

Training

Whether you are a highly qualified instructor or simply someone who wants to share skills, you might feel daunted at first by the task of working with somebody with an obvious disability. One experienced instructor suggests 'Start by thinking of how you would teach a left-handed person to tie a bowline. If you are right-handed, it will require some thought and many contortions!'

Some may say that being paralysed, missing an arm, or having visual impairment is rather different from being simply left-handed. But the point is to start somewhere and allow the rest to follow.

Focus on the Sport not the Disability

Like everybody else, sailors with disabilities want to improve their sailing skills. Understanding the needs of trainees is an essential part of teaching. As always, good communication is the key. It is important to discuss the aims of the training session and ask how these may be modified to suit the needs of the sailors concerned.

Allow Time

The most likely modification to a training programme involving people with disabilities is allowing more time for such things as:

- Putting on protective clothing.
- Transferring into an out of boats.
- Orientating to the boat and the equipment.
- Planning for efficient use of personal resources.
- Making minor adjustments to the boat or rigging.
- Repeating and reinforcing all steps for people with learning difficulties.

Use qualified instructors if possible:

All ISA qualified instructors have been trained to teach people with disabilities, and in order to emphasise sailing rather than disability, it is desirable to obtain the services of experienced and qualified instructors. We are moving into an age of litigation where qualifications are important. However, to provide support for practice sessions, there will always be a place for the experienced sailor without formal qualifications.

The ISA instructor training programme is accessible to people of all ages, and it may be desirable to look at qualifying some of the volunteers/personnel involved with the disabled training programmes.

Follow Existing Training Programmes

The ISA training schemes are available to all regardless of the disability. They give structure and purpose to training and will automatically ensure your training programme has the endorsement of the National Authority.

Endorsing Certificates

The ISA issues sailing certificates to award achievement. These certificates are issued to anyone who has achieved the relevant national standard (according to ISA criteria). In some cases these certificates may carry endorsements for sailors with disabilities, who have reached the standard of sailing, but through their disability may not have been able to practically carry out the relevant task themselves. e.g.

'Cannot personally carry out capsized drill but is able to direct a novice crew to right the boat.' (Physically disabled sailor)

'Requires sighted look out when at sea.' (Visually impaired sailor)

'May require some able-bodied assistance when picking up a mooring.'
(Physically disabled sailor)

