Planning Movement Activities That Work for Mixed-Ability Teams

Start with clear goals for inclusion

When you bring a team together for a movement session, the people in that room will have different fitness levels, mobility ranges, and comfort with physical activity. Some may have years of experience with exercise, while others might feel anxious about being left behind or unable to keep up. The goal is not to find a single activity that works for everyone all at once. Instead, it is to design a session where each person can participate fully from where they are, without drawing attention to what they cannot do.

Begin by asking what you want the group to gain. Is it better collaboration, a break from sitting, or simply a shared experience that lifts energy? That intention will guide every choice you make about the structure, the pace, and the adaptations you prepare. When you keep inclusion as the organising principle, you start to see that the real work is in the planning, not in the activity itself.

Assess the group without singling anyone out

Before the session, gather a little information about the participants. A short anonymous form or a simple check-in with team leads can tell you about common mobility considerations, injuries, or health conditions. Do not ask for medical details. Focus on practical needs: does anyone need to avoid kneeling, jumping, or lying on the floor? Is the room accessible for wheelchairs or walkers? Knowing these things early lets you prepare modifications in advance, so you are never caught off guard.

Watch out for the assumption that everyone who can stand can also balance well, or that anyone who sits all day is out of shape. People have different strengths and limitations that are not always visible. The more you can build flexibility into the session from the start, the less you will need to single anyone out during the activity.

Choose low-impact movements with scalable options

Low-impact movement is a strong foundation for any mixed-ability group. Walking, gentle stretching, controlled bodyweight exercises, and seated variations allow everyone to move at their own pace. The key is to design each movement so it can be made easier or harder without changing the basic pattern. For example, a lunge can be done with a small step forward and hands on thighs, or deepened with a twist. A squat can be performed from a chair or with a full range of motion.

Offer three levels for each exercise: a base version that most people can do, a higher-intensity option, and a gentler option. Let people choose without telling them which level is better. When you describe the options, avoid words like 'advanced' or 'beginner'. Instead, say something like 'if you want more challenge, try this' or 'for a gentler version, do this'. This keeps the focus on personal choice rather than hierarchy.

Structure the session with frequent check-ins

Break the session into short blocks of activity, no more than ten minutes each, with a pause between them. During each pause, invite people to notice how they feel and to adjust their effort for the next block. This rhythm respects different fitness levels and gives everyone permission to slow down or rest without needing to explain themselves.

Include a breathing moment or a calm stretch between blocks. This is not just filler. It helps the group reset and keeps the session from becoming a competition. Watch for signs that someone is pushing themselves too hard to keep up with others. The person who looks flushed and quiet may need a gentle redirection to a lower intensity. The person who seems bored may need a cue to increase their range of motion.

Adapt the physical environment for access and comfort

The space itself can create barriers or remove them. Check that pathways are wide enough for wheelchairs and walkers, and that the floor surface is stable and non-slip. Arrange chairs so that anyone who needs to sit during the session has a clear view of the instructor. Remove obstacles that could trip someone, and keep the room at a comfortable temperature.

Think about sound and visibility. Can everyone hear instructions clearly without straining? For participants who are deaf or hard of hearing, use visual cues and demonstrations alongside spoken commands. If the room is bright, avoid sudden changes in lighting that could disorient someone. The more predictable the environment, the more people can focus on movement rather than on navigating the space.

Use inclusive language and avoid assumptions

How you speak during the session matters as much as what you do. Use language that focuses on movement rather than on bodies. Instead of saying 'lift your leg', say 'move your leg to a height that feels right for you'. Avoid phrases like 'just do your best' or 'listen to your body', which can sound dismissive to someone with chronic pain or a condition that limits their range. Instead, say 'take this movement as far as it feels useful for you today'.

Do not assume that everyone wants to be pushed or that everyone wants gentle options. Some people with disabilities prefer a challenging workout, and some people without visible

limitations may need a gentle day. The best approach is to state clearly at the start: 'This session is designed so that every movement can be adjusted. You are the best judge of what works for you right now.' That single sentence gives everyone permission to participate authentically.

Teambo approaches movement sessions with this same emphasis on flexibility and respect for individual needs. Their sessions are designed as inclusive wellness activities that fit into team building events and workplace gatherings, so the focus stays on shared experience rather than on individual performance.

Prepare backup plans for unexpected situations

Even with careful planning, something may not go as expected. A participant may arrive who needs more support than you prepared for. A movement you thought was safe may cause discomfort for someone. Have a few simple alternatives ready: a chair-based version of the whole session, a short partner exercise that works for any mobility level, or a quiet breathing activity that can fill a block if you need to pivot.

If someone tells you they cannot do a movement, thank them for sharing and offer an alternative. Do not try to convince them to try the original version. Trust that they know their own body. The goal is not to get every person to do every movement. The goal is for every person to feel they were able to take part meaningfully.

Follow up with the group after the session

A brief check-in after the session can tell you what worked and what did not. A simple anonymous form with two or three questions is enough: What did you enjoy? Was there anything that felt awkward or uncomfortable? Would you attend another session? Use the feedback to refine your planning for next time. Over time, you build a library of activities and adaptations that serve your specific group.

Remember that inclusion is not a one-time checklist. It is an ongoing practice of noticing, adjusting, and listening. Each session teaches you something new about the people in the room, and about how to design movement that honours everyone's ability to participate. Teambo offers inclusive wellness-focused movement add-on sessions that follow this same principle: every person moves in a way that works for them, and the group shares the experience together.