ACTIVITY: Polybat

Commonwealth Games in the Inclusive Sports Programme

📄 BACKGROUND

Polybat was developed at Nottingham Trent University as:

- an alternative to **table tennis** for young people who have higher support needs;
- a developmental game that can lead young people into table tennis.

🏑 WHAT YOU NEED

- Polybat bats and balls or alternatives (see **STEP 'Equipment'** for some ideas).
- Table tennis table or any large table or flat surface – or even on the floor.

👥 HOW TO PLAY

- The aim of the game is to hit the ball over the opponent's end of the table or cause them to play a fault by lifting the ball off the table surface. Polybat can be played as singles or doubles.
- Each player has two serves. The serve then goes to the other player (or rotates alternately for doubles). First to eleven points wins.
- Play begins with the server playing the ball off any side. Strokes can then be played directly or off the side.
- Players can touch the ball more than once with the bat before returning it to their opponent's end.
- The ball **must stay on the table surface at all times**.
- Polybat is suitable for players who have arm, balance, or coordination impairments and for whom table tennis may not be appropriate or possible.
- Polybat can also be used as a means of introducing table tennis to younger children.

🧠 THINK ABOUT

Using a pushing or sweeping action instead of hitting or striking the ball.

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Use the STEP adaptation tool to ensure that players of all abilities can participate

SPACE

- Reduce the width of the end line by adding short rebound sides to the end of the table. This creates a smaller 'goal' to defend and can balance play between players of different abilities, or if two players play against one.
- The sides can be attached to a table tennis table which provides a standard size for play. However, any large table can be used, or a number of smaller tables can be pushed together. Tape can be used to smooth where the tables join.

TASK

- Allow some players to serve direct to their opponent.
- Encourage the players to keep the bat steady and in front of the body. Players can rest the bat on the table surface if neces-sary to provide more stability or support themselves with their other hand/arm.
- Players should try to angle the bat downwards so that they can keep the ball on the table surface.
- Encourage beginners to use the forehand side of the bat when the ball is on that side, and the backhand when it comes to the other side.

EQUIPMENT

- If regular polybats are not available, then any small flat-edged play bat can be used. Or alternatives, like plastic or wooden rulers, can be used.
- Use slow moving airflow balls; start with larger airflow balls before progressing to the standard polybat ball (about the size of a golf practice ball). Or use the lid of a jar (like a puck).

PEOPLE

- As players' skills improve, the 'multiple-touch' rule can be removed and they must play the ball with a single contact only.
- Players who have impaired or absent grip can use a glove-bat or some improvised way of attaching the bat to their hand or arm.

OTHER POLYBAT GAMES

POLYSKITTLES

- Can be played between two or more players or teams.
- Try to knock down as many skittles as possible using five balls in succession; one point for each skittle.
- Keep individual or team score – highest wins!

POLYSNOOKER

- Place a range of lightweight (for example, airflow) balls along the edge of the table opposite the player.
- Using their bat, the player plays a large white airflow (cue) ball down the table to try and knock target balls off the end of the table.
- Players have 5 successive balls and score a point for each ball knocked off the table. Or allocate points for knocking different coloured balls off the table – as in snooker.

⚠ SAFETY

- Make sure that the lower limbs of wheelchair users do not rub against the table/table legs.
- Ask players to be careful that they do not bump their heads when retrieving the ball from under the table.
- Check for signs of fatigue with beginners.
- Avoid striking the rebound sides with the bat. Check every so often that they are properly clipped or taped onto the table.