



ADAPTIVE LACROSSE INCLUSIVE PLAYBOOK



INTRODUCTION

This playbook is designed to support **Inclusive Lacrosse** programming for players with a wide variety of disabilities. Any athlete with or without a disability may participate with appropriate support. The goal is to provide a fun, safe, and successful lacrosse experience for all players.

Player Grouping










Players participating in Inclusive Lacrosse are often grouped together in stations by a combination of age *and* ability. This allows players to develop at their own pace and participate among teammates with similar abilities.

Field or Court Setup

Inclusive Lacrosse is often played in a station-based clinic format on natural grass, synthetic turf, or basketball court depending on the accessibility needs of the athletes. Dividing the field or court into three or four stations (depending on the available space) is a great way to keep players engaged with a variety of skills and activities.



Game Legend

								
Player	Player Team 1	Player Team 2	Cone	Goal	Hula Hoop	Ball	Run	Pass or Shoot

COACHING PRINCIPLES

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



Ask Questions and Listen

Talk to the player, 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 players, but not for others. Every player is one-of-one.



Coach with High Expectations

Use the minimal adaptation that is necessary to keep players 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 player.

The STEP tool:

Some activities may need to be adapted for safety, enjoyment, or success. Try following the acronym “S.T.E.P.” to adjust the **Space, Task, Equipment, or People** involved in an activity. For example:

- Play indoors to reduce outside noise and distractions (Space)
- Have players scoop with their hands instead of a stick (Task)
- Use a low bounce tennis ball or mini goalie stick (Equipment)
- Assign teammates to help lead or demonstrate a skill (People).

EQUIPMENT OPTIONS

Here are some equipment options to help make lacrosse more accessible. In addition to the [USA Lacrosse National Grant Program](#), there are also several [other grants](#) available for players who need more specialized equipment.



Foam Practice Lacrosse Ball (Pink or Blue)

Slightly smaller and much softer than a typical lacrosse ball. Will bounce and roll on a hard surface.



Low Bounce Tennis Ball (Orange)

Comparable size and slightly softer than a typical tennis ball with 50% less bounce.



Low Bounce Tennis Ball (Red)

Slightly larger size and much softer than a typical tennis ball with 75% less bounce.



Yarn / Fleece Ball (Multi-color)

Light, soft, and safe for most players. Will not bounce or roll on a hard surface.



USA Lacrosse Unified Stick

Slightly smaller than a typical stick (36") with a smaller diameter handle.



Mini Stick

Slightly smaller than a Unified Stick (30–32") with a smaller diameter handle.



Mini Goalie Stick

Similar size to a mini stick but with a larger head to assist with catching.



Silicone Hand Grips

A soft, flexible, and durable tool that can be used to help players grip the stick.

EQUIPMENT ADAPTATIONS

Selecting the right equipment and making adaptations often requires some trial and error. So, ask questions, stay flexible, and note any successful strategies that can be used again at future sessions.

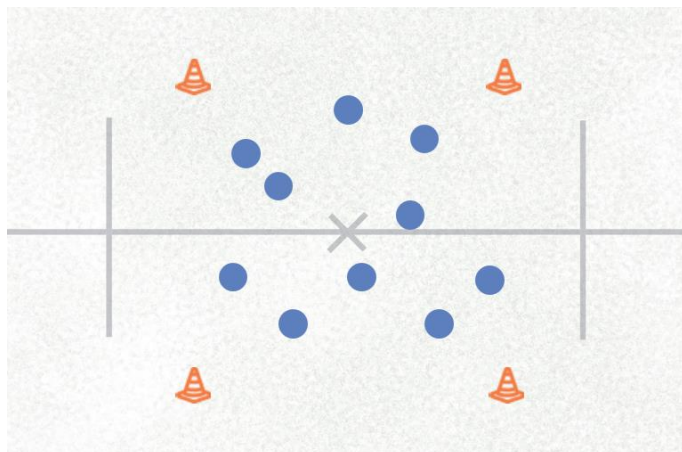
CHALLENGE	ADAPTATION
Ball Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Try using a Low Bounce Tennis Ball or Fleece Ball to keep the ball from rolling away (especially on a hard surface)→ Use a Mini Goalie Stick to assist with catching
Grip Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Experiment with a Mini Stick to help improve grip and control→ If more grip support is needed, try applying racquet grip tape or Silicone Hand Grips to the stick for more independence
Sensory Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Provide noise-canceling headphones→ Offer optional protective equipment—some athletes may feel comforted by wearing a chest protector or helmet
Hearing Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Provide visual cues using lights, flags, or hand signals→ Use Skill Cards and pictures to describe activities
Vision Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Play with a high visibility ball or audible ball→ Use bright boundary lines or cones for direction

DISABILITY-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

While every individual is unique, here are some general strategies to consider when working alongside athletes with specific types of disability:

TYPE	STRATEGY
Cognitive or Developmental Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provide a practical demonstration of each skill → Divide the playing area into stations organized by age and ability → Work in small groups to maintain attention and connection → Break down each activity into step-by-step instructions → Provide consistent structure, repetition, and review of skills → Offering noise-cancelling headphones for sensory sensitivity → Use Skill Cards or other types of visual communication
Physical or Mobility Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Focus on the skills that the player can perform → Emphasize activities that develop mobility and stability → Experiment using one-handed techniques when necessary (e.g. scooping a ball when seated in a wheelchair) → Understand that there are different ways to perform each skill
Hearing Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provide a practical demonstration of each skill → Establish eye contact when speaking → Provide visual cues using lights, flags, signs, or hand signals → Use Skill Cards and pictures to describe activities → Hire an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter to translate during instructional practices and games
Vision Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Assign teammates to help guide players through the activity → Use a high visibility ball or an audible ball → Use bright boundary lines or cones for direction → Tap the goal posts with a stick to help players locate the goal

PINNIE TAG



Notes

How to Play

Players are spread out in a large box made of cones. Each player will tuck a pinnie or flag into their waistband. When the game begins, they must try to take the pinnies from other players while moving around the box. If they succeed, give it back, and go again.

Skills

- Warm up
- Dodging
- Agility
- Stick Protection

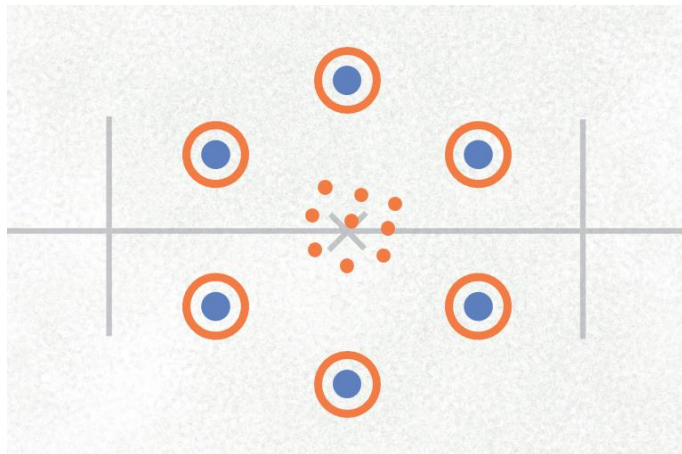
Equipment

- 1 Pinnie or flag per player

Adaptations

TYPE	EASIER	HARDER
Space	Increase the size of the playing area	Decrease the size of the playing area
Task	Remove the pinnies and change the task to a game of tag	Restrict players to only using one hand to grab the pinnie
Equipment	Encourage players to tag each other using a pool noodle	Challenge players to cradle a ball in their hand while playing
People	Add teammates to the playing area to increase engagement	Play against a coach or teammate of similar ability

SQUIRRELS AND NUTS



Notes

How to Play

Scatter the balls all over the field of play. Players start at their “nest” (hula hoops) and on the whistle, run to a ball and pick it up. Players will then run back to their “nest” and drop the ball in. Play until all balls are cleared.

Skills

→ Scooping

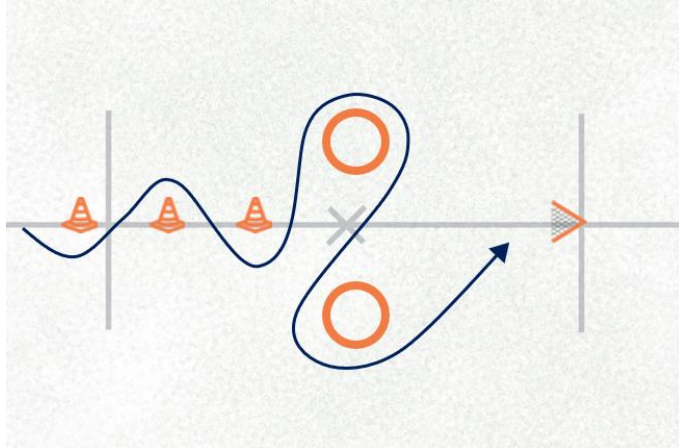
Equipment

→ Plenty of balls
→ Hula hoops

Adaptations

TYPE	EASIER	HARDER
Space	Increase the size of the playing area	Decrease the size of the playing area
Task	Encourage taking extra time, walking, and help with scooping	Turn the game into a timed competition
Equipment	Use a goal for the nest to help control balls	Use a trash barrel or bucket for the nest
People	Combine nests to form teams based on similar ability	Add a coach as a defender

THE LAXMAZING RACE



Notes

How to Play

Set up a maze or obstacle course using cones, noodles, hula hoops, etc. Players will go through the course and end with a shot on goal.

Skills

- Dodging
- Agility
- Shooting

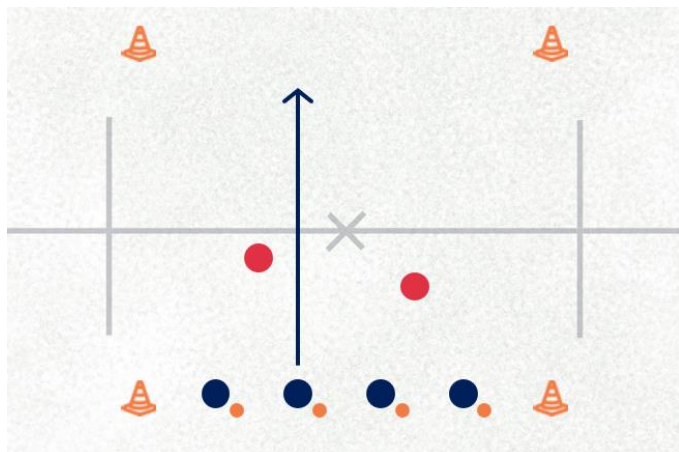
Equipment

- Plenty of balls
- Cones
- Obstacles
- Goals

Adaptations

TYPE	EASIER	HARDER
Space	Decrease the number of obstacles in the playing area	Increase the number of obstacles in the playing area
Task	Navigate the maze without a ball. Scoop and shoot at the end	Navigate the maze with a ball, cradling and dodging as needed
Equipment	Use flags or cones to form a clear path to follow	Randomize the obstacles so that players can take multiple paths
People	Encourage teammates to help players navigate the maze	Have players race to complete the maze or add a coach as a goalie

SHARKS AND MINNOWS



Notes

How to Play

Players are divided into two groups of either sharks or minnows. There are half as many sharks as there are minnows to start. On the whistle, the minnows must pass through the sharks and get to the other side. If they lose their ball, they become a shark.

Skills

- Dodging
- Agility
- Stick Protection

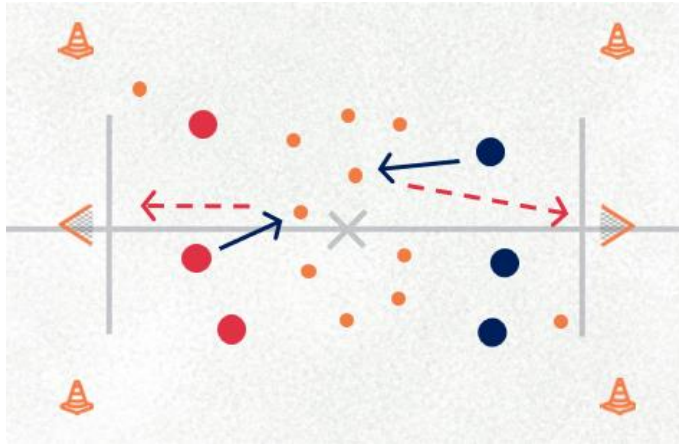
Equipment

- Plenty of balls

Adaptations

TYPE	EASIER	HARDER
Space	Increase the size of the playing area	Decrease the size of the playing area
Task	Begin with no balls. Sharks must “tag” the minnows instead	Challenge players to dodge the sharks with a ball or no ball
Equipment	Carry a dodgeball or beach ball past the sharks with no stick	Give sharks pool noodles to bother the minnows
People	Encourage teammates to help players get past the sharks	Group players by ability and form smaller groups of minnows

HUNGRY HUNGRY HIPPOS



Notes

How to Play

Scatter the balls in a large box made up of cones and place at least 2 goals on either end. When the game begins, players will run to scoop a ball and shoot into any goal. Go until all balls have been cleared.

Skills

- Scooping
- Dodging
- Shooting

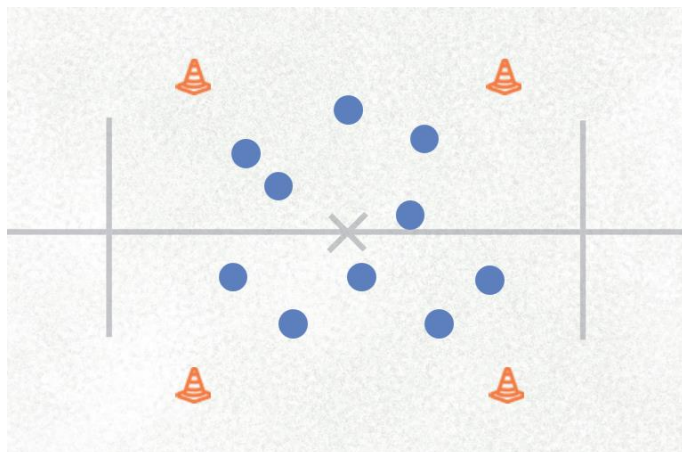
Equipment

- Plenty of balls
- Cones
- Goals

Adaptations

TYPE	EASIER	HARDER
Space	Add 2 more goals so that there are goals on all 4 sides of the box	Create teams and have players stay on their own half of the field
Task	Encourage players to shoot the balls into any goal	Specify which goal(s) the players should shoot towards
Equipment	Scatter dodgeballs, pinnies, or other items to scoop instead of balls	Scatter additional cones or other safe obstacles for players to dodge
People	Encourage teammates to help players with scooping and dodging	Have a relay race with only one player from each team going at a time

PARTNER TOSS



Notes

How to Play

Players are spread out in a large box made of cones. Each player will have their own ball and will start by tossing the ball straight up into the air underhand (with just one hand on the stick) and catching it. Progress to using two hands and, eventually, playing catch with a partner.

Skills

- Passing
- Catching

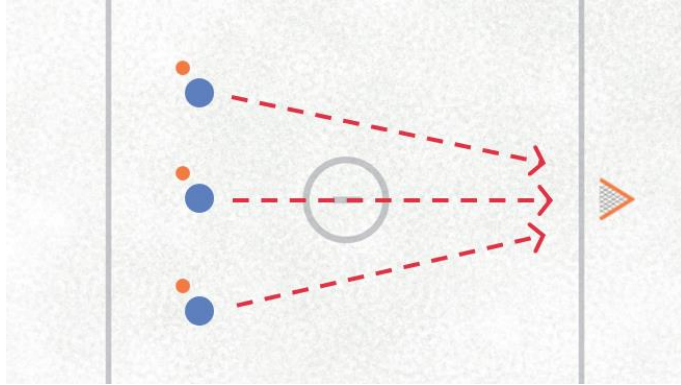
Equipment

- Plenty of balls

Adaptations

TYPE	EASIER	HARDER
Space	Increase the size of the playing area	Decrease the size of the playing area
Task	Remove the stick and have players toss the ball underhand or overhand	Put the stick in the ready position (above the collarbone) and toss it up
Equipment	Remove the stick and have players toss the ball with their bare hand	Use different sized balls to create different challenges
People	Partner players with a coach or volunteer to increase success	Add a coach or teammate as a defender and play a game of keep away

LONGEST SHOT GAME



Notes

How to Play

Have each player stand with a ball at a similar distance to a fixed target. While working on their aim, players will compete against one another to get their ball in the goal/target. If the player scores successfully, they can take a few steps back and shoot again. The longest shot wins!

Skills

- Passing
- Shooting

Equipment









- Plenty of balls
- Goals
- Targets

Adaptations

TYPE	EASIER	HARDER
Space	Increase the distance to the goal or target.	Decrease the distance to the goal or target.
Task	Try rolling the ball towards the goal rather than shooting	Play a game of HORSE, with each player selecting a different shot
Equipment	Use two goals side-by-side or another larger item as the target	Use a trash barrel or another smaller item as the target
People	Form balanced teams to allow players to compete as a group	Have a coach or teammate play goalie

SAMPLE VISUAL SCHEDULE

Consider printing out a visual schedule to help players follow the practice plan and anticipate what comes next. Here is a sample schedule for a 60-minute, station-based practice session:

	Welcome	5 min.
	Warm Up	5 min.
	Station #1	10 min.
	Station #2	10 min.
	Water Break	5 min.
	Station #3	10 min.
	Station #4	10 min.
	Wrap up	5 min.