

Theme 2: Para sports

Unit 4: Let's play the Para sport of boccia

Learning objective:

To become aware of different Para sports and adaptations

Introduction

Boccia or bocce is played by athletes with impairments affecting all four of their limbs. It is similar to bowls and French pétanque, but has no Olympic equivalent. The game requires strategy and pin-point accuracy. Most players use electric wheelchairs for mobility and players are permitted to use assistive devices, like ramps and head pointers, during the games to propel their balls. This has made the game accessible to those with severe limb impairments. The rules also permit people without impairments to act as assistants. They set up ramps and place balls for the Para athletes to propel.

The game is played on a flat, smooth court measuring 12.5m x 6m in size. Made of leather, the balls are slightly larger than tennis balls. Further information about the game can be found in the Overview of Para sports.

Use the Agitos Foundation film, 'I'mPOSSIBLE: Boccia' to introduce the game and the main moves: youtu.be/W9aiKvYLKWM

Activities 1a and b are the main activities for **younger** and **older** students who are new to the game of boccia. These activities can also be used as practice activities for more experienced players before moving on to their main activity; Activity 2.





Activity 1a

Let's get started learning these skills:

propelling balls and other objects to targets using throwing, rolling and kicking skills.

Equipment

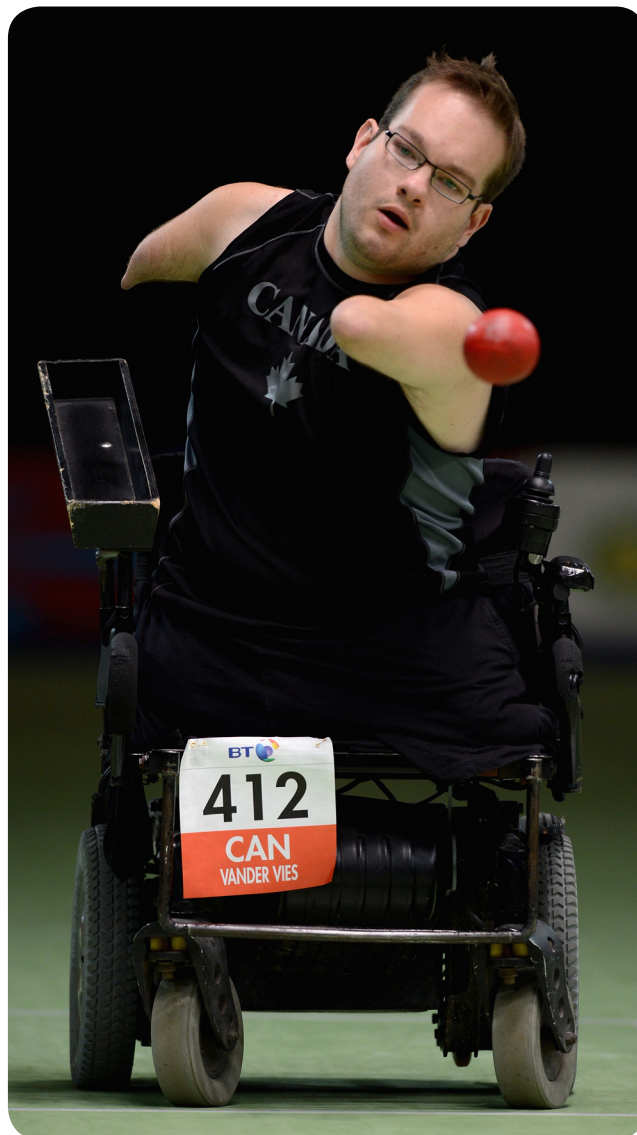
A range of small balls and other objects, like bean bags or rubber rings, that can be used to throw, toss and roll; target balls – footballs, basketballs, tennis balls or similar; a variety of objects that can be used for targets – hoops, ropes, buckets, mats, chalk markings on the floor or wall, plastic cups/bottles; obstacles to throw over.

Skills practice

Players should be seated on a chair, bench or wheelchair throughout the activities.

In pairs:

- Players sit opposite each other, about three metres apart, and toss or roll a ball to one another. Increase the distance between the players as their confidence improves.
- Place a target between both players (a plastic cup/bottle, a bucket or a stone). The players should then try to hit the target. The smaller the target, the more difficult the challenge. Players score one point each time they hit the target. How many points can each pair score in a specified period of time?
- Roll a ball towards a target (larger ball, skittle or other marker) that is placed 2-3 metres away. Play a simple game where players score one point each time they hit the target. Move the target farther away and repeat the activity, once players gain confidence.





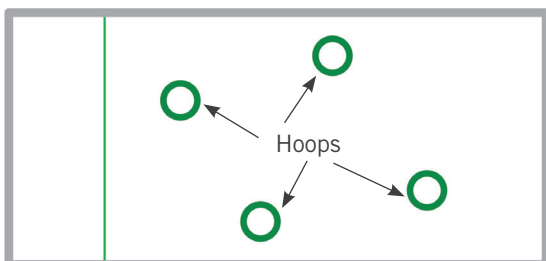
Activity 1b

Let's practise our skills
and get ready to play

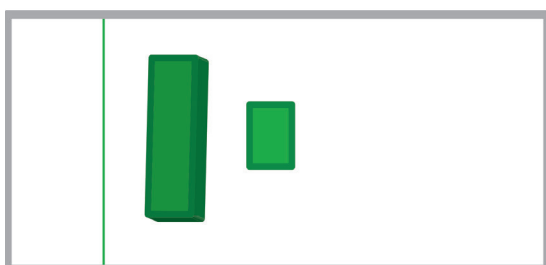
Try out the accuracy and skills games below to build the techniques needed to play boccia.

Skills practice

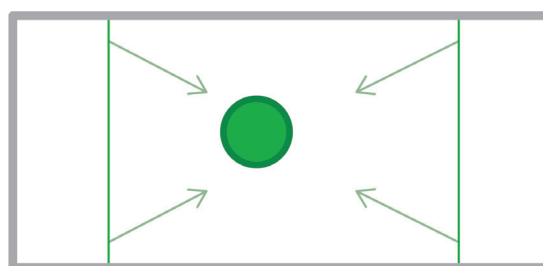
- Place three or four hoops (or chalk/rope circles) on the playing area. Players each have four attempts to toss, throw or roll a ball/bean bag into each of the hoops. They score one point for each successful attempt. How many successful throws does each player make?



- Place a raised object, like a bench or a low box, onto the playing area. Put a mat or a hoop on the far side of the raised object. Players have three or four attempts to toss the ball over the raised object so that it lands on the mat/in the hoop. They score one point for each successful attempt. How many successful throws does each player make?



- Play **target ball**. Place a large target ball in the middle of the playing area. Place teams of six players along each side of the playing area. Each player has three objects that they can throw, roll or toss. Each team of six must attempt to score points by knocking the large target ball across their opponents lines, using their throwing items to do so. Players must remain seated throughout the activity. The first team to score five points wins the game.



- Play **seated dodgeball** using a soft ball. Divide students into groups of eight to ten players. Players sit in a close circle with one player standing in the middle. Outside players roll the ball to try and hit the player in the middle below the knee. If successful, the outside player changes places with the player in the middle. Outside players must always remain seated. Decide your own scoring system.



Activity 2

Let's give it a go:

experiencing the Para sport of boccia.

See the Overview of Para sport and the film 'I'mPOSSIBLE: Boccia' (youtu.be/W9aiKvYLKWM) for a brief introduction to boccia.

Playing area

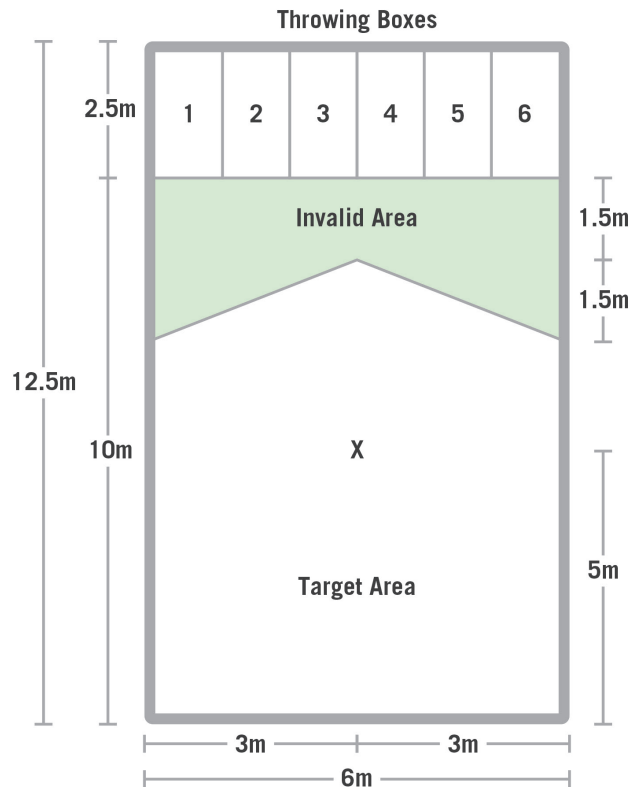
A smooth-surfaced area roughly 12m x 6m, marked with chalk, tape or other markers. Draw or mark a box for each participant, or draw a line behind which all players must remain when tossing/rolling a ball/beanbag.

Equipment

- Each team needs six lightweight objects of the same colour that can be thrown, rolled or propelled using hands or feet. If boccia balls are not available, use small balls, bean bags or rubber rings.
- The small, target ball is known as the 'jack'.

How to play

- The game is played individually, in pairs or in teams of three. Men and women compete with and against each other.
- Coloured balls are thrown, rolled, kicked or released so that they stop as close as possible to a white target ball, known as the 'jack'. Players can use assistive devices, such as ramps or chutes, to enable them to propel the ball.



- The aim is to score as many points as possible by getting your balls closer to the jack than your opponent's.
- The player, pair or team with the most balls closest to the jack is the winner. They receive one point for winning, and an additional point for every ball that is closer to the jack than any opposition's ball.
- Matches consist of 'ends'. Each individual, pair or team 'throws' six balls per end.
- After completing of six ends each (or four for individual or paired competitions), the teams should add up the points they scored in each round. The team with the highest total score wins.

Further information and films can be found on the IPC website: www.paralympic.org/boccia



Inclusion tips:

- (T) Keep instructions short and to the point.
- (T) Use language that is appropriate for the group.
- (R) Reduce the competitive element of the games.
- (E) Reduce the size of the playing area.
- (E) Play from wheelchairs; use chutes or other assistive devices to propel items onto the playing area. Allow the ball to be kicked.



Extension activity

Research the rules of the game, playing strategies and other boccia techniques. Apply this knowledge to your own games.

Take part in class boccia competitions and tournaments, or challenge another local school to a competitive game. Also, set up and oversee boccia tournaments and festivals for younger children.

Research the chutes, ramps, head pointers and other assistive devices used by boccia players. What assistive device can you invent to help the next generation of boccia players?

To extend students' understanding of the game, students could take the role of coach and/or referee or act as an assistant to a boccia player. A guide to the rules of the game can be found in the official international boccia manual: www.bisfed.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/01/V.3_with_markup.pdf

Optional independent research

Research the Para athletes who represent your country by being part of the national boccia team. Use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or similar social media apps and websites to show your support to them.

Discussion/reflection questions

- How would you describe boccia?
- What skills and abilities must one gain to become an elite boccia player?
- What difficulties might these players face in daily life? How might they overcome those difficulties?
- If you had a classmate with an impairment, how could you make boccia more inclusive?

Homework task

- The game of boccia is a target game requiring precision and pin-point accuracy. Find out about other target games played by Para athletes?

Evaluation quiz

Complete the evaluation quiz independently, in pairs or small groups.

