Embracing Neurodiversity:

Create a space where every brain belongs

Small changes help more people feel welcome, included, and able to participate.
If people feel safe, understood, and included, they are far more likely to take part and stay involved.

This quick guide provides simple, practical suggestions to help people feel included, safe, and able to participate in any community activity (sport, recreation, volunteering, events, groups). Use this guide to match these suggestions against your own context and add any extra ideas.

Pre- activity inclusion audit suggestions:

Space and equipment:

- Where are there loud whistles, shouting, or chaotic spaces?
- Is there a quiet space or break option if someone feels overwhelmed?
- Is it safe to allow sunglasses, hats, earplugs or other sensory items if needed? Can these items be used at some agreed times if not possible to use all times?

Communication:

- Can you keep written materials simple and visual?
- Can you use bullet points, images, or short videos?
- Can you offer help filling out forms if needed?

Engagement:

- Make it easy for people to join?
- Is there a way to use a buddy or support system for new people? Can you offer to pair new participants with someone welcoming?
- Ask “what helps you take part?”
- Be open to suggestions of small adjustments that make a big difference

Other:

_____

_____

_____

_____

During activity inclusion suggestions:

1. Keep instructions simple
- Use short, clear steps
- Show (demonstrate) as well as tell where possible
- Repeat if needed

2. Create a predictable structure
- Follow a consistent format where possible
- Explain the plan at the start
- Give warnings before changing activities "We've got 2 more minutes, then we'll move on."

3. Reduce overwhelm
- Be mindful of noise, crowds, and busy environments
- Offer a quiet break space if possible
- Allow people to step out and return when ready "Take a break if you need, join back in anytime."

4. Offer flexible ways to participate
- Provide different roles or levels of involvement
- Allow people to observe before joining in
- Let people opt in and out without pressure

5. Support learning and coordination
- Break tasks into small steps
- Allow extra time to learn new skills
- Focus on effort and progress, not perfection

6. Make communication accessible
- Use simple, clear language
- Support with visuals, examples, or demonstrations
- Keep written information short and easy to follow

7. Communicate respectfully
- Be clear and direct
- Avoid sarcasm or unclear instructions
- Give feedback privately when needed

8. Respect personal space and boundaries

- Don’t assume physical contact is okay
- Ask before helping or demonstrating physically

9. Support different energy and focus levels

- Avoid long waiting times where possible, set up smaller group rotations
- Be okay with movement, fidgeting, or breaks
- Offer a mix of active and quieter roles where possible

10. Create a safe and supportive environment

- Be calm, consistent, and fair
- Make it clear that mistakes are okay

Other:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Post- activity inclusion suggestions:

Actively seek feedback via short direct questions

For example:

What did you enjoy about…?
What did you not enjoy about…?
Did you feel welcome, included, and supported?
Were things explained clearly and easy to follow?
Did you feel comfortable participating in a way that suited you?
What would have made this experience better for you?

Offer different feedback formats:

- Quick survey (online or paper) with simple checkboxes or scales
  e.g. "Strongly agree → strongly disagree" or "Easy → hard"
- Anonymous feedback box
- Informal chats
- Gather feedback from parents / carers / support people:
  For example:
  Did ..... feel comfortable attending?
  Did you feel the environment was inclusive and supportive?
  What would help ..... to participate more easily?

Key Message

Inclusion doesn't need to be complicated:

- Be clear
- Be flexible
- Be supportive
- Be curious about individual experiences

