

TOP TEN TIPS for teaching people with disabilities

When teaching people with disabilities focus on what they can do. These tips assume you are working with a physically disabled student who has never been on the water before.

Assess

Get the student to grip and pull one of your fingers, and to push and pull your arm to give you an idea of their ability to control a tiller, joystick or mainsheet. Determine which course will suit them best and discuss the content. If possible, give each student their own training record card.

Involve

Involve your student in as many aspects of the activity as possible – preparing the boat, rigging, launching etc.

Assist

Give your students physical assistance only when requested, or when absolutely necessary. Some students initially resist the use of a hoist as this may be the only time that they are truly dependent on others. Help overcome this by explaining that the hoist is not just for their benefit, but for the helpers to eliminate the need for lifting.

Adapt

Adapt the boat before going afloat.



You may need to consider electronic assistance, padding or support, connecting a bungee to the joystick or tiller to assist with centralisation.

Communication

Before going afloat establish a method of communication, ie. turn left or right, port or starboard, harden up or bear away. Will direction be indicated by over there, in front, behind, by the compass or the hours on a clock face? Don't change the method until the student has gained experience, allowing nautical terms to be used. A sight-impaired student will know which method would suit them. A hearing-impaired student

may need a 'signer' to establish the method to be used eg. visual or tactile.

Familiarise

Once in the boat, but before setting off, explain each control. The assessment previously made of the student's physical abilities should be confirmed at this stage.

Safe, exciting and achievable

The first trip afloat should be an 'orientation' exercise and is likely to be exciting enough without you doing much more than just sail or drive the

boat. All tasks must take into account the student's abilities and skills and be in accordance with the course on offer. Each successful task can be 'signed off' enabling other instructors to be involved in training your student.

I do. I do and explain. You do

All training should follow this simple principle. Debrief each task and discuss which skills will be tackled next.

Sailing solo

Some students may not have the potential to sail solo, usually due to a learning difficulty. The boat used should therefore be large enough for their parent /carer to accompany them. Involve the student in sailing the boat as much as possible, even if this just means holding a rope.

Carers

Boating can seem to take place in a very strange environment and cause distress in some students. A parent /carer may be better able to calm their fears and recognise symptoms that require urgent attention. Such symptoms can easily be missed by the instructor.

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