

TENNIS

ANY

ABILITY

VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Coaching Tips Factsheet

WHAT IS VISUALLY IMPAIRED?

Visual impairments (VI) range from blind to partially sighted and can be considered a hidden disability, (i.e. difficult to know whether someone has a vision impairment). A vision impairment can be temporary, (e.g. as a result of illness or injury) permanent, genetic or acquired.

General Information

Coaching people with visual impairments can provide varying levels of challenge, as different people will have varying levels of sight. Some people may see nothing; some may see outlines; some may see a small area in detail but nothing around that area; some may see best in good light; some in poor light; some may have seen in the past and have a memory of how people move; and some may never have seen and will therefore have to learn everything by description.

As a result, effective communication is really important when coaching visually impaired people and you will need to talk to the participant prior to the session to understand their personal support needs.

- Find out how much sight an individual has – do not be afraid to ask how well an individual can see
- Ensure the player knows what is around them and who is present
- Ask them if they want to be shown or guided around the environment
- Ensure that any documentation is accessible to read; use larger font, provide a description of any pictures, word documents are better for screen readers



DID YOU KNOW...

- **OVER 950,000** people in England have a visual impairment (Sport England – Mapping Disability 2016).
- There are different degrees of blindness, someone can be legally blind but still see colours, shapes and varying degrees of light.
- **LESS THAN 2%** of visually impaired people use a white cane to navigate, the rest use guide dogs or nothing at all. So you could pass someone who is visually impaired and not know it.
- VI tennis is one of the newest versions of the game and was first launched in the UK in 2007; it now has **OVER 400 PLAYERS**

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFO

For further information on visually impaired tennis please contact the Tennis Foundation team:

EMAIL: info@tennisfoundation.org.uk

CALL: 084587 20522

VISIT: www.tennisfoundation.org.uk

Player Pathway and Competition

VI tennis is played on a smaller court with raised lines and uses smaller rackets and sound tennis balls. As the sport is in the early stages of development, there aren't yet formalised ITF rules for VI tennis competitions. But there is a generally accepted set of rules used in Great Britain and internationally in an increasing number of visually impaired events and competitions.

This is based on the player's sight with blind players permitted to have up to 3 bounces of the ball prior to returning; partially sighted players have 1-2 bounces of the ball depending on their level of sight.

COACHES' CORNER

When coaching blind or partially sighted players, it is best to adapt your methods using the STEP's Principle. Additional tips to support this can be found below:

- VI sessions should be indoors with minimal background noise and appropriate lighting. Consider colour contrasts for balls, court and background.
- Find out how much sight an individual has to ensure your communication and coaching provision are appropriate. Try not to overcomplicate instructions and always check for understanding.
- You may need to put the participant in the correct position or stance but ask if this is ok prior to touching them.
- If a participant asks to be guided, hold your arm out for the person to hold and keep arm relaxed and still. Do not take hold of the participant yourself, unless you have permission to do so.
- VI sessions should be at venues with accessible transport networks and should not be at the same time as other VI sports (e.g. goalball and blind football).
- Try not to assume the limitations of the player; if they have the ability to play with a mini red ball as opposed to the sound ball then you should include these to continuously develop the player's skills. Can the player be integrated into the other mainstream sessions? Do they want to? Be sure to find out what their goals are.



FOR MORE COACHING TIPS...

...please read our **Disability Tennis Coaching Resource.**

 **Tennis Foundation**