

Positive language



Using positive language

Changing how we speak to use more positive language can be a challenge and it takes time. The words we use each day towards physical activity itself and those that are engaging in physical activity sets the culture we want to cultivate within our setting. Positive language towards learners and physical activity conveys confidence in the activity and the learner that is engaging in it. Providing encouraging words reassures learners that they are developing a skill and it may not always be easy to achieve, but they will accomplish it at some point.

Using positive language does not mean that the learner cannot receive feedback, receive a critique of their performance or behaviours or that they will always succeed. Positive language is about framing expectations within an activity so that everyone understands what will occur, and using the experiences within the activity to build knowledge, understanding, critical thinking and strategy in order to perform differently next time.

How can I use more positive language in a physical activity setting?

Positive language can be used to reinforce the learning and expectations within an activity by stating what is going to happen and what we want the learners to do. This differs from listing what the participants are not going to do. For example, when explaining a throwing game between partners we can explain the game this way:

- We are going to throw to our partner
- If you catch three throws successfully you take a step back
- If you drop the ball then you move back to

where you started.

This explanation is short and simple and places all the expectations for the activity upfront so there can be no misunderstanding. What was avoided in this explanation were statements such as:

- Don't kick the ball
- Don't throw it way over your partners head
- Don't throw it too hard

When the activity is underway, reminders to participants can also be positive, such as:

- Remember we are throwing to our partner so they are able to catch it

If the task is either too difficult or too easy for some people, you can use language in a positive way to build knowledge and critical thinking:

- Have you tried using a different ball or object?
- What happens if you use your other hand?
- Would it be more difficult to catch with one hand?
- What aspect are you finding difficult? How can we modify that?

Facilitating this way takes practice, but leads to more engagement, increased communication, understanding of the learners' abilities, increased confidence and motivation and many more attributes that lead to further engagement in physical activity.