

# SUPPORTING COMMUNICATION



Neurodivergent individuals have challenges with how they understand language and how to use language to express themselves. It is important that coaches and leaders make communication as clear as possible.



## TIP 1: USE CLEAR AND PRECISE LANGUAGE

Match the age and language skills of the team. Try avoid unfamiliar terms or phrases until you have taught them, for example “push up” can mean very different things in different sports.



## TIP 2: CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

You can use a variety of ways to have a participant confirm that they have heard and understood from verbal through to gestures.



## TIP 3: ALLOW TIME FOR PROCESSING

Allow time for instructions and information to be processed, sometimes it can take up to six seconds. Avoid repeating as it is then a “new” instruction and can overload the system.



## TIP 4: EYE CONTACT IS NOT ATTENTION

Be aware that some participants may struggle to make or maintain eye contact or sit still, it can even cause physical discomfort and stress. Forcing eye contact can prevent listening and attention to occur so look for other ways to confirm they’ve heard you [see Tip 2].



## TIP 5: AVOID METAPHORS & SARCASM

Colloquial sayings require the other person to know that a specific phrase has a hidden meaning that is often unrelated to the words used. Metaphors can push a logical concrete thinker into unfamiliar abstract territory while hoping they guess the right meaning. And sarcasm is intentionally providing mixed messages between the verbal and non verbal cues. If your aim is be understood then its best to avoid extra layers of confusion.



## TIP 6: DON'T RELY ON FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Relying on facial expressions or body language can add additional layers of confusion and lead to misunderstanding. It can be problematic for certain participants who view each layer of communication independently and often need additional time to process and confirm the overall message. For others they may simply miss these cues as they can be lost in the overall sensory overload being experienced.



## TIP 7: DO USE VISUAL AIDS AND PROMPTS

While subtle messages can be lost (see Tip 6) the use of visual aids, prompts or gestures can be a useful way to back up and reinforce verbal communication. They can even be used to work around verbal communication issues. Using specific gestures or visual aids that all parties understand can help information to be shared both on and off the field.

Find out more using the QR code below!

### TRY THE "RULE OF 1" APPROACH:

**1 VOICE + 1 WAY\* + 1 INSTRUCTION + 1 TIME**  
(then wait up to 10 seconds)

No response? Try 1 more time using the exact approach used the 1st time. Only then do you try changing the way its delivered.

\*use 1 way to communicate i.e. verbal OR visual



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