
YOUR FIRST WEEK OF ADAPTED PE

A Practical Starter Guide for New PE Teachers

THE GOAL

Simple routines. Easy activities. A plan you can actually use.

Starting Adapted Physical Education can feel overwhelming—especially when your students have different abilities, communication styles, behaviors, equipment needs, and levels of support.

The good news? You do not need a complicated lesson plan to teach a great APE class.

YOUR FIRST WEEK FOCUS

During your first week, your biggest goals are to:

- Get to know your students.
- Establish a predictable routine.
- Learn how students communicate.
- Observe how students move.
- Help students feel safe and successful.
- Figure out what works before worrying about what looks perfect.

THE PAYOFF

This guide will help you do exactly that.

START HERE

Before Your Students Walk Into the Gym

Your first few classes are about learning your students, not testing how elaborate your lesson plans can be.

Before class, gather a few pieces of versatile equipment:



FIRST WEEK EQUIPMENT

- Cones
- Beanbags
- Playground balls
- Foam balls
- Hoops
- Scarves
- Floor spots
- Balloons or beach balls
- Buckets or targets
- Music, if appropriate for your students



You don't need all of these. Choose equipment that allows students to throw, rail, carry, kick, strike, balance, travel, explore and make choices.



Set Up the Environment

Whenever possible:

- **Define the space.** Use cones, floor markings or stations so students can see where activities begin and end.
- **Reduce clutter.** Too much equipment can be distracting or overwhelming.
- **Have equipment ready before students arrive.** Transitions are usually easier when you're not searching through a closet during class.
- **Create a predictable meeting location.** Use a circle, line, wall spot or designated area where students learn to begin and end every class.



Ask Your Team

Before the first class, try to learn:

- ⑦ How does each student communicate?
- ⑦ Does the student use a device, pictures, signs or gestures?
- ⑦ Are there mobility considerations?
- ⑦ Are there sensory concerns?
- ⑦ Are there behaviors you should anticipate?
- ⑦ What motivates the student?
- ⑦ What should you know about safety?
- ⑦ Does the student need physical assistance?
- ⑦ What does successful participation currently look like?



You don't need to know everything. Your first week will teach you a lot.

USE THE SAME CLASS STRUCTURE

Predictability Makes Teaching Easier

One of the easiest ways to make Adapted PE more manageable is to use a consistent class format. Students begin to understand what happens next. Paraprofessionals understand their roles. And you don't have to reinvent your entire lesson every class.

Try this structure:

1

Instant Activity

Students enter and begin a simple movement activity. Examples:

- Walk around the gym.
 - Choose a ball and explore.
 - Move between floor spots.
 - Carry an object from one bucket to another.
 - Roll a ball with a partner.
-

2

Circle Time

Bring students together briefly. Use this time to:

- Say hello.
 - Show the visual schedule.
 - Introduce the skill.
 - Demonstrate today's activities.
 - Review one or two expectations.
 - Keep it short.
-

3

Group Activity

Complete one activity together.

Examples:

- Follow-the-leader movement
 - Parachute
 - Movement to music
 - Simple throwing game
 - Locomotor activity
-

4

Stations

Use approximately three stations targeting the same skill or related skills.

Students rotate individually, with peers, or with adult support.

5

Choice Time

Allow students to choose from several appropriate activities. Choice can be highly motivating and gives you another opportunity to observe students.

6

Closure

Return to your meeting area.

Try a simple ending routine: What did we practice today? Then preview what will happen next class.



YOUR FIRST APE LESSON

Day 1 Goal: Learn About Your Student

1



INSTANT ACTIVITY

Students explore several pieces of equipment so you can see how they move and interact.

2



OBSERVATION

Notice what students approach, imitate, follow, communicate, prefer, and stay engaged with.

3



CIRCLE-TIME ROUTINE

Gather together and follow this simple sequence:

GREET → SHARE → MOVE → REVIEW

4



FOLLOW-THE-LEADER GROUP ACTIVITY

You lead simple movements and students follow.
Try: walk, march, reach high, touch knees, stomp, clap, freeze.

5



STATIONS

Introduce the three practice stations in the set.
Give a quick demo and let students explore.

6

CHOICE TIME

Students pick a favorite station or activity and revisit something they enjoyed.

7

CLOSURE

Bring the class together, celebrate effort, and share a short success statement.

You showed great effort today!

THREE EASY FIRST-WEEK STATIONS

Simple movement tasks that are easy to run

1

ROLL & KNOCK DOWN

EQUIPMENT

Use a playground or foam ball with cones, pins, or blocks.

ACTIVITY

Students roll toward targets.

SIMPLER OR HARDER

Add an easier option by moving closer and a harder option by moving farther or changing the target.

2

BEANBAG MOVE

EQUIPMENT

Use beanbags, hoops, floor spots, or buckets.

ACTIVITY

Students carry, place, toss, or move beanbags through simple pathways.

SIMPLER OR HARDER

Give a closer target or larger target to simplify and a smaller or farther target to challenge.

3

BALL EXPLORATION

EQUIPMENT

Use different balls and simple target areas.

ACTIVITY

Students explore rolling, tossing, carrying, or kicking in low-pressure ways.

SIMPLER OR HARDER

Adjust distance, support, or target size to make it easier or harder.

DAYS 2-5

Keep the routine. Change the challenge.

The first week works best when the class structure stays the same and only the focus changes. Students feel safe, know what to expect, and can focus on trying their best.

DAY 2

1

Traveling

Practice moving through space with simple locomotor actions and observe how students travel.

DAY 3

2

Rolling and Throwing

Use balls and targets with different distances and support levels.

DAY 4

3

Kicking

Keep the task simple, adjust spacing and equipment, and watch for student success.

DAY 5

4

Student Favorites

Repeat the activities that worked best and use them to see what students enjoy and can do independently.



REMEMBER: Consistency matters more than novelty during the first week.

WORKING WITH PARAPROFESSIONALS

Don't leave adults guessing

A clear role for every adult helps students feel supported and keeps the class running smoothly. Communicate your plan and partner together.

BEFORE

YOU TEACH

Explain the adult's job, where to stand, and when to assist.

Share the plan before class so everyone knows how to support students and keep routines consistent.

DURING

CLASS

Support students without automatically doing the task for them.

Prompt only as needed and encourage students to try first. Help them stay independent and build confidence.

AFTER

CLASS

Share quick notes about what worked and what support was needed.

Include any safety or communication concerns so we can plan and support students even better.

Clear roles. Shared goals. Stronger students. **We're a team.**

WHEN THE LESSON ISN'T WORKING

Adapt the activity before you abandon it

An activity does not need to look exactly as planned in order to be successful. Learners change, energy changes, space changes—and so can your plan.



TRY, ADAPT, TRY AGAIN.

Small changes can bring big results. Stay flexible and keep learners engaged.



ADAPT BEFORE YOU ABANDON

1



CHANGE THE EQUIPMENT.

Use different tools to reset challenge or engagement.

2



MOVE STUDENTS CLOSER OR FARTHER AWAY.

Adjust distance to adjust difficulty.

3



SIMPLIFY THE SPACE.

Reduce size, remove distractions, or create clearer boundaries.

4



SHORTEN OR CLARIFY DIRECTIONS.

Use fewer words, model it, or break it into steps.

5



ADJUST THE SUPPORT LEVEL.

Offer more help, a visual, or a partner. Then fade support gradually.

6

LOWER THE GOAL.

Aim for progress, participation, or quality steps—not perfection.

REMEMBER

Success can look different from the original plan—and still be meaningful.

YOUR FIRST-WEEK OBSERVATION SHEET

Keep your data simple

During the first week, focus on a few key areas. Observe during natural routines and everyday moments. Jot quick notes—this will guide your support and planning.

STUDENT NAME _____

DATE _____

OBSERVATION AREA

NOT YET

SOMETIMES

CONSISTENTLY



COMMUNICATION

Uses words, gestures, or AAC

☐☐☐

FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

Understands and responds

☐☐☐

TRANSITIONS

Moves between activities

☐☐☐

MOVEMENT

Moves safely and purposefully

☐☐☐

OBJECT CONTROL

Handles materials and tools

☐☐☐

ENGAGEMENT

Shows interest and participation

☐☐☐

SUPPORT NEEDED

What helps them be successful

☐☐☐

TEACHER NOTES

Quick observations, strengths, what to try next.

YOU MADE IT THROUGH WEEK ONE

Now Build From What You Learned

BY THE END OF YOUR FIRST WEEK, YOU SHOULD KNOW MORE ABOUT:

- ✓ How your students communicate.
- ✓ How they transition.
- ✓ Which equipment works well.
- ✓ Which activities motivate them.
- ✓ How much assistance they need.
- ✓ Which routines need more practice.
- ✓ Which movement skills need instruction.
- ✓ How your paraprofessionals can best support the class.

**You don't need to have everything figured out.
You need a system you can build on.**

THAT'S WHY I CREATED EASY ADAPTED PE

After years of teaching Adapted Physical Education, I wanted something I could actually use—not simply a collection of activities.

Easy Adapted PE provides a practical framework for planning and teaching throughout the school year, including:

- Monthly programming
- Lesson ideas
- Instant activities
- Group activities
- Stations
- Choice activities
- Assessment strategies
- Behavior supports
- Paraprofessional guidance
- Planning tools
- Visuals and teacher resources



So instead of asking:

"What am I going to teach tomorrow?"
you have a structure to work from.

READY FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR?



EASY ADAPTED PE



Practical planning from August through June.

[\[EXPLORE THE EASY ADAPTED PE MANUAL\]](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Sarah spent more than a decade teaching Adapted Physical Education and now helps teachers create practical, organized and student-centered APE programs.



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