

## How to adapt sport education & activities for SLD children?



### Lesson outline

1. The benefits of physical education
2. How to organize and implement inclusive PE or activities
3. Adapted activities

### Introduction

Sports as well as physical activities are essential for children's physical and mental development.

In this lesson we will help you to understand what are the difficulties that DYS children may encounter and how to adapt your PE lesson so it enables them to develop essential motor skills.

# 1. The benefits of PE

Physical Education presents plenty of advantages for all age groups, from self-esteem to healthy living.

## Enhance self-esteem through physical success

Remember that in every fields, all the students are unique and need their own way of learning. In this way, PE class can be either a nightmare or a fulfilling moment depending on their skills and abilities.

For these reasons, PE should be adapted to all the children's needs, so it remains inclusive and benefits to all of them.

For children who have DYS and feel less performant with academic studies, PE can be a way to emancipate themselves and gain social recognition from peers. However, some DYS children, and especially children with dyspraxia may have more difficulties than other and may require more attention or adaptation.

The critical fundamental motor skills for children that will be required in their day to day life and for any sports/ activities are as follow:

- Catch
- Vertical jump
- Kick (Football, etc.)
- Overhand thrown
- Run
- Ball bounce
- Leap- Dodge
- Forehand strike- Two-hand side-arm strike (baseball, tennis, ...)

The esteem students have about themselves can be linked to their physical skills. A student who has integrated fundamental motor skills will perceive himself as more competent, socially accepted and be very positive towards physical activity.

## 2. How to organize and implement inclusive PE or activities

Before organizing an activity, set the goals and assess the needs. All the students are different and may not have the same difficulties. Should it be ball games, dodging games or fine motor skills enhancement, make sure none of the kids is left on the side.

### Note to the teacher

If changing clothes is required, remember that getting dressed can be an issue for children with DYS, so provide enough time for them to do it. Inform parents about what clothes are needed and when.

**Tip:** Velcro shoes instead of shoes with laces is also better for them.

### 1. Explanations and rules

- When you explain the activity make sure all the children are paying attention.
- Remember that, for children with SLD, coping with two different pieces of information is a real challenge. Therefore, provide information in clear different steps
- Make sure the rules are understood by all of them and encourage them if possible, to do an immediate demonstration. The more they wait between explanations and practice, the more likely they are to forget the instructions.
- **Visual instructions:** For children with DYS it is sometimes easier to understand with printed material or drawings. Use the board, make a scheme or draw the different steps on it. You can also bring some printed documents so they can have an overview of what they are expected to complete.
- **If spatial representation is required:** use color stickers or color plots so children with DYS may have a better understanding of the path.

- **Before you start the activity:** have a talk with the children with DYS so you can fix some specific goals with them. The objective is to help him/her monitor and evaluate his/her improvement.

## 2. Create teams and encourage collaboration

PE and activities are an excellent way to enhance social skills and foster group dynamic.

However, remember that for children with DYS, socializing can somehow be an issue. They might feel shy or clumsy and be reluctant to participate to PE activities.

### Note for the teacher

Creating the groups and pairing the children yourself will reduce the discrimination (girls vs boys / tall vs small / fast vs slow or children with DYS...)

We all remember the terrible feeling of being the last kid to be chosen to join a team or being the only left option 😊 so it is always better not to let students create their own team by themselves.

- Define a space for each category and then, attribute a number or a colour or an animal to each child. They have to memorize both their number / colour or animal and the place of the meeting point.
- You can state a sentence and then create groups according to their answers. For instance: I eat chocolate for breakfast every morning: groups Yes and No.
- You can also divide the alphabet in X groups and ask children to join the group that matches the initial of their name.
- Use their date of birth to create groups: students with an odd or even date of birth will be together.
- If you need to make two teams, ask them what they prefer. Example: cat or dog team, pizza or hamburger, etc.

In order to foster all the students, you can either create well balanced group yourself, so they have the opportunity to know and play with children there are not used to play with or you can use other entertaining techniques :

- if a child with SLD - especially dyspraxic children - refuses to play or participate, you can always involve him in another mission such as:
  - act as referee
  - hold the finishing line
  - blow the whistle
  - install the material with the teacher
  - etc.

If you need to pair children, put stronger players with weaker players at times. Hence, stronger player will have more challenge and improve faster while weaker players will partner with someone who already practices accurately.

### 3. Set up goals

In the learning process it is important to set SMART goals. Try to find activities in which you know they can success and improve themselves. It is important that they remain enthusiastic and motivated. Clear objectives and goals will help them follow their progress and realize their achievements.

Describe the purpose of the lesson / game / activity and suggest some goals they can set for themselves.

Example: the lesson will be about basketball

## Basketball - 4 Lessons

Goal of the lesson	What I did well	What I can improve
Lesson 1: Catching and throwing the ball	Throwing is accurate and fast enough	Catching – be able to position so I can catch the ball easily
Lesson 2: Bouncing – scoring a basket	Bouncing was OK	Positioning on the marking of the court is an issue
Lesson 3:		
Lesson 4:		
<b>General feedback:</b>		

It is very important that each student feels involved in his/her learning process. For children with DYS it is even the more important since it can higher their self-esteem and feeling of success.

### 4. Feedback

Sports can be a good way to teach a lot of important skills needed in day to day life such as team spirit, solidarity, the sense of effort, surpassing oneself, face defeat, etc.

Even though competition is part of the game, it is important not to forget about benevolent behavior and encouragement.

When students perform an activity or a game, it is always good to have a dedicated moment for feedback and remarks.

Let them express their thoughts about what was good, what can be improved and encourage them to make constructive comments to their peers. If possible put children into pairs and get them to auto correct and auto evaluate and improve.

After this exercise, ask them to perform together.

The purpose of this exercise is to let them learn how to give feedback and how to become good coach or mentors. It also fosters solidarity and teamwork.

As a teacher or educator, you need to give constructive feedback as well and encourage their progress.

## 4. Adapted activities

Here you will find some examples of few activities and games you can implement and monitor. Remember that activities must be adapted to the group category and to the age of the children.

### A) Pre-school

For small groups: **French skipping** is an excellent game as it requires ability and memory for both songs and movements. It is very inclusive because if the game is too complicated for a child with DYS he/she can still participate by holding one end of the elastic and join the singing part.

**Hopscotch** as well as maze on the floor are proven to enhance accuracy, balance, and strategy skills. If you want to prompt children to play with each other you can have one kid blind folded and another kid guiding his/her partner. These kinds of exercises emphasize the importance of trust in friendship. At the same time it offers the possibility for children to understand and realize what it is like to have difficulties such as visually impaired or motion troubles.

It can be an opportunity to open the discussion about disability and differences.

## B) Primary school

**Introduction to ball games.** Make sure you adapt the ball to the kids so there are no security issues. You can provide a kit which contains a variety of sizes, weights and texture of balls so all the children can practice with a ball they feel comfortable with.

With balls you can implement a lot of different games focusing on specific skills such as catching, dodging, throwing, dribbling, targeting a specific point... Also, you can create paths with color cones or make teams play together or compete. The amount of possibilities with ball games are huge and will constitute an excellent initiation for traditional ball games they are likely to play later.

A game that mixes all the skills is tag with a ball and teams. Throwing the ball at kids from the other team – catching the ball prevents the kid from getting out. Dodging the ball in order not to be out. Run, hide, grasp...

## C) Secondary school

In secondary school, complex games' rules or skills are supposed to be acquired by most of the students.

However, it can still be an issue for some students with DYs. For them not to feel excluded, always break down the movements or rules into components and give demonstrations.

For students with DYS it is important to keep on encouraging them and noticing their improvement. Try to make them practice sports and activities that are less competitive or for which they have to measure their skills against their own performances such as circuit training or agility challenges.



In any sports or activities, start with a discussion and make sure positions and roles are being exchanged. It is essential for them all to be capable of being switchable. Hence, they will realize what are their strengths and weaknesses and see that they need to work on team spirit and team compatibility.

If a student with DYS doesn't feel at ease in a game or activity, try to set small goals with him/her and give him/her a good understanding of what different positions requires. It is very likely that with the global picture he/she will feel more comfortable with a specific role such as goalkeeper or runner or pillar.