

Adaptive Ally Toolkit



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Welcome to the Adaptive Ally Toolkit!

The Adaptive Ally Toolkit is created for all Athlete for Hope athletes, with the goal of education and empowerment. When starting the journey of giving back, you might know that you want to help, but can't find a clear place to start - or even how to start!

This toolkit is meant to:

- Give a better understanding of the landscape of disability-focused organizations.
- Inspire and empower you with a few ways to think about making your day-to-day more accessible and inclusive.
- Start your journey to be the best ally to people with disabilities, both in and outside of the game.

While this toolkit isn't all encompassing, it is a starting point. At AFH, we will continue to support your education as you move through the causeway - this is just the beginning of something great.

Remember - however you get there, it's the journey that matters. Let's make sure we lift up others on our journey, too.

With gratitude and courage,
Athletes for Hope

So, what's a disability?

A **disability** is defined as any condition that impacts the body or the mind. It is generally defined as having three components: impairment, activity limitation, and/or participation restriction. A disability could impact social interactions, physical movement, mental health, communication, or any other part of daily life. Some disabilities are genetic, and some are acquired. In many cultures, a disability is stigmatized. Some disabilities are visible to the everyday observer, and some are not. Ultimately, there is no single definition of what a disability looks, sounds like, or appears to the outside observer.

In the last 50 years, significant progress has been made in America to protect the rights of people with disabilities. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed, which prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities in schools, workplaces, transportation, and all public or private places. Since then, advocates have continued to tirelessly work for increased accessibility and inclusion in daily life. In the United States, 1 in 4 adults have a disability, which is approximately 61 million people.



Sports Opportunities

The Spectrum

For athletes with disabilities, there are many options for sports - whether for recreation, or competition.

Adaptive Sports

Adaptive sports refers to a setting where changes are made to the rules or equipment of the sport to accommodate athletes with disabilities. Adaptive sports are often held separately from mainstream or typical sports events. The focus is generally on the disabled athlete.

Miracle League is an example of an adaptive sports setting; participants can use adaptive equipment, and sometimes assistance from another person, to play ball! Another example of adaptive sports are the Special Olympics, which were created to empower people with intellectual disabilities.

Inclusive Sports

Inclusive sports refers to a setting where disabled athletes compete along able-bodied athletes. In an inclusive sports setting, there may be adaptations or modifications made so that disabled participants can participate with the most independence and success possible.

For example, in a sport like soccer, football, or baseball, the ball might be brightly colored so that it is more visible to visually impaired participants.

Least Restrictive Environment

Least restrictive environment (LRE) is a concept that emphasizes the need to create an environment that has the minimum adaptations created.

This is so that the disabled participant can practice the most independence and self-determination possible, and develop the maximum skills needed.

Person-First Language

Person-first language refers to the concept of referring to a person before their disability, with the goal of focusing on the individual rather than the diagnosis or label. An example of this would be to say “a boy with Down Syndrome,” rather than a “Down Syndrome boy.”

However, some people prefer to utilize their diagnosis. For example, many Autistic advocates prefer that a person says “an Autistic person” rather than “a person with Autism.” In this toolkit, you’ll see both language choices used.



Remember, if you’re ever unsure, it’s okay to ask! Each person is different, and might have different preferences. If you don’t know what to say, you can ask “*Do you prefer that I use person-first language?*”

Accessibility & Sports

Wherever you go next, let's learn about how we got here.

1904

The Olympics had its first disabled competitor. Gymnast George Eyser, impacted by a physical disability, became a gold medalist.



1948

A doctor, Dr. Guttman, at a rehabilitation hospital in London organized the first competition for wheelchair athletes. Participants were largely injured service members from the war. They called the games "The Stoke Mandeville Games," named after the hospital.

1955

Longtime institutions for people with disabilities and mental illnesses begin to be shut down after reports of poor and abusive treatment. People with disabilities begin to be able to live in community settings.

1960

The Stoke Mandeville Games grew, and by 1960, there were 400 athletes participating! They were then renamed the Paralympic Games.

1962

Eunice Kennedy Shriver starts a summer camp for young people with disabilities.

Many of these young people had previously lived in institutions, and the goal was to have participation in community sports and recreation.



1968

The first Special Olympics Games were held in Chicago.

1976

The first winter Paralympics were held in Sweden. This year was also the first time that the Paralympics were broadcast in their entirety, like the Olympic Games.

1996

Loretta Clariborne, a multi-sport Special Olympian, is honored with the Arthur Ashe Award at the ESPYs. She is the first woman, and first person with a disability to receive it.



2012

Swimmer and Paralympian Ellie Simmonds broke the world record for fastest freestyle, and won gold at the London 2012 Olympics. She broke this record again at the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympics.



2020

Chris Nikic, an American amateur triathlete, becomes the first person with Down Syndrome to finish the Ironman Challenge - and is a recipient of the Jimmy V Award.



2022

For the first time, deaf and Hard of Hearing American Sign Language performers sign for the Super Bowl Halftime Show.

Adaptive Sports Resources

There are so many incredible ways to adapt sports to include people of all abilities. There are specific pieces of equipment that can be used, or you can create your own adaptations from everyday materials. Here are some examples of adaptive equipment you might see:



If you ever are unsure about what a person's needs are, you can ask them! They know their needs best, and can even share what past experiences have been positive or negative.

For ice-based sports, using a **bar walker** can allow a person with a physical disability to have more steadiness to skate.

A bar walker can be adjusted so that people of different heights can use it. It also has a bar on the back, so that the user can rest by leaning or sitting on it.



If a person has fine motor skill deficiencies, holding onto a golf club, bat, or hockey stick might be challenging to do over the course of a game or meet. A **gripping aid** can give extra support to a person to hold on effectively.

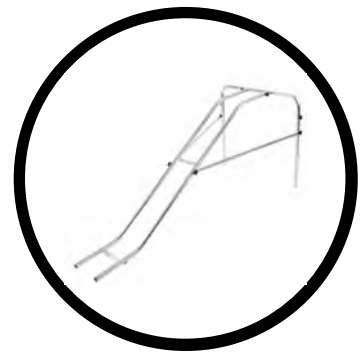


For people with sensory processing disabilities, like Autism, settings like an arena or a recreation center can be overwhelming and overstimulating. A sensory processing disorder can mean a hyper-sensitivity to sounds, lights, or environmental changes.

A pair of **headphones**, especially noise-canceling ones, can make it easier to be in larger spaces. Offering or making sure that headphone or disposable ear plugs are available can make a huge difference!

For a person with a disability or limited mobility, bending over or quick movement can be challenging.

This **bowling ramp** allows the user to aim where their ball should go, put the bowling ball at the top, and push it down with as much force as they feel comfortable. It can also be adjusted for people of differing heights.



By creating a treadmill that is wider, an athlete who uses a wheelchair is able to exercise and train. These **adaptive treadmills** also have a ramp so that the athlete can be elevated easily onto it.



While this might initially look like a typical wheelchair, on second look you can see some modifications that allows the user to have maximum mobility and range of motion.

This **sports-cycle** can be used for basketball, tennis, or any court-based sport. The wheels are at an angle, so that the person can lean to one side without risk of tipping. There is also a bumper on the front so that the user's legs are better protected.







A great place to start is to look at the sports facilities that you use. Are there ramps or elevators so that all places are accessible? Is there a way for a wheelchair user to reach the same amenities? Is there any equipment already available?







Disability-Focused Organizations

Now that you're thinking about next steps of action, here are a few of the many amazing organizations that provide time, support, advocacy, and resources to disabled individuals.

| Name | Disability-Focused Programming | Website |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Adaptive Sports Foundation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive sports lessons (ski, skateboarding, sledding). • Adaptive lesson summer camps. |  |
| Best Buddies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment/job preparation and support. • Teaching independent living skills. • Mentorship. |  |
| Easter Seals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility (transportation, resources). • Recreation (camping, day programs). |  |
| Miracle League | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miracle League Games / Angels on the Outfield |  |

Disability-Focused Organizations

| Name | Disability-Focused Programming | Website |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Move United | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive sports programming, games, tournaments. • Adaptive sports equipment. • Disabled veterans programming. |  |
| Respect Ability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for: respectful representation in media, disability-focused policy change, accessible spaces in faith settings. • Job apprenticeship/employment resources |  |
| Tim Tebow Foundation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Night to Shine" Dance. • Timmy's Playroom. • International Special Needs Coalitions. • "Shine On". |  |
| Special Olympics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year-round training • Local games, programming • National games |  |

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Get Involved. Be Inspired.

Athletes for Hope reaches millions of people through its network of athletes, charities, foundations, leagues, teams, and many others. Join the movement.

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