

ADAPTIVE COACHING STRATEGIES

Effective adaptive lacrosse coaches are patient, flexible, and collaborative. Here are some things to consider when working alongside athletes with disabilities:

Ask Questions and Listen

Talk to the athlete, their family, caregivers, or teachers to learn what might work best for them. They are the experts on their disability.

Be Flexible and Individualized

Understand the needs of each participant and adapt activities accordingly. Recognize that adaptations may work immediately for some, but not for others.

Coach with High Expectations

Use the minimal adaptation that is necessary to keep athletes safe and engaged. Then, try to decrease those adaptations over time.

Focus on Changing the Environment

Understand each athlete's disability, but do not be led by it. Coaching adaptive lacrosse is about changing the learning environment, rather than changing the athlete.

COACHES

- Demonstrate respect for everyone in the program.
- Create a sense of belonging for everyone in the program.
- Provide opportunities for control, mastery, and support.

TEAMMATES

- Focus on positive engagement and instruction.
- Help each other create opportunities for joy and success.
- Acknowledge and celebrate accomplishments appropriately.

HOW TO ADAPT ACTIVITIES

If you answer “no” to any of the key considerations below, try adapting the activity or the environment using the acronym STEP: Space, Task, Equipment, People.

Is the environment safe?

Are the athletes engaged?

Do the athletes experience success?

AREA	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Space	Change the space where the activity is happening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play indoors to reduce distractions, background noise, and other sensory triggers.• Play on a solid surface to accommodate wheelchair users.
Task	Change what activity is happening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have athletes scoop the ball with their hand before trying to scoop with their lacrosse stick.
Equipment	Change what is being used for the activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a smaller size stick to allow better grip, or use a goalie fiddle stick to facilitate catching.
People	Change who is involved in the activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assign teammates to help lead or demonstrate a skill.• Create balanced teams based on age and ability levels.