



Guidelines for Go Ape! customers with special needs

At Go Ape we want to welcome all persons aged 10 and over onto our courses. However, whilst our courses are designed to be accessible to most people they do offer a degree of physical and mental challenge. For some persons with special needs this may mean that additional equipment and/or levels of supervision will be required for safe participation. For others the risks of injury may still be too great despite taking such additional measures, preventing their use of the course. This letter gives you guidance about what to do if you are planning to Go Ape with persons with special needs.

What does the course require?

Physical ability

Go Ape courses are physically challenging high wire adventure courses that require a degree of physical fitness and co-ordination. All participants need to be able to climb a number of rope ladders, be capable of attaching karabiners to the safety system, cross obstacles and run into landing zones at the bottom of zip wires all without physical assistance.

Mental maturity

All customers are given training in the use of safety equipment and systems prior to going onto a course. It is vital that all customers are able to understand this training and apply it throughout the course when not under direct supervision. If the safety instructions and advice are not followed a customer is at risk of serious injury or death. Safety training takes approximately 45 minutes. If a participant is unable to remain attentive for at least that period and then apply what they have learned whilst undertaking the activity then a Go Ape course is unsuitable for them.

Risk Assessment

The ratios for supervision set out in our booking terms and conditions are a minimum and may not be sufficient for participants with either physical or mental special needs. The staff at Go Ape are not medically qualified and so are not in a position to assess the capacity of participants with special needs to undertake a course. It remains your responsibility to undertake such an assessment prior to use of the course.

We advise you to visit the course prior to booking to undertake your own risk assessment. You may also wish to contact the participant's doctor for further advice.

Whilst we cannot set out a definitive list of all the conditions that might adversely affect a person's ability to undertake a course safely, the following examples may be of use in your assessment:

Psychiatric conditions

Due to the possible adverse effects of medication and the risk of unpredictable behaviour, the following conditions preclude participation on a Go Ape course:

- Any acute psychosis
- Chronic schizophrenia
- Hypomania/Mania
- Severe anxiety/severe depression

Learning/behavioral disorders

Due to the risks to the safety of vulnerable customers, Go Ape requires increased supervision ratios for the following disorders to two responsible adults to one vulnerable participant:



- Severe Learning disorders;
- All severe developmental disorders – including Asperger’s Syndrome, autism, severe communication disorders, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder; and
- All severe behavior disorders – including personality disorders, Non-Epileptic Seizure Disorder and post head injury disorder.

Physical disability

The physical ability required to undertake a Go Ape course has been set out above. However, the following examples are ways in which we have been able to accommodate parties with physical special needs to date:

- Blind participants – a minimum of 2 fully sighted participants to 1 blind/partially sighted participant is required. One fully sighted participant should complete the course on either side of the partially sighted participant. A communication system (vocal) or a brake line is required at the end of the zip line;
- 1 missing upper limb – where available we can provide a Trac pulley system to assist in completing the course;
- 1 missing lower limb – we can provide a chest harness.

Participants with prosthetic limbs have taken part on Go Ape courses in the past and their suggestions and recommendations have been as follows:

- Possibly remove prosthetic limb or ensure it is securely attached (potential danger of it "falling off" and hitting someone below). Customers have taken both approaches depending on the nature of the limb and attachment.
- Climbing nets (and in particular the Tarzan Net) is very difficult as it moves around a lot. It is more difficult than it looks so take a break before attempting it.
- Where possible land backwards in the landing sites and drag your leg to slow down. Ask the instructor how to "rotate" to achieve this.
- Inform the Duty Manager on arrival. If a high amputation, you may be required to wear a Chest Harness.
- If you remove your prosthetic limb and are walking between sites you may want to use a stick or crutches - ask the Duty Manager for assistance in moving them from zip line landing to zip line landing.
- Go on a quieter day so you have time to enjoy the course.

Conclusion

If your risk assessment concludes that additional equipment and/or supervision and/or time will be required for the course to be undertaken you must contact the site manager to discuss whether these additional needs can be accommodated. We would not expect you to incur any extra cost for any additional equipment or supervision that we request.

We will try to provide as much assistance as we can to help those with special needs to undertake our courses. However, the primary responsibility of our staff is to ensure the maintenance of safety on a course. We are sure that you will understand that, where this conflicts with individual needs, course safety will be given priority.