

# Mixed Ability Squash 57



Club Starter Guide  
2022/23









# Who are 'IMAS'?

Founded in 2014, International Mixed Ability Sports or 'IMAS' is a not-for-profit organisation promoting the Mixed Ability model around the world. Our vision is to change the world through Mixed Ability sports. Starting in Rugby Union, Mixed Ability is now delivered across many different sports including: rowing, bowls, tennis, golf, swimming and football.

With sport previously described as a 'microcosm of society', IMAS strongly believes that Mixed Ability sport can help to address some of the inequalities that are seen in wider society.

Organisationally, IMAS works with national governing bodies, charities and grassroots sports clubs to help spread the Mixed Ability message and increase the participation offer. On top of the multiple sports available in England, Mixed Ability continues to grow around the world!

The fundamental commitments and considerations of IMAS are detailed within our manifesto, these include:

- Health and Happiness
- Equal Participation
- Inclusion and Equality
- Rules and Regulations
- Membership and Belonging
- Breaking Down Barriers

As new Mixed Ability clubs we would welcome any interest in [becoming a signatory](#) of our manifesto. Alternatively, if you'd like to find out more about the work we do please visit our website at [mixedabilitysports.org](https://mixedabilitysports.org)

We believe that our greatest strength lies in the co-production of all our delivery and supporting resources alongside our trainers with lived experience. Our weekly Inclusion in Sport class includes many disabled participants sharing their lived experiences of Mixed Ability. This allows us to create resources (such as this!) that help share the Mixed Ability message, and increase the number of participants around the world.



Many people still face significant barriers to participating in mainstream sports as a result of factors including: disability, age, gender, background or poor self-perception.

Mixed Ability takes an innovative approach to address this issue and break down these barriers.

Participants from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities are able to share their experiences within a team setting. This creates sporting environments that are safe, welcoming and non-judgmental.

Mixed Ability emphasises regular, frequent and sustainable activities, self-determination, club membership and opportunities for social interaction for everyone. It is intended to be 'mainstream', and situated within the core participation offer of a grassroots sports club.

From a club perspective it is intended to increase the diversity of the membership whilst also fostering greater inclusivity across the wider club.

## What is Mixed Ability?

Mixed Ability sports can therefore be simply described as social teams that provide opportunities for disabled and non-disabled players to participate together. The term 'Mixed Ability' refers to the variety of playing abilities on court, as opposed to the disabled members that may be playing.

Within a squash club this may mean that you have a Club team, a Development team and a Mixed Ability Team. It is important to note that all Mixed Ability teams play to the 'just another team' ethos, meaning they are members in the same way any other person in the club would be.

It is widely encouraged for Mixed Ability teams to compete with other social sides in the area. Whilst playing against other Mixed Ability sides is also to be encouraged, we have found that social benefits are maximised when other, non-disabled clubs get the opportunity to compete against Mixed Ability squads.



# How Mixed Ability can benefit your club

We believe that Mixed Ability sports have the potential to positively impact any club, regardless of size or playing level.

There are numerous benefits which are summarised in the graphic below. With specific regards to squash clubs the following also apply:

## Diversifying your Playing Offer

Although squash clubs may be welcoming, they are unlikely to specifically promote to disabled people. By offering Mixed Ability and showing that you are opening the doors to everyone, you will attract new players to your club.

## Increasing Membership Income

As with any new team, new members means an increased level of income via membership fees and other revenue streams such as the bar and club kit.

## Tackling Stereotypes

With no specific 'para' offer, squash may previously have been viewed as inaccessible to disabled people. Mixed Ability Squash 57 shows that this is not the case!

## Improving Facilities

We have found that Mixed Ability sessions will inevitably help you to identify any barriers created by your existing facilities. As with previous clubs, we would be happy to support any funding bids to help increase the physical accessibility of your club/ courts.

## Upskilling your Coaches

For many coaches this will be their first experience of working with disabled people. Doing so will improve their coaching practices, enabling them to become more adaptable in delivery whilst also working with a whole new cohort of members.



**New Members**  
Fresh input into the club.



**Feel good factor**  
Creates a new family within the club.



**Diversity**  
Being more representative of the local community.



**Local recognition**  
Strengthen the club position in the community.



**Club heritage**  
Re-engage founding members.



**Sustainability**  
Re-engage and retain new and returning members.



**Motivation**  
New ways to engage volunteers



# How can IMAS help?

Our team have over a decade of experience in sports development and 30+ years in teaching, much of which has been spent working with disabled participants and learners. We are also fortunate to have a highly enthusiastic and passionate 'Inclusion in Sport' class who help us to co-produce our resources. As a result, we are able to assist grassroots clubs in a range of ways. These include:

## Linking with Service Providers

We have links and contacts across numerous disability service providers and can help to ensure your Mixed Ability sessions are shared with all of their members.

## Creation of Guides and Flyers

In order to make promotion of your Mixed Ability sessions a little easier, we create guides such as this one for you to share with both new and existing club members.

## Adding your Club to the Mixed Ability Network

Although Mixed Ability Squash 57 is the newest sport within our network we have links with a range of grassroots clubs in multiple sports, all of whom we have assisted previously. Many of these clubs will be happy to share their experiences with you.

## Ongoing Advice and Support

As with any team, there will inevitably be challenges when you get your Mixed Ability sessions started. To help with this we will share contact details for your nearest IMAS Regional Development Manager (RDM). All our RDMs have started their own Mixed Ability teams and therefore have plenty of experience to draw upon.

## Mixed Ability Certification and Accreditation

Once your Mixed Ability team has been established we are happy to offer both certification and accreditation. Both of these are designed to upskill your club volunteers whilst also providing you with a plaque to showcase that you are an inclusive Mixed Ability club.

Help recruit new participants  
with and without disabilities

Provide links to disability  
services providers

Simple and  
comprehensive guides



Ongoing advice and support

Include your club in the  
mixed ability network

Mixed ability certification,  
accreditation and  
affiliation schemes

CPD and Equality awareness  
training for coaches, club  
members and players



# Taster session tips

## Aron Harper-Robinson Mixed Ability Champion & England Squash Activator

- Keep things simple and fun
- Be friendly and welcoming – have some snacks and drinks available (if possible!)
- Encourage everyone to take part – parents/carers should join in too, it's Mixed Ability after all
- Do a quick assessment of standard with some arrival skills games
- Multiple coaches and courts to give all players a chance to get involved
- Be adaptable, you may be expecting 10 people and get 1 or vice versa.
- Do it all with a smile on your face – Squash 57 is fun!



## Appropriate Language

We understand how important using appropriate language is to both participants and deliverers. The table below provides a few examples of terms that may be useful when introducing Mixed Ability to your club. Whenever possible, call everyone by their name. Never use the impairment to describe the person.

Term(s) We Avoid	Term(s) We Use
(The) Handicapped/ Disabled	Disabled People
Able-Bodied	Non-Disabled
Mentally Handicapped/ Retarded	with a learning disability
Wheelchair Bound	Wheelchair User



# FAQs

For the majority of clubs this will be their first experience of Mixed Ability sport and in some cases, Squash 57! It is understandable to be nervous but, by following Aron's tips on the previous page, we are sure that clubs will be able to create a positive experience for their new members. In order to help, we have compiled some of the questions that other squash clubs have raised when getting started.

## **Should disabled players pay less than non-disabled players?**

No, they should pay the same for Mixed Ability sessions. However, it would be worth considering how much court time the Mixed Ability team use and tailoring your membership price accordingly.

## **What if new players don't have the right footwear?**

Some clubs have bought a number of cheap pairs of shoes or asked existing members to donate old pairs. Alternatively it may be that you relax your footwear rule for the taster sessions, it is up to you!

## **How long should we run taster sessions for?**

You should run a minimum of two taster sessions. However, you should have a date in mind for the regular sessions so you can refer new members to their next playing opportunity.

## **How long will it take to get a team started?**

This can vary between clubs and sports. For a sport like Rugby Union that requires 15-20 players we recommend 12-24 months. For a sport like Squash 57 this may be reduced to 6-12 months due to the smaller squad size.

## **Do I need any specific qualifications to coach Mixed Ability?**

No, we recommend the Head Coach has a relevant coaching qualification however a set 'Mixed Ability' qualification isn't required to get started.



# Next steps

Making the decision to become a more inclusive club is always a positive step. For many, Mixed Ability Squash 57 will be their first experience of working with disabled people. We have therefore pulled together a brief checklist to help you at the start of your Mixed Ability journey. Aside from the checklist below, we would also recommend that you are compliant with the requirements of England Squash e.g. ensuring any coaches who are leading the sessions will be DBS checked.

Most importantly, enjoy it! Mixed Ability will bring new groups and individuals to your club that may not have previously felt squash was accessible to them. By offering Mixed Ability within your club you are removing this barrier and helping us to change the world through Mixed Ability sports!

If you have any questions please contact your IMAS Regional Development Manager or email [contact@mixedabilitiesports.org](mailto:contact@mixedabilitiesports.org)

## New Club Checklist

- Identify a Club Champion.
- Decide on dates for initial taster sessions.
- Let IMAS know dates and times.
- Share taster session poster with all contacts.
- Share poster via social media.
- Invite existing club members.
- Identify weekly session times.
- Create Mixed Ability or 'social' membership (if required).
- Enjoy the start of your Mixed Ability journey!







