

Value: Respect and acceptance of individual differences
Activity: Obstacle course - how to use adapted equipment

GENERAL GOAL

Students gain personal experience of increased independence by using adapted equipment for persons with various disability types to overcome environmental challenges.

SPECIFIC GOALS

- To learn the basic principles of wheelchair handling and other assistive devices such as crutches and walkers.
- To experience and understand accessibility and inaccessibility.
- To learn to help each other appropriately.

ENVIRONMENT

Indoor (sports hall) or outdoor (playground).

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

- Various objects to create obstacles: cones, mats, wobbling board, (imitation of a) curb, (imitation of a) door.
- Chalk.
- Assistive devices: wheelchairs, petrabike, walkers, crutches.

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITY

Session leader and assistants and if possible, a wheelchair user.

STARTING THE ACTIVITY

The session leader begins by describing the equipment. The session leader asks for a volunteer to help introduce and demonstrate how each piece of equipment is properly used. Safety issues are emphasized throughout the demonstration (e.g., lean forward in the wheelchair, spatial awareness).



RUNNING THE ACTIVITY

The session leader demonstrates how the students are to move through the obstacle course. Each obstacle within the course represents a real life situation:

- moving up and down curbs.
- reaching for high objects.
- opening and closing doors.
- manoeuvring through narrow passages.
- moving through different pathways (e.g., zigzagging between cones).

Students travel through the course in pairs, by means of wheelchairs, petrabikes, walkers and crutches. The pair changes roles after each has completed a tour of the course.

Students have a common tendency to want to push the wheelchair even when not needed. Therefore the session leader should emphasise movement independence. As a result, the student only receives assistance if requested. The task of the session leader in this activity is not only to set up a challenging but also a realistic obstacle course. Moreover, during the activity the session leader's task is to provide the students with verbal cues and feedback which will help them to overcome the obstacles while using all equipment. The session leader also should give physical help only as needed and should encourage the students to ask for each other's help as needed.

GUIDELINES FOR ADAPTATION TO YOUNGER PARTICIPANTS

- Adjust difficulty level of each obstacle.
- Motivate the children by integrating the whole activity into a story (e.g., Peter Pan has to overcome different obstacles while travelling to 'Never Land Area').

GUIDELINES FOR ADAPTATION TO OLDER PARTICIPANTS

- Make the course into a relay race.
- Put more emphasis on the correct use of the equipment.
- Teach students how to assist persons using a wheelchair up and down stairs.

REFLECTION

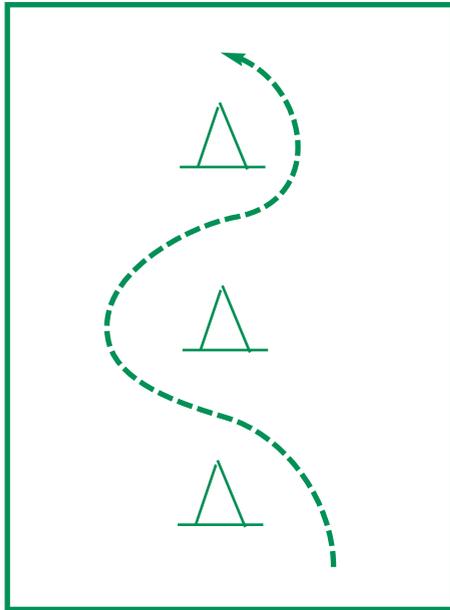
The session leader initiates a discussion in which the students reflect as a group.

Sample questions

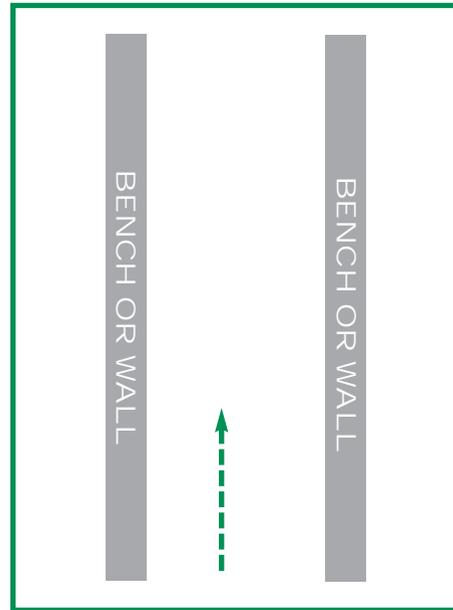
- What were the most difficult challenges you faced during the activity?
- What are similar challenges might persons using a wheelchair find in a daily life?
- Were there obstacles which were impossible to overcome without asking for assistance?
- Can you think of other adapted equipment that persons with a disability use in sport or daily life (e.g., guide dog, prosthetic devices, white cane, etc.)
- In which useful ways can you assist a person with a disability?

As an extra topic in the final discussion, the session leader should have an athlete go through the course, and emphasize the fact that athletes do not face any problems overcoming the obstacles. This confirms the theory that individuals with a similar disability can have various functional potential levels.

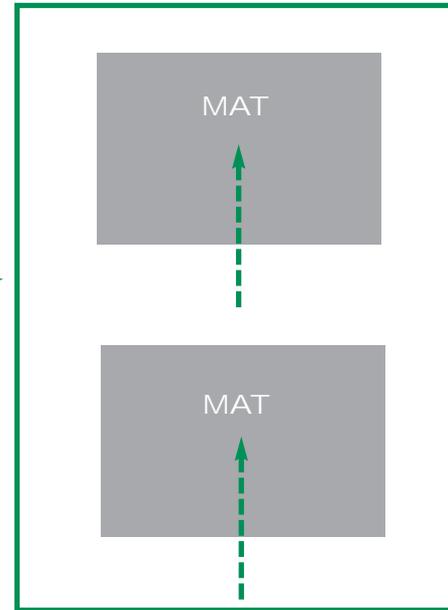
obstacle course examples



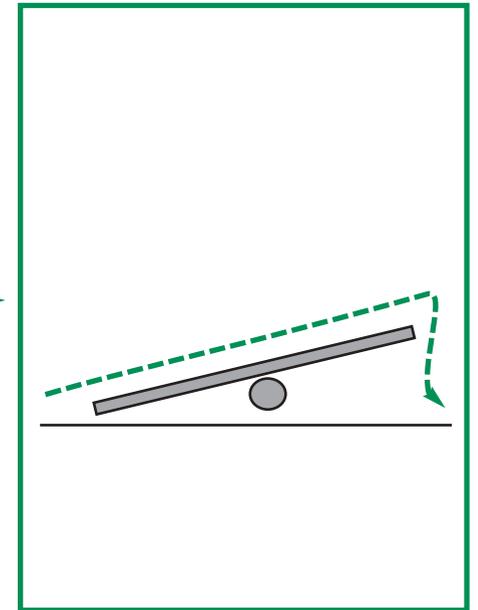
Use cones to create a zigzag path.



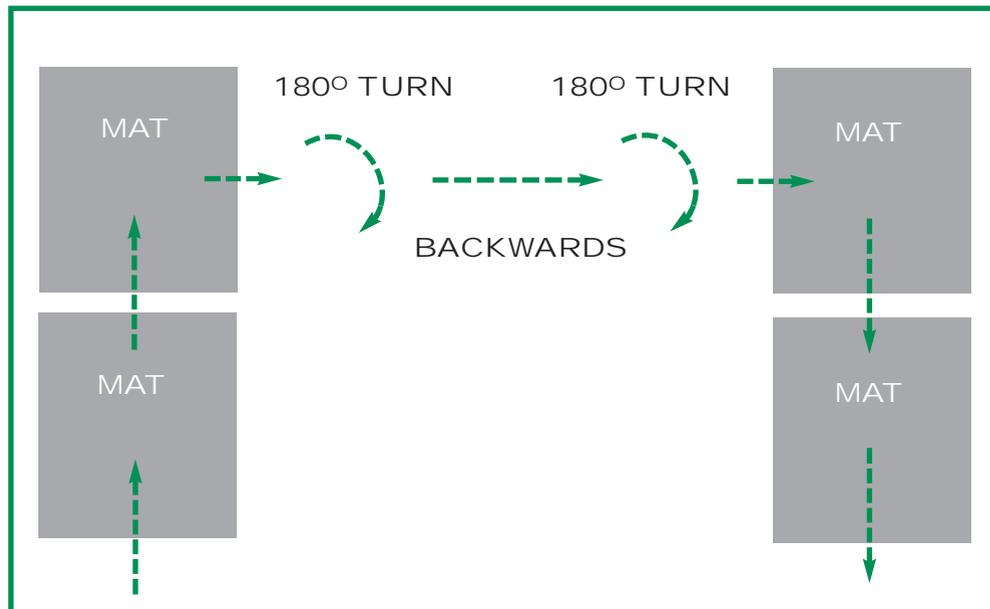
Move through a narrow passage.



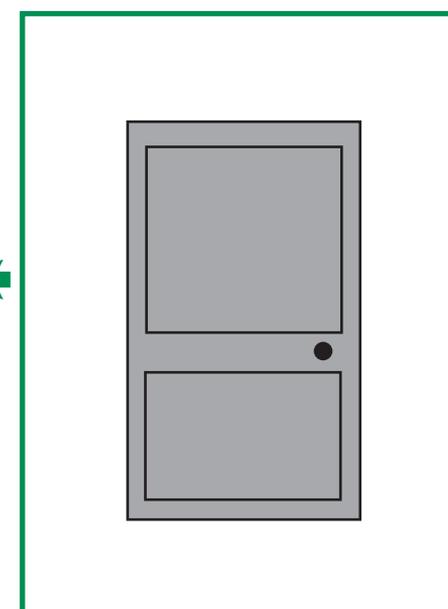
Move up and down curbs using mats.



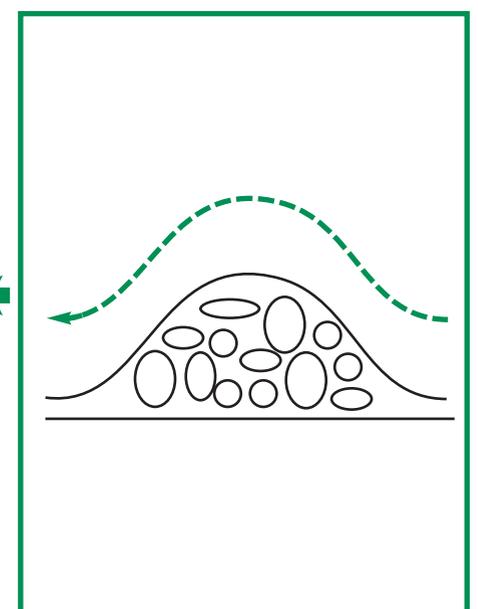
Move through uneven terrain: over the wobbling board.



Moving sideways and backwards.



Open a door, pass through and close it again.



Move through uneven terrain: over a hill.

adapted equipment

petrabike



- Cerebral Palsy
- Therapeutic & Recreational

wheelchair



- Physical disabilities
- Daily life
- Sports independence

walker



- Persons with a physical disability and elderly people
- Standing and/or walking support
- Daily independence

crutches



Photos: Debbie Van Biesen, Jonas Ekströmer

LINKS

Website: www.paralympic.org
PSD Manual: Section Two, Chapter 4

