

How can we make our sessions fun and friendly?



This question is important because...

People who have not been physically active for some time are often nervous about becoming involved. However, if they have a fun and positive experience, they are likely to come back and continue taking part. The personality and attitude of the people leading sessions is central to creating this fun and friendly atmosphere. It will also help you engage the people you want to work with and can positively impact on your own motivation and enjoyment of sessions.

Research

The University of Strathclyde's research tells us that people are as much motivated by meeting other people and having fun as by becoming active. Having a social element to sessions is therefore key to engaging people in becoming more active.



Key messages

- ✓ Provide a warm welcome.
- ✓ When you recruit new volunteers and staff, take applicants' personalities and their ability to engage and empathise with others into account. It's vital that they will be trusted by participants. You may find that you are looking for slightly different skills than usual. Their previous experience might be in working with your client group rather than in physical activity.
- ✓ The people delivering activities are those with the greatest opportunity to engage and support participants, so they must be the right people and should be well trained and well supported.
- ✓ Make sure staff and volunteers understand the needs of the group and know why making sessions fun and friendly is so important.



How can we make our sessions fun and friendly? (continued)



- ✓ Remember that “fun” can mean different things to different people – use your observation skills and adapt as necessary.
- ✓ Be mindful of how intense and difficult the activities are – if something is too hard or far too easy for people it is not likely to be fun.
- ✓ Keep things light-hearted and informal.
- ✓ Include time for a social element in your sessions – a chat and a cup of tea can make all the difference.
- ✓ It often works well if the session is delivered or supported by people who participants can identify with. Ex-participants often make good champions or peer volunteers, helping to welcome and assist new participants.