

Being a tennis coach is the most rewarding job to have. You are able to nurture your tennis players and allow them to develop into confident strong people. The best way to coach is by example. Creating an inclusive environment where anyone can pick up a racquet shows your ability to foster diversity, and in turn will make the players you coach feel welcomed, respected and safe in the flourishing environment you have created.

Qualities and skills of an inclusive coach

Patience	Recognising some participants will take longer to develop skills or make progress than others
Respect	Acknowledging difference and treating all participants as individuals
Adaptability	Having a flexible approach to coaching and communication that recognises individual differences

Organisation	Recognising the importance of preparation and planning
Safe practices	Ensuring every session, whether with groups or individuals, is carried out with the participants' safety in mind
Knowledge	Utilising knowledge of training activities and how to modify them in order to maximise the potential of every participant

Here are a few tips to help you create and maintain a flourishing tennis environment:

- Be inclusive, helpful, kind and encouraging towards all your students you coach
- Understand the people you are coaching and their goals and dreams
- Understand the persons disability and what they can and can't do
- Make practical modifications to the court or equipment where necessary
- Show your understanding of how people with a disability can be integrated into existing tennis sessions where possible
- Understand the impact of your coaching behaviour and the language you use when working with people with a disability.

- Have a 100% inclusive attitude towards everyone in your club, no matter what their ability. Being an inclusive tennis coach encourages others to be inclusive and creates a positive environment for all participants.
- Have an understanding of the different performance pathways your players can take depending on their skills and interests.
- Be aware of existing structures, resources and opportunities for people with a disability
- Make yourself aware of your clubs, and Tennis Australia's behavioral guidelines and the discrimination and anti bullying policies.
- Make sure you alert someone if you think you or someone else is being treated unfairly or being discriminated against. Everyone has the right to participate in a safe and happy environment

Side note: it's important to remember that someone with a disability who comes to play tennis may have had very different experiences trying out different sports. That's why the best thing you can do as a coach is to be as welcoming and accommodating as you can possibly be with the resources you have access to. Chances are you might be the first person to encourage (not discourage) them from playing or getting involved in a sport. What seems like such a small aspect of tennis and your coaching, could be the thing that changes someone's life and perspective on the world. You could be the person they think back to and remember as being the first person to welcome them with open arms, with a can do attitude and a smile on your face. Trust me, that is something very special.