Five principles of universal design for games and activities

Universal design framework

A universal design framework is a tool to progress and maximise the learning of each individual, and can create an accessible, meaningful and challenging experience for the learner. By using the five principles listed here, we are able to create this learning environment for all individuals in a group setting.

With purpose

Every game or activity should have a purpose. The purpose of the game may seem obvious, such as running, jumping or throwing, but there are many more layers you can add to this. Many games incorporate social skills such as teamwork and sharing, and some activities may develop creative thinking and problem solving skills. These motor and cognitive development aspects vary depending on the age and ability level of the participants in your group. Understanding and being intentional with the purpose of a session is a key element to think about when planning activities.

Always engaged

All participants should be engaged throughout the length of an activity. This can take many forms, from modifying the rules so that there are no eliminations, adjusting the size of the area or

height of the target so everyone can achieve success, and altering the competitive element to some games. Other options are thinking of creative ways to engage participants such including their favourite TV show or toy in a game, or utilising more theatre and drama in activities.

Another way to keep all participants engaged is to ensure that each participant has their own piece of equipment. This allows for individual skill development at an appropriate level for that individual, and enables the facilitator to provide specific, observable feedback to each learner.

Everyone included

Much like keeping everyone engaged, adaptations and modifications can be made in order to offer and inclusive environment. Modifications can be made to each game or activity and for every movement skill in order to include participants with a disability, mobility limitation or any form of cognitive or physical diagnosis.

Progressive and challenging

Providing progressive and challenging environments and situations leads to children discovering their own level of optimal challenge, and therefore developing the skill in the most efficient and engaging way. If a task is too difficult too early, a child becomes disengaged, and if a

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task is too easy for a sustained period of time, boredom occurs.

Fun

Fun games and activities keep participants engaged and wanting to come back to that activity in the future. The best time to end an activity is when the participants are having the most fun, which leaves them with a positive experience. Fun games allow for skill development through play, and the focus can be on the process of the movement and not the outcome of the activity.

We can help!

For more information or to consult with us on adaptations or activities, please get in touch!