform. Start from an individual’s current level of performance and work from there.

## 7. **Visual Impairment**

Use verbal cues, physical prompts and/or physical assistance. Utilize the sound of physical devices like beep balls, as well as guide ropes along lane lines. Provide precise and action-specific instructions (such as “1-2-3 swing” when pitching a ball) with immediate feedback.

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## 8. Hearing Impairment

Establish eye contact when addressing youth who are hearing impaired. Ask the participant how he or she would like to communicate and use signs, pictures, or sign language. Demonstrate the desired outcome.

## 9. Autism Spectrum Disorder

Minimize verbal prompts and emphasize visual communication (e.g. picture board). People with autism spectrum disorder have difficulty in processing sensory stimuli (over-arousal), so provide only one picture at a time. Reduce sensory overload like whistles or other loud things. Individualize the child's schedule with known start and known finish (predictability is important). Use clear, consistent cues and prompts. Cue transition from one activity to another.



## Adapting Activities

Before any activity, use these questions to plan:

- What rules can be incorporated into the adapted activity so that everyone can participate?
- How can we create a safe environment for all participants?
- What adaptive equipment will be incorporated into the game for all kids?

Specific suggested modifications are included with each activity, but here are some general tips:

### Rules

- Shorten the duration of games.
- Allow players in wheelchairs to carry balls on their laps while pushing their wheelchairs.

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## Environment

- Provide a safe, flat environment free from anything that might block or get caught in a wheelchair or assistive device.
- Outdoor spaces should have a fence for safety.

## Equipment

- Balls in a variety of sizes, weights, textures, and colors are helpful for those with visual impairments or who may have difficulty gripping objects.
- Beep balls are balls that make beeping sounds and allow youth with visual impairments to hear the ball approaching.
- If you have kids who are visually impaired, it may be helpful to have guide ropes taped down along lane lines or strung between two points as a guide while they are running.
- If you have kids who have difficulty with verbal expression or interpretation, it may be helpful to use picture boards or cards with illustrations to assist in communicating.
- There is a wide variety of adaptive sports equipment available, including pieces that are usable for multiple sports. A little research can open up many more possibilities!

However you modify the rules or equipment, maintaining the goal of the program or activity is vital. If an activity isn't working for your group, feel free to change the rules and get creative with your use of equipment. As much as possible, involve participants in coming up with these adjustments. The goal is to have all kids participate where they can learn, have fun, and be successful, even with different strengths and ability levels. Experiment to find out what works best with your group!

**COACHING TIP:** Familiarize yourself with all the lessons and activities before you begin using the *HCHC: Adaptive Sports Edition* with your kids. If you have not done so already, create your free account at [CRSFPortal.org](https://CRSFPortal.org) for more resources.

# NOTES

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 1: CONNECTING THE DOTS

### Key Points:

- Everyone has ups and downs in life, but these challenges do not define us. What matters is how we respond to a given situation.
- Practicing good sportsmanship means we approach people and situations in a positive manner. We treat others with respect.
- It is important that we learn to win and lose with kindness, consideration for our opponents, and humility in our words and actions.

**COACHING TIP:** Whenever you're bringing new kids together, a simple icebreaker activity can help with team building. Here's one suggestion, but you can find more icebreakers at [CRSFPortal.org/blog-tags/icebreakers](https://CRSFPortal.org/blog-tags/icebreakers)

### Icebreaker: Partner Challenge

*Gather everyone in a large circle. Establish a "go word" that will signal when everybody should start mingling. This word can be anything or you can have the kids pick one.*

*Tell the group that when they hear the "go word," they have to begin mingling around so that everyone is getting mixed up.*

*After they've mingled for a little, tell them to stop and find a partner close to them. This person is their "Handshake Partner." They have to introduce themselves and shake hands. If they want, they can come up with a special handshake.*

*Then say the "go word" and have them mingle again to find a new partner. This partner is their "Fun Dance Move Partner." After they introduce themselves, they have to come up with a fun dance move.*

*Repeat the process. Their third partner is now their "Double High Five Partner" and they have to give each other double high fives and introduce themselves.*

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

*Confirm with everyone that they know who their three partners are and tell them that when you say the “go word,” they will begin to mingle again.*

*While they’re mingling, you will shout out the different partners and the participants have to run to those partners and do the respective action that goes along with that (high five, dance, etc.)*

*Shout each partner a few times to mix them up then ask them to stop on one of them. Once they’re stopped with that partner, ask them all a question and have the partners discuss it. (They can share their favorite movie, number of brothers and sisters, etc.)*

*Repeat the process above until the players have landed on each partner and discussed something with them.*

Sportsmanship is realizing that we cannot always change a situation, but we can control our reactions to that situation. For example, our team might lose the game but instead of getting mad, we can talk about what skills we want to work on before the next game. Then we can work harder to practice those skills. While we might be upset that we lost, we can still congratulate the other team for having played well.

There are times when athletes make mistakes. It is important to note that people have good and bad days. We all do! It is our choice to either build up or tear down someone else by the way we react to their mistakes or hardships.

Respecting others means that we value our teammate’s attempts to do their best no matter the level of their ability. By our actions and our words, we can show that we value them as teammates and friends no matter what happens in the game.

We can build up our teammates by encouraging them and being good friends. Even when the person is on the other team, we can be respectful and compliment them for putting forth a good effort.

When we play sports, we want to win. But even if we don’t win, it is important that we do our best and look for something positive from the experience. We can always learn something and we can always have fun!

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 1: CONNECTING THE DOTS

**COACHING TIP:** If kids in your group have verbal expression or interpretation difficulties (or even if they don't), draw or allow the kids to draw pictures of specific actions that they consider good sportsmanship. You can also have kids act out their answers to the discussion questions. Make it fun!

### Discussion Questions:

- **How would you define and or give examples of “good sportsmanship”?**
  - *Possible answers: have a positive attitude, treat others with respect, work hard, encourage others, respect the rules of the game*
- **What are some ways we could react positively when we lose a game or we're having a hard time with something?**
  - *Possible answers: spend more time practicing, think about how much better I am at hitting than when I started, keep trying because my teammates are counting on me*
- **How can we show encouragement toward another athlete (on our team or on the other team) when things are not going well for them?**
  - *Possible answers: recognize their hard work and effort, tell them they will do better next time, remind them of their other skills*



# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 1 ACTIVITY: SPORTSMANSHIP CODE OF CONDUCT

### What you will need for this activity:

- Blank poster board
  - Markers, crayons, pencils
  - Blank paper
1. Continue the discussion on ways that we can practice good sportsmanship and be good teammates. Encourage kids to come up with concrete examples of specific behaviors and then help them summarize them into a code. For example, “I will try my best, play fair, and be supportive of others. I will cheer others. I will congratulate the other team after the game. I will be happy and have fun learning, exercising, playing, and having competition with my friends. I will celebrate when a struggling teammate is able to complete a skill well.”
  2. After the group agrees on their expectations for themselves and each other, write the Sportsmanship Code of Conduct on the poster board.
  3. If you drew pictures during the discussion, use those pictures or, if you didn’t draw anything earlier, have the kids help to illustrate the Sportsmanship Code of Conduct.
  4. Hang this poster at your facility or, if you hold activities in different spaces, bring it every time you get together.
  5. Have the team recite the code with you prior to every game.
  6. Refer to the code specifically during any competition.
  7. Have your team line up and shake hands after each game.
  8. Provide positive reinforcement at every game when players demonstrate good sportsmanship.



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**SPORTSMANSHIP &  
ADAPTIVE SPORTS**

WRAP UP

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 2: STAYING POSITIVE

### Key Points:

- We may need to play differently or work a little harder, or we may need some help from our teammates, but every person, regardless of ability, can enjoy sports.
- Having a positive attitude means focusing on all of the things we can do and things that we can do better than we did before.
- Practicing good sportsmanship also means we look for ways to have fun in everything we do!

We are all different. This is not, by itself, a good thing or a bad thing. It's just the way we are.

In some cases, those differences are very easy to see. Some of those differences are not so easy to see. This means some of us need to learn or do things in a different way than other people, but it doesn't mean we can't do them. Maybe we just need to work harder or be more creative.

When we're learning to do something new, like how to play a new game or sport, it's easy to get frustrated. It can be even more frustrating if we watch other people and see them do these things easily.

But everybody has a hard time learning something new, and you don't always get to see other people trying to do something for the first time. Because everyone is different, we might be really good at something that the other person struggles with. That's why teams are stronger than just one person. When we combine our strengths with those of our teammates, we can achieve things nobody can do by themselves.

So next time you're having a hard time, remember this and give yourself a break! Instead of comparing yourself to others, focus on what you learned that you didn't know last time and how much progress you have made. If we pay attention to our own abilities, it will be easier to keep a positive attitude.

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 2: STAYING POSITIVE

### Discussion Questions:

- **What are you good at? What are some of the things you can do?**
  - *Possible answers: really fast in my wheelchair, strong, good cheerleader, high fives and fist bumps, dancing*
- **Have many of you have ever played baseball?**
- **How many of you have ever watched baseball?**
- **What do you need to do when playing baseball?**
  - *Possible answers: hitting, catching, running around the bases, throwing*
- **What are some ways that we can use our strengths in playing baseball?**
  - *Possible answers: getting around the bases, throwing the ball, leading cheers, encouraging my teammates*
- **How can we have fun while we're learning to play baseball?**
  - *Possible answers: trying new things is fun, playing with friends is fun, we can come up with special high fives or dance moves to celebrate with our teammates*



# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 2 ACTIVITY: ADAPTED BASEBALL

### What you will need for this activity:

- A baseball venue with a flat surface, preferably made of rubber so that youth using wheelchairs, walkers, and other assistive devices can play baseball safely
- Small and larger balls made of rubber
- Both plastic and aluminum bats
- A batting tee for those who are unable to hit a pitched ball
- A beep ball for kids who are visually impaired
- Baseball gloves for participants who are able to use them to catch
- Baseball helmets
- One-to-one volunteers to act as “buddies” for the players

*NOTE: Coordinate volunteers to act as buddies for safety purposes. Some kids with special needs will hit the ball much harder than others. Players out on the field with physical limitations will need “buddy cover” so that they do not get hit by the batted ball.*

**COACHING TIP:** Keep it simple and break down the game before playing. Conduct individual skill sessions for training purposes prior to games. Allow plenty of time to teach specific skills such as throwing, catching, hitting, and rules of the game.

1. Start by fielding two teams comprised of a variety of players with various special needs. The top of the inning one team bats and the other takes the field with their buddies.
2. Allow the team batting to be pitched to by an adult coach and/or hit off of a tee.
3. Each player hits the ball and automatically is safe at first base. Their “buddy” runs with them and/or assists them to the base. There are no outs or strikeouts permitted in this game.
4. Every player bats each inning. Runners advance one base at a time.
5. The last player up each inning automatically hits a “grand slam.”

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 2 ACTIVITY: ADAPTED BASEBALL

**COACHING TIP:** Celebrate the individual! Give a high five (or a fist bump) to every player once they reach base as positive reinforcement for hitting the ball.

6. Teams switch, fielding team now bats while the hitting team takes the field.
7. Each team gets to bat twice. All games end in a tie.
8. As the game concludes, each team lines up on their respective side of the field on the first and third base lines and the line begins to move as each athlete congratulates the opposing team with a handshake or high five.
9. Each team then huddles with their coach after the game and discusses all of the positive things that occurred during the game, the good sportsmanship that was displayed, and what they found fun about playing baseball. You can also have both teams talk together so they can share positive things that players on either team did.

**COACHING TIP:** If you are working with kids without disabilities, it may be helpful to hold a separate debriefing discussion with them afterwards. Ask what they first noticed about their peers with disabilities and then whether they were able to move beyond the initial reaction. Encourage candid but respectful dialogue about differences and how learning more and getting to know people changed their impressions. Explain or help kids learn more if they have questions. Ask for examples of similarities (e.g. shared interests), strengths, and other positive qualities they discovered in their peers who have disabilities. Encourage kids to continue building diverse friendships.

*Playing indoors or want to start with a simpler game? Quickball is a fast-paced game similar to baseball that can be played indoors or out. Everyone gets to hit and, with plastic bats and foam balls, it's a fun way to learn baseball basics more quickly. Learn how to play Quickball by going to [CRSFPortal.org](https://www.crsfportal.org) and watching our Classroom training video!*

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# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 3: MAKING IT FUN FOR EVERYONE

### Key Points:

- Every one of us has different strengths and abilities. This means sometimes we need to do things differently, and that others need to do things differently.
- We can respect differences by adjusting, adapting, and working together in order to make activities fun for everyone.
- Approaching challenges with a positive attitude also means asking for help when needed—whether it's help to do something or to understand each other's differences.

### Discussion Questions:

- **Have you ever needed help and not asked for it? Why not?**
  - *Possible answers: felt embarrassed, wasn't sure who to ask, didn't know anyone, wanted to do it myself*
- **If you see someone who looks like they might need help, what can you do?**
  - *Possible answers: ask if they would like help, ask how I can help them, introduce myself and let them know I can help if they want*
- **What's an example of something you need or like to do differently?**
  - *Possible answers: I read lips when people talk to me, I have my own unique style of dancing*
- **What's an example of a time when you had trouble doing something at first and then figured out a way to do it? How did you solve the problem?**
  - *Possible answers: had trouble hitting a pitched ball so I used a tee, split up a project with a teammate so that each of us could do the parts we were good at or able to do*

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 3: MAKING IT FUN FOR EVERYONE

**COACHING TIP:** Celebrate the individual! Compliment athletes on the examples they shared, pointing out whether they showed creativity, extra effort, communication, teamwork, etc.

While we cannot control how we are born or all of what happens to us in life, we can control how we act and react.

Everyone has different strengths and abilities. This means sometimes we need to do things differently, and that others need to do things differently. However, we control what we do with what we are able to do.

We can respect differences by adjusting, adapting, and working together in order to make activities fun for everyone. And we can always be positive and encourage our teammates.

When facing a challenge, one way to react positively is to ask for help. We may need assistance to do something. Or we may need help in understanding each other's differences and what that means.

When someone asks us, we need to be willing to explain what we need, share what we are able to do, and use our abilities to help however we can!



# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 3 ACTIVITY: ADAPTED BASKETBALL, SOCCER, AND BOWLING

Choose which sport you would like to introduce, or allow the kids to choose ahead of time, since you will need time to organize equipment or arrange a venue.

**COACHING TIP:** Make it fun for everyone! To be effective, grouping of the players by the coaches is an integral step. You must get to know the ability levels of all players as you build your program, sports teams, or adapt a particular skill set, sport, or activity. You can place youth with similar ability in the same group or design groups of mixed ability. Whatever you decide, it is vital that everyone is meaningfully involved and contributes in the activity, but most importantly, that they have fun!

### BASKETBALL

#### What you will need for this activity:

- Various size balls (size, weight, texture, color)
    - o Beep ball if any kids are visually impaired
  - Adjustable basketball hoops, if available
1. Conduct individual skills sessions such as dribbling, passing, and shooting for training purposes prior to games. Some kids can compete in skills competition without playing on a team. Use of mixed versus similar ability groups is up to you. Modifications with skills should be similar to those used during a game.
  2. Depending on the ability and age of the youth, use a regulation basket or lower the basket.
  3. Shorten the court if necessary.
  4. Start with a mixed ability group for team basketball. Each team consists of five players on the floor at any given time.
  5. Explain the rules.
  6. Allow travelling and/or two-handed dribbling.
  7. Disregard three-second lane violation.
  8. Allow players in wheelchairs to hold the ball on their laps while pushing the wheelchair.

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 3 ACTIVITY: ADAPTED BASKETBALL, SOCCER, AND BOWLING

9. Reduce the time of the game. Play two halves with a running clock of 10 minutes each.
10. Encourage teamwork with passing of the ball and provide positive reinforcement throughout the competition.
11. Remind teammates to treat each other with respect and in accordance with their Sportsmanship Code of Conduct.
12. Teammates should be encouraged when they make a mistake. All players should show good sportsmanship by shaking their opponents' hands prior to and after any competition.

**COACHING TIP:** Celebrate the individual! Throughout instruction, skill sessions, or games, acknowledge the individual progress that each kid has made. Remind buddies and other volunteers to do the same.

## SOCCER

### What you will need for this activity:

- Use regulation soccer balls, brightly colored balls, softer balls, or beep balls
  - Soccer goal nets
1. Start with a mixed ability group.
  2. Build individual skills such as dribbling, passing, and kicking the soccer ball prior to playing a game.
  3. Have well-defined boundaries.
  4. Reduce the playing area.
  5. Explain the rules.
  6. Play five or six-a-side soccer instead of eleven-a-side.
  7. Kids can walk or run during the game.
  8. Allow players in wheelchairs to hold the ball on their laps while pushing the wheelchair.
  9. Reduce the time for each half of soccer.
  10. Allow off-sides and be liberal with throw-ins by not enforcing the two-feet on the ground rule.
  11. Encourage teamwork with passing of the ball and provide positive reinforcement throughout the competition.

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 3 ACTIVITY: ADAPTED BASKETBALL, SOCCER, AND BOWLING

12. Remind participants to treat each other with respect and to encourage teammates if they make a mistake.
13. All players should show good sportsmanship by shaking their opponents' hands prior to and after any competition.

**COACHING TIP:** Celebrate the individual! Compliment kids when they show good sportsmanship.

### BOWLING

#### What you will need for this activity:

- Use of ramps and bumpers
- Bowling balls in a variety of weights

*NOTE: Coordinate with the bowling alley ahead of time to ensure lanes are set up with bumpers and/or ramps.*

1. Establish teams with similar abilities. Even kids who do not need assistance and/or ramps should be paired with a partner.
2. Allow for individual training/practice so that specific skills can be addressed and developed.
3. For safety purposes, teach youth to pick up the balls with two hands when retrieving.
4. Make sure everybody knows what lane they must bowl.
5. Teach proper stance and ball/hand position.
6. Teach proper foot placement as well and delivery, whether to use a four-step versus a five-step approach. Give those needing a ramp (with or without assistance) the appropriate coaching with picking up the ball, placing the ball on the ramp, and pushing the ball down the ramp towards the pins.
7. Begin the game and use standard bowling rules for scoring.
8. Remind all players to encourage one another during the bowling competition.
9. Have all participants show good sportsmanship by shaking hands with their opponents prior to and after the competition.

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# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 4: CELEBRATING THE INDIVIDUAL

### Key Points:

- While we cannot control other people's attitudes toward people with various disabilities, we can control how we act and react.
- Sometimes people are fearful and not sure how to approach a person with a disability. We can be positive leaders by reaching out to say hello or to explain differences.
- A simple way to be respectful in any situation is to put the person first.
- By focusing on the "ability" in "disability," we can all benefit from the strengths of every community or team member.

### Discussion Questions:

- **How many of you have ever felt ignored?**
- **Have you ever noticed someone staring at you but not coming over to talk to you? What would you have preferred for them to do instead?**
  - *Possible answers: come over and said hello, just asked me if they were curious*
- **Have you ever felt nervous about going up to someone new and introducing yourself? Why? or to improve at something? How did you deal**
  - *Possible answers: shy, afraid they wouldn't like me, I waved at them and they pretended not to see me*
- **If you notice someone who is new or who is being ignored or excluded, what can you do?**
  - *Possible answers: make eye contact and say hello, go up to them and introduce yourself, invite them to hang out or play with you*
- **What if they look, speak, or act differently? How should you treat someone with a different hair color, who speaks with an accent, or has a disability?**
  - *Possible answers: be friendly, treat them the same way you would treat anyone else*

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 4: CELEBRATING THE INDIVIDUAL

- **You hear someone refer to a person with a disability as stupid, dumb, or retarded. What do you do?**
  - *Possible answers: speak up and tell them that is offensive and hurtful, tell an adult nearby*

**COACHING TIP:** Explain why we should not use the R-word (retard). Why is it so hurtful? The R-word equates intellectual disability with being stupid or dumb. Not only is this incorrect, but it is hateful and demeaning to people who have intellectual disabilities. Encourage kids to speak up if they hear someone using the R-word and to explain to others why it is hurtful. Opening lines of communication regarding someone's disability is important.

Sometimes people are afraid and not sure how to approach a person with a disability. People who are different may scare us because we don't understand or are embarrassed to discuss due to a lack of education, respect for, or understanding of those differences. Sometimes people may be scared of us because we look different or do things differently, and they just don't understand these differences.

But we can't learn anything by ignoring it or pretending differences do not exist. And other people won't learn either. While we cannot control how other people act, we can control how we respond.

So what can we do?

**We can put the person first in all situations.**

- When speaking, we can describe someone as a person with a disability or a person who uses a wheelchair.
- When meeting new people, we can look for similarities first, instead of our differences. We can treat them like we would treat anyone else.
- If someone is using hurtful words, we can speak up and explain to them, or we can tell an adult.



# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 4: CELEBRATING THE INDIVIDUAL

- When someone is being ignored or when someone is ignoring us, we can make the first move and reach out to say hello.

Remember that you can always ask for help! Nobody has all the answers, but we are all in this together. Just as teamwork allows us to do things we couldn't do by ourselves, it's important that we celebrate and be open to friendships with all kinds of people.

### Focus on the “ability” in “disability.”

Barriers exist. But when we put our energy into the things we can do—things we can control—we not only feel better about ourselves, but we can achieve great things. When we focus on the things that other people can do, we can work together and enjoy all the positive qualities that they bring to the table.

We talked a little bit about what others might see when they see us for the first time, but now it's time to share who we are through our favorite things.



# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 4 ACTIVITY: MY FAVORITE THINGS

### What you will need for this activity:

- Paper bags, one for each participant
  - Safety scissors, one for each participant
  - A wide variety of magazines
  - Markers
1. Give each kid a paper bag and a pair of scissors. Make sure everyone has their name written on the bag. Some children with special needs may need assistance from an adult for this activity.
  2. Each participant should cut pictures from the magazines that represent:
    - o What they enjoy doing
    - o Favorite foods
    - o Clothing and shoes that reflect their style
    - o Sports they enjoy
    - o Something they like about themselves (e.g. their eyes, their smile, something they have accomplished)
  3. All of these pictures should be placed in their bags, which can be decorated with their name and anything else they wish to draw to personalize their bags.
  4. Once completed, all kids will share the contents of their bags.
  5. Wrap up the activity with a brief discussion:
    - o When you first met the other people here, did you think you would have a lot in common with other people or not very much?
    - o Did your first impression of anyone change?
    - o What have you learned about your teammates that surprised you?

This activity helps everyone get to know each other a little better. It also allows for discussion regarding the similarities and/or the differences between the individuals, while showing how each person is unique. It can further be discussed that it's okay to be different and to value, accept, and appreciate the differences among the group.

# SPORTSMANSHIP & ADAPTIVE SPORTS

## LESSON 4 ACTIVITY: MY FAVORITE THINGS

### CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE!

*“If you don’t dream it, you can’t achieve it.” – Jason McElwain.* Jason, who is autistic, was the manager of his high school basketball team back in 2006. He spent hours shooting baskets with the hope of playing for his high school team one day. As a 17 year old, Jason was given the chance to come off the bench in the last four minutes of his team’s final regular season game by the coach. He put up shot after shot in those final four minutes, including six 3-pointers, and scored a total of 20 points. At the final buzzer, fans rushed the court and he was carried off to thunderous applause. Millions saw him on national television. Jason gave hope to so many children as well as giving hope to parents of children with autism.

Challenge kids to celebrate all individuals:

- Make new friends by looking for what you have in common with others.
- Be brave and reach out to say hello when you see someone sitting on the sidelines.
- Focus on abilities—our own and other people’s.
- Compliment others on their efforts or on the progress they have made.
- Celebrate the abilities of those who are different.
- Participate in sports or other activities with individuals who have disabilities and who have a variety of abilities.
- Be creative! Come up with your own ideas!

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## REINFORCING THE LESSONS

*“Perfect practice makes perfect.” – Cal Ripken, Sr.*

Creating an inclusive environment allows all kids to enjoy sports and being part of a team. Young people with intellectual and physical disabilities can grow through team sports both physically and emotionally and can build social skills through peer interaction.

That doesn't mean it's not challenging. By adjusting how we coach, and by celebrating the individual, we can help all kids reach their potential. As is helpful when coaching anyone, help your kids recognize and celebrate their individual progress. Wherever possible, encourage them to share their unique strengths and gifts.

Keep finding ways to introduce kids to peers with a variety of abilities and backgrounds. In addition to helping your kids develop interpersonal skills, disability awareness is an important process that assists in the education of all of us. We are in this together!

It is important to understand that people with disabilities notice how others perceive them in any type of situation. Disability education can bring to the surface attitudes and perceptions that can be examined, especially as we strive for an inclusive society, whether it is at school, on the playing fields, or in the work place.

As coaches, we lead by example. It is vital that we focus on “ability” in the word “disability.” It is important to note that everyone has different strengths and abilities. But we need to put aside those differences and recognize that in order to reduce barriers, we need to be positive leaders and be accepting of and respect those differences in a positive way. We gain nothing when people are sitting on the sidelines. An inclusive society celebrates diversity so that everyone is able to live a full life. It starts with you, so set the tone and make it fun!

### “THE RIPKEN WAY”

**Keep it simple**

**Explain why**

**Celebrate the individual**

**Make it fun**

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## RESOURCES

In addition to [CRSFPortal.org](https://www.crsfportal.org), here are some related resources that might be helpful in your work with youth.

### Adaptive Sports and Recreation

[adaptedsports.org](https://adaptedsports.org)

[disabledsportsusa.org](https://disabledsportsusa.org)

[usaba.org/index.php/sports/sports-adaptations](https://usaba.org/index.php/sports/sports-adaptations)

### Learn More

[cdc.gov/ncbddd](https://cdc.gov/ncbddd)

[eparent.com](https://eparent.com)

[parentcenterhub.org/topics/disability](https://parentcenterhub.org/topics/disability)

[r-word.org](https://r-word.org)

[unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf](https://unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf)

### Programs, Services & Resources

[autismspeaks.org](https://autismspeaks.org)

[asasoftball.com](https://asasoftball.com)

[bestbuddies.org](https://bestbuddies.org)

[leagueofdreams.org](https://leagueofdreams.org)

[miracleleague.org](https://miracleleague.org)

[miracleleagueofnc.org](https://miracleleagueofnc.org)

[pathfindersforautism.org](https://pathfindersforautism.org)

[specialolympics.org](https://specialolympics.org)

[unlimitedplay.org](https://unlimitedplay.org)

### Fun Games

[playworks.org/games](https://playworks.org/games)

[gameskidsplay.net](https://gameskidsplay.net)

[kidshealth.org](https://kidshealth.org)

[letsplay.com](https://letsplay.com)

[familyfun.go.com/playtime](https://familyfun.go.com/playtime)

[ripenquickball.com](https://ripenquickball.com)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation would like to acknowledge Richard Agretto and Frank Kolarek for sharing their strategies, activities, and expertise.

For 30 plus years, Richard Agretto has worked in the field of special education as a teacher, administrator, and consultant. In 2010, he helped to start and was named President of the Miracle League of Northampton County, which strives to create positive experiences for those with intellectual and physical disabilities and their families through baseball. Their complex includes an accessible baseball field built in partnership with the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation. Richard continues to serve on the board of directors for the Miracle League of Northampton County and remains a dedicated volunteer with the Northampton County Special Olympics, where he has volunteered for 35 years.

Frank Kolarek is the president and founder of League of Dreams. The mission of this Maryland-based nonprofit is to provide all individuals, regardless of physical or mental capacity, the opportunity to experience the joy, challenges, and personal growth from playing baseball and softball. Frank has a deep passion for and an extensive background in sports as an athlete, including playing for the Oakland A's organization, as a coach, as an administrator, and currently as a scout for the Baltimore Orioles. He has previously directed sports programs with the ASA/USA Softball Organization, Special Olympics, and the Navy Run, Jump 'n' Throw Program.

### Special Thanks

These materials were printed through the generous support of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.



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## CONNECT WITH US

You are on the front lines, empowering kids in your community each and every day. You're there through life's challenges, just as Cal Ripken, Sr. was for his kids and his players: teaching them how to make the best of every situation, leading by example, and encouraging them to swing for the fences.

At the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation, we see our role as supporting you in this shared mission.

**Join our training portal for free resources:**

**[CRSFPortal.org](https://CRSFPortal.org)**

**Visit our main website to learn more:**

**[RipkenFoundation.org](https://RipkenFoundation.org)**

**Join the conversation:**

[CRSFPortal.org/forum](https://CRSFPortal.org/forum)



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**The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation helps build character and teach critical life lessons to disadvantaged young people living in America's most distressed communities through baseball- and softball-themed programs.**



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