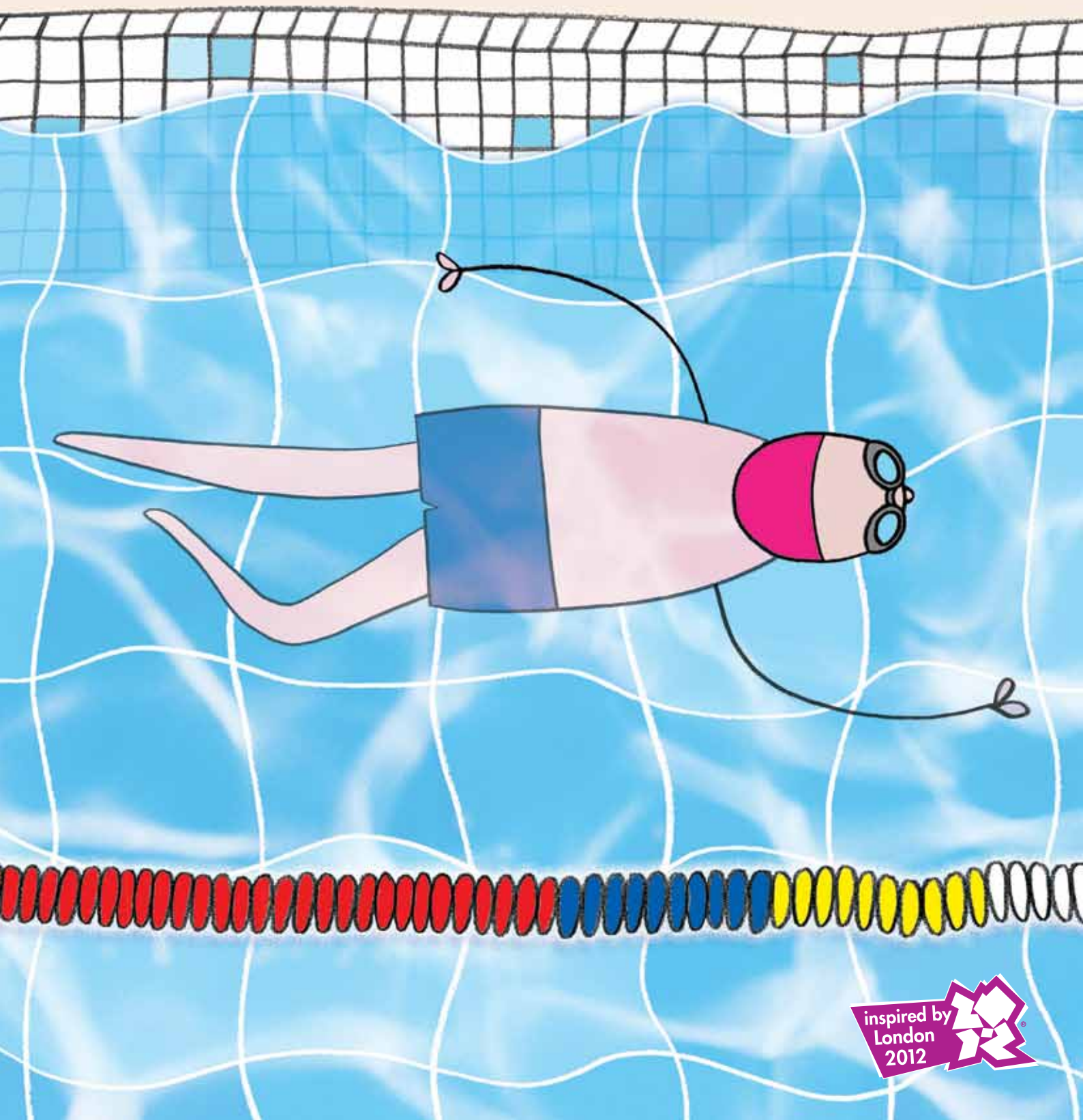


Disability Rights UK

Doing Sport Differently

A guide to exercise and fitness for people living with disability or health conditions



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How to use this guide

This guide is aimed at people with lived experience of disability or health conditions and at those advising or working with us. A question and answer approach enables different people with different interests and objectives to dip into this guide in different ways. Doing Sport Differently will show you how far access to sport, exercise and fitness has improved and how to enjoy it.

Where should I start?

- » If you're not sure you can do sport or take exercise for whatever reason, go to **section one**.
- » If you want to do sport or take more exercise but don't know what you want to do, go to **section two**.
- » If you want to get involved in refereeing, coaching or activities off the pitch on either a paid or voluntary basis, go to **section three**.
- » If you want to find out more about watching sport, go to **section four**.
- » If you're looking for websites and organisations to help with any of the above, go to **section five**.

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» A note on terminology

Doing Sport Differently is for everyone with lived experience of disability or health conditions. In the everyday language of Disability Rights UK, we don't make big distinctions between different types of conditions. However, Paralympic sport does categorise and classify athletes according to their impairment and its impact so the language some organisations use may not be the same as ours, for example 'intellectual disability', which we would normally call a learning difficulty or learning disability. If you're not sure whether something we talk about here is for you, just ask the organisation concerned.

Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE

You may find this hard to believe but I know exactly what it's like to find exercise daunting – to not know what to do or how best to do it.

I love sport. Paralympics, world championships, and world records were my life for many years. But after my retirement in 2007 I didn't do anything for a year or so and when I wanted to get active again, I wasn't quite sure how to go about it.

I was no longer a professional athlete and needed a different sort of exercise regime that fitted in with my new life, interests and levels of fitness. The ideas and suggestions in this guide and the stories of others' experiences helped me to think about what I wanted. Just as you will, I found the right way for me.

Sport and sports facilities are far more accessible to all than they were when I started racing in the 1980s. Doing Sport Differently is the first-ever guide to sport written by disabled people for disabled people designed to enable us to take full advantage of this.

There is no reason why we shouldn't get as much out of sport and exercise as non-disabled people. I am living proof of that. Whether you're a beginner or want to compete internationally, whether you're a parent of a sports player or whether you just want to watch sport, Doing Sport Differently will help you to do it.

Give it a read – especially if you don't think exercise is for you. It may change your life.



Tanni won 16 Paralympic medals (including 11 golds), 16 world championships medals (five gold), held over 30 world records and won the London Marathon six times. She now sits in the House of Lords as Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE.



Peter Ayliffe,
President and CEO, Visa Europe

Visa Europe is a payment technology company that makes money flow more easily, quickly and securely between consumers, retailers, businesses and governments. There are 115 million Visa debit, credit and commercial cards in the UK. £1 in every £3 spent in the UK is now spent on a Visa card. Across Europe, there are 445 million Visa cards and 14% of consumer spending at point of sale in Europe is with a Visa card, and almost 80% of that is on Visa debit cards. A not-for-profit membership association, Visa Europe is owned and operated by more than 3,700 European members. Visa has been a global Olympic partner since 1986 and a global Paralympic partner since 2002.

When London won the right to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the bid team promised to create a sustainable legacy for the UK. In particular, it explained that the UK population at large would be inspired by sport, would be motivated to take part in sport – and would have new opportunities to engage in sport.

As a worldwide sponsor of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, Visa is helping to bring this legacy to life. It is important to us that it is extended as far as possible – and, given our close, long term association with the Paralympic movement, we want to be certain that disabled people are part of this.

It was therefore entirely logical and very important for us to support Doing Sport Differently. We would like to congratulate Disability Rights UK and Tanni Grey-Thompson for spearheading the initiative and bringing it to life. This guide should act as an invaluable source of reference, encouragement and advice – helping many more disabled people to seek out sporting opportunities and motivating them to participate.

The principles of inclusivity and equality matter deeply to Visa. This is the reason why we became the first global sponsor of the Paralympic Games back in 2002; it is why we have supported many other disability rights initiatives in the meantime; and it is why we work closely with many Paralympic athletes in our various community support and outreach activities.

In summary, London 2012 is about much more than a few weeks of exhilarating competition. It is about the longer term impact of the Games. I am proud that Visa is able to be a part of this legacy – through our financial contribution, our technical expertise, the scale and reach of our marketing support, and our commitment to the communities in which we operate.

1: Why do sport?

The benefits of exercise

Doing Sport Differently is not just for the next Tanni Grey-Thompson. It's not even for the few who have ever played competitive sport at any level. It's for everyone. When we talk about sport, exercise and physical activity, we're talking about things that everyone can do – disabled and non-disabled alike. It needn't be competitive, it needn't be hard work, it just needs to be fun.

If you want to be more physically active but don't know how, this is the guide for you. (It's also for you if all you want to do is watch sport – see chapter 4.) Even if you think you hate sport and don't believe that taking more exercise is beneficial or even possible for you, read on – you may be surprised.

With London hosting the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the idea of sport for all has never been higher on the agenda. For people who want to get active, there have never been more opportunities than now. You don't even need to leave the house.

I can't get fit and healthy, I'm disabled

Have a read of some of the personal stories in this book and you may feel differently. But meanwhile we need to define some terms.



SPORT TALK

I have cerebral palsy and use a wheelchair. In 2010, I was diagnosed with the muscle-weakening disease myopathy. My consultant advised me not to do any physical activity and to wait for the inevitable. That didn't sound like good advice to me.

I turned to Andrew, a personal trainer used to working with disabled people. Thanks to his hard work – and mine – I can now get up off the floor myself if I fall out of my chair and don't have to wait for help. In fact, I'm now more mobile than before I had myopathy and can now walk miles using a walking frame.

I didn't have great coordination and I'd lost all mobility in my legs. I needed to strengthen them. We started with a couple of sessions a week of an hour and a half and now have three of three hours. I also work-out on my own. Progress was painful at times and, to be honest, I thought Andrew was crazy when he first suggested I walk. But now I'm planning to walk the London Marathon with my frame. That shows you how much I've progressed in less than a year.

Disability is created by the environment not by you, your impairment or health condition. If you're a wheelchair-user stuck outside a building without a ramp, what is the barrier? The injury that makes it easier for you to use a chair or the lack of a ramp? Add a ramp and not only can you access the building more easily but so can older people, people with prams, people with heavy luggage, children –

pretty much everyone in fact. It's the absence of the ramp that is disabling.

The same applies to sport. Again, to take a wheelchair-user as an example, there's nothing stopping you rolling your wheelchair onto the nearest tennis court and having a go except the rules of the club or the width of the gate onto the court or the attitudes of the other players. Nothing that can't be changed.



SPORT TALK

I had a serious bout of depression in my early 40s and decided to get some therapy. It helped but it wasn't enough. I needed to get out of myself.

I was overweight so I didn't think I could just go out jogging. As a child I'd been a decent swimmer so I decided to try that. I enjoyed the simple repetition. Quarter of a mile. Half a kilometre. Every couple of lengths there's a landmark. I mixed the strokes up too. The counting kept me focused and diverted me from my (real and imagined) problems.

Perhaps racking up the lengths sounds dull to you but it made all the difference in the world to me. That's the great thing about sport – there's something for everyone. I'm not saying

it cured my depression. It didn't.

But a change is as good as rest and swimming became my time-out from myself. I like to think that whilst I was doing it my mind was also processing what I got from therapy but I don't know.

My one piece of advice is whatever sport you choose, make yourself do it. Often you just won't want to – especially at first. But compare the days when you make the effort with the days when you don't and then you'll see the difference. It's amazing that something that is so beneficial can be so difficult to do. I've no idea why – if I had the answer to that one, I'd be a millionaire sports psychologist, I suppose.

But wheelchairs are just an example. This applies in different ways to all of us experiencing disability or a health condition. The barriers to someone with a mental health condition or a learning difficulty doing sport may be less obvious than a flight of stairs but they're there all the same in the attitudes, organisation and environment around exercise. This guide is about removing those barriers too.

Of course, your impairment or health condition may effect what you can do. But whatever your impairment or health condition, you are you and taking some exercise will make you a fitter, healthier you.

Health and fitness, of course, are not the same thing either.

Fitness is largely physical. It's about your capacity to deal with the environment around you so a fitter wheelchair-user may be able to wheel him or herself further and faster.

Health is about more than this. It includes physical, mental and social well-being. This involves self-acceptance. The well-known serenity prayer puts its finger on it very well and you don't need to be religious to get it. It wishes for us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference. This is something

we all need to understand to be healthy, especially if we're doing sport or exercise.

And that brings us right back to disability because one of the things that we can change is the disabling environment of barriers and attitudes.

The law is there to help us do this. Under the Equality Act 2010 (which is based on the disability discrimination legislation that went before it), it is unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably because they are disabled. Service providers must make 'reasonable adjustments' to the way they provide their services to remove the barriers preventing disabled people from accessing them. This applies to the local gym or football stadium as much as it does to banks, pubs or cinemas.

'Reasonable' refers to the resources available for adjustments so a service provider can only avoid making them if he or she can show that it would be genuinely too impractical, too disruptive or too expensive to do so.

So what does all this mean in practice? It means simply this: anyone can get fitter and healthier regardless of their impairment or health condition – mental health condition, learning difficulty, physical impairment, whatever. This guide will show you how.



SPORT TALK

**Alexandra Rickham, Paralympic sailor
(two-person keelboat, SKUD-18)**

I was very sporty and competitive as a child. I loved swimming, tennis and horseback riding. But I had a shallow-diving accident when I was 13 and broke my neck.

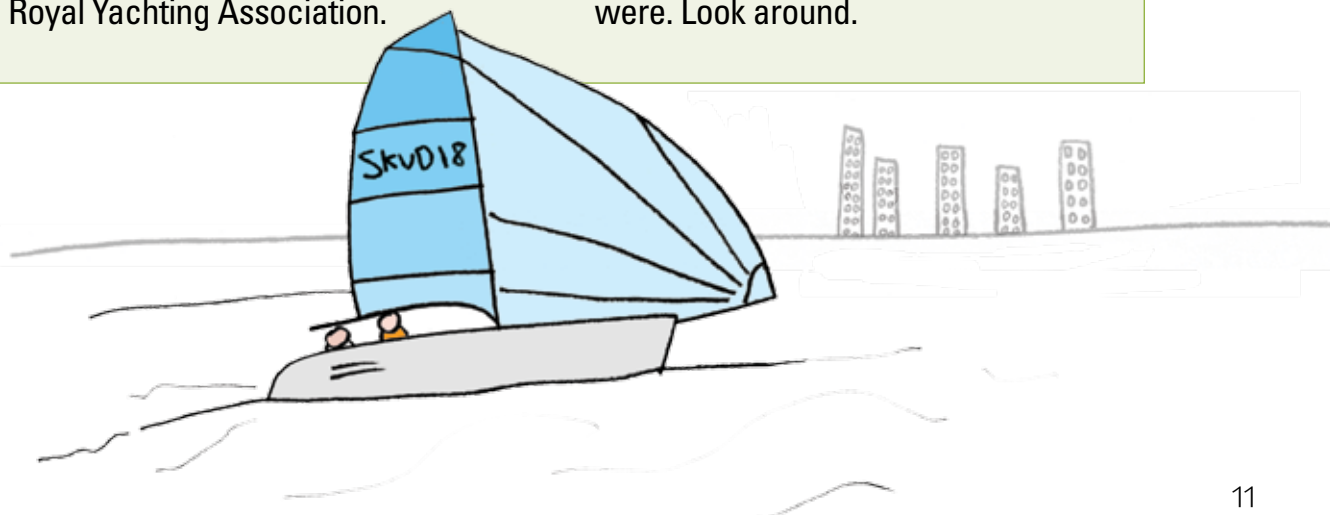
I first tried sailing while in rehab in Miami but for about ten years I prioritised my education. It wasn't that I couldn't do sport but I wanted something more. Plus, access to sport for disabled people was not so easy then. When I was at university I wanted to be on the sailing team but they weren't very interested in me.

I sailed with Sailability but I really got into the sport through Back-Up. Michael Cogswell contacted them looking for a sailing partner and they put him in touch with me. Eventually I was put together with Niki Birrell by the Royal Yachting Association.

It's been a lot of hard work, particularly as I've been fast-tracked, gradually expanding my role over time. Helming a SKUD-18 is not a cardio sport but you need strength and endurance to take part in three one-hour races a day, out there in all the elements.

We've been world champions four times. I'm lucky to be able to be a full-time athlete. Sport has boosted my confidence and opened up a whole new world. You meet really interesting people in elite sport. I love being part of a team and the fact that unlike in some jobs, you can see the results of your efforts right away.

There's far more out there for disabled people than we realise. Schools, organisations and rehab institutions do need to do more to raise awareness that sports facilities and gyms are much better than they were. Look around.



Do there have to be winners and losers in sport?

In some sports, this is true but it is irrelevant. What we're talking about here is equality of access not equality of outcome. You have the right to take part in sport or exercise not the right to win every time you play. You have the right to access your local tennis court not to beat Rafael Nadal. (Making Rafa play with a stick of celery, by the way, would not be a 'reasonable adjustment'.)

Anyway, in many fitness activities, as you'll see in this guide, there aren't winners and losers – just the benefits to everyone of taking part.

What are the benefits of keeping your body as fit and healthy as you can?

Doctors will often say that if exercise were a pill, it would be one of the best drugs ever invented. And they're right. According to the NHS, people who do regular physical activity have:

- » up to a 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- » up to a 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes
- » up to a 50% lower risk of colon cancer
- » up to a 20% lower risk of breast cancer
- » a 30% lower risk of early death
- » up to an 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis
- » up to a 68% lower risk of hip fracture
- » a 30% lower risk of falls (among older adults)
- » up to a 30% lower risk of depression
- » up to a 30% lower risk of dementia

But frankly the health benefits are often only the tip of the iceberg. There are the social benefits – sport and exercise help you get out, meet people and make friends. There are also enormous personal benefits – you'll feel better about yourself after exercise (honest!) which boosts self-confidence in all areas of life. Achieving a goal, however small, brings satisfaction.

Exercise boosts mood and energy levels and improves sleep. It is believed to help memory and brain function and to reduce stress. It's also a great time to do some thinking and problem-solving. Last but not least, it will become fun (even if it isn't at first).



SPORT TALK

I wanted to do outdoor pursuits the same as my non-disabled twin sister from an early age but the support network wasn't there and having cerebral palsy, I use far more energy to move. Keeping up with anyone walking was a challenge in itself.

The moment came when my dad gave me the opportunity to climb Ben Lomond, near Trossachs, Glasgow when I was ten. I did everything possible: walked, crawled and moved on my bottom. It was tough for me but fun and I made it. That's when my buzz of outdoors began and ever since, I have tried to escape to the countryside whenever I can.

Walking outdoors is probably the most enjoyable and cost-effective way of keeping fit. I now use a walking stick to help with balance on uneven terrain. Walking helps loosen other parts of my body and makes the muscles stronger. It reduces the risk of falls, improves muscle mass and bone density, reduces the risk of associated conditions, reduces blood pressure and improves the quality of my life and my perception of myself.

More importantly, I have challenged my impairment and broken the barriers. This has made me physically and mentally stronger and will help me to overcome more barriers.

I've taken up cycling again. I swim, go to the gym and am developing my taste in extreme sports and wilderness recreation. When I was young I participated in dinghy sailing and have gained a Grade 1 Royal Yachting Association certificate. Through this involvement, I was introduced to voyages on the Tall Ships, which cater for disabled and non-disabled sailors.

I am currently patron of RaceRunning Scotland. RaceRunning is an international disability sport in which children and adults compete with running bikes on an athletics track.

How much exercise do I need to take?

As much as you want. Every little helps.

When health professionals and fitness experts talk about 'regular physical activity', they're usually talking about taking about 20 minutes a day of exercise that is hard enough to raise your heart rate and cause a sweat. That's about 2 hours and 30 minutes a week, the level of exercise on which the sort of health-related data mentioned above is usually based. It's called 'moderate-intensity aerobic activity'. But don't worry if you can't do this, it's not a problem.

Exactly what constitutes moderate-intensity aerobic activity varies for each of us depending on how fit we are to start off with. But good examples of moderate-intensity aerobic activities are:

- » walking fast
- » riding a bike on level ground or with few hills
- » pushing a lawn mower

How do you know if something is, for you, a moderate-intensity aerobic activity? A good rule of thumb is that you're too breathless to sing a song but not to talk – good news for you (you're exercising efficiently and safely) and, if you've got a lousy singing voice, your exercise partner too.



SPORT TALK

Don't let yourself be put off. Develop an attitude. I now outperform the vast majority of non-disabled riders when I cycle over my favourite terrain, the Brecon Beacons, and that's with one false leg and two brain tumours.

Cycling is a big part of my life. It gives me various bonuses: firstly, the health element; secondly, I have developed a competitive edge. I enjoy the company of other riders, friends and family. But there are also times when riding on your own especially in beautiful countryside allows you to escape the modern world and to enjoy the solitude to think clearly.

Cycling is easy now, but in the beginning it was a long and hard road, to learn to walk after the amputation of my left leg, then to cycle with confidence too.

I started cycling because I had lost my driving licence following brain surgery and wanted my freedom back one way or another. But I never expected to become a competitive rider. It has given me focus, given me life. This is a freedom I didn't have before.



SPORT TALK

I have a mental health condition and I find sport really boosts my mood and my energy levels. One symptom of depression is lethargy and tiredness and this is one of the best ways I've found to overcome these.

That's far too strenuous for me

Don't worry. There are still enormous benefits to exercise. Even if you can't do anything vigorous, many of the ideas in this guide will still work for you.

If you can work up to 'moderate-intensity aerobic activity' so much the better but even if you can't, you'll still benefit.

You'll get some of the health benefits mentioned above plus you'll simply feel better. This is partly physical. Exercise gets the endorphins going. (These are chemicals in the brain that improve your sense of well-being.) It also helps you sleep better and there's not a person on the planet who wouldn't benefit from a decent night's sleep. It's psychological too – just the small sense of pride in having done it will make you feel good.

Don't underestimate the benefits of just a little exercise.

Even very unfit people can improve their health enormously simply by becoming slightly less unfit. To put it into figures, imagine the population divided into five groups: the fittest to the least-fit. The people in the least-fit fifth of the population can DOUBLE their chances of surviving the next decade simply by getting into the second least-fit group – in other words, if you go from being very unfit to just plain old unfit, you're twice as likely to still be alive in ten years time. Sound like a good enough reason to take a little more exercise?

But I haven't exercised for years

No problem – you're never too unfit to get fit. But to be on the safe side, you might want to talk to your healthcare professionals before starting to exercise to check what activities might or might not be suitable.

Whatever your medical history, start slowly. If you experience chest pain, dizziness or feel faint at any time while you're exercising, stop immediately and see a doctor. During exercise you should feel no more than a burning sensation in your muscles, not a sharp pain. If something hurts, stop doing it.

But I hate sport

Do you really hate sport or do you just hate competitive sport? Or perhaps you just hated Physical Education (PE) at school.

What we're talking about here need not be competitive – unless you want it to be – and will be nothing like PE at school. We're talking about choosing something that you like doing and that gets the heart going a little and doing a little more of it. It certainly needn't be cross country running or anything that we traditionally think of as sport. It could be yoga or walking, gardening or dancing, horse-riding or orienteering. (Sex fits the bill too.)

What are the types of fitness?

Some aspects of fitness are directly related to health, some not.

- » Heart (or cardio-vascular) fitness
- » Strength
- » Muscular endurance
- » Flexibility – particularly important as we get older
- » Agility – the ability to change the direction of the body quickly
- » Speed
- » Reaction time
- » Balance
- » Power (strength multiplied by speed)
- » Co-ordination

Most of us could benefit from most of these. Different sports, exercises and fitness activities develop these different aspects of fitness to different degrees. You're not obliged to work on all of them. For disabled and non-disabled people alike, it depends what you're interested in and what you want to do.

Marathon runners are more interested in endurance, footballers in coordination, most of us are just happy with a healthier heart and improved flexibility.



SPORT TALK

I have four children and all of them have been keen participants in a number of different sports. As a wheelchair-using Dad, I have sometimes been forced to miss seeing them do their thing because the organisers simply didn't think about the needs of disabled spectators!

It isn't always easy to ensure that venues have good access but there is no excuse for a lack of communication regarding what is available. Perhaps sports organisers could refuse to hire or use venues that don't provide access to disabled parents or spectators.



SPORT TALK

I have three kids and like me, they all love sport. The two sighted ones are into football, cycling and skateboarding while the blind one is into football, goalball (a team sport using a ball with bells inside), sound tennis, cricket, trampolining and judo.

My job is simple. I take them along to any sport that they want to try but never push them. My encouragement is always positive. Liam, my blind son, finds new sports hard at first but once he's played them for a few weeks, it's a different story.

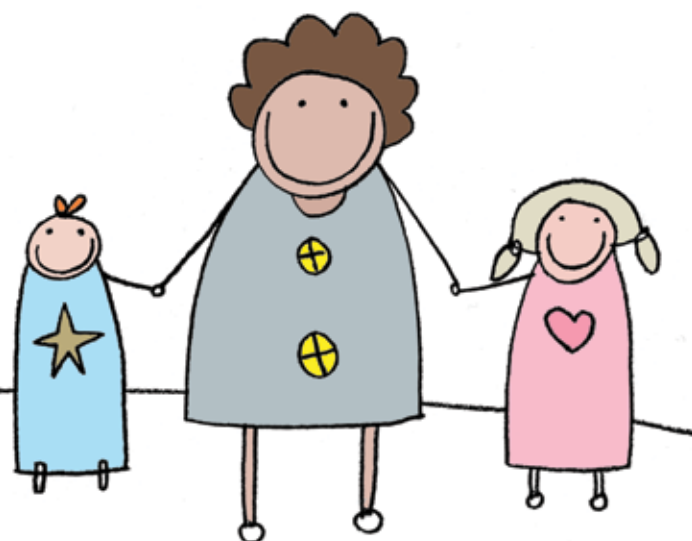
And the hard work – both mine and his – pays off. Recently, he was asked to go for a weekend's training with the England B1 football team.

I firmly believe that if you put in the effort for your child that in the long run it can only benefit them (and you in terms of your relationship with them). Sport is out there for every disabled child, young adult and adult. Non-disabled parents can help their children find the right sport for them.

I'm a parent. What can I do?

Whether you're a disabled parent or have a disabled child (or both), this guide is for you too. Read it through. Perhaps there is an activity you can share with your child. What about taking them to see a sport (see chapter 4) or getting involved yourself behind the scenes (see chapter 3)?

The key thing is to encourage your child to get involved. Find out what they most want to do rather than what you most want to do or what you most wanted to do when you were their age. What are the barriers to your child getting involved? What can you do to help your child overcome these? There are many ways you can help – encouragement and enthusiasm are probably the most important but money and lifts or other help with transport are always welcome too.



2: Taking part

Millions of players, thousands of activities, endless possibilities

When it comes to exercise, disabled people have pretty much the same options as non-disabled ones – everything from simply getting out a bit more to playing for your country. Once you start looking, you'll be surprised how much is out there.

There isn't space in this guide to discuss the issues around every impairment or every sport or every one of the many, many possibilities. We all have different barriers to overcome so not everything here will be relevant to you. But read the chapter and think about how it might apply to you. The main limitation may turn out to be your imagination.

I don't know what to do

Have a think about what you hope to get out of exercise, what you're able to do and when you're able to do it. If you want to meet people as well as get fit, a team sport or joining a club might be best. If you're stuck for time, something that you can fit more easily into the day like walking or exercising at home or the gym near work might be better.

Think about what you like doing. Different sports have different requirements – speed for sprinting, strength for rugby, hand-eye coordination for badminton, ball skills for football. Even if you didn't much like Physical Education (PE) as a child there were probably some things you enjoyed more than others.

If you don't like getting wet, give swimming a miss. Cross country running may have been hell on a wet Wednesday in leaking plimsolls but jogging where you want, when you want with a decent pair of trainers and your own soundtrack is a different matter.

Or take up something you've never tried before – horse-riding, abseiling, skiing or one of the sports specially devised for disabled people. Think broadly. It's not just the traditional sports that will get you fit. What about yoga, gardening or dancing?

Think of ways of doing what you want to do differently. Put stabilisers on your bike or swim with a rubber ring or armbands. Fancy roller-blading but not sure about your balance? Use Nordic walking sticks as an aid. Worried your



SPORT TALK

Fred Bridges, international cricketer

I didn't even know you could play cricket with hemiplegia but then someone told me about the work the ECB were doing so I got in touch with my local club. They made it really easy to get involved. I come from Sussex but there are opportunities at grass roots level for disabled people to access the sport all over the country. There are pathways up to international level for blind, deaf, physical disability and intellectual disability. I never thought that when I started playing that I would end up in Dubai, spin bowling for England against Pakistan in the first ever international series between two national sides of physically disabled players. You could say I've been bowled over.

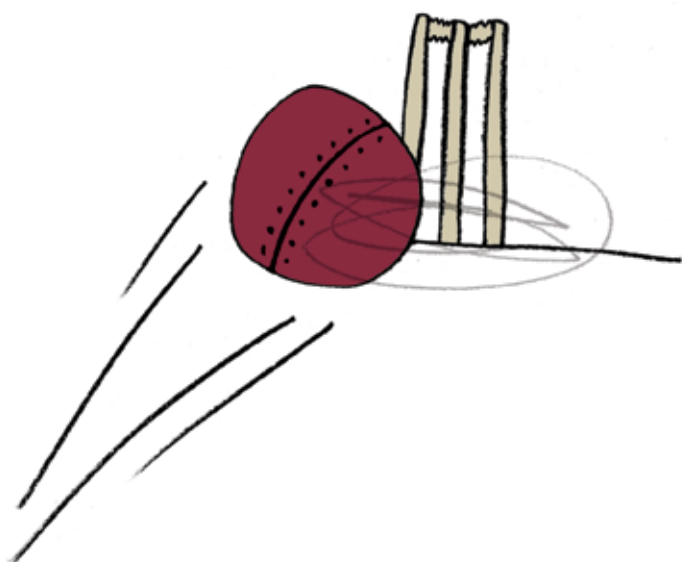
dancing is dodgy? Dance at home or go to a darker night club (or better still try a No Lights, No Lycra session where everyone dances – and exercises – in the dark).

You don't have to go to a gym or sports centre. Or indeed anywhere. There are many exercises you can do at home with no or cheap equipment. There is a lot of satisfaction in simply doing one more repetition of a morning exercise than you did the day before.

Also think about how fit you are right now. Some activities are more physically demanding than others. Don't start off with tennis or squash if you're very unfit. All that twisting and turning could result in an injury. Get fitter and more flexible first with a lower impact activity.

This section looks at some of the activities you might want to think about. We include some basic, general advice but, depending on your impairment, you might also want to get some personal advice from your health professional, local disabled person's organisation, organisation for people with your impairment or a fitness coach.

Exercise and the rush you get from it can be addictive. If you're ever worried about it becoming an obsession, take a week off. If you can't do this, get some help.



Walking

If you can walk, there's no easier and more effective exercise.

If you can manage longer distances at faster paces so much the better but even if you can't, there's an enormous amount to be gained. A review by Harvard Health Watch suggested that just 5.5 miles per week and at a pace as casual as about 2 miles per hour was good for the heart.

Some people are sceptical about the benefits of walking because it's not aerobic. True, we rarely get sweaty and breathless doing it. But exercise is about duration and frequency not just intensity. In fact, although you obviously burn fewer calories walking than running, a greater proportion of the calories burned are fat. So while you may have to walk for longer than you'd need to jog you'll still benefit.

But this doesn't necessarily mean walking takes longer than jogging. After all, with walking, you don't need to warm up, change into special clothing or shower afterwards.



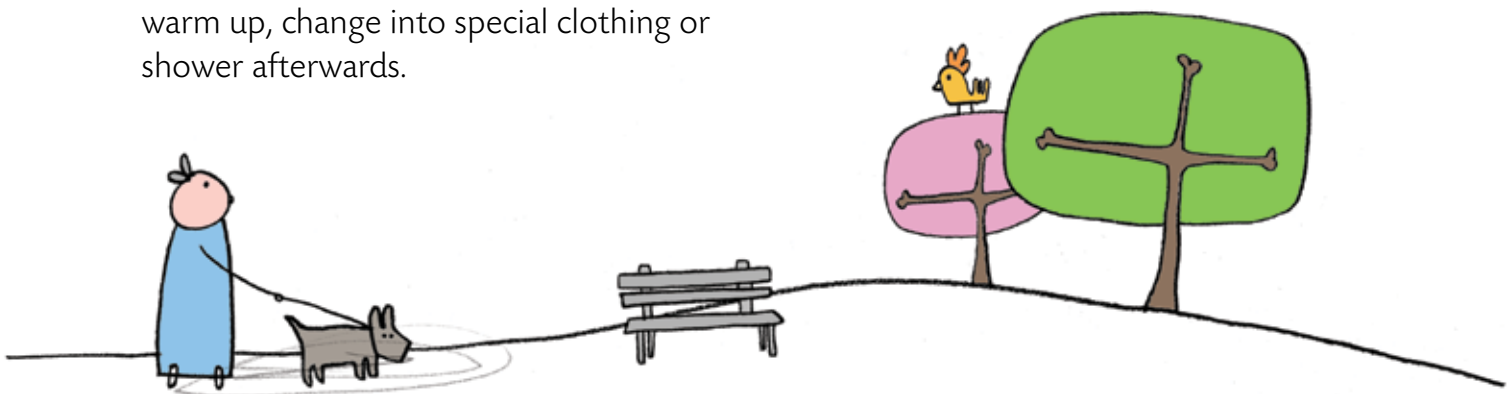
SPORT TALK

I like simply walking – I walk the dog for 40 minutes a day. I like the fresh air, sunshine and exercise.

Dogs are great for people with mental health conditions – they love you and are always there for you. The dog is my companion but he's also my incentive to go out when I don't feel like it. Dogs are great for social contact – everyone wants to pat them or talk about them, especially as my dog has three legs. You can get a support dog if you have a mental health condition. Contact Assistance Dogs.

Two other great advantages of walking are that you can incorporate it into your existing day by, for example, leaving the car at home or getting off the train a stop earlier.

You can also meet other people by joining a walking or rambling group.





SPORT TALK

I had a stroke when I was 31. Four years later, I was fat, unhappy and not taking any exercise.

I didn't have the balance to ride a bicycle but I chanced across a small-wheeled tricycle in a local shop. I rode it for five minutes and realised that, once I'd attached the plastic 'rat-trap' on the pedal to my foot, I could ride it.

Getting on to my tricycle is about the most obviously disabled thing that I do because my foot muscle is gone but it's a great example of doing things differently because, once I'm on, I'm suddenly free and can cycle as far or as fast as anyone else.

I cycle ten miles everyday to and from work and I'm as fit as a fiddle. But the greatest benefit is mental. I used to be exhausted by 6pm but now I'm energised by using a different part of my brain to cycle.

I've cycled round London, Newcastle, Leeds, Birmingham and Bournemouth. I've even taken the ferry to Hook of Holland and gone to Amsterdam. And the great thing is it's something that I do totally for myself without anyone else's involvement.

As a barrister specialising in discrimination law, it chimes perfectly with my work which is often about challenging presumptions of what disabled people can and can't do. In fact, my tricycle is actually better than a bike for me as it can carry more luggage – ideal for my legal books.

Cycling

Cycling is popular because like walking it is an effective mode of transport that gets you fitter at the same time. Admittedly UK roads are not exactly bike-friendly but there are more and more cycling lanes and opportunities to ride off-road.

There are tricycles, quadcycles, recumbents and other alternatives for those unable to ride a regular bicycle including hand-powered bikes called handcycles.

There are also power-assisted bicycles and static exercise bikes for using at home. Side-by-sides or tandems allow two to ride at once.

Running bikes are half-way between running and walking. They are three-wheeled tricycles with no pedals which support you as you walk or run.

Running bikes are particularly good for people with impairments that affect their mobility and balance. But they enable pretty much anybody to propel themselves considerably faster than they could unassisted making them a fun way to improve strength, fitness and well-being for people of all ages and fitness levels.

There are contacts for all types of cycling and running bikes in chapter 5.

Running

If you want something a little more vigorous than walking, try jogging. There is plenty of advice available for new runners but it all boils down to one thing: don't get injured. (Actually that's pretty good advice for any new sport or exercise regime.)

A common pattern is that new joggers start off slowly, go a little faster and a little further each time and then, after a handful of runs, get injured. The reason is that your heart and lungs often rise to the challenge more quickly than your muscles and skeleton. The maxim is: don't do more today than you will be able to do tomorrow. Warm-up with some walking and stretching. Take it very easy. Don't run every day at first. And make sure you've got proper running shoes suited to your feet – buy them at a decent sports store.

What you're trying to do is to get your pulse into a zone that is between 60% and 85% of your maximum heart rate. (Your maximum heart rate is 220 minus your age.) A heart rate monitor can keep you in this zone. Run while you're below and in the zone. Once you go above your maximum, walk until you're comfortably back in the zone again. At first you may find that you really can't run far at all before you're out of the zone. Listen to your body. It will keep you safe (and uninjured). There's no problem exercising below the zone so any amount of walking will still help but exercising continually above the zone is dangerous.

Exercise – at the gym or at home

Just 5-10 minutes a day exercise will help. Talk to your health professional or ask an organisation for people with your impairment about what the best exercises are for you to do. You can also get personalised advice at a good gym but if you want to work out at home, that's fine too.

There are some excellent exercises you can do at home which require no equipment at all including the press-up, the sit-up, the burpee and the plank. A Wii or other TV or PC-linked games console can help.



SPORT TALK

I enjoy running and taking long walks.

I think there is a physical reason, the release of endorphins in the brain. But as well as that, I feel a sense of achievement while doing them (especially running) and I almost always feel much more mentally relaxed after the run than before it.

I feel better about myself if I've managed to do some exercise. It makes me feel that I'm not such a bad person after all (at least for a time). Also, I do most of my runs and walks in scenic places such as parks or rivers so I enjoy looking at the scenery too.

I always feel physically tired after running, but that's much better than the mental tiredness I feel many other times.

I mainly run by myself but normally walk with others. I quite enjoy the company on those occasions although sometimes, I walk by myself which I find quite calming.

It can be difficult to find the time but I usually do a run or walk at weekends, sometimes both. It is frustrating that I can't find more time to run. It's easier when the evenings are lighter. Depression can make me very lethargic, and it can be quite difficult to force myself out of the house to do exercise, especially when it's cold and dark. But for anyone with a mental health condition, I would certainly recommend making the effort.

The old maxim 'use it or lose it' applies to most muscles but that doesn't mean you need to do weight-lifting. Stretching a joint through its range of movement is most useful. But get advice first, especially if you have a physical impairment – exercises that are not suited to your impairment may be dangerous.



How do I choose a gym?

The best bet is to look for one of the nearly 400 IFI (the Inclusive Fitness Initiative) accredited gyms.

IFI is a programme managed by the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) that supports the UK fitness industry to become more inclusive. It provides accreditation for gym and other facilities that meet the standards in four areas:

- » accessible facilities
- » fitness equipment that is appropriate for the vast majority of disabled people
- » staff training
- » inclusive marketing

You can find your nearest IFI facility by going to the EFDS website (www.efds.co.uk) searching on 'Inclusive Fitness Initiative' and using the Facility Search.

Visit any gym you're interested in at peak time (usually 6:00-8:30pm) and ask yourself a few simple questions. Is it overcrowded? Is there enough equipment? Does it look clean and well-maintained? Is there somewhere to warm-up and warm-down? What are the changing rooms and showers like?



SPORT TALK

By doing fitness and strength training, the balance and stability of my body improves. Together with chiropractic treatments, this helps to keep my spine healthy and straight. I enjoy the strength training the most because I can use my whole body.

For my short arm I use a special arm prosthesis with vacuum-fitting. I use straps to attach the prosthesis to, for instance, a pull down machine. The prosthesis must fit well. Using my short arm during training really feels special – during rowing, for instance.

I exercise twice a week. Half an hour there and half an hour back home by bicycle. I do strength training for about 1 hour. Then another 15 minutes some kind of cardio exercise and stretching and I am ready.

Ask about the instructors. Are there enough around? What are their qualifications? Have they had disability awareness or other training in working with disabled people? Are they registered with any professional body? (Check that professional body out – visit their website.)



SPORT TALK

We use a Kinect console provided by lifelites.org in our hospice and it's great for kids of all ages. It's a sociable thing for sometimes isolated children. They can exercise at any time – no need even to go out. And these sorts of consoles are also fun and easy to use. We want to empower the children and young people, and by choosing their own games and exercise, they are given control over their leisure time.

We had a six year old who has problems with her coordination on it non-stop during her last visit. It was wonderful as it really brought her out of herself and increased her confidence, movement and concentration.

Don't be over impressed by fancy video screens. Air-conditioning, lighting and drinking water facilities are more important. If you do want to watch TV while exercising, check out what's on. Some people prefer to listen to music or, on some machines, even read.

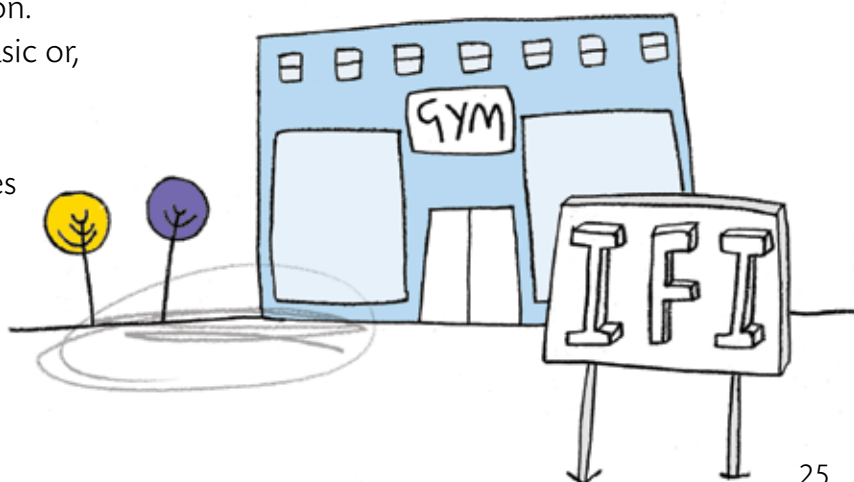
Ask about the programme of classes and see if anything suits you.

Check fees carefully. Is there a joining charge? Any additional costs for classes or other facilities? How do you cancel or suspend membership? Any discounts for disabled people or for paying for a longer period upfront.

You don't have to join a private gym. Many local authority gyms are excellent and may have higher levels of disability-awareness among the staff.

Try it out. Before joining, get a daily or weekly pass and see what the place is really like. Some gyms offer free trials or free trial lessons.

Good gyms will give new members a questionnaire to help assess their fitness. If you haven't exercised for a while or need specific advice because of your impairment, ask for a fuller assessment by an instructor. Before letting you on the equipment, the gym should explain how it all works and suggest the best programme for you to begin with. If they don't, consider another gym.





SPORT TALK

I hadn't taken any exercise for years and years. I just assumed it would be too difficult.

I was approaching 40. Maybe you'd call it a mid-life crisis but I was about to change jobs and wanted to do things differently this time. I'd been working all the hours and not eating properly. I was putting on weight.

I went to the local gym and it was the world of the body beautiful. I just didn't like the way I was treated. I was seen as an oddity. They showed me around but very half-heartedly. I didn't join.

So I went online and looked for local personal trainers. I made a few phone calls. A couple of them were very wary and that made me wary. Then I got this guy Darryl who was 100% up for it within minutes. He understood a bit about arthritis. He'd done a module on disability in his training. And he was keen to learn more.

He was the first to ask me what I'd consider standard questions to find out what I could and couldn't do. I told him about my mobility and the operations I'd had. I said 'I can't run, can't grip and can't get down on the floor'. He said 'fine!'

The first meeting was still hell. This young whipper-snapper turned up in all his fab fitness gear. But he was very nice. He said: 'put some music on and let's dance'. I said 'you've got to be joking'. But I did and it was hysterical. Within 15 minutes we were both laughing.

We did some range of movement exercises. He had read around the subject and knew about the replacements I'd had and what you could do without driving the rheumatologists up the wall.

Ten years later, it's still fun. We never do the same session. It's always fresh and different. Darryl has got to know me and what makes me tick. He knows when to push and when not. I've had lower back and shoulder pain at times and he knows how to focus on these areas.

With Darryl I went back to that gym and this time I joined. I don't think their attitude had changed but I had. I was more confident. Now I see Darryl or go to the gym at least once a week.

You can't put a price on feeling good about how you look and feel. Apart from the obvious physical benefits, it helps me wind down after heavy work periods. When I'm exercising I eat more sensibly and am better about carving out time for myself rather than just working and working. Keeping the muscles around the replacement joints as strong as possible also keeps my arthritis stable.

A personal trainer isn't cheap – mine is £60 an hour – but if you find the right person it is worth it. Darryl's firm specialises in working with women so that helped too. It's like finding a counsellor. It's a very personal relationship. You need to shop around to find someone you're totally comfortable with.

Without Darryl I'd be far less ambulant and probably overweight. In return I sort out his girlfriend problems so it's a fair exchange really.

Check your local gym for individual advice on fitness classes or individual programs, many at affordable prices.

Swimming

Swimming is a great sport and among the safest ways to exercise as your body is supported up to 90% by the water. Also because water is about 12 times as thick as the air, the water resistance maximises the benefit you get from your movements.

This means that swimming is a little like jogging and lifting weights at the same time. Plus, of course, your body is submerged making it a less public form of exercise than some others.

There are many instructors who are used to teaching disabled people to swim and many clubs and county swimming set-ups have a disability liaison officer.


Contact your local pool to see what is available in your area. The Big Splash section of the British swimming website – www.swimming.org/bigsplash – may help.



Adapted sports

Many sports can be played by disabled people on the same basis as non-disabled people. But some have also been adapted to make them more disability-friendly. Some adaptations are very slight; others more significant. Football for people with learning disabilities is played by the same rules. So is deaf football – except referees use flags rather than whistles. Blind football is five-a-side with sighted goalkeepers, a ball filled with ball-bearings and no offside rule. There is more on www.disabilityfootball.co.uk

Similar adaptations appear in other sports such as cricket (www.ecb.co.uk/development/disability-cricket) – the England and Wales Cricket Board has opportunities for blind, deaf, physically and intellectually disabled players – and tennis (www.tennisfoundation.org.uk/disabilitytennis).

**SPORT TALK**

The experienced swimmer, when in the water, may be classed among the happiest of mortals in the happiest of moods, and in the most complete enjoyment of the happiest of exercises.
The Swimming Instructor – William Wilson (1883)

**SPORT TALK**

I can swim completely independently once I'm in the water. Some say my stroke is all wrong and that I swim like a frog but so what? I can swim 40 lengths of my local pool without stopping so ungraceful as my stroke may be, it works OK.

There are several sports specially adapted for wheelchair-users, five are internationally organised and played at Paralympic level (see box opposite). You don't need to be a permanent wheelchair-user to take part. You can find out more about them from Parasport (see page 59).

There are more examples of adapted sports in the section on Paralympic Sports which follows.

Paralympic sport

If you want to play in an organised way with other disabled people or to compete at a higher level, you might want to look at the disability sports that come together under the Paralympics umbrella. There are currently about 20 summer Paralympic sports and five winter ones but the list is growing. Paratriathlon, for example, combining running, swimming and cycling is taking

off among disabled fitness enthusiasts and will be included in the Paralympics in 2016 in Rio.

In order to ensure fair competition, athletes are classified according to their impairment and its severity. There are six official Paralympic categories, based on type of impairment:

- » people with a partial or total amputation of at least one limb
- » people with a non-progressive neurological disorder resulting from cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury or stroke, or similar disabilities
- » people with an intellectual disability (usually called a learning difficulty or learning disability in the UK)
- » people with visual impairments
- » wheelchair-users
- » Les autres (people with an impairment not easily placed in one of the other five categories including people with dwarfism, multiple sclerosis or other disabilities)

» Wheelchair Sports

Wheelchair tennis is much like the 'running game' except the ball can bounce twice. The Tennis Foundation (www.tennisfoundation.org.uk) can tell you more about a game that is played by over 6,000 people in more than 70 countries.

Wheelchair basketball is also much like the familiar 'running game'. Organised under the auspices of the Great Britain Wheelchair Basketball Association, it's very popular in this country with its own league of around 65 teams.

Wheelchair rugby is a full-on contact sport that is played indoors on a basketball-style court.

Originally called murderball when it was developed in Canada in the 1970s, it actually shares little with regular rugby beyond its name. The Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby Limited is the national governing body for the game in England, Scotland and Wales.

There is also wheelchair curling and wheelchair fencing.

If you have a go, you'll want to buy or borrow a specialist wheelchair designed for your sport. Ask the people you're going to be playing with or your local organisation of disabled people for advice.



SPORT TALK

Bulbul Hussain, British Paralympic Wheelchair Rugby team

I had a road traffic accident on holiday in Bangladesh and broke my neck. When I came back to England I was in Stoke Mandeville (SM). That was the first time I saw wheelchair rugby – there was a training session – but I didn't think it was for me. Before my accident, I played football with my friends for fun but I wasn't really a sportsman.

But when I came home from SM I was bored and isolated. At SM there had been lots of other wheelchair-users but there weren't any at home. I didn't want to hang out with my old friends either. I just sat around smoking.

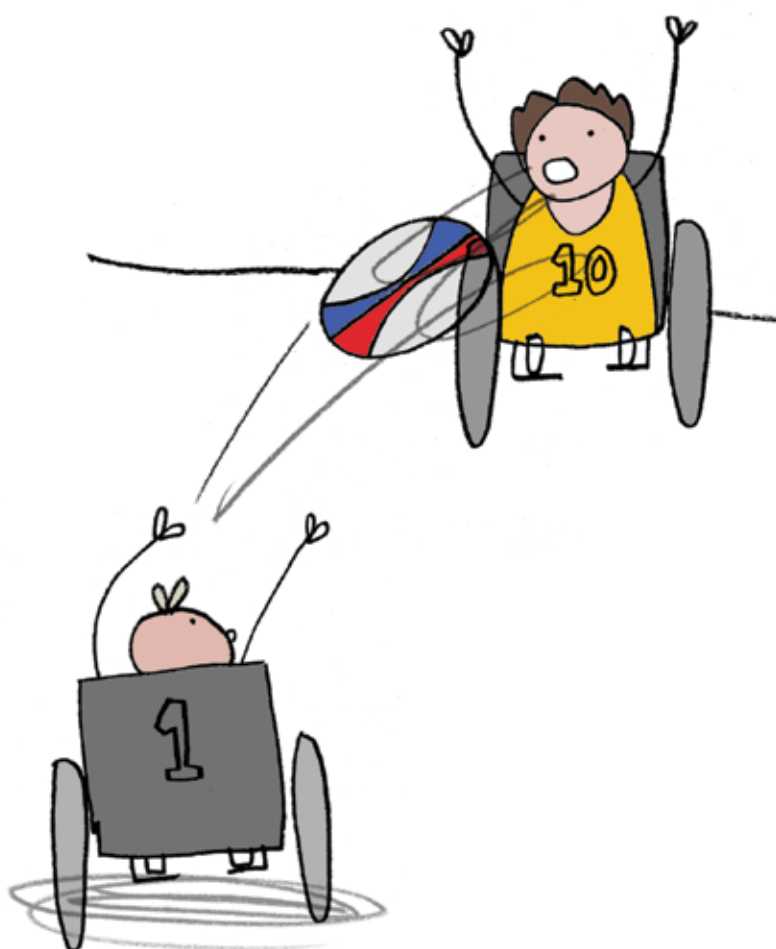
The local occupational therapist came round and saw I was bored so she suggested painting. But I didn't like that. It was too messy. Then she mentioned wheelchair rugby and this time when I actually tried the sport I really liked it. After the first session I ached all over, my muscles, my joints, and when I got home I had a massive blister on my hand. I told the captain that I didn't think I could come to training the next week and he told me that I could be a really good player.

This was the encouragement I needed because I'm a real competitor. When I was in hospital I was competing with the bloke in the bed opposite to get better quicker than him. Players are categorised by their level of impairment. I'm a one pointer which is the second highest level of impairment and I want to be the best one-pointer on the squad. Sometimes people tell me I'm maybe the fastest one point player in world and that really makes me feel good.

I stopped playing for two years when I got married and had a son. But I noticed I was losing fitness and missing the social side too. Playing again made me happier as well as fitter. It took me about four years to get back to British team standard. There were one-pointers ahead of me in the team.

For 2012 I'm the oldest man in the squad and we really want to win it in our own back yard. Wheelchair rugby sold out quicker than any other paralympic sport so we have a good chance with a big home crowd behind us. But it's a team game and we all need to play our best to win gold.

Wheelchair rugby has taken me all over the world – the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand – and I'd be a completely different person without it. I don't think it's good to sit at home in front of the telly. You need to burn off all those calories and for me the best and most enjoyable way is through training.



Looking at the full Paralympic programme will give you a good idea of the range of sports developed or adapted particularly for disabled people. It includes archery, alpine and Nordic skiing, athletics, adaptive rowing, cycling, equestrian sports, football, judo, powerlifting, sailing, shooting, swimming and table tennis. There is also sitting volleyball (literally volleyball played sitting on the floor over a lower tennis-style net), ice sledge hockey (again, as the name suggests, a form of ice hockey played sitting in small sledges) goalball (a sort of handball for people with visual impairments) and boccia (a game like bowls or petanque for athletes with a severe degree of physical impairment).

Of course, people with a learning difficulty can get involved in most sports without the need for adaptations. But there are currently three Paralympic sports open to athletes with a learning difficulty: athletics, swimming and table tennis. There are also a whole host of other sports in the Inas Global Games. Inas is the International Federation for sport for para-athletes with an intellectual disability. You can find out about these from the UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability.

Visit Parasport (www.parasport.org.uk), the website of the British Paralympic Association (BPA) for more information. You can even see what Paralympic sports you could compete in using the self-assessment wizard. There are other useful contacts in chapter 5.

Other Sports

As far as exercise options go, all of the above add up to nothing more than the tip of the iceberg. There are many disabled people playing many other sports and involved in many other activities.

Angling remains the most popular participant sport in the UK – four million people fish each year, of which tens of thousands are disabled. The British Disabled Angling Association is working to improve access further.

Badminton is increasingly popular as it is a sport that disabled and non-disabled players can play together. Although it is not yet a Paralympic sport, there is an organised Parabadminton network including competition for wheelchair-users, ambulant players, dwarf players and players with learning disabilities. Bowls and golf are two other popular sports disabled and non-disabled people can play together.



SPORT TALK

I had ridden all my life and had had a horse of my own, but at the age of 42 I had a brain tumour. I found myself partially sighted, deaf on one side, no balance (and unable to stay upright), partial paraplegia on my entire left side, including my face.

While in rehab, I dreamed of riding again. The Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) rode to my rescue.

Although I had lost a lot of weight and strength, I managed, with the help of the RDA staff and volunteers, to progress. I was thrilled to find that the awful balance issues were completely removed when riding. This was a revelation that was the beginning of so much. I simply cannot express this enough. I gradually regained confidence and a renewed feeling about what I could achieve physically.

These days, I have improved so much that I compete in Paralympic dressage.



SPORT TALK

I'm totally deaf and blind and have problems with balance – it's like being permanently drunk (but not as much fun). I do everything through the sense of touch.

My chosen favourite sports are quadbiking, jetskiing and tandem cycling. With the first two I normally sit on the front with a sighted pillion rider who uses a simple but effective system of touch signals to indicate the direction to steer and when to slow down. (I don't need any encouragement to go faster!)

And these are just the sports that the disabled people we have spoken to have told us about. There are umpteen more. The Recreation and Sports section of Ableize (www.ableize.com), the UK's virtual directory of resources run by disabled people, includes more than 30 activities including bowling, cricket, martial arts, water-sports and flying.

There are many variations. Take the example of our national sport football. There are just two football events played at Paralympic level (seven-a-side for athletes with cerebral palsy and five-a-side for blind people) but there are many other forms of the game.

I used to motorcycle but when my balance started to go in the mid 90s, I bought my first quadbike which was fantastic fun. I was offered the use of a 100 acre field and the chance to get up some serious speed on the straights. It takes skill to do it safely without sight and a lot of practice to build up the speed and slow down on grass without skidding – you really have to trust your pillion rider and vice versa. It was exhilarating to reach speeds of up to 80mph in a matter of seconds riding a race-tuned 700cc quad.

Other people's attitudes can get in the way of disabled people doing sports. Chief among them is that it would be too dangerous. But where are the stats to back that up? Isn't it true that thousands of sighted people crash their cars every year and yet still carry on driving afterwards? Shouldn't disabled people be allowed to have accidents too without being made to feel somehow that it will be seen as a reason to stop their sport?

In 2004 with a serving police officer as pillion rider I smashed my previous quad world speed record reaching a top speed of 136mph and an average speed of 133mph.

The Football Association (FA) alone runs teams for partially-sighted people, for deaf and hearing-impaired people, for people with learning disabilities and for amputees. There are umpteen other football teams out there including those for people with mental health conditions as well as physical ones. And all this

is to say nothing of the many, many disabled players playing for ostensibly non-disabled teams or kicking a ball around with their mates in the park. So look around. Whatever exercise or sport interests you, someone somewhere will be doing it.



SPORT TALK

I do sport quite regularly. I go to the gym. I do weights. I prefer these to running on treadmills and I play tennis – it's aerobic but not boring. Although I work full-time, I play three or four times a week.

Compared to a treadmill, tennis isn't a chore and the exercise is a by-product of my enjoying myself. Doing something that's fun and getting some exercise is a double boost to your mood. I played tennis before I began to experience depression so I knew I enjoyed it.

Tennis is a great game for people with mental health conditions but we don't realise it. We often get cut off from the world and find contact with others threatening. I think carers and health professionals need to emphasise the benefits of exercise and the contact it brings more.

The problem with tennis is that you can lose and that can be a knock back – especially if you're very competitive. But it doesn't have to be competitive, especially when you're a beginner. Just knocking up is fun and sometimes better exercise than a game.

If you don't want any competition there are lots of fun gym classes including yoga and tai chi. Gentle exercise like this calms the mind. Thinking of the position you're holding and the breathing distract you from what's on your mind. You can also do it even when you're genuinely tired.

What do I need?

The kit bag is key to any exercise but exactly what you pack depends on what you're doing. You'll need to make your own list – unfortunately, it tends to get longer as you get older – but these are the sorts of things to think about:

- » water (and/or orange squash, a cheap, easy energy drink)
- » towels (large for showering and small for wiping off sweat during exercise)
- » toiletries
- » medication
- » something to keep sweat out of your eyes? (sweatband, bandana etc)
- » healthy post-exercise snack to deter you from going to the pub or cafeteria
- » MP3 or other music player?
- » keys (including Radar key)
- » your kit including underwear, shoes and socks suitable for the activity you're undertaking



Can I really access sports facilities on the same basis as everyone else?

Yes. And it's not just because of the equality law. It's also because it's good business for those who run sports facilities, gyms, sports clubs and stadia. These establishments have been hit by the recession as much as anyone else and they're keen to get customers through the door.

There are over eleven million disabled people in the UK but only 16% belong to sports clubs (compared to 26% of non-disabled people). Indeed, only about 6.5% of disabled people currently participate in at least 30 minutes of exercise at moderate intensity at least three times a week. So we represent an enormous potential market.

Research by the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) identified some of the main barriers to participation. These included lack of privacy in changing rooms and lockers, uneven surfaces, poor signage, lack of appropriate equipment, poor quality of the welcome from staff, absence of single sex sessions and cost.

Some of these may be barriers for you. However, more and more providers of sports facilities, especially local authorities and national sporting bodies,

are trying to break down these barriers. Sport England and other bodies now provide guidance on accessible sports facilities built around an inclusive design process.

But it's also a question of attitudes – ours and theirs.

Some people involved in exercise and fitness just don't get it. They don't understand how people with mental health conditions, learning difficulties or physical impairments can do sport. There are fewer and fewer of these people around but if you encounter one, why not lend them your copy of *Doing Sport Differently* or download a free copy from www.disabilityrightsuk.org. We tackle all the common misconceptions about sport and disability in section one.

Some trainers and coaches may be under the same misconceptions. Refer them to their professional body, most of them will have a policy on equal access and will offer equality training. At www.interactive.uk.net there's even a free online disability equality training course called 'Be Inclusive and Active' accredited by the National Skills Academy and offered in partnership with Sport England, the English Federation of Disability Sport and disability organisations such as Disability Rights UK.

We need to think about our own attitudes too. We can be our own biggest barrier. But it comes down to this: it doesn't matter what you or anyone else thinks. It's not a question of whether you're good or bad. It's not a question of how you look. It's just a question of whether you want to do it or not. If you want to, you have a right to.

Leisure centres, swimming pools, tennis clubs and tennis courts, golf clubs, rugby, cricket and football clubs, ice rinks, riding schools and equestrian centres, gyms, health and fitness clubs, rowing and sailing clubs, adventure centres, sporting venues – they're all covered by the Equality Act and must all make 'reasonable adjustments' to make their facilities inclusive. This applies to paid-for and free services (including free trials) and includes changing facilities (you should be able to change in the same privacy and comfort as a non-disabled person).

There are some exemptions to this. More about them later (see *Can a sports club turn me down for membership?* on page 38).

Health and safety is no excuse. Under the law, disabled people are entitled to make the same choices and to take the same risks within the same limits as anyone else so any decision taken on the basis of health or safety must be proportionate to the real risk.



SPORT TALK

I extol the virtues of croquet to anyone who will listen. It's one of the few international sports in which we, the Brits, excel. It's totally amateur and men and women, old and young, fit or not at one's best, compete enjoyably with one another.

The possibility of a handy pint nearby in the middle of a match are extra ammunition in the process of persuasion.

I began playing in the garden with my Dad. When I took a PGCE in Cambridge I discovered that there was a bit more to it than just pottering around the lawn.

Croquet is played to the highest levels on an amateur basis. Personally, I'm quite competitive and it's great to find a sport where an average sort of bloke like me with various bits missing can play one of the top players in the world and still have a good time. There's no separate arrangement for disabled players because there are no barriers.

One of the all-time greats, Monty Spencer-Ell, played to a very high standard despite losing both arms in World War I.

The reputation of croquet as being an elitist game played by toffs on rectory lawns persists but it's quite wrong. Yes – you'll probably always be playing in a pleasant setting but the game is accessible to all ages and pockets. All you need to start playing at your local club is a pair of flat shoes. The club will supply the rest of the gear.

My club is in Norfolk in the beautiful grounds of Stow Hall, just outside Downham Market in Norfolk. It's a haven of peace and calm, like a lot of croquet clubs, and each season roughly 100 disabled people come along and have a go. Log on to the Croquet Association website. I'm sure the welcome will be just as warm at your local club.

So the advice is: if you want to use any facilities, ask. If they're not accessible to you, there may well be some 'reasonable adjustments' that can be made. Perhaps they've not come across someone with your impairment or health condition before. If you can see a 'reasonable adjustment' that is not offered, suggest it. After all, you're the person best placed to know. If you do encounter real resistance, take advice from the Equality and Human Rights Commission or a disability organisation: you have a right to take part.

There are also some specific programmes designed to remove barriers such as the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI), outlined on page 24.

In England, there are 49 County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) which bring together local authorities, national governing bodies, clubs, schools and school sport partnerships, health professionals and other local agencies with the explicit goal to increase participation in sport and physical activity. Contact yours to find out what they're doing to improve access. In Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, contact the bodies listed in chapter 5.

Can a sports club turn me down for membership?

In theory, in very particular circumstances, yes.

This is one of the exceptions to the general principle of equal access enshrined in the Equality Act 2010. Some membership organisations – known as associations – which have more than 25 members and are genuinely private with specific requirements for membership do have the right to discriminate.

That is to say that they can select their members on criteria of their own choosing (for example, the requirement to be nominated by an existing member). You can think of obvious examples where this makes sense such as organisations of disabled people (which may not be open to non-disabled people) or parents' associations (which may not be open to non-parents). But it also includes some sports clubs and special interest clubs.

However, whether or not an organisation is an association and therefore entitled to discriminate in the selection of its members is a question of law, not something the organisation can decide on the spot just to refuse someone access to their facilities.

If an organisation such as a gym or sports club provides a public service allowing anyone to use their facilities provided that they pay then they are a service-provider not an association and so do not have the right to discriminate. It doesn't matter what they call themselves or if they call their charge a 'membership fee'.

Some organisations may be both associations and service-providers. A golf club, for example, might have members but also be open to the public. The club may have the right to discriminate when it comes to selecting its members but not if you wish to play golf as a member of the public.

Of course, in reality, most sports clubs want all the members they can get so will probably welcome you and your subscription fee with glee. If they don't and you still want to join, you may find contacting your local Disabled Persons Organisation (DPO) or Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) helps you get what you want.

I'm newly disabled. How do I stay in sport?

If exercise has been a big part of your life before your accident or illness, you won't want to lose it but you may need to rethink how you do it. That's what this guide is all about: doing sport differently. But it's also part of something wider: doing life differently.

Because every player loses or falls short sooner or later, sport teaches us a lot about dealing with setbacks. These lessons can help you deal with life's wider challenges including ageing, injury or ill-health. The best example here is surely former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammed Ali, the BBC's sports personality of the 20th century. He now has Parkinson's disease and is better known today for his centre for the disease and other philanthropic work.

SPORT TALK

Even though I have a mental health condition, I was able to join my club as a disabled member. If you're on disability living allowance, it shouldn't be a problem. If you're on direct payments these can also be used for gym membership.

Acquiring an impairment requires a period of grieving for what has gone. Finding a new way to exercise might help this process – especially if it involves meeting people who are living with a similar impairment.

If you can carry on doing what you were doing – albeit at a different level or to a different degree of intensity – why not? Sport is only ostensibly about the result. If you’ve played at any level at all you’ll know this. Is it so bad to be a lesser player than you were? Look at footballers like Clive Walker or Steve Claridge who played at the very top and finished rich and varied careers in non-league football. Look at international cricketer Devon Malcolm. In 1994, he bowled the best test spell ever by an England fast bowler (9-57 against South Africa). A decade later, he was playing minor counties and club cricket. Now in his late 40s, he still turns his arm over while training to be an umpire.

Of course, you don’t have to carry on doing the same thing. You can try an adapted version of your sport or take up something completely different. Perhaps think about what you can do off the field (read the story of Norman Whiteside on page 43). See it as a new challenge. But whatever you do, don’t let an impairment also impair the pleasure you take from sport and exercise.

Where do I find out more?

Your local library or local council’s leisure or social services department should have details about facilities, sports clubs and other initiatives in your area. They may also be able to tell you if you are entitled to a leisure pass or any other discounts.

In England, you could also try your county sports partnership (there are 49 of them across the country).

For the governing body of a particular sport, you can search for them on the internet or contact Sport England, Sport Northern Ireland, Sport Scotland or Sport Wales (the overseeing bodies for the home nations).

There are also the many organisations mentioned throughout this guide and in chapter 5 as well as your local disabled person’s organisation.

If you’re looking for other players in your area, web searches and online social networks such as Facebook and Twitter could also be useful.



SPORT TALK

I developed rheumatoid arthritis as a teenager and not being able to play football was a real blow.

After a period of feeling sorry for myself I tried golf as an alternative. It can be expensive, but it is easy enough to get some cheap clubs and play nine holes on public courses.

After getting to a reasonable standard, I started to get bad inflammation in my hands. I stopped playing for a while. After the inflammation settled down my grip was considerably weaker and I couldn't hit a ball without the club twisting in my hands.

I experimented with various things – padding out the grips was a failure but then I discovered weightlifting gloves in a sports shop. These are gloves with padding in the palm and are open at the end of the fingers. The addition of this padding gave me just enough grip to resume swinging a golf club without endangering passers-by.

I don't play regularly, but I can play passably well to enjoy a game with my non-disabled friend. He may hit the ball a lot further than me, but I play steady and reasonably straight and feel very smug when I catch up with him looking for his ball in the trees.

Some tips I'd pass on to anyone thinking of trying golf:

- » Technique makes a major difference, pay for three or four lessons to get started with the right habits
- » Only use four or five clubs and putter, you have much less weight to carry and you will get used to the clubs you have
- » If you find you get on better with irons than woods, don't use woods at all. And also this can work vice versa as you can get woods that go all the way up to No 9 (you might not understand what I'm on about here yet but you soon will once you start playing)

There's that famous quote often attributed to Mark Twain about golf being a good walk spoiled. But I've never been one for walking so one of the best things about playing golf for me is hiring a cart.



SPORT TALK

I began sailing in 2002 when I had already turned 50.

I'd been a wheelchair-user since the mid 90s and after the initial difficulties coming to terms with it, I was looking around for something to do. I'd always been very active.

I was in the habit of going to the annual Mobility Roadshow and I decided one year to visit the RYA Sailability stand. They were very welcoming and helpful and assured me that even though I could not climb in and out, I could access a boat with the aid of a hoist.

I started going to the Sailability centre at Rutland Water and at the end of my third full day I was sailing solo. Now I'm a qualified Royal Yachting Association assistant instructor showing other disabled sailors how to use the sails and the wind and how to steer.

We use specially-designed access dinghies, which cannot capsize. Nationally, Sailability clubs have enabled over 20,000 disabled people to experience sailing.

Sailing is freedom. That's the word that covers everything. It's exhilarating. It's exciting. To see young people sailing for the first time is such a thrill. Coming aboard via the hoist some are nervous at first but within minutes they have a smile on their face. The camaraderie across all ages is tremendous. We have a member in his 90s who still sails and several in their 80s.

My advice is just try it. I've never met anyone who has tried it and not liked it. It's not expensive (Rutland Sailability charge £5 for the first visit with adult membership less than £50 a year and £15 for under 17s.) And it's totally safe. We have buoyancy aids just like non-disabled sailors, but to tell you the truth the only people I've ever seen fall overboard have not been disabled.

3: On the touchline

From washing the kit to training the team to balancing the books

We can't all score in the FA Cup Final.
But Norman Whiteside did.

When he found the net for Manchester United in the 1983 final, the 18 year-old became the youngest player ever to do so. A year earlier he had become the youngest player to appear in the World Cup finals, beating a record set by the great Pele. He could have been one of the very best but a series of injuries forced him out of the game in what should have been his prime. He was just 26.

Whiteside turned his tough times into something that could help those still playing. He'd spent so much time with the United physiotherapist that he thought about retraining as one but in the end qualified as a chiropodist and podiatrist. He then went to work for the Professional Footballers Association checking out younger professionals for lower limb problems – a job that brought him into contact with nearly every club in the league.

There are an incredible number of jobs like this behind the scenes in sports – on and off the pitch. Some require specific skills, most just require your enthusiasm and commitment.

Could I have a career in sport?

Yes. Sport and fitness has become a major industry, offering a wide variety of careers to a wide variety of people with a wide variety of aptitudes and interests. Some require certain academic qualifications, others certain practical skills.

Yes, there are barriers to disabled people working in the industry, especially other people's attitudes but the equalities legislation is there to support you and the fact is that many disabled people already work in sport and fitness.

There are careers with national or regional sporting bodies and in local sports facilities or with local clubs.



SPORT TALK

Without the two million adult volunteers who contribute at least one hour a week to volunteering in sport, community sport would grind to a halt.
Sport England

There are managerial and administrative posts as well as practical ones involving training, coaching, health and rehabilitation. Many of the jobs mentioned under 'What can I do?' on page 45 can be paid or unpaid depending on who you're doing them for.

If you're interested, discuss it with a careers professional. Check out the careers sections of the websites of the organisations you're interested in. The Sports Leaders UK website – www.sportsleaders.org – will also be useful.

What about volunteering?

About one person in four volunteers at least once a month in the UK and interest is growing. But according to Sport England, research carried out by Scope and Leonard Cheshire suggests that only 6% of disabled people regularly volunteer within the community. They point out that if more disabled people volunteered within sport then more disabled people would participate and clubs would be 'more equitable, inclusive and representative of our community'. It's up to us to take up the challenge.



SPORT TALK

You always get setbacks – in sport and in life. It really helps if you have someone who believes in you.

I'd always loved sport. I was a wheelchair-racer in my teens and had done some coaching. I wanted to do GCSE PE but the exam board wouldn't allow disabled people to do it. So my teachers changed board, changed the criteria and I became the first disabled person in the borough to take GCSE PE.

It meant I was able to go to university to study Sport Development and Coaching but it didn't work out. I was bullied and the staff were unable or unwilling to make the 'reasonable adjustments' to accommodate me.

I hit rock-bottom. I was clinically depressed. But Michelle, one of my old athletics coaches, got in touch and told me I shouldn't waste what I'd done. She got me into voluntary work with my local borough which led me to completing my coaching licences. Eventually I went back to university, a different one, and graduated with a 2:1.

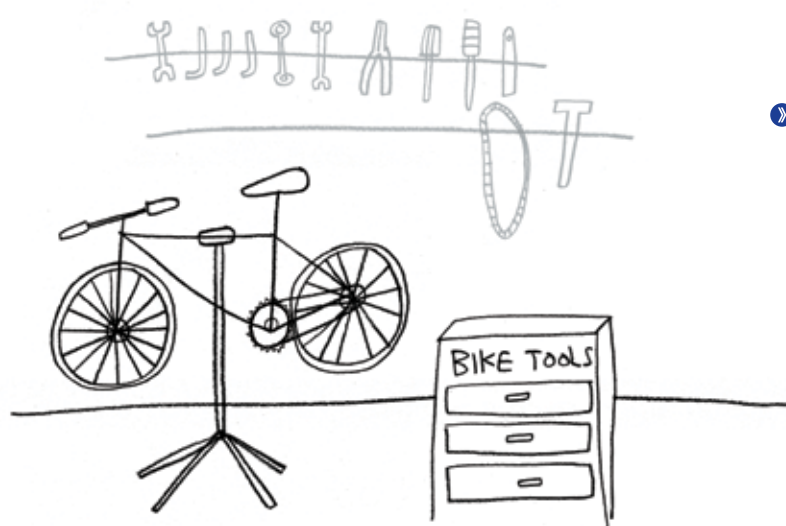
Now I'm working as an Athletics Activator in Tower Hamlets on RUN!, an England Athletics Olympic legacy initiative.



SPORT TALK

I'm deaf, blind and self employed, running my own cycle repair and servicing business (www.cyclesurgery-peterborough.com). Yes, it is possible for blind people to do electrical wiring, true buckled bike wheels and use power tools. I've still got all my fingers and no one has been electrocuted. I fitted out my workshop myself – the workbenches, lighting circuits, powerpoints and tool racks.

I first trained and qualified as a cycle engineer in 1981. Always having been a bit of a perfectionist I work to very high standards. Bikes are road vehicles and should be safe. It isn't just about making a living – it gives me great satisfaction to be contributing to the community and doing something that others value and benefit from.



What can I do?

Here are some of the ways you could help:

- » **Coaching/managering** – if you understand a sport or activity well, why not bring on the next generation through coaching? You don't have to be able to do it well (though it helps), you just need to know what's what. There are disabled coaches of both disabled and non-disabled athletes. If you're also a good motivator and tactician you could think about being a manager. These roles can be very competitive. After all, there may be two dozen players in the squad but there's only one manager.
- » **Refereeing/umpiring** – most sports are desperate for decent referees and umpires so if you're drawn in this direction, know your stuff and can cope with the physical and mental strain of the job, you may well be able to find an opportunity.
- » **Clubs and committees** – sports administration is complicated and many find the committee work and the discussion it involves tedious so if committees are your thing you could make yourself popular.

- » **Volunteering** – in addition to the more formal roles, there are a whole host of jobs behind the scenes in sports clubs including making the tea, driving the mini-bus, washing the kit, running the league ladders, organising the socials, fundraising, doing the accounts, tending the pitch, taking the photos, building the website. The list is endless. If you have a skill, your local sports clubs may well be able to make use of it.

These jobs require different levels of skills and time commitment. Managing, coaching and officiating require a lot of both. Some other voluntary roles less so. There are many jobs that can be done by anyone in whatever time they have to give.



SPORT TALK

I have cerebral palsy and use a wheelchair constantly. I do support a league team – Middlesbrough – but I prefer the non-league game. I'm nearer the action and I find that the clubs I take an interest in, take an interest in me as a supporter.

When I was a child Tonbridge Angels FC started using the school's facilities for training and I took the opportunity to chat to some of the players. I realised these were just ordinary blokes who played the game for the love of it more than for what they could gain (financially) from it.

I'm now an ardent fan of Steeton AFC of the West Riding County Amateur League.

A club at this level needs all the help it can get and it wasn't long before the editor of the club programme roped me in to write articles and to help with fund raising. I would now go so far as to say that many of the staff and players are among my closest friends and I was thrilled when a few years ago I was asked if I would like to become the club's Honorary Vice President, a position I'm proud to hold.

I would advise the disabled fan wanting to be involved in the game rather than merely turning up to watch it, to look to the lower leagues where your attendance is noted – and ask not what the club can do for you but what you can do for the club.



SPORT TALK

I remember one night in hospital when I was around six years old. I was struggling to cope with not being able to see very far.

My doctor pointed out of the window and asked, 'What can you see there?'

I looked at the white light I saw in the distance and replied: 'The moon'.

The doctor responded: 'That's around 250,000 miles away. How far do you want to see?'

It was from this point on that I strove to focus on what I could do, rather than what I could not do.

I loved sport from a very young age and come from a sporty family. I found participating difficult but still wanted to be involved in other ways. I guess that I took a rather strange route. I took a BSc in Social Psychology and an MSc in Applied Psychology.

I moved into sport when I studied for my PhD back at Loughborough University in 2005. This focused on understanding the nature and importance of the coach-athlete relationship and identifying ways in which it could be maintained.

I'm now a Lecturer in Sport Psychology at Brunel University. I also research athlete welfare in sport. For example, I work with the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit to help safeguard vulnerable children within sport. I am also involved in other projects to promote athlete welfare in the USA and Japan.

For anyone who has an impairment and wants to work in sport, I say 'go for it!' Find out what you can do, think about what you want to do and work out how you can make it happen. In fact, due to the technology that is now available, I would not view myself as being disabled. I can lecture 300 undergraduates with a PowerPoint presentation as well as a sighted person.

How do I get involved?

Think about what you want from volunteering – new skills, fun, a chance to contribute – and about what you have to offer – skills, time and so on.

Get in touch with the sports club or organisation you want to volunteer for. They'll be delighted by your enthusiasm. Talk to them. Make sure there's a mutual understanding of what you want and what they want and a reasonably close fit between the two. Don't be shy about asking questions.

Although interest in volunteering is growing, it is often on a short-term basis, often instead of paid work, so if you're in a position to make a long-term commitment you'll be particularly welcome.

If you're not sure exactly where or what you want to do, contact your local volunteer centre or a national organisation such as:

Volunteering UK

(www.ukvolunteering.org)

Volunteer Scotland

(www.volunteerscotland.org.uk)

Volunteering Wales

(www.volunteering-wales.net)

Volunteer Now in Northern Ireland

(www.volunteernow.co.uk).



SPORT TALK

I am a wheelchair-user who loves sport of any kind and will give anything a go. I throw the javelin and swim regularly.

I volunteer for Ican2 which helps disabled children do various sports and activities including sit skiing, tandem riding, learning to ride a bicycle or a tricycle, adapted handbikes, and go-karts. I love seeing the children smile doing something new. I have just qualified as a swimming coach to disabled people and volunteer at my local swimming club.

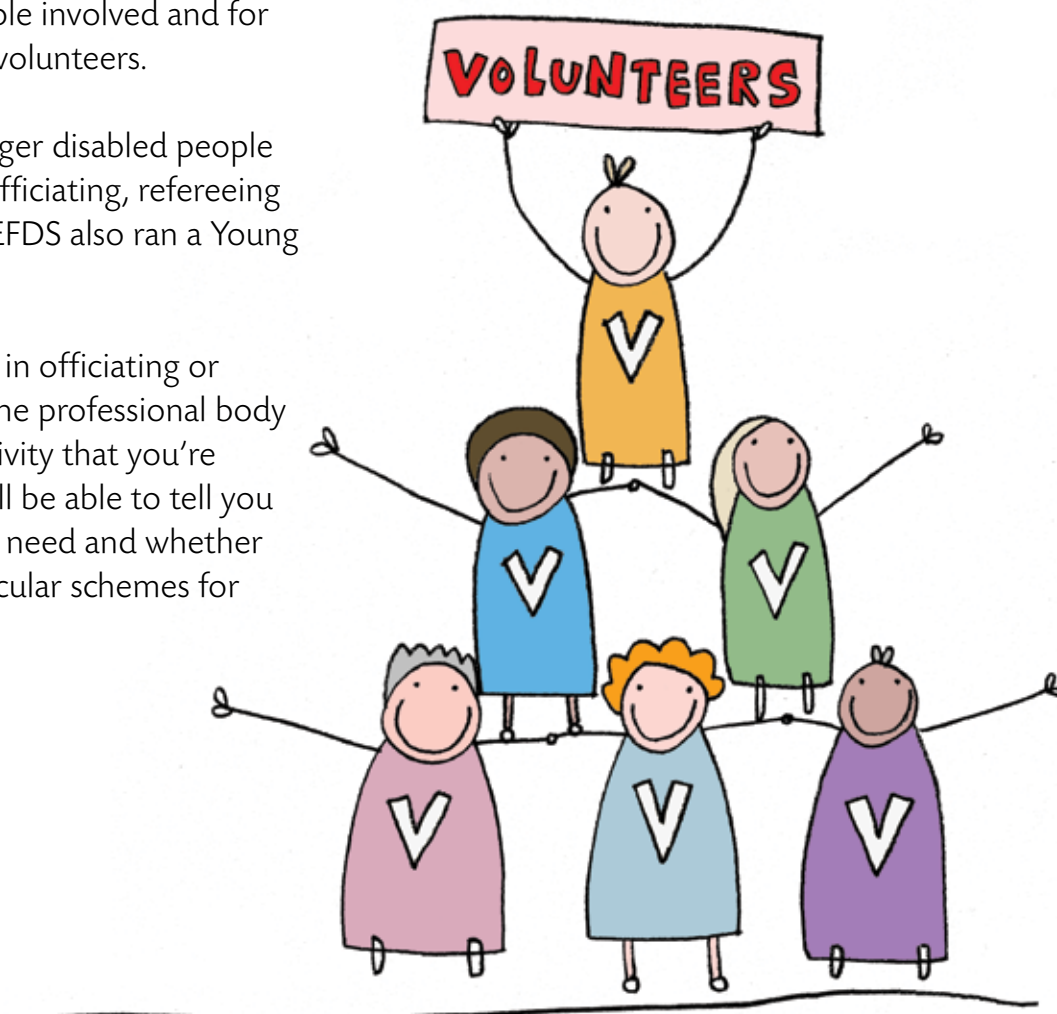
In my area, there are many activities out there for young disabled people but not much for those over 18. It would be nice to be able to do something to change this state of affairs so that they don't feel lost with nowhere to go at 18.

In England, the Do-It: volunteering made easy website – www.do-it.org.uk – enables you to search by your interest type (including sport and outdoor activities) and postcode. The Vinspired site – www.vinspired.com – offers much the same facility for 14-25 year olds. You could also talk to your County Sports Partnership or the national body of the sports you're interested in.

Disability sports organisations are particularly interested in making it easier for disabled sports fans to volunteer. For example, the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) project Inspire to Lead was run in partnership with Sports Leaders UK, Youth Sport Trust and Sport England to increase the number of disabled people in sports leadership and volunteering and to identify how best to support this. The resources they produced, full of good ideas and good practice, show what is possible and are useful reading both for clubs who want more disabled people involved and for would-be disabled volunteers.

To encourage younger disabled people to get involved in officiating, refereeing and umpiring, the EFDS also ran a Young Officials scheme.

If you want to train in officiating or coaching, contact the professional body for the sport or activity that you're interested in. They'll be able to tell you what training you'll need and whether they have any particular schemes for disabled people.





SPORT TALK

I went to Tottenham Hotspur FC to watch a junior match for people who are partially sighted. My impressions and expectations of partially-sighted football were completely wrong. Spurs introduced me to a volunteering coaching project set up with Haringey Mencap called The Spurs Project: Sport for People Under Represented in Society.

I was blown away by the positivity in and around the project and instantly became a volunteer. Along with being a coach I was also able to learn more about being a support worker within Haringey Mencap. I went on to work full time within the day centre as a support worker and eventually to become a service manager.

I really enjoyed my time working on the project because it was able to teach me more about working with disabled people on a daily basis but also it taught me that I had certain skills that I was not aware of and that I was looking to develop.

Through this work I really found myself and also regained my confidence as a person and a sportsman. I got the opportunity to gain a number of qualification, in football, community

leadership and working with disabled people.

Now as Senior Inclusion Projects Officer I'm a full time member of staff in the Disability and Inclusion Department at the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation.

To other disabled people who want to work in sport, I would say be open to volunteering because it can always lead to a positive. It can allow you to find out if you have an interest in a certain area of work and can provide valuable experiences.

Being visually impaired hasn't made me a better coach but it has made me more aware of people's needs and I make sure that I am even more prepared and organised when delivering a sports session.

Sport is a fantastic motivator and is a vehicle to provide opportunities for people to develop. It can provide opportunities for individuals to learn, exercise, access qualifications, socialise and build on existing skills. The skills that I have developed through sport are completely transferable into everyday life and any working environment.

4: Watching

Your guide to accessible spectating

Spectating is one of the easiest ways to get involved in sport. Enjoy it – and who knows, watching may inspire you to have a go yourself.

The Olympic ideal – swifter, higher, stronger – is easy to understand but living up to it is harder. The same is true off the field. The Olympic ideal for access – 1% of capacity for wheelchair-users, 1% for ambulant disabled people – is easy to understand but outside of purpose-built Olympic venues, achieving it remains a challenge.

Having said that, the UK's sports grounds are becoming more accessible. Not as quickly as we might like but it is happening. Some older stadia are difficult to adapt but things are changing in the newer grounds and the sporting authorities are beginning to understand the issues around access. Generally six groups are targeted:

- » wheelchair users
- » people with limited mobility
- » people with visual impairments
- » people with hearing impairments
- » people with learning difficulties
- » people with a psychological condition or mental health conditions

To take the national sport of football as an example, European football's governing body UEFA estimate that half a million disabled football fans attend matches in Europe. UEFA's guide 'Access For All' embraces the social model of disability and covers everything from access to the ground to access to the hot dogs. It recommends access audits, consultation, disability officers and clear mission statements.

The guide points out that this is not an issue that concerns only disabled people since 'research has shown that the actual percentage of people who require accessible infrastructure exceeds 20% at any given time'. This includes people with injuries (supporters, staff and players), pregnant women, children, older volunteers and supporters, shorter people, people not familiar with the local language and first-aiders and emergency services. That's a lot of potential users.

If you do encounter the increasingly rare club that thinks disability access is not worth the effort, it might be a good idea to show them this list.

Generally, the newer the stadium the better the access. So, of the top football clubs, access at Arsenal and Manchester City or the new Wembley, for example, is better than at Manchester United or Chelsea. But don't take anything for granted, even with new stadia.

How do I know if my team's ground is accessible?

If you're a disabled spectator you'll want to find out about Level-Playing Field (www.levelplayingfield.org.uk), the national charity representing disabled fans of all sports in England and Wales formerly known as the National Association of Disabled Supporters. They began as a football supporters organisation but now cover all sports. Their website includes access information on many grounds including most football clubs.

In the UK, there are several laws relating to sports grounds and access and at the time of writing there was a further sports grounds safety bill going through parliament.

The current legislation is brought together in 'Accessible Stadia: A good practice guide to the design of facilities to meet the needs of disabled spectators and other users'. (Although this guide was put together by the football industry, it is referred to as

the guidance document for all sports facilities in Approved Document M, the government's building regulations on access to and use of buildings.)

It includes guidance on, for example, the number of wheelchair spaces. The current minimum is six for a stadium under 10,000 capacity going up to 210 plus 2 per 1,000 for a capacity above 40,000 (so, the new Wembley stadium, for example, has 310 wheelchair places and associated carer seats for a capacity of 90,000). But, of course, it not just about wheelchairs. Gary Deards of Level-Playing Field says: 'there should be as much ambulant disabled access as wheelchair access. Ideally, you should be able to sit where you want without too many stairs and/or with a personal assistant or guide dog or whatever you need with you.'

If you don't think your particular needs are being met at the sports grounds you visit, it's worth having a look at the guide and seeing what the relevant targets are.

However, the key point as far as this guide is concerned is that under the equality legislation, sports grounds and stadia need to be as accessible as possible and to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure this.

Currently, there is room for improvement. In February 2011, Level-Playing Field (then called the National Association of Disabled Supporters) told the Culture, Media and Sport Committee of the House of Commons inquiry into football governance that of the 92 professional football clubs in the top four divisions:

- » 13 provided the minimum recommended numbers of wheelchair user spaces and amenity seats
- » 37 enabled disabled away fans to sit with their own supporters
- » 21 provided a full audio described commentary service for visually-impaired fans
- » poor sightlines in disabled seating areas were commonplace with views often completely blocked
- » few offered shelter from the rain in the designated areas
- » accessible parking and amenities were often poor or nonexistent

Most sports grounds are trying to improve. The vast majority of football, rugby and cricket grounds are not filled to capacity every week and clubs want as many supporters as they can get. According to Level-Playing Field, rugby league and horse racing are two sports that have a particularly open attitude on access and are keen to improve. Cricket, like an express fast bowler, is also making great strides.

But what is available and to whom varies enormously. Do your homework before setting out. Contact the club in advance and find out exactly what they offer. Ask about ticket prices for you and, if you need one, for a personal assistant to accompany you. Speak to the disability liaison officer if they have one. Also contact the supporters club and/or disabled supporters club if there is one. If you're travelling to an unfamiliar part of the country, the local organisation of disabled people might be able to help too.

How can I help my club do better on access?

Do your own access audit and report back.

Then encourage them to have a professional access audit. An access auditor can tell them what they need to do to make their ground more accessible and how to do it most cost-effectively. Make sure the auditor is registered with the National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC), an independent register of accredited Access Auditors and Access Consultants who meet professional standards and criteria established by a peer review system.

This is not expensive. Level Playing Field amongst others can arrange effective NRAC audits within the budget of all but the tiniest club.



SPORT TALK

I'm a person who is totally blind, I follow Watford and Manchester City. I didn't renew my Watford season ticket this year as they've effectively quadrupled the price for blind fans. True, it was low before but now it's the same price as for fully sighted fans. Money's tight and you need to prioritise.

The club is better than some and worse than others. Like about 25 other clubs, they provide an audio commentary via the Soccer Sight project. Although it's now finished, this project helped establish a dedicated commentary with headsets that can be used anywhere in the ground. I can also get BBC so sometimes I have one ear listening to one and one listening to the other.

Some commentators are really good; others waffle on about all sorts. Sometimes the pitch-side effects mike is too loud – you don't need that if you're actually in the ground.

The best club I've been to in the last 15 years or so as a blind fan is Norwich. They give you everything when you arrive at the turnstile, so you don't have to go back and forth for headsets and audio programmes and so on.

Ipswich is good too because they have a disabled liaison officer who is disabled himself so understands the problems we encounter. That makes a real difference. Arsenal was good as well.

I can't pretend there aren't problems sometimes with very few clubs using alternative formats for providing info etc for their blind fans. Chelsea was terrible considering the amount of money that has been pumped into the club. The stewards didn't even know what a white stick was.

But the atmosphere and friendship is still great, even at the smaller clubs where they have more time for you.

My advice to blind people hesitating about going to football is go. There's no real danger. The other team's fans may give you some banter over the team you are supporting, but they will normally look after you if you need help. I've never had a remark about my impairment, just the colour of my shirt.

The more of us who go to games, the better the clubs will become at understanding what we need.

Kick it Out, the campaign against discrimination in football which began with racism, now has an Equality Standard that encompasses six areas of diversity: race, religion, age, gender, disability and sexual orientation. There are three levels of compliance – preliminary, intermediate and advanced – and to meet even the preliminary level, clubs must commission an external disability access audit using the Accessible Stadia document mentioned on page 52.

But that's only the first stage. To meet the Advanced level – and only Arsenal have so far done this – clubs need to implement the auditor's recommendations.

Encourage your club to share access information: a page on the website is easy to do and can make a big difference, a leaflet or booklet for people booking tickets, information for away fans. Often away teams sell tickets with no idea of the access arrangements at the home team's ground.

Encourage your club to do the little things that can make a big difference such as being flexible about where people sit or using their existing audio-visual facilities as much as possible. Announcing substitutions/replacements, goals/tries/wickets, bookings/expulsions and other information both on the PA and on

the screens in the ground doesn't just help spectators with visual or hearing impairments but also those who have popped out to the toilet, are temporarily unsighted or don't recognise your team's exciting new Brazilian signing.

Record the match programme and make it available on CD (from the programme sellers) or as an mp3 on the club website. Doing this professionally will only cost a couple of hundred pounds but you can probably find a fan who will do it for next to nothing.

Ask the manager and players to give up five minutes to read their contributions. No studios are needed. Modern technology means they can record themselves on their mobile phones. Again it's not only partially-sighted fans who benefit. All those people driving home in their cars after the match can listen to the match programme.

Time and again disabled spectators told us that the single thing that would make the biggest difference was better staff training. Understanding the issues makes it far easier for stewards and other staff to respond appropriately. Clubs with well-trained disability-aware staff don't need to think of every possible eventuality in relation to every possible impairment in advance because they can be confident that their staff can respond intelligently to any situation in the interests of both club and supporter.

Can I be turned away?

As far as spectators are concerned, most sports clubs are not associations. If the general public is able to enter a sports ground to spectate then a service is being provided and it should be accessible to everybody with 'reasonable adjustments' made if necessary. It doesn't matter if entry is paid or free.

Use your common sense. If you're going to a ground that you're not familiar with, consider contacting them in advance if you will need specific adjustments. This makes 'reasonable adjustments' possible. The organisers are far less likely to be able to help if you turn up unannounced five minutes before the start, especially if you have a particular need they're not used to.

Take into consideration the resources of the club you're dealing with. It's perfectly reasonable to expect to be able to get into flagship stadia like the Olympic stadia, Wimbledon, Lords or Twickenham but smaller clubs, especially non-professional ones, often have to make do with what little they've got and that includes the supporters. You might have ideas for how they can improve even with limited resources.

Could a club with a non-accessible ground be taken to court?

In theory, yes. The Equality Act is clear and it would be difficult for some of our bigger sports clubs to argue that they couldn't afford to make the adjustments. As Gary Deards of Level-Playing Field puts it: 'everybody has issued guidance and every club knows what to do, it's now a question of doing it.' (You can find much of that guidance at: www.levelplayingfield.org.uk/Football-Authorities-Guidance.aspx).

However, fans are reluctant to take their teams to court. Confidentiality agreements have been used in out-of-court settlements. But, if a club were taken to court, it could set a precedent that could revolutionise access to sports grounds. Watch this space.

SPORT TALK

I've been going to sports grounds, football, cricket and rugby, for a long time and I remember how following the recommendation of the Taylor Report, set up after the Hillsborough Disaster in 1989, many grounds became all-seater or mainly seated almost overnight. Why can't they do the same on disability access?



SPORT TALK

I hold a season ticket at Arsenal because for a disabled fan – I’m a wheelchair user – Arsenal is the best ground by far. Lifts galore. Loads of different viewing spaces for wheelchair and visual and ambulant disabled people. Commentary for blind people. One of my carers is a Arsenal fan so it combines football, best mate and sometimes beers!

At Arsenal I have no barriers. But were I not a season ticket holder there are only a limited amount of disabled wheelchair spaces for each game. I would go into some form of ballot if applying for a game. This happens for away matches. Football clubs have limited wheelchair spaces, especially older grounds and at some grounds there are only a handful of spaces for away wheelchair users. When applying, the tickets go to those fans with most credits.

I am also an England Fan member and whilst getting tickets for home internationals is easy, travelling away to remote countries requires masses of planning and luck.

A major problem for disabled England fans is the need to make a phone call to book tickets. Non-disabled fans can use the internet. Why? Better use of the internet, especially for ticketing would really improve things for disabled fans.

Overcome barriers by learning the system. If I want credits for tickets for cup games I have to go to 3-4 away games per season for three seasons running. So I strategically pick grounds that are nearby. I also utilise my carers and direct payments to fund my independence at matches. Often a carer will work for free on the basis of their match day ticket being paid/ subsidised.

More disabled parking would make a big difference. But my advice to would-be fans is just get on with it – you won’t know whether you like it until you try it. Ring clubs. Ask how to go about it – they are very helpful usually.

5: Who can help?

Information, advice and further support

A good place to start locally is your library or council leisure or social services department. You'll also find the national sporting bodies will help if they can. However, there are so many possibilities, we can list only a fraction of them here. If you can't find what you're looking for, have a good look online. You'll be surprised how much is out there.

General starting points

Sport England

Address: 3rd Floor Victoria House,
Bloomsbury Square,
London WC1B 4SE
Tel: 08458 508508
Web: www.sportengland.org

www.activeplaces.com

Sport England directory including information on over 50,000 facilities.

Sport Scotland

Address: Doges, Templeton on
the Green, 62 Templeton
Street Glasgow G40 1DA
Tel: 0141 534 6500
Web: www.sportscotland.org.uk

Sport Wales

Address: Sophia Gardens,
Cardiff CF11 9SW
Tel: 0845 045 0904
Web: www.sportwales.org.uk

Sport Northern Ireland

Address: House of Sport,
2a Upper Malone Road,
Belfast BT9 5LA
Tel: 028 9038 1222
Web: www.sportni.net

English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS)

Address: SportPark, Loughborough
University, 3 Oakwood
Drive, Loughborough,
Leicestershire LE11 3QF
Tel: 01509 227750
Web: www.efds.co.uk

Website includes link to Inclusive Fitness Initiative database of accessible gyms and facilities (or call 0114 2572060 – add prefix 18001 for Typetalk). EFDS also host Disability Sport Events – www.disabilitysport.org.uk

Disability Sports Wales

Address: Sport Wales National
Centre, Sophia Gardens,
Cardiff CF11 9SW

Tel: 0845 846 0021

Web: www.fdsww.org.uk

Scottish Disability Sport

Address: Caledonia House, South
Gyle, Edinburgh EH12
9DQ

Tel: 0131 317 1130

Web: www.scottishdisabilitysport.com

Disability Sports NI

Address: Adelaide House, Falcon Rd
Belfast BT12 6SJ

Tel: 028 9038 7062

Textphone: 028 9038 7064

Web: www.dsni.co.uk

Other useful general websites**England's County Sports Partnerships**

Web: www.cspnetwork.org

Parasport

Web: www.parasport.org.uk
If you want to get into paralympic sports, this is the place to start.
(Also **Ability v Ability** – for schools)

Web: www.abilityvability.co.uk

Federation of Disability Sports

Organisations in Yorkshire and Humber

Web: www.fdsow.co.uk

Interactive

Web: www.interactive.uk.net
Lead strategic development agency for sport and physical activity for disabled people in London.

Get Active London

Web: www.getactivelondon.co.uk
Search site for all Londoners which provides details on the inclusivity of the activities it lists.

Ableize

Web: www.ableize.com/recreation-sports
Sports section of disability resources site run by disabled people.

Direct Enquiries

Web: www.directenquiries.com
Online access guide including sports facilities.

Disabled Go

Web: www.disabledgo.com
Online access guide including sports facilities.

Youth Sport Trust

Web: www.youthsporttrust.org
Run many programmes promoting sport and volunteering.

Organisations for particular sports

We can't list every sport here so we've tried to include those mentioned in the guide and/or particularly popular with disabled people.

Angling

- » www.bdaa.co.uk

Archery

- » www.archerygb.org
- » www.british-wheelchair-archery.org.uk

Athletics

- » www.uka.org.uk/

Badminton

- » www.badmintonengland.co.uk

Boccia

- » www.gb-boccia.org

Cricket

- » www.ecb.co.uk/development/disability-cricket
- » www.cfpd.org.uk (Cricket Federation for People with Disabilities)
- » www.cricketdeafengland.co.uk

Croquet

- » www.croquet.org.uk

Cycling

- » www.britishcycling.org.uk/disability
- » www.handcyclinguk.org.uk

- » www.ctc.org.uk
- » www.companioncycling.org.uk

Equestrian

- » www.rda.org.uk
- » www.britishdressage.co.uk/para_equestrian

Football

- » www.thefa.com/TheFA/WhatWeDo/Equality/DisabilityFootball

Goalball

- » www.goalballuk.com/

Golf

- » www.disabledgolfsociety.com/

Netball

- » www.englandnetball.co.uk/

Rowing

- » www.britishrowing.org/taking-part/adaptive

Running bikes

- » www.racerunning.org
- » www.acerr.org
- » www.rrscotland.org

Sailing

- » www.rya.org.uk/sailability
- » www.jst.org.uk

Shooting

- » www.dtsgb.org.uk (Disability Target Shooting Great Britain)

Sledge hockey

- » www.sledgehockey.co.uk

Snow sports

- » www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk/

Swimming

- » www.swimming.org/britishswimming/disability-swimming
- » www.swimming.org/bigsplash

Table tennis

- » www.etta.co.uk/our-sport-modules/table-tennis-for-people-with-disabilities/

Tennis

- » www.tennisfoundation.org.uk/disabilitytennis/

Volleyball

- » www.volleyballengland.org/getintovolleyball

Walking

- » www.disabledramblers.co.uk
- » www.getwalking.org – section for ‘people with disabilities’

Wheelchair basketball

- » www.gbwbba.org.uk/gbwba
- » www.iwbf.org

Wheelchair curling

- » myweb.tiscali.co.uk/bwcca/

Wheelchair rugby

- » www.gbwr.org.uk

Organisations for people with particular impairments

Back Up

- » www.backuptrust.org.uk
For people with spinal cord injury.

British Amputee & Les Autres Sports Association

- » sites.google.com/a/balasa.org.uk/main

British Blind Sport

- » www.britishblindsport.org.uk/

Cerebral Palsy Sport

- » www.cpsport.org/

Dwarf Sports Association

- » www.dsauk.org

Extremity Games

- » www.extremitygames.com/
Adaptive sports competition, similar to the X Games, for athletes with amputations and limb differences.

Mencap Sport

- » www.mencap.org.uk/sport

Metro

- » metroblindsport.org
London based club for blind and partially sighted people.

Special Olympics

- » www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk

» Doing Sport Differently

A guide to exercise and fitness for people living with disability or health conditions

Transplant Sport UK

» www.transplantsport.org.uk

UK Deaf Sport

» www.ukdeafsport.org.uk

UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability

» www.uksportsassociation.org

Inas

» www.inas.org

The International Federation for sport for para-athletes with an intellectual disability.

Wheelpower

» www.wheelpower.org.uk

National charity for wheelchair sport.

Spectating

Level Playing Field

» www.levelplayingfield.org.uk

Formerly the National Association of Disabled Supporters.

Centre for Access to Football in Europe

» www.cafefootball.eu

UEFA

» uefa.com

(download Access For All V1.0 here: tinyurl.com/uefaaccess)

» Health warning

Experts advise that you should see your GP before starting a new exercise programme if you:

- » Have not done any exercise for 10 years or more
- » Are over 40
- » Have a heart problem
- » Have high or low blood pressure
- » Have joint problems
- » Take painkillers or any other drugs regularly
- » Have back problems
- » Are very overweight or very underweight
- » Are prone to headaches, fainting or dizziness
- » Have a resting heart rate that exceeds 100 beats a minute
- » Have any other medical condition which could interfere with your taking part in an exercise programme

Disability Rights UK



Disability Rights UK has arrived – the merger of The Royal Association for Disability Rights (Radar), the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL) and Disability Alliance (DA) took place on 1st January. This will enable us to offer all the services and campaigns we did before – and more. Our vision is a society where all disabled people can participate equally as full citizens.

Doing Sport Differently – a guide to exercise and fitness for people living with disability or health conditions.

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Thanks to all the people with lived experience of disability or health conditions and Disability Rights UK members who helped write this guide. With special thanks to our sole sponsor Visa, and the project board.

Doing Sport Differently – a guide to exercise and fitness written by and for people living with disability or health conditions. Some positive messages within:

‘I like simply walking – the fresh air, sunshine and exercise...’

‘Once I’m on my cycle, I can go as far or as fast anyone else.’

‘Doing sport challenges pre-conceptions about what disabled people can and can’t do better than almost any activity I can think of.’

‘Sport has boosted my confidence and opened up a whole new world.’

‘Once you start you can’t stop. I never knew I could do all these things. I never knew they could make me feel so good.’

Disability Rights UK would like to thank Visa, sole sponsor of Doing Sport Differently



Disability Rights UK



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