



Inclusive Language Starts with You

The language and behaviour a coach uses around their athletes sets the tone for others and has a direct impact on the safety and well-being of all participants. Here are some tips to help you create a more inclusive and positive sport environment for everyone.

How to Model Respectful Language and Behaviour

Put People First

Get to know individual needs and be sensitive and understanding of them.

Use the Language or Terms That People Use to Describe Themselves

E.g. Respect chosen pronouns.

Use Gender Neutral Language

For athletes, parents and other coaches.

Avoid Assumptions

E.g. Don't assume gender or cultural background based on appearance.

Avoid "Boys vs Girls" Activities

Divide athletes based on birth month, favourite colour or other similar topics.

Be a Visible Ally

E.g. Hang a rainbow flag poster in the lockerroom or add a sticker on your clipboard.

Avoid any word or phrases that have a negative connotation.

Putting It Into Practice – Examples of Inclusive Phrasing

Non-Inclusive Phrases

“Hello boys & girls”
or “Hey guys”

“Tell your mom and dad to
drop you off at the gym”

“They are confined
to a wheelchair”

“They suffer from
Down syndrome”

“You’re playing like girls”
or “Man up”

Inclusive Phrases

“Hello everyone”

“Tell your parent or guardian
to drop you off at the gym”

“They use a
wheelchair”

“They were born with
Down syndrome”

“You’re not playing up to
your potential right now”

Tips for Responding to Inappropriate Language Amongst Your Athletes

Establish a zero-tolerance for
“locker room talk” that ridicules
or puts people down.

Address each
situation consistently.

Don’t ignore it.

Ignoring it will make it seem
acceptable, and it will continue.

Use each situation as a
teaching opportunity – Instead of
reprimanding with “don’t say that”
discuss appropriate alternatives.

Instead of calling someone out,
explain that their language is hurtful.
What one thinks may be casual banter
is actually very upsetting to others.

References: You Can Play Project
Canadian Women & Sport
A Coach's Guide: LGBTQI2S Sport Inclusion - CoachNB