WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL
COACHES

COACHES MANUAL

LEVEL 1

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF BASKETBALL COACHES

COACHES MANUAL

LEVEL 1

COACH

PLAYER

TEAM

LEVEL 1

COACH

CHAPTER 1

ROLES AND VALUES

CHAPTER 1

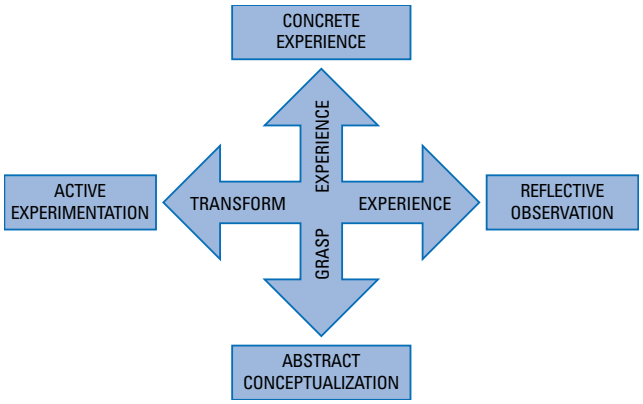
ROLES AND VALUES

YOUR PREFERRED EDUCATOR ROLE

Experiential Learning Theory has long been recognised as playing a particularly valuable part in both Coach Education and Coach Development. A very broad definition of learning may be "Learning is a change in behaviour due to an experience". More importantly however, effectively analysing or "unpacking" these experiences hold the key for Instructors, Coaches and Players gaining more meaningful learnings and insights from these experiences. Instructors and Coaches hold a significant responsibility for enabling this effective "unpacking".[1]

Learning is complex which is reflected in the number of different models and theories that exist regarding learning. It is widely agreed that experiences can play a particularly important part in learning and Experiential Learning Theory proposes a four-stage cycle of learning – experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting.[2]

The Kolb learning cycle model confirms that learning it is not a linear process and instead is cyclical. Experiences form the basis for observations and reflections. The learner thinks upon these reflections and forms abstract concepts from which new implications for action are drawn. These implications can be actively tested by the learner and serve to create new experiences. This cycle can be illustrated as:



Of course, learning can take place with no assistance or intervention from an "educator" (e.g. a teacher, instructor, coach etc). Where an educator is involved their primary concern is to create a productive learning environment and the educator plays different roles at the various stages of the learning cycle. Kolb describes those roles as:

- Facilitator Role
  The educator helps the learner to get in touch with their personal experience and to reflect upon it. Typically, the educator will adopt a warm affirming style designed to draw out the learners' interests, intrinsic motivations and self-knowledge. It is often useful to facilitate through conversation and discussion amongst small groups

1 Professor Sanyin Siang, Executive Director, Coach K Leadership & Ethics Centre (COLE), Fuqua School of Business, Duke University, USA - Interview with Patrick Hunt, President, FIBA World Association of Basketball Coaches – "Lessons from Coaching in Sports for Leading in the Corporate World", Forbes Magazine, 24th February, 2019. See also https://www.forbes.com/sites/sanyinsiang/2019/02/24/patrick-hunt-basketball-coach-of-coaches/

2 Dr Alice Kolb & Professor David Kolb, Eight Important things to know about The Experiential Learning Cycle, Australian Educational Leader, Volum 40, Issue 3, 2018 pp8-14.
See also http://learningfromexperience.com/

- Expert Role

  As a subject expert, the educator helps the learner to "connect" their own observations and reflections with the broader "knowledge base" about the subject. The educator may adopt a more authoritative style – presenting (or "pushing") information rather than "drawing" it from the learner. The learner is required to systematically organise and analyse the information presented by the educator and, combined with their own experiences, will form the learner's "knowledge base" to draw from when facing new situations.

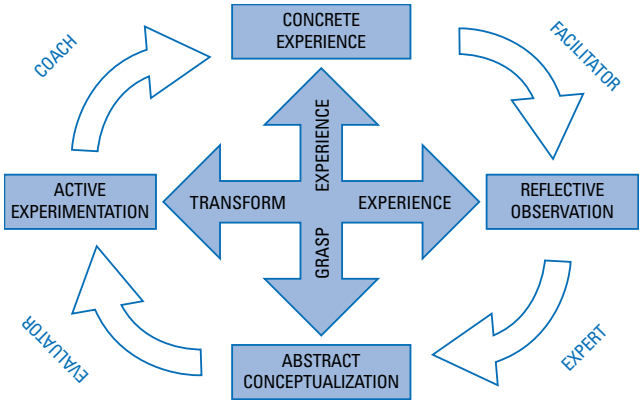
- Evaluator Role

  The educator creates performance activities in which learners can demonstrate what they have learnt. It is almost always impossible to assess all aspects of what has been learnt and instead the educator evaluates the learners' understanding of a "sample" of the overall curriculum.

- Coaching Role

  In the coaching role, the educator helps the learner to apply the knowledge to achieve their goals and this involves both setting of those goals (e.g. personal development plans) as well as providing feedback on performance.

These roles apply to the learning cycle as follows:



Individuals tend to prefer one or two roles over the others which will reflect their educational philosophy, their personal teaching style as well as the content that they are teaching. To assess your tendency or preferences for teaching you can take the free Educator Role Profile at http://survey.learningfromexperience.com/).

Having a preference for a particular role does not mean that an Instructor would be unable to perform other roles, however it may be worthwhile for the Instructor to consider how they integrate those roles that they do have less preference for.

The following considerations may assist Instructors to evaluate how they perform the various roles:

COACH ROLE

- Give personalised feedback and assist candidates to identify realistic goals
- Create opportunities for knowledge to be connected to the candidates' experiences both within basketball and within a broader context
- "Success" and "Failure" are not opposites – failure is a part of success. Create a "safe" environment where candidates can make mistakes on their journey to achieving.

FACILITATOR ROLE

- Ask about how the candidate feels about their experiences
- Encourage diverse discussion on a topic to facilitate candidates to appreciate other points of view
- Share personal examples to help candidates understand concepts
- Allow time for candidates to reflect

EXPERT ROLE

- Learning occurs best when candidates integrate new concepts into their existing "knowledge base" of experiences and understanding. Use questioning to draw from the candidates their knowledge on a subject before presenting information

  For example, when presenting information on how to defend an on-ball screen, the Instructor may first ask candidates to identify what are the various offensive options and then introduce defensive techniques in response to each offensive option
- Encourage candidates to analyse and establish their own theories don't just present the "answers"
- Provide information to candidates in writing

EVALUATOR ROLE

- Be clear about what you are looking for when evaluating candidates
- Assessment is continuous – every activity undertaken in a WABC Coaching Course provides an opportunity to observe the candidates.
- Provide feedback to candidates during the course.

1.1 LEADERSHIP

1.1.1 BEING A ROLE MODEL

The most admired coach may not be the one who has the most wins. The most admired coach, and perhaps the coach who can make the biggest difference to a young player, is the one who:

- *Nurtures athletes;*
- *Understands athletes;*
- *Sets clear boundaries as to what is acceptable;*
- *Help athletes recognize right from wrong.*

"A leader's most powerful ally is their own example"

COACH JOHN WOODEN

WHAT KIND OF TEAM AM I GOING TO COACH?

It is very important that a coach takes the time to understand the team they are coaching, using the following questions as a guideline:

- Is it a mini-basketball team? A children's team? Is it a team made up of promising young players? Is it a first-class elite team?
- What sort of organization does the team belong to? Is it a school team? A club team? What sort of school or club?
- How good are the players? How long have they been playing? What is their potential?
- Why are the players playing? For fun? To spend time with friends? To learn and get better at basketball?

The answer to each of these questions will help the coach to understand the context of the team. This will help the coach to avoid the kind of mistakes that can arise if the coach and players (or their parents) have different expectations for the team.

Once the coach understands the type of team they are coaching, it is important that they communicate their expectations to the team. In the context of coaching young children, this must also include communication with the parents.

WHAT KIND OF TEAM AM I GOING TO COACH?

It is very important that a coach takes the time to understand the team they are coaching, using the following questions as a guideline:

- Is it a mini-basketball team? A children's team? Is it a team made up of promising young players? Is it a first-class elite team?
- What sort of organization does the team belong to? Is it a school team? A club team? What sort of school or club?
- How good are the players? How long have they been playing? What is their potential?
- Why are the players playing? For fun? To spend time with friends? To learn and get better at basketball?

The answer to each of these questions will help the coach to understand the context of the team. This will help the coach to avoid the kind of mistakes that can arise if the coach and players (or their parents) have different expectations for the team.

Once the coach understands the type of team they are coaching, it is important that they communicate their expectations to the team. In the context of coaching young children, this must also include communication with the parents.

A coach who is training young players has the responsibility of contributing to the players' overall development both in sport and life in general – taking a holistic approach. The coach should not only be interested in short-term achievements.

Taking into account all of the above, coaches should decide upon general objectives for the team which reflect that particular team and those players and their particular motivations.

For example: a coach training a mini-basketball school team (ages 9-10) might want to consider the following:

- All players should have equal opportunity to participate in games.
- Some of the players may never have played before; some may have been playing for only a year and in general, the skill level of all players is likely to be low.
- Some players will have good basic movement skills (running, jumping etc.) while others will not and the level of fitness of players may vary widely.
- The coach's main priority will be to contribute to the personal development of these children in developing a positive and sportsmanlike.
- Therefore, general aims that the coach may adopt could be that the children:
  - enjoy themselves
  - improve their physical development
  - learn certain values (such as team work, respect for others, etc.)
  - work on overall improvement of basketball fundamentals (dribbling, passing, etc.)
  - see that success is measured by the improvement of skills (team and individual) and executing those skills in games.

1.1.2 BEING PART OF "THE SYSTEM"

It is very important that coaches have an understanding of the development pathway for both players and coaches in their particular region.

If players are involved in other programs, the coach should encourage that participation and be prepared to vary the workload for the athlete on their own team.

Even if the coach is not interested in participating in regional or national development programs, they should find out what is available so that they can make players aware of it. Making contact with the organisers of regional or national development programs can be very useful for all coaches and, in particular, might make resources available to the coach.

KEEPING THE PERSPECTIVE ON THE ATHLETES

The performance of coaches is often summarized by reference to their "win-loss" ratio as if they alone were responsible for those results. This is undesirable.

Unfortunately, some junior coaches merely attempt to maximize wins, often at the expense of long term development. Playing the "best" players may win games in a given season, however the coach's performance is more accurately assessed by the progression each athlete, and the team, makes throughout the season.

ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE "SYSTEM"

Coaches should consider participating in the development system within their region as this will be good for their own development and will enable them to better understand the requirements such programs place on athletes in their own teams.

Time is obviously limited, but even if the coach cannot regularly attend sessions, speaking with players and other coaches is also useful to gain an understanding of these development programs.

DON'T WAIT TO BE ASKED

Sometimes, coaches may be asked to participate in regional development programs and this may be based upon their performance within their club team, or a coaching colleague may have recommended them.

However, coaches that are interested in participating in regional development programs, or simply want to know more about them, should be pro-active in making contact with coaches within those programs either to find out more, observe or perhaps actively participate.

SUPPORTING "THE SYSTEM"

Often a good way to connect with development programs is to make contact and ask if there are ways that you can support the program. If you have players from your team that are in the development program, ask if there is anything in particular they would like you to work on with those players?

For example, often within a local competition a player may play in one position (e.g. Centre) but at higher levels of the sport they may be required to play in a different position (e.g. Forward). All coaches should introduce every player to each playing position, and specifically they may be able to support a development program by providing opportunities to emphasise what is being done in that program.

1.1.3 GETTING SUPPORT FOR YOUR PROGRAM

Effective communication is a key element in building support for your program and, in particular, getting people to contribute to your program.

The better people understand the aims of your program, the more likely it is that they will be willing to contribute to its success.

DEFINING THE PIECES IN THE PUZZLE

A program is like a jigsaw and the coach's role is to communicate not only what the complete picture is but also what each of the pieces looks like.

A coach is much more likely to garner support if they are specific about what they require. Having clarity about what a coach needs enables potential volunteers and helpers to evaluate whether or not they can commit the time and resources required and whether or not they have the right skills or experience.

It is also important that the coach understands the minimum level of support that they require and is clear about that. Accepting anything less than that can lead to more problems rather than providing the necessary support.

For example, a coach may want an assistant coach, particularly to help at practice. This can be easily defined – e.g. two practices a week of two hours' duration and 15 minutes before and after each practice. A total of 5 hours per week.

If someone offers support but can only attend one practice, the coach should not feel that they automatically have to accept and instead might explain that they need the help at both practices. Of course, in this example, they may still encourage that person to attend sessions whenever they can, whilst continuing to look for an assistant coach that can make the greater commitment.

VALUE EVERY CONTRIBUTION

People perform best when they feel that their contribution is valued and they understand what it is that they are contributing towards. A simple "thank you" can be very motivating and coaches may do this verbally, by writing a short note or by acknowledging to the team a particular contribution that has been made.

Having a clear understanding of what support the coach wants will also help them to understand the importance of each contribution. Sometimes one task cannot be undertaken until an earlier task is completed and at other times something can be achieved more easily because of previous achievements.

Some things to consider in relation to how a coach demonstrates that they value a contribution:

- Say please and thank you. Whenever you ask someone to undertake a task, you are asking them to prioritise your needs above everything else in their lives. The common courtesy of "please" and "thank you" is the least that you can do!
- The more specific you can be about what you need, the more likely it is that you will get it.
- Every volunteer deserves a "moment of your time". Take time to speak to the people that support your program. When you truly don't have time, explain this and ask if there is another time when you could talk?
- Talk about them, not you! Ask if there is anything that you can do to help them? Ask what their goals from being involved in your program are and don't assume that you know them. For example, a coach of a development program may want the local coaches to focus on something in particular. Simply asking "could you please make sure that you let Player X practice post moves" may not get a particularly supportive response. Instead, offer to run a clinic, or provide some information, about the teaching points you have for post players. Not only is this more likely to be effective, it is also more likely to have the local coaches implementing your teaching points.
- Be aware of the effect that your program may have on another coach's program. For example, you might only practice twice per week and want players to prioritise your practice over other programs, however if those practices are at the same time as games or practice the player has with another team, them always attending your practice would have a significant impact.

WHO CAN HELP?

To help to identify possible sources of help, a coach should ask each player to provide an overview or summary of what other commitments they have not only to basketball but also any other sports and matters such as jobs, family and school.

Getting players to provide you with a simple diary of their activities can be a good way to get this information.

It can also help the coach to build their network. For example, one player on the team may also do athletics and by connecting with their athletics coach, the basketball coach may be able to provide some specific tuition in running for another player.

Coaches of young players should also not dismiss the role that parents can play in helping. Whether as an assistant coach at practice (undertaking a simple role such as passing to shooters) or carrying out an administrative task (e.g. setting up a Facebook page for the team), parents are often the easiest people to recruit because they are already involved in the team through their child.

Some of the roles that a coach may need assistance with are:

- Strength and conditioning – personal trainers, health clubs and other gyms may be able to assist.
- Physiotherapy – whether for injury rehabilitation or prevention, a physiotherapist can help athletes to look after their bodies.
- Team management – arranging uniforms, travel, pre/post game food and a host of other tasks
- Stats – not official statistics (that may be provided by the league) but other statistics that mirror what the team has been practicing (for example, a team that has been working on help defence may want to keep track of how many times the opponent passed the ball from one side of the court to the other before shooting. The more times they passed the more pressure the defence has put on them).
- Technical assistance – sometimes a coach may not be confident in teaching a particular topic. Asking another coach to come to their session and work on that topic not only helps the players to develop, it will also improve the ability of the coach to teach it next time.

1.1.4 HAVING THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Whether in a practice session or a game, coaches working with young players should have an objective, constructive and positive attitude toward their players and the officials.

The best players in the world, during their best games, have missed shots that seemed easy

Coaching in games can be frustrating for a coach, because whilst they may see mistakes being made and know what needs to be done, they cannot directly do it.

If coaches act (or react) out of frustration or stress, it will not have a good result, particularly when coaching young children. Having an objective, constructive and positive attitude is particularly important.

- Objective, because they should objectively assess what their players can do (before the game), what they are doing (during the game) and what they have done (after the game).
- Constructive, because whatever happens during the game, coaches should use it so that their players, both individually and collectively, obtain benefits that will influence their athletic and personal development.
- Positive, because during the game is not the time to make an in-depth analysis of mistakes, but to emphasize the players' positive behaviour and to encourage them to do things without being afraid of failing.

The coach's comments during a game should focus on what the team needs to do or is going to do, not what has happened previously.

Obviously, what has happened previously in the game informs what the coach wants the team to do, but the coach will be most effective if they use positive, action-oriented language ("now this is what we are going to do...").

Coaches should be realistic in their expectations of players and not demand more from them than the players are capable of at their stage of development. They should assume and accept that the players will make many mistakes because:

- the best players in the world, during their best games, have missed shots that seemed easy;
- even the best players make mistakes when passing and/or have turnovers. No team has won a championship and recorded no turnovers;

Unfortunately, many coaches lose the appropriate perspective and the self-control that they should have during games - when players make mistakes such coaches add to the stress of the players by making unproductive comments that only increase their insecurity, turning the game into a negative experience.

In fact, many young players who start out enthusiastically playing basketball lose their enthusiasm and quit because games become very stressful experiences that they cannot deal with.

The coach´s behaviour is an essential element in avoiding this problem and in getting games to be positive experiences, whatever the result on the scoreboard.

Similarly, the coach must assume and accept that officials will make mistakes. Even the most experienced official will sometimes make a mistake and the coach, and their team, must not focus on that and instead focus on the next play. A coach that speaks after a game about how referee decisions cost them the game will soon have players that do not accept their accountability for performance.

1.1.5 UNDERSTANDING THE MOTIVATIONS OF PLAYERS

It is important for a coach to understand why their players are involved in sport and for the coach's expectations for the team to align with those motivations.

Various studies have confirmed that children are primarily involved in sport to have fun, with the following reasons typically being given by children as to why they play:

- To have fun
- To learn new skills
- To be with friends
- To do something that I am good at
- To keep fit

Not having fun is the primary reason why children stop playing sport and children rarely rank "Winning" as an important factor in why they play sport. It is not that winning is unimportant, necessarily, it is just not the reason that they are involved in sport. Indeed, some studies indicate that high school students prefer to play on a losing team rather than sit on the bench as a substitute on a winning team.

Clearly, a coach that makes decisions based purely on winning games (e.g. court time) may actually discourage players from being involved in sport. Often when coaching junior athletes pressure to win will come from parents rather than players and this can be difficult for a coach to deal with.

One approach is for the coach to make sure that the parents see the improvement that the players and the team are making because often parents will only evaluate success according to the scoreboard. The coach should also be very clear what their approach will be (e.g. giving young players equal playing time) so that the players (and parents) can decide whether or not they want to be involved with that approach.

Even professional athletes will generally perform better if they are enjoying the experience and if it is an environment where they are learning and developing their skills. There is no specific time when winning becomes a major motivation for players and it is always worthwhile for a coach to discuss with players why they are involved in the team and what they want to get out of their time with the team.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Consider each of the teams that you are involved with and for each team:
   a. what are the various motivations of players within the team?
   b. what expectation does the club have for the team?
   c. what expectations do parents (if it is a junior team) or club supporters and sponsors (if it is a senior team) have for the team?
2. Based on your answers to question 1, does this make any difference to how you will coach the team? Describe any differences you identify.
3. Describe to a colleague how you coach, specifically:
   a. how often do you speak to players?
   b. are you a loud coach?
   c. are you an emotional coach?
   d. how do you interact with referees?

Then have your colleague watch you coaching at either a training session or a game and have them comment upon the following:

   a. from what they observed, do they agree with how you describe your coaching behaviour?
   b. do players reflect your emotional demeanour at any time during the practice/game?
   c. do the players interact with referees similarly to how you do?

1.2 WORKING WITH OFFICIALS

1.2.1 APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION WITH OFFICIALS

The coach's attention should be on the performance of their players and the team.

TALK AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE

The coach should introduce themselves at the start of the game, wish them all the best and then say thank you at the end of the game. Particularly when coaching juniors, this may be the extent of communication with officials.

YELLING IS A DISTRACTION

There may be times when the coach wishes to clarify a decision that the referee has made or seek other information. Yelling at the official while the game is going on is not an appropriate way to raise the matter and is likely to distract them from their job of officiating the play that is going on at that moment.

Instead, the coach should wait for a break in play and to then speak with the official in a conversational tone. If the coach's concern is in regards to the score or a timing issue, this should first be raised with the scoretable and they will notify the referees if necessary.

ASK A QUESTION

Once the coach has the official's attention they should ask the question which they want answered. Simply saying "that was a foul" or "didn't you see that the screener moved" is unlikely to be helpful.

Instead the coach should speak to the official to:

- Seek clarification of a ruling that has been made (which may include both calls that were made and calls that were not made) (e.g. "my player was standing still well before the shooter started their lay-up so why was a block foul called?");
- Bring something to the attention of the referee and ask them to look at it (e.g. they are moving when setting their ball screens);
- Raise a concern with regard to the score or timing (although this should first be raised with the scoretable).

QUESTION ASKED, QUESTION ANSWERED

Once the coach has asked a question they should accept the answer. They may disagree with it (particularly if it was about a matter of interpretation – was it a "block" or "charge"), but simply repeating the same question several times is not productive.

There is little point in engaging in an argument with the official. For example, the coach may believe there was contact and a foul should have been called. The official may explain that they did not see any unlawful contact. The coach re-iterating that they believe there was a foul is unlikely to change the official's belief that there wasn't a foul.

The coach should turn their attention to the efforts of their players and the team. Like the fable of the "boy who cried wolf", the more often a coach questions or complains to the officials, the less likely it is that they will consider that the coach is saying anything of merit and the less likely it is that the officials will take what the coach is saying into account.

RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY

The key to having a good relationship with officials is the same as any inter-personal relationship and coaches should look to build relationships over the course of a season or a tournament.

Being respectful toward the official and the role that they have is key. The coach should have conversations with the official, not attempt to dictate to them or berate them.

Before the game is an excellent opportunity to start to build a rapport with the official and to raise with the official anything of concern to the coach. For example:

- "Last time we played this team, there was a lot of contact in the post and we felt that their players were pushing us out of position"
- "I've noticed during the season that a lot of latitude has been given to the defenders in the post and allowing them to push the offensive player off the post. Has there been any direction in this regard?"
- Asking the official "how have you found the season? Are there any particular trends you've seen?"

WORK WITH THE OFFICIALS

A coach is responsible for the conduct of team staff and players and a coach's behaviour can have a significant impact upon the behaviour of the fans and spectators.

For example, if a player is distracted by the officials, and particularly if they are starting to complain to referees, the coach should take action. That action could be:

- Presenting the player's concern to the referees – for example, "my point guard feels that he is getting pushed a lot by #5 who hand checks every time. Could you have a look at it please?"
- Take the player from the game to "cool down" – it is certainly better that the coach takes this action rather than the official calling a technical foul
- Changing tactics to relieve the player from a particular situation – e.g. moving to "5 Out" if the player is concerned at contact in the post.

The coach can also influence the behaviour of spectators and the most obvious example of this is that the more the coach complains to the officials, the more spectators will see that as an acceptable action and join in.

Instead, the coach should set an expectation for the team's spectators to focus their energy on positively supporting the team, rather than commenting upon the referees.

EXPECT MISTAKES

Officials will make mistakes in every game – just as players and coaches do. Officials work together as a team to "cover" the whole court. Basketball is a very fast-moving game and sometimes players may move quicker than the officials can, however most times officials will be in a better position than the coach is to see what happened.

Officials make hundreds of decisions every game, mostly in a split second and the official barely has time to think about the last decision before needing to make their next decision.

If they do make a mistake, the official (like a player) should then be focussing on the "next play". Coaches should assist this by making their communication at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way and making sure their players communicate similarly appropriately (if at all) with officials.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Do you have a good relationship with referees? After answering the question, ask a colleague or administrator who has watched you coach whether they believe you have a good relationship with referees. If possible, seek feedback from referees on how they find officiating your games.
2. How would you respond if one of the experienced players told the team after the match "we only lost because the referees made a mistake at the end of the game – the offensive foul they called was wrong".
3. Would your answer to question 2 be different if you agreed that the referees had made a mistake? Discuss with a colleague how they would approach the situation.

LEVEL 1

COACH

CHAPTER 2

KNOW-HOW

CHAPTER 2

KNOW-HOW

2.1 PLANNING

2.2. TEACHING

2.3 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE SESSIONS

2.4 ADMINISTRATION

2.5 COMMUNICATION

2.1. PLANNING

2.1.1 PLANNING PRACTICE-INTRODUCTION

Planning activities (practice sessions and games) is an essential aspect of a coach's role.

Coaches who do not plan tend to drift. They will often spend too much time on one aspect (particularly if the players are not doing it well) and not enough time on other areas. This will invariably result in a lack of progress by the players, which is compounded because coaches who do not plan often end up doing the same things from one training session to the next.

By contrast, coaches who plan sessions find they have a goal and a clear idea of how to attain it; they know exactly where they want to go, the path they should follow and how to follow it, the problems they will encounter and how to overcome them. This will help the athletes to develop their confidence.

Coaches who plan well also avoid the mistake of spending too long on one aspect of the game. Even if the players are not executing something perfectly, a coach who has planned knows that to continue working on that means not doing something else that was important and which they had planned to do. In this circumstance, the coach should note what stage the team reached so that they can return to it at the next session.

THE FIRST CONSIDERATION WHEN PLANNING A SESSION IS WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE, SUCH AS:

- courts, basketballs, hoops, etc.;
- off-court area, whiteboard;
- do the players have reversible uniforms so they can be divided into "teams";
- how long is the session;
- number of players attending;
- number of coaches at the session;
- other training aids (e.g. cones, bibs, "bump bags").

There are many factors that need to be taken into account by the coach.

Often when coaching a junior team, the coach will not have an assistant coach; if that is the case they should consider whether or not parents can assist. Simple tasks such as rebounding the ball or being an "obstacle" that players dribble around can often be delegated to a parent.

Often the resources are limited (few balls, little court time, only half a court available, outdoor courts, etc.). Coaches must use their imagination to make up for these deficiencies. For example, if only a few balls are available, use a "circuit", where players work in small groups with different types of activities for each group – some activities with the ball and some without. Alternatively, players could be encouraged to bring their own ball.

Coaches must always try to avoid a situation where players line up in a long line, waiting a long time until they finally have a turn with the ball.

Coaches should also explore what other possibilities are available to make up for the lack of resources. For example, the team may only have the use of one court with two baskets for practice. The coach could consider the possibility of training on another day in a space without baskets, taking advantage of this session to do activities that do not require a basket (e.g. agility). This can allow the coach to use the limited time with baskets to the best advantage.

TRAINING RULES

Coaches should establish training rules and communicate these to the players (and their parents) at the start of the season. In order to do this, they should consider the following:

- How early should the players get to practice? When should they be dressed and ready to start training?
- What should the players wear to practice? Is there a designated practice uniform?
- How does the practice start? Will the coach meet with the players in the locker room before going out on the court? Should the players go out when they are ready and start to train by themselves until the coach calls them? Should the players go out on the court and wait until the coach calls them before doing anything else?
- Who is in charge of the equipment needed for the practice? Who is in charge of the balls? Who picks them up after practice? Who has the key to the locker room? Who is responsible for the whiteboard? Is there an alarm code to lock up after practice?
- Are players that are injured and unable to train required to attend practice? If so, what is their role at practice (taking statistics, doing a limited workout?)
- What happens if a player gets injured during practice? Who takes care of them? What should be done?

By being clear about their training rules a coach can then hold players accountable to follow them. Team mates can also hold each other accountable.

Coaches should also establish simple rules when speaking to the players so that they pay attention to them. For example, they could use a whistle when they want the players to stop what they are doing and listen, and whistle twice if they want the players to move over to the coach.

There is little point in the coach speaking until they have the attention of the players. Similarly, when speaking to an individual player the coach should first get their attention. Many coaches will yell during a drill: "Move to the baseline, Michael." Unfortunately, Michael may not start listening until he hears his name, which means he would actually miss the coach's instruction. Accordingly, the coach should say: "Michael, move to the baseline."

Coaches may also establish a rule that when they are speaking to the players that players should not be dribbling the ball, tying their shoes, talking to each other or doing anything else, but should look at them and pay attention to what the coach is saying.

There is research that suggests that some players will be able to stand perfectly still while others will "fidget"; but both are listening. The overriding rule must be that no player can do something that makes it hard for another player to hear or distracts the attention of another player.

Nevertheless, in order to keep the players' attention in these situations, coaches must make sure that their explanations are short and very precise.

Coaches should also establish procedures such as whether or not players sit down or drink water between activities. Training rules should also emphasize that players must remain positive with each other and set out whether visitors (parents, friends, etc.) may attend.

HOW FAR AHEAD SHOULD YOU PLAN?

A coach should have a plan for the season. First, the coach identifies where the players and team are currently in terms of ability to execute skills and tactics. The coach should then have a plan for what they want the players to learn throughout the season. This enables the coach to ensure that they spend some time in each practice on all aspects.

Once the coach has identified goals for the season, each session should be a step toward achieving one of the goals for the season.

2.1.2 PLANNING PRACTICE-SETTING GOALS

SETTING GOALS

The coach needs to identify two or three key goals for each training session. These should relate to the overall goals for the season and may also be linked either to the previous game or the next game. Linking them to a game helps define how and when success is measured. The goals of each session should be few and two serious mistakes are:

- trying to do too much in a single practice or a single activity;
- the coach not knowing clearly what they want to achieve during the training session as a whole and/or with each specific activity.

There are two types of goals - outcome goals and performance goals.

OUTCOME GOALS

Outcome goals refer to collective or individual results, for example, making a certain number of shots, taking a certain amount of time to complete an activity or scoring a certain number of points. Outcome goals may be divided into two types:

- intra-subject or intra-group - results by an individual player or group, (e.g. make 10 shots)
- inter-subject or inter-group - results of an individual group compared to another individual or group (e.g. first to make 10 shots)

PERFORMANCE GOALS

Performance goals focus on the desired steps toward an outcome, rather than the outcome itself. For example, improving a chest pass, shooting more often from specific positions on the court, blocking out or passing the ball to the low post.

Achieving a performance goal does not guarantee that an outcome goal will be achieved, but it does increase the probability of achieving it. Performance goals help players to develop confidence in the execution of skills.

For example, shooting more often from ideal positions (performance goal) does not guarantee that more points will be made (outcome goal), but does increase the probability of making more points, and only by shooting more often from these positions will the player be able to control how to make more points.

In general, outcome goals work better at enhancing the players' interest, but performance goals are better at helping the players to understand that they can control the situations with which they are faced.

It is advisable to combine both types of goals depending on the players' age group, keeping in mind the following:

- inter-subject and inter-group outcome goals are advisable for teams made up of 15-18-year-olds and, to a lesser extent, for teams made up of 13-14-year-olds. They are not advisable for mini-basketball teams.
- individual and collective performance goals are highly recommended for all teams.

In order to be efficient, goals should be **SMART:**

S	Specific	Goals should be specific and clearly defined rather than general and ambiguous.
M	Measurable	There must be some criteria set as to how the goal is measured and, where possible, this should be objective.
A	Achievable	Goals should be challenging for the players. Goals that are too easy (requiring little effort) or that require too much effort are not suitable. Goals should be challenging in such a way as to motivate the player; goals that are too easy, although attractive, are not challenging.
R	Realistic	Goals should show the progress that a player or a team will make. To be realistic, those goals must seem possible. Sometimes you will set a series of goals toward achieving a goal. For example, for a ten-year-old having a goal of dunking the ball is very unlikely to be realistic (at least at that time). However, having a series of goals (e.g. the height they can jump) they can realistically take steps toward the ultimate goal.
T	Timely	each goal should have a time frame set to it, whether that is end of the season, the end of the year or the next week. Having a time frame provides a sense of "urgency" and will help track progress.

Goals should be established for the team and for the individual players. If only collective goals have been established, individual motivation can easily diminish. And with young players, it is important that each player be allowed to progress at their own pace; therefore, individual goals are important. It may be that within one activity, different players will have different goals depending upon their skill level.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERFORMANCE GOALS

Performance goals are particularly important when coaching young players because they:

- are centered on what the players do and how they do it, rather than on the consequences of what they do (missing a shot does not mean it was a bad shot and similarly making a shot does not mean it was a good shot);
- allow a more realistic evaluation of the feasibility of the goals;
- facilitate a simple and reliable assessment of output;
- permit the players to use their own behaviour to measure their progress;
- increase self-confidence (which comes from feeling "in control") and motivation (which comes from belief that the goal can be achieved).

Coaches of 6-9-year-olds should use only performance goals. Coaches of athletes aged 10-12 years should concentrate on performance goals but may include some intra-subject or intra-group outcome goals related to those performance goals.

For example, in order to work on the individual performance goal of improving lay-ups:

- a coach of 6-9-year-olds should focus on the players being balanced and using correct footwork;
- a coach of 10-12-year-olds may set an intra-group outcome goal for how many lay-ups the group can achieve (with correct balance, footwork and shooting with the correct hand) in a certain time;
- a coach of players aged 13+ may divide the squad into two groups with an inter-group outcome goal of the first team to make a certain number of baskets.

Using performance goals with younger players does not mean that coaches cannot use games that keep score. Often, it can be a lot of fun for an activity to be competitive, however the coach should be careful to focus on performance goals.

For example, teams may play a game where players attempt lay-ups and the first team to make 20 points wins. With young players, the coach may award 3 points for correct footwork and only 1 point if a basket is made (and no points if it is made with incorrect footwork). This is a competitive game, but the coach's focus is on correct performance of the skill.

Having an outcome can also be useful as it gives a natural ending to an activity (e.g. when one team scores 20 points). Using performance goals with younger players equally applies to games, and indeed in many competitions for players under the age of 10 there are no outcome goals because no scores are kept. Even if scores are kept, the coach should set other goals for the team that relate to processes that they have been practicing.

Performance goals also remain important when coaching older age groups. For example, if players are struggling to make a lay-up with their weaker hand the coach may:

- award two points if the correct technique is used and the basket is made;
- award one point if the correct technique is used but the basket is missed;
- deduct a point if the basket is made but incorrect technique is used.

CHOOSING THE MOST APPROPRIATE GOALS

Once the coach decides which goals are appropriate, they must decide if these can be achieved within the coaching time available. In many cases, because of the lack of time, they may have to leave out some goals.

Where this is the case (a common occurrence when coaching young teams), the coach has to choose which goals they consider most important, omitting the rest. To do this, they can use criteria such as:

- the importance of each goal, taking into account the type of team they are coaching and, based on this, the team's general goals; obviously those goals considered most important will take precedence;
- the proximity of each goal with respect to the present. In general, if the degree of importance is similar, those goals that can be achieved first should take precedence;
- the relationship between different objectives, bearing in mind whether the attainment of one goal is essential to achieving others. In general, the simplest goals that facilitate the attainment of later, more complex, goals should take precedence;
- combining offense and defence goals (for example, improve offense 1-on-1 fundamentals and improve defence 1-on-1 fundamentals). Both on an individual level and on a collective level, the development of offense and defence should follow a parallel progression;
- the "cost" necessary to achieve each goal, defining cost as the physical and psychological effort necessary. In general, those goals requiring lower cost should take precedence.

In general, goals that are geared toward the development of skills or understanding the game are preferable to those that are geared toward winning a particular game.

2.1.3 PLANNING PRACTICE-STAGES OF A PRACTICE SESSION

The effectiveness of any particular activity will be influenced both by what is done and equally importantly, when the activity is done within the overall practice.

Coaches should be realistic when determining the activities to be done in the practice session, keeping in mind:

- the skill level of the players;
- the amount of time available for each activity;
- the specific "teaching points" to emphasize in each activity. It is often possible to use one activity to teach a range of different skills;
- the simplicity of the activity; generally the simplest activity should take precedence over more complex activities. The coach should also consider whether or not the activity has previosuly been used with the team. The more familiar the team is with a particular activity the lower the psychological load;
- the integration of the activity, into the overall framework of the session; the activity that fits in best should take precedence;

STAGES OF A PRACTICE SESSION

In general, a training session should be divided into three stages:

- In the first stage, the aim is to prepare the players to be physically and psychologically ready when they reach the main stage of the practice. Warm-up activities without the ball such as running, stretching, etc., should be included here, and simple activities with the ball (low physical and psychological load) that, little by little, require greater concentration and physical effort.
- In the second stage, the coach should incorporate the main objectives of the session, those requiring greater physical and psychological effort, combining activities of greater and lesser physical and psychological intensity. This is where the most teaching is done.
- In the third stage, the coach should progressively reduce the physical and psychological intensity, although not necessarily simultaneously. Thus, in the first part of this third stage, they may include a physically intensive drill requiring low concentration. Or they can organise it the other way around, a psychologically intense drill with a low physical workload (for example, a shooting contest). Then it would be appropriate to end with exercises that require little physical and mental effort, such as basic stretching exercises.

The coach must decide what the main goals of the training session will be and, based on this, select the contents to be included and the most appropriate drills, taking into account the time available and the physical and psychological loads that they consider most appropriate at a given time.

In general, the goals of an activity can be grouped into four main blocks:

- learning: the objective is for the players to learn or perfect new skills, both technical fundamentals (passing, dribbling, shooting, etc.) and tactical skills (1 on 1, 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 strategies, etc.);
- repetition: rehearsing skills that players have already mastered in order to consolidate them and to perfect them. These activities can also be used to provide a physiological change, as the case may be (for example: shooting a series of twenty shots or running and passing for a period of ten minutes). It is important that repetition is done in context - for example, having someone stand in front of a shooter will help the shooter to develop a higher release.
- exposure to real game conditions: the objective here is for the players to train under real game conditions (mainly stressful conditions) so that they get used to these conditions;
- specific game preparation: the objective is to prepare the team to confront specific rivals who present specific difficulties.

With athletes aged 12 and under learning activities will predominate and, to a lesser degree, repetition goals. It is not appropriate to spend training time on the other two areas.

For teams of 13-14-year-olds, learning and repetition should predominate but the players should also practice skills mastered in non-stressful game conditions. However, it is not appropriate for this age group to spend training time on specific game preparation.

For teams of 15-18-year-olds, learning, repetition, exposure to game conditions, and specific preparation for games should be adequately combined. Learning drills should generally be done early in the practice session (when the psychological load has been low) or after a break.

The contents included in practice sessions should correspond to the goals for that session (e.g. perfecting foot movement in 1 on 1 defence; repeating passes already mastered, etc.).

Well planned activities are essential for making the most of practice time. A session made up of good, well-coordinated activities will benefit the players much more than a session with inappropriate or poorly coordinated ones.

With each activity that the coach uses, they must clearly identify their "teaching points". These are the things that they will emphasize for the players to do. They are "process goals" and form the basis for evaluation of players.

In planning practice, the coach should also plan how much time will be used to "present the activity. Simply, this is briefly explaining the activity to be done and explaining the teaching points, which are the specific things that the coach wants the players to concentrate on.

The explanations given should be very brief. The players cannot be standing still for a long time, listening to long explanations. If an activity is to go for 10 minutes, no more than two minutes should be spent presenting the activity. Many coaches will try to restrict the amount of time used to instruct athletes at practice to 1 minute (the length of a timeout) or 2 minutes (the short break between quarters).

2.1.4 PLANNING PRACTICE-CHOOSING APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES

There are many factors that contribute to a successful activity. In order to control the players' attention, the coach should try to make the environment closely related to the goals of the activity. For example, reducing court space when working with small groups of players and limiting the actions permitted (no dribbling, no screen etc.).

Activities with a simple structure (e.g. where players move) also help the players to concentrate better on the goal and the contents of the activity. Activities with a complex structure, on the other hand, force the players to devote attention to adapting to the structure, rather than concentrating on the key aspects.

In complex activities, coaches often provide feedback, mostly about the structure of the activity (e.g. where players move after passing the ball) instead of concentrating on the teaching points that the activity is meant to emphasise.

The coach can vary the difficulty of an activity by introducing rules for the players to follow, which focus on the teaching points.

For example, if the aim of an activity is for the players to dribble using their non-preferred hand the coach may use a half-court 3 on 3 game where the sole goal is to dribble with the non-preferred hand. If a player dribbles with their preferred hand their team loses possession of the ball. This is an example of a "working rule". This way, the players will pay more attention to the goal of the activity.

Although activities using a simple structure help the players to concentrate on the goal, using the same activity again and again leads to lower motivation and concentration.

For this reason, it is a good idea to vary the activities by changing either the structure or the goals or both.

If after one activity, another one is done that is similar to the first in its goal and/or its structure, the players will be better prepared mentally to perform the second, especially if the level of attention required progressively increases.

For example, the coach can begin with an activity with a single goal and a limited number of stimuli and then progressively add complexity. For example, moving through the following activities:

1	In pairs, in a reduced space, with one ball per pair. Players can only move without the ball and pass the ball to each other. The player receiving the ball must face the basket while the player who passed should immediately change position;
2	2 on 2 situation, playing in a larger but still limited area. Offensive players get free to receive the pass. If the defensive players steal the ball they change to offense and the offense changes to defence. The goal is still for the players to look at the basket when receiving the ball and change position as soon as they pass;
3	The players now move to another activity, keeping a similar structure but with a different goal. Still 2 on 2 but the goal now is to score using left-hand lay-ups;
4	The players do another activity, keeping the same structure and combining the two previous goals. 2 on 2, the players should make at least three passes before the lay-up. The player receiving a pass must face the basket and the player passing changes immediately to another position; players can only score using left-hand lay-ups;
5	Finally, the players change to another activity with the same goals but adding more stimuli such as a 4 on 4 half-court game. Players receiving the ball should look at the basket; the players passing should immediately change position. The team must make at least five passes before doing the lay-up and they can only score using left-hand lay-ups.

Organizing activities where the players compete among themselves or against themselves is a way to increase motivation and concentration, as long as they have enough resources to be successful. Here are some examples:

- divide the team into four groups, two at each basket. See which group does more left-handed lay-ups in three minutes;
- divide the team into groups of three players each. Each group executes chest passes running from one basket to the other (at least three or four passes), ending with a lay-up. Each basket made is worth two points, with one point taken away for every pass not completed. The drill is to last three minutes; the point is to see which team makes more points. The second phase repeats the same drill but the aim is to see which teams can improve their first-phase score;
- two players play 1 on 1 (with specific working rules) until one makes three baskets;
- divide the whole team around all baskets available. The players work in pairs and shoot simultaneously (the player who shoots then rebounds the ball and passes to the other player who is waiting, etc.). In three minutes, they have to make the maximum number of baskets. At the end of the time limit, the score is recorded. Periodically (once or twice a week) this drill can be repeated to see if the players can improve their top score and set a new record.

If used correctly (posing challenges that can really be achieved) and not used too often, these competitive drills increase motivation while incorporating into the practice sessions an important element in training young players, which is to get them used to competing.

Having fun is essential, especially for younger players. When coaching young players, the coach´s main objective should be that the children enjoy themselves.

Doing enjoyable activities is not to be confused with letting each player do whatever they want or making an effort only when they want to. Enjoyable drills are those that are attractive to the players, in a relaxed, non-stressful setting that allows the player to feel at ease and have a good time, but they should also have a purpose, working rules and require a certain level of performance.

For example: an enjoyable activity for a mini-basketball team might be for a group of players to each have a ball in the keyway; they have to dribble their own ball and try to knock the other players' ball away without losing their own. The last player dribbling in the keyway wins.

In this type of activity, the players work in a relaxed setting and have fun, but the activity has a purpose, working rules and requires a degree of performance, making it doubly useful: the players have a good time and they are working on objectives that are important to their development as players.

TRANSFER OF SKILLS BETWEEN ACTIVITIES

When the goal of the training session is learning technical or tactical skills, the coach should still include short activities to give the players a chance to put the skills into practice.

Basically, these activities consist of incorporating more stimuli in such a way that the players have to concentrate on more than simply the skill they were learning. If, when faced with this more complex situation, the players do not apply the skills that they have been learning, it would indicate that these skills are not yet sufficiently mastered and consequently, that the players still need specific work in a certain area.

For example, if in a previous activity, the players had the goal of learning to make left-hand lay-ups. They worked half-court in a 2 on 2 game during which they could only shoot using left-hand lay-ups.

Now, in the test drill, the coach organises a full-court 4 on 4 activity (more stimuli and consequently, greater demand) and watches to see if the players make left-hand lay-ups when they have the chance or if they continue to use their right hand. In the latter case, the coach may conclude that the goal of making left-hand lay-ups still needs more specific training.

2.1.5 PLANNING PRACTICE- DURATION OF ACTIVITIES

When deciding how long activities will last, the coach should take into account aspects such as boredom and psychological fatigue which lead to decreased concentration.

The activities should last long enough for the players to have enough time to understand and assimilate the contents, but if they go on too long, concentration decreases and, from that moment, productivity decreases as well. This is especially important for younger players.

Running activities for 7-10 minutes is a suggested maximum before having a change of activity or a break.

Some activities require the players to concentrate more than others. If the coach uses various activities that all require a high level of concentration in a practice session, the players will tire and their concentration will decrease.

For this reason, it is important to schedule psychological rest periods throughout the practice session by either planning complete rest periods or using some activities that do not require a high level of concentration.

The coach should use activities in which all of the players participate frequently. For example, it is best to avoid training sessions where the children are lined up in a long line to do lay-ups and have to wait more than a minute to have their five-second turn (sometimes longer if the coach stops the activity to correct someone). It is also best to avoid practice sessions where some of the players spend a long time sitting down while their companions play a game.

2.1.6 PLANNING PRACTICE- USING STATIONS AND GROUP WORK

Even if the resources available are limited (for example, a single ball and a single basket), the coach has to use their imagination to keep players actively involved during the entire session.

A lack of resources is no excuse, it is a problem that the coach should compensate for as well as they can.

For example, it is a good idea for the coach to divide the players into small groups, establishing specific goals for each group. If there are not enough balls or baskets, some groups can do drills without the ball and without a basket (defensive moves, fakes without the ball, plays without the ball, etc.), while others do drills with the ball. Then, the groups switch activities.

The players should never be standing around except for short breaks to recuperate from an intense effort. If the number of players does not allow all of them to participate at the same time (for example, there are eleven players and the idea is to play a 5 on 5 game), the players who cannot participate should be the lowest number possible (in this case, one) and for a very short period, with the players rotating frequently.

It can often be useful for the coach to designate a rule by which substitutions are made (e.g. the scorer is substituted) as this enables the coach to concentrate on observing the activity and giving feedback. Many coaches have fallen into the trap of forgetting to substitute players into an activity.

2.1.7 PLANNING PRACTICE-MANAGING PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL LOAD

When planning, the coach must consider both the physical and the psychological load that training places on players.

THE PHYSICAL WORK LOAD

When planning practice sessions, the coach includes technical and tactical aspects (passing, dribbling, 3 on 3 drills, etc.) as well as activities to improve the players' physical development (e.g., drills to improve coordination or speed). The coach can improve the physical condition of the players, not only with the more specific physical work but also by including technical and tactical training that involves physical work (for example, when the players perform fast-break activities).

However, it is equally important to avoid fatigue and burnout. When young players are overtired, they no longer enjoy themselves, they learn less and there is a greater risk of injury.

To control the balance between physical work and rest, coaches need to consider both the work they are doing with their teams as well as other activities that players participate in.

Young players are likely to participate in other sports or play basketball with their school or other teams as well as in their free time, apart from the work they do with the team. Players that have commitments with a regional or national team, for example, may need to train less with their club team in order to avoid overtraining.

It is important to keep in mind that the players should be rested before a game. So, training sessions in the day or two before a game should have a lighter physical workload. Similarly, training sessions for the day after a game should be relatively light.

Most importantly, the balance between work and rest needs to be kept in mind during each training session. The players should perform a series of activities and then be able to recuperate from the effort by either resting or doing activities that require less physical effort.

For example: after full court 1 on 1 (intensive exercise) activity the players will need to rest or do low-intensity drills (for example, free throws).

When estimating the physical workload, a distinction should be made between volume and intensity. Volume is the total amount of physical work performed by the players. Intensity refers to the physical work that the players do within a unit of time.

For example: an activity including thirty full court sprints has more volume than an activity involving twenty full court sprints. However, the second activity requires more intensity if it is done in 3 minutes and the first activity is undertaken in 5 minutes.

Coaches need to consider the total volume (workload) in a session and ensure that players have adequate rest between high volume practice sessions. They should also balance the intensity of activities, providing longer rest breaks in between high intensity activities or following a high intensity activity with a less intensive activity.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LOAD

Just as the coach should control the physical workload, they must also control the psychological load.

The psychological load is related to such aspects of training as:

- the players' commitment to their sport: the greater the commitment, the greater the psychological load;
- players' participation in the activities: the greater their participation, the greater the psychological load;
- the novelty, variety and complexity of the tasks set during a session: the greater the degree of novelty, variety and complexity, the greater the mental effort required;
- the degree of attention demanded of them: an activity that the players are doing for the first time may require more attention than an activity that they have done many times;
- stressful competitive situations: exercises that pose stressful competitive situations (for example, playing a game with a time limit in which the winning team gets a prize) impose a greater psychological load;
- the behaviour of the coach; if the coach is on top of the activity, giving instructions, commenting, correcting, reinforcing, etc., the psychological load is greater. This is particularly so if the coach's behaviour produces stress.

However, coaches must also be conscious that without a minimum psychological load, the training session is dull and boring. Therefore, monotonous sessions (doing the same drills again and again) or where the players participate little (for example, a long line of players waiting for their turn) will be counter-productive.

Similarly, sessions that do not include competitive drills or if the coach does not provide evaluation of the players' performance may lead to boredom.

Also, when the coach appears disinterested and is not involved in their work, it can lead the players to a sense of boredom and a loss of interest.

The coach must seek to provoke a psychological effort on the part of the players which helps them to control a difficult situation that can actually be controlled. For example: dividing a team into two groups and organizing a shooting competition between them is a common activity.

If the players shoot from positions in which they can actually score and if the level of the two groups is similar, the activity will have a productive psychological load. The players will be concentrating on the task and they are faced with a competitive situation that they can handle. They will have to deal with the frustration of missing in order to keep on trying and they will be faced with the success or failure of the final score (thus learning to control emotions related to success and failure).

However, if the players are shooting from positions from which they can barely reach the hoop, or one team is much better than the other, the psychological load will be negative. After several failed attempts, the players perceive that they are not controlling the situation because no matter how hard they try, the goal of scoring is beyond their reach and, in these conditions, both motivation and effort will diminish.

In general terms, the psychological load for players that are aged 12 or under should be moderate. In order to achieve an adequate load, the following should predominate:

- activities in which all players participate (thus avoiding situations where they are waiting a long time for their turn);
- simple activities which the players know or can quickly perform;
- general contents that do not force the players to make a special effort to concentrate on very reduced stimuli;
- short activities to avoid losing the players' attention;
- competitive activities, carefully monitored by the coach in such a way that successes and failures are evenly divided.

For these teams, the total volume of psychological load can be similar in most of the practice sessions. During each session, either activities of a similar load can be used or activities with a greater load in conjunction with others of a lesser load.

For teams of 13-14-year-olds, the psychological load can be greater and even more so for 15-18-year-olds although, in both cases, greater and lesser loads should be alternated in practice sessions and in the drills performed during each session.

Let us consider, for example, a one-week plan of four practice sessions for a team of 15-18-year-olds:

- the first day, the coach introduces new offensive objectives that require the players to make a significant mental effort (medium-high load);
- the second day, the same objectives are repeated, using non-stressful activities (medium-low load);
- the third day, the coach uses competitive drills related to that objective and others that the players have already mastered; some activities may be stressful (high-very high load);
- the fourth day, objectives are repeated using non-stressful activities (low load).

When planning the entire season, the coach should bear in mind the importance of psychological rest periods as well as physical rest periods, so that the players will be able to assimilate the work they have done and be in a fit state for new productive efforts.

It is therefore a good idea, during the season, for young players to have rest periods which involve taking a break from basketball. It is advisable for them to divide their time between their sports activities and other physical, recreational and intellectual activities. For example, a coach may plan sessions that have a low psychological load when the players have school exams.

Similarly, having a team watch a video of the game immediately after playing does not take into account the psychological load of the game or the psychological load of watching a video of this type. A game involves a very high psychological load producing extreme psychological wear and tear, and requires a period of psychological rest so that the players can recuperate.

2.1.8 PLANNING PRACTICE- ADDING COMPLEXITY

ADDING COMPLEXITY BY CREATING TRAFFIC

One method that can be used to vary an activity and to increase its psychological load is to "create traffic".

For example, a team may do an activity such as "3 man weave" - where 3 players pass the ball between themselves up the length of the court and then attempt a shot. Teams may do a number of "up and backs" before stepping off.

A variation on this drill is to have 2 or more groups of 3 doing the activity at the same time. This creates "traffic" by increasing the number of people on the court and forcing players to be aware of where people are positioned on court and to avoid contact with them. The coach can emphasise that players not travel with the ball and that the ball must not hit the ground.

This is a simple, yet very effective, mechanism for making an activity more complex, without players needing to learn more rules and patterns of movement.

2.1.9 REVIEW-REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

A coach should spend time after each practice to make some notes about the practice.

Some things that the coach should record are:

- Any injuries that occurred or other incidents (such as players arguing). This is particularly important with junior players so that the coach can discuss with the parents if necessary;
- Any activities that were planned but that were not done;
- Scores achieved in any activities (e.g. number of lay-ups made in two minutes) which can be compared to future practices to measure improvement;
- Any skills or concepts that the coach wants to work on at future practices (whether for the whole team or individual players);
- Any activities that worked particularly well (perhaps because the players really enjoyed them) and the coach wants to use it again;
- Any activities that did not work well (perhaps because they were poorly explained or did not achieve the intensity the coach hoped for), with any suggestions on how they could be improved.

This simple review will help the coach to prepare their next practice and, importantly, to get continuity from one practice to another. The better the players know the activities that are being used the less time is required to do them (as the coach does not need to explain the activity), although having some variety will help to reduce complacency.

2.1.10 CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Coaches should have a constructive attitude when leading practice sessions. The role of the coach is not to harshly reprimand the players when they do something wrong, nor should they be in a bad mood, and they certainly should not insult players, make fun of them or ridicule them.

A coach must take a positive and constructive attitude when coaching young players. To do this a coach should:

- create a pleasant environment in which attractive and achievable challenges and positive comments predominate;
- accept the fact that the players' mistakes are a part of their training and that, there will always be mistakes;
- understand that each young player learns at their own pace, and the coach must help each one, respecting that pace, without underestimating those who learn more slowly or with greater difficulty. It is also important to recognize the various methods of learning and to present information in different ways to cater for different learning styles;
- always have a realistic perspective concerning what they can and should require of the players;
- appreciate and emphasize the efforts made by the players more than the results obtained. If the players try, and the coach controls the training process, sooner or later they will see an improvement;
- focus on what the players are doing right and what you want them to do, not on what they may be doing wrong;
- be patient when things do not turn out as expected and encourage the players to try again.

A key factor in developing a positive environment is not to dwell or focus on what the players cannot do and instead to focus on what they can do.

This includes acknowledging improvement when it occurs, even if an ultimate goal has still not been achieved.

An example of this is a coach working with players to get them to "look up" when dribbling in order to see team mates so that they can pass the ball. Anyone who has observed young basketballers will know their tendency to dribble, dribble, and dribble!

Where a player does look up and attempt a pass, it should be acknowledged by the coach – even if the pass was unsuccessful.

Parents can also play a key role in the development of a positive environment. Parents will not necessarily have played basketball and indeed may know very little about basketball.

For these parents it is natural to evaluate "success" as whether or not the team won, or the basket was scored.

Coaches should keep parents informed about the skills that the team is practicing, so that the parents can share the enjoyment when there is improvement in a particular skill.

2.1.11 PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

A coach is obligated to provide a safe environment for their athletes.

This has a number of elements:

- Teaching safely, using activities that are appropriate to the skill of the athletes, their understanding of the game and their physical capabilities;
- Ensuring that the court is free from dangerous obstacles or hazards;
- Creating an environment free of harassment - either between team mates or from someone external to the team.

Some strategies that a coach can use to provide a safe environment are:

- Inspect the court before practice and games and remove any rubbish or obstacles.
- If there is any water on the court, wipe it with a towel, and then check the area again to see if there is an ongoing leak. If there is an ongoing leak, the coach should alter activities so that players do not go near that area and mark the area (e.g. with cones).
- Ideally, a court will have a least 1 metre clearance from the sidelines and any obstacle (e.g. grandstand or wall). If there is not this much clearance, then do not use the whole court in activities (e.g. treat the three-point line as a sideline)
- If the court is dusty, see if it can be swept. Having a wet towel on the sideline that players can wipe their feet on can also help reduce the risk of players slipping over.
- Choose activities based upon the level of experience and skill of the players, not just their age. In contested activities, consider grouping athletes of similar skill or similar physical size together.

A coach must treat all athletes with respect and should not belittle or demean the athletes. When correcting an athlete, the coach must do so in a positive manner – focusing on what the athlete needs to do. The coach should avoid sarcasm as it may be misunderstood by children.

Similarly, the coach should regulate how the players speak to each other and how they treat each other. Often a child that feels "bullied" will not say anything to the coach about their feelings, but that does not mean it will not have a significant impact upon them.

Sometimes behaviour may be good natured and not intended to hurt, however, being teased for not being as good, or missing a shot (for example), can certainly hurt their feelings. The coach must lead by example and make it clear that such comments will not be tolerated.

Harassment is often subtle and can be as simple as players being critical of a teammate. The coach must make it clear that negative comments will not be tolerated, whether they are made at practice, away from practice (e.g. at school) or online.

Some players may not be offended or upset when a teammate criticises them. However, the coach must still address this behaviour, making it clear that it is unacceptable (even though no complaint was made). If the coach does not act, then the culture of the team will be to accept the behaviour.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Reflect upon your last 5 practice sessions – to what extent (if at all) did they deviate from your practice plan for the session?
2. How do you keep track of time during a practice session? Do you:
   a. use your watch?;
   b. use the scoreboard? Counting down or counting up?;
   c. delegate someone else to keep track of the time?
3. Do you share goals for each practice session with your players? Do they have their own goals for practice sessions?
4. Discuss with a colleague the advantages and disadvantages of using "performance goals" instead of "outcome goals".
5. Plan a practice session and note specifically for each activity:
   a. your assessment of whether it has a high, medium or low physical load;
   b. your assessment of whether it has a high, medium or low psychological load.

At the end of the practice, ask the players to rate each activity for physical and psychological load. Do their ratings agree with yours?

6. Consider an activity that you commonly use in practice. How could you:
   a. decrease the physical or psychological load that the activity imposes;
   b. increase the physical or psychological load that the activity imposes;
   c. vary the activity if you are using it to introduce the skill;
   d. vary the activity if you are using it to replicate "game-like" pressure.
7. Have someone video your practice, keeping the shot as wide as possible – i.e. showing as much of the court as possible. As you watch the video, consider:
   a. how often are players standing and either listening to you or waiting for their turn?;
   b. when you speak, are you facing all the players?;
   c. note where you are standing during activities – does the camera angle show you things that you didn't observe at the practice?
8. Watch another team at practice and observe:
   a. how does the coach organize players into groups?;
   b. how often are players standing around waiting?;
   c. what are the teaching points being used? How clear are they to you?;
   d. how many different activities does the coach use?

Reflect upon your own sessions. Is there something that the coach did that you could incorporate into your coaching or that you should avoid doing?

9. Exercise 7 can be particularly useful if you watch a practice session of another sport. If possible, discuss with the coach after the session why particular activities were used.

2.2. TEACHING

2.2.1 LEARNING STYLES

In essence, a coach is a teacher, basketball is their subject and the basketball court is their classroom. Therefore, to be effective, coaches must understand how people learn.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Basketball players must learn to pay attention and to concentrate on many different stimuli – whether it is what an opponent is doing, remembering and implementing team rules in a certain situation or knowing how much time is left on the clock.

Sometimes the stimulus is a single thing, but often they have to focus on more than one stimulus at the same time, with more or less intensity, and for a longer or shorter amount of time.

Basketball may help players to develop their skills of selecting and processing external information. From all the stimuli that they receive, they must select only those that are relevant and that can be associated with what they have already stored in their memory. Given the fluid nature of the game, they must learn to process this information and then make quick decisions.

Many of the stimuli that a player will receive are irrelevant to the game, for example, the sound of the crowd, the lights, advertising banners (particularly if they are moving) and what is happening on an adjacent court.

Other stimuli could be relevant (e.g. what an opposition coach is saying) but should the player focus on that or ignore it?

These cognitive processes - selection, association, storage, use of stored data, and decision-making - can be developed better if the coach promotes them by making suitable demands depending on the players' capacity.

For instance: if the coach of a mini-basketball team sets up an activity that demands from the players a great amount of attention (several stimuli at the same time), that may result in an information overload. This overload will complicate subsequent cognitive processes, and that will negatively affect their decision making process.

Stimuli can be a wide variety of different things. The logistics of an activity (where the pass is made, who cuts where) and the rules of an activity are stimuli, particularly when the activity is new.

The markings on a court can be stimuli particularly if there are a lot of different markings (as players must then identify which are relevant to them). Again, similarly to learning a new activity, once the players are familiar with the court markings it becomes much less of a stimulus because the players don't have to pay particular attention to it.

Another example: if the coach of a team of girls between the ages of 13 and 14 wants the players to learn several new concepts at the same time, these concepts may not be associated and stored properly. Thus the learning goal will not be achieved, and the cognitive efforts made by the players will not be worthwhile.

In the same way, if the stimuli offered by the coach are inadequate, this will not stimulate the appropriate cognitive processes of the young players.

For example: monotonous practices with unexciting drills, or contents that are too simple, without allowing players to contribute with their own initiatives, do not lead to better cognitive development of children and teenagers.

This can be very challenging for the coach where they have players of varying abilities, because an activity that one player finds hard, another may find too simple.

To address this, coaches may instruct players differently. For example, the coach may use an activity where players dribble the ball. For the less skilled players, this may be the only instruction. For more skilled players, the coach may have them dribble with their non-preferred hand or may have them dribble two basketballs.

Through practice the players will learn to prioritise the various stimuli that they receive, based upon how much of an impact it will have on their performance. Particularly, whilst players are learning, some stimuli will automatically have a high "ranking" and the voice of their coach will be one of those things.

Unfortunately, the voice of their parents will often be the most dominant stimulus, with players hearing that above everything else. Coaches need to establish clear rules for the parents of their teams, asking them to keep their comments constructive and general (e.g. "well done", "good play").

THE 4 STYLES OF LEARNING

Confucius is quoted as stating "What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand", which probably suggests that he was a kinaesthetic [UK spelling, not capitalised] learner, and quite possibly good at sports!

It is generally accepted that there are 4 styles of learning and that each individual has a preference for how they best receive and process information. This has immediate ramifications in either a classroom or a practice session in terms of how well they will understand, act upon and process instructions.

VISUAL	Visual learners have a preference for learning by pictures, shapes, patterns or watching.
AUDITORY	Auditory learners want useful direction. They focus on sounds and rhythms to learn movement patterns along with verbal direction.
READ/WRITE	Reading or writing learners prefer descriptions and instructions in written form.
KINAESTHETIC	Kinaesthetic learners need to experience what a certain movement feels like and prefer a dynamic environment.

The choice of preferred learning style is not conscious, rather it is part of an individual's personality. People can learn regardless of how information is presented, but a person will learn quickest, and most efficiently, when information is available in their preferred style.

It is important that coaches understand their own preferred learning style as most coaches will present information to athletes in the coach's own preferred learning style or in the style in which it was first presented to them. At the end of this chapter is a simple test that can give an indication of your learning style.

WHAT IS YOUR ATHLETES' LEARNING STYLE?

Some research has suggested that whilst only 5% of the overall population identify as Kinaesthetic learners, 18% of athletes identify as kinaesthetic learners.[1] Indeed kinaesthetic learners may be best

1 Jones, DC (2010), Hey Coach, One Teaching Style Does Not Fit All, World Swimming Coaches Association, Vol 10, no 4:4-6

suited to sport (or at least more suited to sport than learning in a traditional classroom setting) as the physical nature of sport and learning "on court" through doing various activities certainly suits the kinaesthetic learning style.

An indication of an athlete's preferred learning style may be determined through observation. For example:

- Athletes that sit back and watch when new training activities are introduced before stepping on the floor may be visual learners;
- Athletes that ask for copies of a playbook are likely to be read/write learners;
- An athlete that comments to the coach "show me" or "I see" is likely to be a visual learner;
- An athlete that says "it doesn't feel right" may be a kinaesthetic learner;
- Athletes that ask a lot of questions may be auditory learners.

Particularly when coaching juniors, it is highly likely that a coach will have a number of different preferred learning styles amongst their players as well as the coach having their own preferred learning style.

HOW TO CATER FOR DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES?

There are a number of things that coaches can do to cater for the varied learning styles that their athletes may have:

- Where athletes tend to stand back and watch an activity before joining it (likely visual learners), do not put these athletes first in line or use them to demonstrate a new activity, but let them observe first;
- Have a whiteboard courtside at training and use it to draw or describe activities – this can be done by coaches or players and will particularly help read/write learners and possible visual learners;
- Provide copies of training session plans to your team prior to training;
- Provide players with key words and concepts and teaching points after training sessions;
- Prepare a short playbook that sets out key concepts and teaching points;
- Watch a game with your team and discuss with the team how your team's rules would apply to situations in that game;
- Have one of your games or training sessions filmed and then watch it with your team and discuss the key teaching points and concepts;
- "Coach on the Run" – stop practice as little as possible and allow athletes as much opportunity to perform and practice the physical skills.

IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE DISCONNECT WITH AN ATHLETE'S LEARNING STYLE

The attentiveness (or lack of it) and behaviour of players is the best indicator of whether or not the player is engaged in the teaching that the coach is undertaking.

For example, if the coach is giving a lengthy explanation of a team concept, auditory learners may remain focused, however visual, read/write and kinaesthetic learners may lose attention. This is not wilful disobedience, it is simply that the player has difficulty engaging with the presentation of information.

If the coach accompanied the lengthy verbal explanation with diagrams on a white board, that may help to keep the engagement of visual learners. Similarly, writing key teaching points and key words on the white board may help to keep the engagement of read/write learners. They will also be assisted by being given written information by the coach, or given the opportunity to write their own notes.

Kinaesthetic learners simply want to get on the floor and "do it". Using them as demonstration athletes, whilst giving the lengthy explanation, will help to keep kinaesthetic learners engaged.

All athletes will be helped by the coach presenting information in positive, action-oriented language. For example, a coach may scout an opponent and then determine how they want their team to play to counter what the opponent is likely to do.

The coach should take their athletes through the principles of play that the coach wants the team to do. The coach does not necessarily need to give a lengthy explanation of why they want the team to do it. Detailed information about what the opponent may do may be given after they have become familiar with the particular action that the coach wants them to do.

For example, a particular opponent may use a lot of ball screens and may have the screener "roll" to the basket when the screen is set on the side of the court. The coach does not have to tell the team that information.

The coach can simply say which defence they want the team to use when a ball screen is set. Because the opponent uses ball screens frequently, the coach may present this as one of the three key things before the game. With a different opponent (that doesn't use ball screens) the coach may not emphasize it.

HOW TO DETERMINE A PLAYER'S LEARNING STYLE?

A good way to get an indication of the learning styles of your players is to show them a video of a player executing a skill. A video of a professional player doing something in a game works very well, and can be obtained easily through YouTube and other sites.

Show the video to the players and ask them to go onto court, when they are ready, and attempt to perform that move. This works better if the move is a little complex (e.g. multiple dribble moves) or unusual. Let the players watch the video as much as they wish.

Usually you will find a range of reactions from players:

- Watching it relatively little (compared to team mates) and getting out on the floor to attempt to perform the move – these athletes are probably kinaesthetic learners;
- Watching relatively longer, or returning to watch the video after initially attempting the move – these athletes are probably visual learners;
- Asking questions (of either the coach or team mates) or talking to team mates – these athletes are probably auditory learners.

2.2.2 THE STAGES OF LEARNING

Importantly, the stage of learning is also contextual – a player may learn a skill in an uncontested situation at practice, working through the stages. When it comes to performing the skill in a game (under competitive pressure) they may be at an earlier learning stage!

Regardless of preferred learning style, everyone goes through identifiable stages of learning a new skill (or behaviour, ability, technique, etc.). Some may progress faster than others, but everyone goes through them.

The concept is most commonly known as the 'conscious competence learning model', and it remains essentially a very simple and helpful explanation of how we learn, and also serves as a useful reminder of the need to train people in stages.

Put simply:

- Learners begin at stage 1 - *'unconscious incompetence'*
- They pass through stage 2 - *'conscious incompetence'*
- Then through stage 3 - *'conscious competence'*
- And ideally end at stage 4 - *'unconscious competence'*

Confusion about what stage a learner is at is perhaps the most fundamental reason for the failure of a lot of training and teaching. The difference between each stage can be illustrated by a competency learning matrix.

Importantly, the stage of learning is also contextual - a player may learn a skill in an uncontested activity at practice and progress to either stage 3 or 4 of competence. However, when it comes to performing the skill against contested pressure in a game they may be at a stage of incompetence.

	STAGE 1 UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE	STAGE 2 CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE
INCOMPETENCE	• learner is unaware of the existence or relevance of the skill • learner is unaware they have a particular deficiency in the area • learner might deny the relevance or usefulness of the new skill • learner must become conscious of their incompetence before development of the new skill or learning can begin • the aim of the learner and the coach is to move the learner into the 'conscious competence' stage, by demonstrating the skill or ability and the benefit that it will bring to the learner's effectiveness	• learner becomes aware of the existence and relevance of the skill • learner is also aware of their deficiency, ideally by attempting to use the skill • learner realises that by improving their skill in this area their effectiveness will improve • ideally the learner has a measure of the extent of their deficiency in the relevant skill, and a measure of what level of skill is required for their own competence • the learner ideally makes a commitment to learn and practice the new skill, and to move to the 'conscious competence' stage

	STAGE 3 CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE	STAGE 4 UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE
COMPETENCE	• learner needs to concentrate and think in order to perform the skill but can perform it without assistance • learner will not reliably perform the skill unless thinking about it - the skill is not yet 'second nature' or 'automatic' • learner should be able to demonstrate the skill to another, but is unlikely to be able to teach it well to another person • learner should ideally continue to practise the new skill, and if appropriate commit to becoming 'unconsciously competent' at the new skill **NB: Practice (repetition) is the single most effective way to move from stage 3 to 4**	• the skill enters the unconscious parts of the brain - it is 'second nature' • arguably the person is no longer a "learner", although coaches must be cognisant of the difference between competence at practice and at games and various standards of competition • it becomes possible for certain skills to be performed while doing something else, for example, dribbling and "reading" the position of other players • the person might be able to teach the skill, although after some time of being unconsciously competent the person might actually have difficulty in explaining how they do it • this arguably gives rise to the need for long-standing unconscious competence to be checked periodically against new standards

Coaches should choose activities based upon the stage of learning their players demonstrate, and if they incorrectly assess that stage it can compromise the player's learning – if activities are too easy, the player loses motivation. If they are too hard the player will become disenchanted.

For example, let us assume a coach wrongly thought players were at stage 2, but in fact the players are still at stage 1. The coach assumes the players are aware of the skill, and how it is to be performed and that they are aware of their deficiency in not being able to perform it.

In fact, the players are at stage 1 – unconscious incompetence – and have none of these things in place, and will not be able to address achieving conscious competence until they've become consciously and fully aware of their own incompetence.

PROGRESSING FROM ONE STAGE TO THE NEXT

The progression is linear and it is not possible to jump stages. For some skills, especially advanced ones, people can regress to previous stages, particularly from 4 to 3, or from 3 to 2, if they fail to practice and exercise their new skills. A person regressing from 4, back through 3, to 2, will need to develop again through 3 to achieve stage 4 – unconscious competence again.

Progression is also contextual, and a person may be at stage 4 in execution of a skill at training and without defence (e.g. catch and shoot) but be at an earlier level in regards to execution of the skill in a game.

Interestingly, progression from stage to stage is often accompanied by a feeling of awakening - 'the penny drops' or things 'click' into place for the player as they feel like they have made a big step forward, which of course they have.

A very clear and simple example of this effect is seen when a person learns to drive a car: the progression from stage 2 (conscious incompetence) to stage 3 (conscious competence) is obvious, as the learner becomes able to control the vehicle and signal at the same time; and the next progression from 3 to 4 (unconscious competence) is equally clear to the learner when they are able to hold a conversation while performing a complex manoeuvre such as reverse parking.

And since the conscious competence theory forces analysis at an individual level, the model encourages and assists individual assessment and development, which is easy to overlook when so much learning and development is delivered on a group basis.

We each possess natural strengths and preferences, and this affects our attitudes and commitments towards learning, as well as our ability to develop competence in different disciplines.

People begin to develop competence only after they recognise the relevance of their own incompetence in the skill concerned. Certain brain-types and personalities prefer and possess certain aptitudes and skills. We each therefore experience different levels of challenge (to our attitudes and awareness in addition to pure capability) in progressing through the stages of learning, dependent on what is being learned.

Some people may readily accept the need for development from 1 to 2, but may struggle to progress from 2 to 3 (becoming consciously competent) because the skill is not a natural personal strength or aptitude.

An example of this is learning to shoot a lay-up with the non-preferred hand. Coaches can magnify this effect if they penalize shots being missed as this will reinforce to players the need to perform the skill with their preferred hand (which has a higher rate of success). Instead, coaches should highlight attempting the shot with the non-preferred hand (regardless of whether or not it goes in) as "success".

Some people may progress well to stage 3 but will struggle to reach stage 4 (unconscious competence), and then regress to stage 2 (conscious incompetence) again, simply through lack of practice.

Having a general understanding of the stages of learning can help players to cope with "failing" (being unable to perform the skill) because correctly seen, it is not failure, but simply the first step to learning the skill!

2.2.3 THE IMPACT OF THE COACH'S LEARNING STYLE

A coach should take the time to understand their own preferred learning style because it is likely that it directly impacts how they will teach. Most coach's will teach skills and tactics:

- In the way they were taught the skill/ tactic; and/or
- In a manner that suits their own learning style.

Having an understanding of their own preferred learning style will help coaches to better understand the possible causes of "disconnect" with their athletes (the coach should reflect upon situations where they have found learning difficult) and the need to cater for the range of learning styles that is likely to exist.

WHAT IS YOUR LEARNING STYLE?

This test will provide an indication of your preferred learning style. For each question, choose the answer that best explains your preference and then circle the corresponding letter (V, A, R or K).

1.	You are about to give directions to a person on how to get to your house. Would you:
V	draw a map on paper
R	write down the directions (without a map)
A	tell them the directions
K	go and get them in your car

2.	You are visiting a friend and have a rental car. You don't know where they live. Would you like them to:
V	draw you a map
R	write down the directions (without a map)
A	tell you the directions
K	pick you up

3.	You have just booked tickets to see the Basketball World Cup, which your friend would be interested to know about. Would you:
A	call them immediately and tell them about it
R	send them a copy of your printed itinerary
V	show them a map of where you are going

4.	You are going to cook a dessert as a special treat. Do you:
K	cook something familiar that you don't need instructions
V	thumb through a cookbook for ideas from the pictures
R	refer to a specific cookbook where there is a good recipe
A	ask others for advice

5.	You have been assigned to tell a small group about famous sites in your city. Would you:
K	take them to the various sites
V	show slides and photographs of the various sites
R	give them a book that includes the various sites
A	give them a talk on the sites

6.	You are about to buy a new camera. Other than price, what would most influence your decision?
A	a friend talking about it
K	trying it out
R	reading the details about it
V	its distinctive appearance

7.	Which game do you prefer
A	Pictionary
R	Scrabble
K	Charades

8.	You are about to learn how to use a new computer programme. Would you:
K	ask a friend to show you
R	read the manual
A	telephone a friend and ask questions about it
V	watch a "how to" video on YouTube

9.	You are not sure whether a word should be spelt "dependent" or "dependant". Do you?
R	look it up in the dictionary
V	see the word in your mind & choose the best way it looks
A	sound it out
K	write down both versions

10.	Apart from price, what would most influence your decision to buy a particular book about coaching?
K	using a friend's copy
R	skim-reading part of it
A	a friend talking about it
K	it looks OK

Whichever letter you have circled most is indicative of your preferred learning style.
It is possible to have more than one preferred learning style, which would be indicated by two letters being about equal.

2.2.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF KEY / CUE WORDS

Even the most basic of skills usually involves a degree of complexity to a novice who has not yet been introduced to it.

For example, instructing a player to adopt a balanced stance could involve the following teaching points:

- Feet shoulder-width apart;
- 60% of weight on the front part of the foot;
- Have one foot slightly in front of the other (approximately half the length of the foot);
- Keep the back straight, but be slightly flexed at the hips (so that the chest is not in front of the feet).

Once introduced, these points can be summarized with the word "stance", however the athletes will need to learn to associate the word with those teaching points (and to remember the teaching points).

Key words (or cue words) such as "stance" make it possible for the coach to quickly remind players of a lot of information. When introducing the key word, the coach must use it consistently and regularly, making sure to explain and demonstrate what it means. It can also help to provide players (and parents) with a written list of key words.

FOLLOW-UP

1. When was the last time you learnt a new skill? Can you remember:
   a. how you felt before you started to learn? Was there something in particular that made you want to learn?
   b. how long did it take for you to feel comfortable learning the skill?
   c. how was the skill shown to you? What "teaching points" were you given? Did they help?
2. What do you think is your predominant learning style? Complete the activity in the chapter to assess your learning style – does the result surprise you?
3. Reflect on a team that you are coaching: what do you think are the predominant learning styles of each player? Are they all the same?
4. Reflect on your coaching: how well do you cater for each of the learning styles:
   a. Visual;
   b. Auditory;
   c. Read/Write;
   d. Kinaesthetic.
5. Consider one of your recent training plans. How many activities did you use that:
   a. a coach used when you were a player?;
   b. you have watched a coach use and thought was worthwhile to use?;
   c. you have put together for that particular team?;
6. Consider a particular skill (team or individual) that you are currently teaching with a team. How would you assess the progression of each player – which stage of learning are they at?:
   a. "unconscious incompetence";
   b. "conscious incompetence";
   c. "conscious competence";
   d. "unconscious competence".

Having regard to your assessment of your players, should you be doing anything differently to assist learning?

7. Discuss with a coaching colleague how you can help a player that is in the early stages of learning a skill but gives up because they are frustrated that they cannot do it well.
8. In two minutes write down as many "cue words" that you use in your coaching as you can. Have your athletes do the same thing. Compare the two lists.

2.3 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE SESSIONS

2.3.1 COMMUNICATING WITH ATHLETES - LISTEN MORE, SPEAK LESS

"Teaching is listening, learning is talking"

DEBORAH MEIER

"Communication isn't what you said. Communication is what the other person heard."

MICHAEL HAYNES

LISTEN MORE, SPEAK LESS

Every coach wants players to listen to them and the best way to foster that is for the coach to listen to the players. Listening to the players is more than asking "any questions?" at the end of a presentation, waiting 5 seconds and then moving on to the next point.

With their actions players may demonstrate to the coach that they do not understand a particular skill or team concept.

However, it is only through words that they can tell the coach the extent of what they do understand and what they don't understand and once the coach knows that, they can address the problem.

This is further complicated because sometimes the player may not understand specifically what it is they don't understand.

Too often though, coaches will observe a "breakdown" and will simply repeat the instruction that they have already given and then observe again only to see the same breakdown occur.

How can the coach break this cycle and actually understand what is causing the breakdown?

USE QUESTIONS THAT ARE OPEN ENDED

By using questions that are open ended, the coach can have the player identify what it is they don't understand. Sometimes the player may not consciously know what it is – they were probably doing what they thought was right.

An open ended question is simply one that the player cannot answer with "yes" or "no" and instead the player has to give more information. For example, assume that a player has thrown a pass that was intercepted and the coach believes that the pass contravened team rules

- The coach asks: "Do you understand our passing rule for 2v1." The athlete answers: "Yes."
- The coach says: "So, I don't understand why you threw the pass. Couldn't you see that the defender would get it?" The athlete answers: "I don't know."

Here the coach has assumed they know what went wrong (the player passing when their defender was in the "passing lane") and has no explanation for how the mistake occurred. Nor does the coach have information to help them to correct the mistake.

"Constantly talking isn't necessarily communicating."

JIM CAREY

"Your ability to communicate to your young people will determine your success."

JIM HARRICK

Alternatively, the coach could use more open ended questions:

- The coach asks: "What players could you see?" The athlete answers: "I was driving toward the basket and John was running the left lane. There was a defender in front of me."
- The coach says: "OK, what did the defender do?" The athlete answers: "They looked at John but stayed in front of me."
- The coach asks: "Can you show me on the whiteboard the position the defender was in?". The athlete draws a picture showing that the defender was around the middle of the court.
- The coach draws the athlete on the whiteboard, towards the side of the key, and says: "I thought this was your position and the defender hadn't moved right across to you. If that was the case, what would you do?" The athlete answers: "They didn't look like that to me, but if that's where they were I'd take the lay-up."

The coach has now established that the player does understand the team rule. The coach may plan to do some activities to help the players identify when the defender has "committed" to them, but doesn't need to repeat the rule.

Often the time constraints of practice or games mean that coaches do not have time to meaningfully seek feedback from players, however this is ultimately to the detriment of the team. Coaches should include some time in practice for team discussion and this can be scheduled before or after the team finishes "on court".

"Coaching on the run" is also an important tool for the coach to use. If the example above occured in practice, the coach could have asked the player to step off the court, but let the activity continue, rather than stopping all players.

Coaches will soon find that it is very valuable to ask players "why?" instead of the coach talking about "what". For example, a player may have thrown a bad pass (what). If the coach asks questions like: "Why did you pass to that player?", "Where was their defender?", "Were other passes open?" the coach will begin to understand where the player made the mistake.

Not only can such a session provide an opportunity for the coach to discover areas of uncertainties amongst the group but it also gives the group the opportunity to learn from each other. The coach can simply start a conversation or that can be delegated to a team captain or leader.

Below are some principles that can be practiced to "speak less":

1. Listening isn't just "not talking". Actively think about what players are saying or asking.
2. Let them finish…then pause. Resist the temptation to answer their question before they have finished asking it. Pause for a second or two after they finish talking – to see if they may continue speaking.
3. Help them find the answer. Rather than simply answering the question, ask the player other questions to help them to discover the answer themselves. It may mean "breaking down" the concept into smaller parts, or asking a question about something similar and then helping them to "apply" it (e.g. ask a question about half court defensive concepts, which then apply to full court).
4. It's not about you, it's about them. Whilst it can help to build a rapport with players for a coach to talk about their own experience, this should not become long and drawn out. If the player has a question, answer it!
5. Take time if necessary. Before answering a question, take a few seconds to organize your thoughts. And, if there isn't time at that particular point in practice to answer the question, explain to the player that you will discuss it with them after practice. The coach must then approach the athlete after practice to answer the question – not wait for the player to come to them.

2 Getting Better, best practices for your best practices, Peter Vint, PhD, United States Olympic Committee

2.3.2 "COACHING ON THE RUN" TECHNIQUE

Repetition is important to learn any skill and the "coaching on the run" technique is one of the coach's most important tools to ensure that athletes have the opportunity for many repetitions!

Simply, "coaching on the run" is giving feedback to players while the activity is still happening.

The timeliness of feedback is very important to its effectiveness and if the coach waits until the end of the activity to provide feedback:

- Athletes won't associate it as closely to their own performance;
- The coach may forget some of the points the wished to make.

Both of these outcomes need to be avoided. When "coaching on the run", the coach either:

- Speaks to an individual athlete when they have completed a task in the activity, allowing the other athletes to continue;
- Speaks to the athlete while they are continuing to do the activity.

Particularly if the athlete is still involved in the activity, the coach's feedback needs to be precise and quick. The use of key or cue words will greatly assist this. It is also important that the coach first gets the attention of the athlete and then gives the feedback.

2.3.3 PROVIDING FEEDBACK

Dr Peter Vint encapsulated the importance of feedback for athletes: "There are exactly two things which contribute more to the development of skill and human performance than anything else. These two things are practice and feedback. Without one, the other is ineffective and in some cases can be completely useless."

"...And, it is important to note that not all types of practices and not all sources or methods of delivering feedback are equally effective.[3]"

PETER VINT

The essence of coaching is not defined by the knowledge that the coach has. The essence of coaching is defined by how well the coach can cause a change in the behaviour of an athlete. In regards to skill learning, there are broadly two types of information a coach will impart:

- New information: explanation of a concept;
- Feedback: an evaluation of the athlete's performance.

POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE

In general, coaches should have a positive and constructive attitude. Their job is not to reprimand players when they do something wrong. Nor should the coach be in a bad mood, and they certainly should not insult players, make fun of them or ridicule them.

It can be difficult for a coach that has had a "bad day" to project a positive attitude when they really don't feel positive. However, they must do it, just as they will equally demand that their players have a good attitude at training, even if they have had a bad day.

In most cases the attitude that you give to people is the attitude that you will receive – if the coach is positive, up-beat and enjoying themselves then it is likely their players will also have that attitude.

One practice that may assist coaches to always bring a positive attitude is to have a "worry tree", which is a powerful visualization technique designed to allow them to focus on their team:

- The coach chooses something that they will always walk past on the way to basketball (it could be a door, the car, a wall or a tree);
- As they walk past they touch it. This is where the coach puts any "worries" that they have from outside of basketball;
- As they leave practice or a game, the coach touches it again. This is where they "pick up" their outside worries again.

Whilst this may seem simplistic, it can be a very effective way to help to focus on the practice or game, without being distracted by other things that may be going on away from basketball.

During practice sessions, the coach´s job is to help the players achieve the established goals, and to do this, coaches must:

- create a pleasant environment in which attractive and achievable challenges and positive comments predominate;
- accept the fact that the players are not perfect and will therefore make mistakes. Indeed an important part of the learning process is to make mistakes;

3 Getting Better, best practices for your best practices, Peter Vint, PhD, United States Olympic Committee

- realise that people learn differently. Some players can follow verbal instructions, others need to see it. A period of training will be necessary before the players assimilate and master the information they receive;
- understand the impact of the stages of learning that everyone goes through as they learn new skills and use activities that are appropriate to the stage of learning of their players;
- in regard to stages of learning, the coach must understand that the stages of learning are also contextual;
- understand that each player learns at their own pace, and the coach must help each player. Sometimes this may require giving players different instructions within the same activity. For example, in a dribbling activity the coach may direct that the better players must dribble with their non-preferred hand whilst players less adept at the skill use their preferred hand;
- always have a realistic perspective concerning what they can and should require of the players;
- appreciate and emphasize the effort made by the players more than the results obtained;
- notice and highlight improvements rather than defects. Use positive "action-oriented" language – tell the athletes what you want them to do, not what they have done wrong;
- be patient when things do not turn out as expected and encourage the players to try again.

In regards to the stages of learning, coaches should be particularly aware that players may be at a reasonably advanced stage of learning of a skill in the context of training, but that they may be at an earlier stage of learning in the context of performing skills in the game. This can also change again when players move from one level of competition to another.

Players may lose confidence when they find they cannot perform skills in a game, which they felt they had "mastered" at training. In this situation, the coach may need to include activities at training that focus on that skill but in a more contested manner to attempt to simulate "game pressure".

2.3.4 CHANGING BEHAVIOUR WITH FEEDBACK

The purpose of giving feedback is to change the behaviour of players – to get them to execute an individual or team skill in a particular manner.

Sometimes the player will already have a behaviour (or habit) which needs to be changed. In other circumstances, the skill being taught is new.

The timeliness of the feedback is very important to the effectiveness of the feedback.

The purpose of the learning process is the acquisition of, or perfecting, a behaviour (for example, shooting technique). Accordingly, any feedback should be provided as soon as possible after the player makes an attempt.

If the player produces proper behaviour, either a "reward" should be applied (which can be as simple as saying "well done") or a "penalty" should be withdrawn (such as not having to run a sprint, which players that did not produce the behaviour have to do) in order to reinforce the behaviour so that the player will repeat it.

If the feedback is given immediately, the athlete will have a good memory of what they did which they can then repeat. The longer the delay between the athlete attempting the skill and receiving the feedback, the less strong their memory will be of what they did.

UNDERSTANDING REWARDS AND PENALTIES

Rewards and penalties can both be effective in changing behaviour. For example, the coach can congratulate a player (a "reward"), or they can decide that a particular player has to pick up the balls after practice (a "penalty").

Withdrawing a penalty (e.g. exempting a player from having to run sprints) is also a reward, however such negative reinforcement may not be as effective as granting a reward because it may not be recognized by the player in the same way that receiving a reward is.

Just as rewards or penalties can be used to promote a certain behaviour, they can also be used if the aim is to eliminate a certain kind of behaviour. When the player produces an unwanted behaviour (for example, protesting to the referee) a "penalty" should be applied (e.g. being substituted) or a "reward" should be withdrawn so that the behaviour will be less likely to be produced in the future.

In both cases, "rewards" and "penalties" should only be applied based on the athletes' direct behaviour, never on their results, over which they may not have full control. Below are some examples of an effective use of rewards/penalties:

- A 13-year-old player makes a decision that the coach considers correct in a 3 on 3 situation. The coach immediately congratulates them ("reward");
- The players of a team of 17-18-year-olds are carrying out a very intense defence drill and they are tired. A player performs a defensive help that the coach wants to develop. As a reward, the coach allows the player to rest for a few minutes. In this case, the coach is withdrawing a "penalty" (performing such an intense drill when the players are tired);

- The coach wants a 17-year-old to defend without fouling. Besides showing them the necessary technique, the coach sets up an activity in which the player gets a point every time they foul. At the end of the practice, the player will have to stay on for a three-minute defence drill for every point accumulated. At the same time, every time the player defends without fouling, the coach reinforces them by saying "well done!" to strengthen the correct defensive behaviour. This is particularly important if the offensive player still managed to score The coach could also consider deducting a point when good defence is played (whether or not a basket was scored).
- The coach of a team of 15-16-year-olds organises a half court 3 on 3 game in which they do not want the players to use their right hand when they could use their left. Every time a player uses their right hand when they shouldn´t, their team loses possession of the ball.

As can be seen, "reward" is used to strengthen desired behaviour and "penalty" is used to eliminate undesired behaviour.

Also, when punishment is applied, it is very important to reinforce the alternative behaviour that is required instead of the undesired behaviour. In the previous examples, defence without fouling or shooting with the left hand.

An example of a less effective use of rewards/penalties would be:

- On the last possession of a close game, the opposition took an offensive rebound, scored and won the game on the buzzer. No player had attempted to "box out" the player that took the offensive rebound. At the next practice, the coach made everyone on the team run sprints because of the failure to "box out".
- Similar to the above, a team won by taking an offensive rebound and scoring on the last play of the game. The defensive team were playing zone defence and the player that took the offensive rebound had been in an "overload" situation (i.e. there was more than one offensive player in the area they were guarding).

In these examples the penalties may be less effective because players may feel that it is unfair that they be penalized when they did the correct thing and that only the athletes that didn't box out should be penalised.

In the second example, players may feel that the situation was out of their control. The defensive player with the overload may have boxed out a player, but simply could not box out two players. Coaches should be careful to apply rewards/penalties to things that are under the "control" of players.

Applying the penalty at practice (which may be several days later) also means that the players will not have as strong a memory of what occurred. To overcome this, a coach may use video to demonstrate to players what went wrong.

It is better to use rewards to strengthen behaviour rather than penalties to eliminate behaviour, especially with younger players. Many coaches also encourage team mates to give a "reward", for example acknowledging a teammate that has made a good pass.

USING REWARDS

Frequent reinforcement (or rewards) will help players obtain a high level of gratification, which strengthens their motivation and helps them "learn" the desired behaviour and repeat it. This is why it is so important for coaches to use reinforcement frequently.

There are two types of rewards (or reinforcers):

- Social reinforcers include respect, recognition, approval and the coach´s attention. For example, the coach appreciates the effort made by a player to recover the ball, "Well done!", "That´s the way!", "Good!"
- Material reinforcers are physical rewards that should be important to the players. For example, rest periods, being able to skip a difficult or boring drill, choosing the drill they want to do, winning a cup, etc.

Reinforcers should not be applied arbitrarily but rather they should be a consequence of the players' behaviour. In fact, the key to reinforcement is that the players perceive that they are obtaining something because of what they did, which then makes it likely that they will repeat that behaviour.

This effect that a reward will have is directly related to the feeling of "control" that players had in the situation. For example, if a player fumbles a ball and it happens to go to a teammate and then the coach (who didn't see a fumble) congratulates them on making a good pass - the player is unlikely to feel good.

During training sessions, social reinforcement is also very valuable because:

- it provides the player with information on their behaviour (feedback);
- it is very rewarding, because the player appreciates the coach´s recognition;
- it contributes to the creation of a positive atmosphere within the training environment.

The coach should not constantly stop players in order to provide a "reward" or acknowledge a behaviour. Instead, in activities, points can be awarded for the particular behaviours the coach wishes to emphasize, with a "reward" given at the end. This will be most effective if explained at the start of the activity.

For example: the coach wants a team of 15-16-year-olds to pass the ball more often to the post from specific positions on the court. To practice this they organize a 4 on 4 half court game for this purpose. The rules of the activity are that every time a player passes the ball to the post from those positions, their team gets a point. At the end of the game, which lasts ten minutes, the team that has made a minimum of seven points will have a five-minute break.

To be successful, points need to be noted immediately, which the coach can do by calling "point". To make this technique work, the following aspects should be taken into account:

- the reward should be attractive. For example, it would be attractive for the players to be able to rest during an intense training session or play a game where they can pick their teammates;
- to make this strategy more valuable, the coach should take into account the age of the players and what they know about them. In general, an infrequent stimulus will be more attractive than a frequent one. For example, it will be more attractive for them to play a game with no rules, in which they choose their teammates, if they do not often do this;
- the total number of points needed to obtain the final award should be attainable in the time allowed and under the conditions of the drill;
- The precise behaviour and the rules necessary to obtain points should be made very clear.

In this example, the awarding of points can be in the overall context of the activity. For example, the teams may be looking to score baskets as well. Often, at the end the coach will be able to highlight that the team that achieved the most points (passing to the post) also scored the most baskets!

Most importantly, the reward is not dependent upon the overall outcome. A pass may be made into the post and then the shot is missed. In the game this is simply recorded as a missed field goal. There is no assist, there are no points scored and players may be discouraged from repeating the behaviour.

Coaches can use the "points game" during games by having an assistant coach keeping track and then providing feedback at time-outs.

USING PENALTIES

A coach working with young players should predominantly use rewards, but the use of "penalties" can be educational, as long as it:

- is proportionate in value and basically symbolic;
- defines as clearly as possible what it involves and why it is being applied (rather than having the coach decide arbitrarily);
- increases the players' interest in challenging but achievable goals related to avoiding the punishment;
- at the same time, reinforcement should be applied to strengthen alternative behaviour.

For example: before starting a 3 on 3 game, the coach could establish that every time a player dribbles with the wrong hand they get a negative point and that, at the end of the game, the team with the most points will have to fill the water bottles for their opponents.

An alternative penalty could be to make dribbling with the wrong hand a violation and give the other team possession each time that violation occurs. However, this can result in the activity being very "stop and start".

Accordingly, using a point penalty can let the activity be more game like, whilst also emphasizing the required behaviour.

Even though the penalty is symbolic it can increase the players' motivation towards the goal of the drill and will help them to concentrate on not dribbling with the wrong hand. At the same time, the coach can use social reinforcement saying "Well done!" when players use the correct hand.

Most importantly, the purpose of using penalties is not to make the coach look tough or show that they are strict. Instead, just like a reward, any penalty must be designed to provoke a desire in the players to avoid the punishment by executing the desired behaviour.

In this way, the "penalty" hopefully can have a "positive" focus – having the players think about what they need to do to avoid the penalty. Coaches should always try to describe activities with positively action-oriented language such as "this is what I want you to do" rather than "don't do this".

FOLLOW-UP

COACHING TECHNIQUE

1. If possible, have a colleague film one of your sessions and wear a wireless microphone when your session is being recorded. When watching/listening consider:
   a. how much of the time are you talking? How often do athletes speak?
   b. are you having to repeat instructions? Were they clear the first time?
   c. how much of the time are your comments:
      i. positive – general encouragement (e.g. "great job", "well done")
      ii. positive – specific feedback (e.g. "nice pass", "good hedge on defence");
      iii. positive – correction (e.g. "next time, put "chin to shoulder" before pivoting");
      iv. negative – correction (e.g. "don't turn without looking first")
      v. negative – specific feedback (e.g. "instead of driving for the lay-up you should have passed the ball")
      vi. negative – general (e.g. "it's just not good enough guys")
2. In planning for your next practice sessions consider some questions that you can ask players to:
   a. test whether or not they understand your instruction;
   b. see how well they can "apply" a particular playing rule;
   c. help the player to identify what mistake they made and how they might avoid that mistake in the future.
3. How often during a practice do you speak for more than 1 minute?
   Given that a timeout lasts for 1 minute, try at your next practice to limit all instructions to 1 minute!
4. Ask players for feedback at the end of a training session – what is one thing that they will take from that session and implement at games or focus on developing? Do they identify the things that you believed were key? It can also be useful to have a team captain facilitate this session and then report back to you.
5. Do you start every practice by saying hello to each athlete and asking how their day was?
   Do you finish every practice saying goodbye to each athlete?
6. Explain a basketball concept to a colleague (they don't need to be a basketball coach).
   Then explain it to them a second time in a different way. Have your colleague stop you if you:
   a. use the same words or diagram the second time that you did the first time;
   b. use words or diagrams that they don't understand (this is common when we use "technical terms" without explaining them);
   c. raise your voice or show other signs of getting frustrated!

Could you explain the concept a third time? Discuss with your colleague how different approaches might work better, or worse, with different people.

9. Conduct a practice session without speaking!

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

1. Do you use "penalties" when you are coaching? What are the potential downfalls of doing this?
2. What is an activity that your team particularly likes to do at training? How could you use this activity as part of a reward? When would you use it in this way?
3. "Feedback is more about what is heard than what is said." Do you agree with this statement? Discuss with a colleague a situation where feedback was ineffective because of this.
4. Why are reinforcement strategies most effective with young players instead of penalties? Discuss with a colleague when penalties may be effective with young players.

2.3.5 CONDUCTING THE SESSION - ORGANIZING PLAYERS INTO GROUPS

CONDUCTING THE SESSION

Having prepared for practice, the coach is ready to conduct the session!

ORGANIZING PLAYERS INTO GROUPS

The use of small groups in practice is often necessary, whether it is dividing into two teams for a scrimmage or using "stations", where different groups undertake different activities. An advantage of using stations is that it can help to keep the athletes engaged and active rather than standing around, which often happens in one big group.

When arranging groups, coaches should:

- Create maximum participation opportunities (a planning principle);
- Encourage players to become responsible for their own efforts and performance (the coach will not be able to supervise all the groups at the once!);
- Allow social interaction to occur (the primary reason young children participate is to have fun!);
- Consider aspects of ability, gender and friendship (don't always put the best players in one group);
- Encourage cooperation between players as they work to achieve their goals.

To form the groups, the coach should use clear and consistent commands, to have the groups formed as quickly as possible. In planning the session, the coach may determine specifically who will be in which group and on other occasions, they will know what size groups they want and can form them with instructions like:

- "Form a pair with a person of about the same height";
- "Stand with another pair and form groups of four";
- "Get into groups of 3";
- "Two to a ball";
- "Into groups of 3, each group with one ball";
- "Four lines on the baseline";
- "Four groups of three in each corner of the half court".

2.3.6 CONDUCTING THE SESSION - INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

Coaches should aim to speak as little as possible in a training session, making sure that what they say is clear to the players and gets to the point. The most important thing is to give the players a chance to act! Remember, a timeout only lasts for 60 seconds so coaches need to be quick and concise!

When starting a new activity the coach needs to:

- *Gain attention* - use a whistle, voice or a pre-arranged signal e.g. stepping to the middle of the floor;
- *Name the activity* – this makes it easier to use in subsequent sessions (e.g. "Shell Drill");
- *Explain* the activity and its purpose to the players;
- *Establish working rules* of the activity (e.g. position and movement of players);
- *State one or two teaching points* – these are what is being emphasized in this activity. This is what the coach wants the athletes to learn and be able to repeat in a game;
- *Demonstrate* – if necessary, give a practical demonstration of what is to be done so that the players can watch and better understand the goal.

USING CUE WORDS

Using "cue words" can save a lot of time and is also an efficient method of providing concise feedback. A cue word may be the name of the activity or a particular teaching point (e.g. "lock and snap" to emphasize arm and wrist position when shooting).

Any cue words should be explained when introducing the activity and then used consistently during the activity. It is also important to keep them consistent from one practice to another as well as in games.

It is a common mistake for a coach to use a particular cue word (e.g. "get to the pinch post") forgetting that they haven't explained to the team what it means. This obviously leads to a lot of confusion and wasted time.

Players can also be confused because different coaches may use different cue words for the same thing. For example, "pinch post" and "elbow" refer to the same area of the court.

It can be effective at the start of the season for the coach to provide players with a page of notes, explaining various cue words that they will use. Alternatively, giving the players time at practice to write notes can also help them to remember the cue words.

REMOVING DISTRACTIONS

When introducing activities the coach needs to be conscious of how they are positioned relative to the group. Sometimes the coach will turn away from the group, to show a particular area on the court, or to instruct athletes doing the demonstration. The problem with this is that:

(a) it makes it harder for the coach to be heard;

(b) it becomes harder to concentrate on what is being said;

(c) the coach will miss visual cues that can help demonstrate if the players are understanding (e.g. nodding their head tends to indicate they understand whilst a quizzical look can show that they are unsure).

As far as possible, the coach should try when talking to stand in a position in which they are "open" to the group – i.e. the coach can see them, and they can see the coach. If the coach needs to move (e.g. to show where a player moves in the activity) they should speak to the group, move (while not speaking) and then turn to face the group and continue speaking once they are at the new position.

2.3.7 CONDUCTING THE SESSION - OBSERVE AND GIVE FEEDBACK

The coach should start the activity as quickly as possible, keeping talking to a minimum. Then comes the most important aspect of coaching – observation. What makes a great coach is not what they say, but what they see.

OBSERVE THE ACTIVITY

Once the activity is underway, the coach observes to see if the players understand what they are meant to do and how well they are executing the skills. Coaches should not be too quick to stop the activity, even if mistakes are being made. Where possible, speak to individual athletes without stopping the activity.

Commonly, some athletes will understand the activity or be able to perform the skills better than others. Encourage them to assist in team mates to make the activity work.

This can be something that a team captain can be given some responsibility to do. Too often, coaches stop an entire activity to correct some part of the structure of the activity (e.g. a player moved to an incorrect position).

Whenever possible, make the correction while the activity is happening, particularly by having the athletes communicate with each other about where someone is meant to pass or move.

If the activity needs to be stopped for correction, the coach's focus must be on telling the players what to do, rather than describing what they were doing incorrectly. This should refer back to the identified teaching points introduced at the start and then the coach should get the activity going again as quickly as possible.

Often a coach may observe something during an activity that was not a specific teaching point, but that they believe needs correction. In this circumstance, it is often better to make a note of it and address it in another activity, rather than stop the activity.

PROVIDE FEEDBACK - "COACHING ON THE RUN"

During the activity, the coach should be quick to praise athletes, particularly where they have used the correct process even if the end objective was not achieved (e.g. good technique was used in shooting although the shot was missed).

When providing constructive feedback, the coach should refer to their teaching points, which is why the use of cue words is important: it enables the coach to quickly give the feedback.

For example, a coach may use "high elbow" or "elbow above the eye" as a teaching point when shooting – to emphasise the correct form for the shooting arm. These words can be relayed to a player, without stopping the drill, to remind them of the correct technique (e.g. "Jane, well done. Nice high elbow.").

When "coaching on the run" coaches should call to a player by using their name first, to ensure that they have the person's attention.

The coach should not act like a radio commentator, broadcasting minute-by-minute instructions to the players, as the more the coach speaks the more it

will become like "background noise". Instead, the coach should give short praise or correction during the activity.

This approach is described as "coaching on the run", because the coach does not stop the activity in order to provide feedback. The coach can also provide more detailed feedback to an individual player at times when the player is not involved in the activity. For example, waiting until the player has completed a fast-break before correcting them.

HELPING PLAYERS TO DISCOVER THEIR OWN ANSWERS

Coaches should also use questions to guide the player to discover what they did wrong (and what they need to do), rather than the coach always telling them what was wrong.

For example, let´s take a lay-up learning activity for children playing mini-basketball. The coach wants them to step with their right foot when receiving the ball. A child does a lay-up and does not do this. Instead of pointing this out, the coach asks them:

- "Which foot did you step with?"
- "Which foot should you have used?"
- "Are you sure?"

These questions require the player to find the answer themselves, thus leading them to pay more attention the next time. Maybe the first time the coach asks the question, the player will not know the answer because they were not paying enough attention, but their concentration will increase from then on in, as will their teammates', once they understand that the coach may ask them questions too.

The questions system can be complemented by reminding the player what they have to do immediately before they begin – using the key words or teaching points. ("Right foot on the catch.")

Both strategies, questions and reminders, are especially useful when dealing with unconsolidated skills requiring more intense conscious attention, or at specific moments when the coach perceives attention deficits.

The questions should follow the player´s behaviour as soon as possible (immediately after the player acts), and pre-emptive reminders (with or without a question) should immediately precede the actions that follow them.

2.3.8 ADAPTIVE COACHING - CHANGING ACTIVITIES TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE

When observing an activity, it may become obvious to the coach that the activity is either too hard or too easy for the players, in terms of their current skill level.

MAKING ACTIVITIES EASIER OR HARDER

In each activity there will be many variables that can be changed in order to provide a better learning environment for the teaching points.

For example, having an activity where a team scores points by successfully getting the ball into the keyway rather than by scoring baskets can focus the players' effort on moving the ball rather than on whether or not a shot is ultimately made or missed.

The coach may also want to challenge players who are more skilled, whilst allowing less skilled players to develop at their own pace. For example, requiring a more skilled player to dribble or pass with their non-preferred hand can make the activity more challenging for them, without making it too hard for other players.

The coach may also change the rules of an activity to make it harder or easier as required. For example, a rule such as not allowing a team to grab the ball out of the hands of a player will make it easier for less skilled players who may still be learning to pivot and pass.

The same rule change can also encourage the more skilled players to improve their defensive position and anticipation off the ball, as they can only steal the ball by intercepting a pass.

THERE ARE MANY ASPECTS OF AN ACTIVITY THAT CAN BE CHANGED AND IN CONSIDERING WHAT ASPECTS TO CHANGE, COACHES SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING APPROACH :[4]

C	Coaching style: use questions to particular players or the team to set challenges for particular aspects of a game. "When should you move to receive a pass?"
H	How to score/win: change the opportunities to score – e.g. allow passing to a player in a particular area to score, instead of shooting for goal. Vary the size/ distance of a target.
A	Area: increase or decrease the game difficulty by changing the shape or size of the playing area.
N	Numbers: consider using different team numbers or varying the number of turns that a player/team receives. Decreasing team size can increase player involvement.
G	Game rules: change the rules of the activity. Restrict the number of dribbles in order to emphasize passing. Require that no shot can be taken outside the keyway unless the ball has been passed or dribbled into the keyway first.
E	Equipment: vary the size or type of equipment. Have players dribble two balls instead of one.
I	Inclusion: ask players to modify activities.
T	Time: reduce or extend time allowed to perform actions.

4 How to Change It – A guide to help coaches and teachers improve sport-related games, Australian Sports Commission, 2007, p3

2.3.9 ADAPTIVE COACHING - COACHING ATHLETES OF VARYING ABILITIES

"Adaptive Coaching" is simply conducting activities that are suitable to the skill of each player.

In any junior team there is likely to be a wide range of skills and athletic ability between the players, as well as differences in their understanding of the tactics of the game.

The role of the coach is to help each of those players to develop and for the team to improve. This requires the coach to be able to design and run activities that include all of the players and sufficiently challenge them so that they will develop.

DIFFERENCES IN SKILL LEVEL AND UNDERSTANDING

It is common in any activity that some athletes will find it easier to do than others. Broadly, there are two areas that will impact how hard an athlete finds an activity:

- Skill level – whether or not the player can perform the skills required in the activity;
- Understanding – whether or not the player understands the structure of the activity (e.g. the sequence of movements) or whether or not they understand the principles of play that are involved (e.g. "passing lane" – "driving lane" principles in 2v1).

Equally, players may find an activity easy and this can affect their motivation, particularly if the coach is stopping the activity a lot in order to correct players who are finding it challenging.

The coach needs to be able to engage both types of players.

Engaging athletes who find an activity easy

MAKE THEM COACHES

Rather than the coach stopping an activity and making corrections, they can have the players that have a better understanding of the structure or team principles make the corrections. This encourages the players to talk to each other and to find their own solutions.

When doing this, the structure of an activity may change slightly, but before stepping in, the coach should evaluate are the teaching points still being reinforced. If they are, then the coach should not stop the activity. Indeed, the coach could go on to give the activity (with its new structure) a name like "John's drill" to emphasise the role the player had in creating the new activity.

CHANGE THE ACTIVITY

The coach may be able to change the activity so that it is more challenging for the better skilled player, for example:

- Add complexity – a more skilled player may have to use their non-preferred hand, whereas lesser skilled player may use their preferred hand, or perhaps a more skilled player may be allowed to use fewer dribbles than a less skilled player can;
- Change rules – for example, do not let skilled players steal the ball from the hands of less skilled players. Instead, state that any steal has to be from intercepting the pass;
- Force teamwork – a skilled player may not be allowed to shoot off the dribble, and may only shoot if they are in the key and receive a pass or if they rebound the ball.

CHANGE HOW A TEAM SCORES

In activities where the object is to score baskets, the more skilled athletes will often end up taking more shots. By changing how a team scores, the coach can make sure all players are getting involved. For example, awarding a point for a pass to a teammate who is open for a shot (whether or not the shot goes in) will emphasise moving the ball.

Engaging athletes who find an activity hard

PARTNERS

Many activities at training have a repetitive nature and if a player is finding it hard to understand the structure of the activity, it can help to partner them with another player and have them "follow" that player.

RULE LENIENCY

One of the most important elements to developing skills is the opportunity to practice them. Allowing a less skilled athlete to get away with a "travel" or "double dribble" violation can give them more opportunity to have the ball in their hands and play, particularly in a contested situation.

Obviously, they ultimately need to be able to perform skills in contested play and so the coach must also provide correction on the execution of the dribbles (often in other activities, not the contested activity). Alternatively, the coach may "call the travel" (so that the player is aware of what they did incorrectly) but give the ball back to them so that they have another opportunity to practice the skill.

TEACHING POINTS

The coach may need to give a less skilled player more detailed teaching points regarding the execution of a skill. They may even take them briefly out of an activity to specifically practice the skill and then return them to the activity.

MAXIMISE SKILL TRANSFER

In structuring practice, the coach should give players a chance to practice the skill immediately before including it in a contested activity. This can assist with the transfer of skills from one activity to another.

MAKING CHANGES AT PRACTICE

Often a coach will be able to incorporate into their practice plan variations to engage all athletes. However, sometimes they will design an activity and it then becomes evident that players are finding it difficult so the coach will need to make changes during the practice session.

To do this, the coach should first consider what the teaching points are for that activity, because whatever changes they make should still emphasise those teaching points.

THE CHANGE IT FRAMEWORK CAN ALSO ASSIST THE COACH TO MAKE CHANGES DURING THE PRACTICE SESSION:

C	Coaching style: use questions to particular players or the team to set challenges for particular aspects of a game. "When should you move to receive a pass?"
H	How to score/win: change the opportunities to score – e.g. allow passing to a player in a particular area to score, instead of shooting for goal. Vary the size/ distance of a target.
A	Area: increase or decrease the game difficulty by changing the shape or size of the playing area.
N	Numbers: consider using different team numbers or varying the number of turns that a player/team receives. Decreasing team size can increase player involvement.
G	Game rules: change the rules of the activity. Restrict the number of dribbles in order to emphasize passing. Require that no shot can be taken outside the keyway unless the ball has been passed or dribbled into the keyway first.
E	Equipment: vary the size or type of equipment. Have players dribble two balls instead of one.
I	Inclusion: ask players to modify activities.
T	Time: reduce or extend time allowed to perform actions.

Particularly with young players, there will always be a wide range of abilities amongst the players in the team. This range of abilities is unrelated to any disability that a player may have.

For example, a player on a team may not be able to catch the ball. This could be because:

- they have a disability (e.g. cerebral palsy affecting their coordination);
- they have not previously had experience passing and catching a ball;
- they have had a bad experience (e.g. hurt their finger) trying to catch a ball previously.

Whatever the reason, the coach needs to be able to help the player to develop this skill.

2.3.10 ADAPTIVE COACHING - INCLUDING ATHLETES WITH A DISABILITY

FOCUS ON THE OUTCOME

Where an athlete has a physical disability, the coach may feel unsure how to instruct the athlete. For example, how would you teach a player who has no hands to catch the ball and then pass the ball?

Sometimes it will be effective to instruct the athlete what you want done and then let them explore how to do it. In the example above, the athlete may be able to catch the ball with their arms (or even stop it with their chest) and then kick it to the next person.

Whilst this is not permissible in basketball (a player cannot deliberately kick the ball), it could be effective in letting an activity continue and the player being able to engage in the activity. They may also be able to find another way to "throw" the ball – but if they are not given the chance to practice, they are unlikely to find a way to do it.

ASK WHAT CHANGES ARE NEEDED?

Whenever a coach has an athlete with a disability in their team, they should speak with the parents about any changes or modifications that may be necessary to include the child. The parents will often be able to give the coach practical advice on how to best work with the player.

CHANGING HOW YOU COACH

To include a player with a disability may require a coach to make some changes in their coaching, however these are no different to changes they may need to make for any of their athletes.

In coaching an athlete with a hearing impairment, the coach may provide written instructions or explanations. They may need to make sure that they are facing the player when they speak and they may need to establish a training rule that when they stop an activity, other players are responsible for ensuring that the athlete with a hearing impairment also knows that it has been stopped. These changes are not difficult.

An athlete with an intellectual disability may need the opportunity for physical demonstration – "walking them through" movements on the court, showing them where to put their feet or hands. Again, these are not difficult changes and are the same as the coach may need to do for an athlete without a disability.

ASSUME THAT THEY CAN, NOT THAT THEY CAN'T

Often the biggest barrier to participation in sport by a person with a disability is the perception that they will not be able to participate or that they will not be able to participate at all alongside athletes without that disability.

Perhaps the most powerful thing that a coach can do is to adopt an attitude that they can include the athlete rather than assuming that they cannot do so.

SEEK ADVICE

There are a number of organisations providing opportunities for athletes with disabilities and they may be able to provide assistance or advice to a coach who is working with an athlete with a disability.

PATHWAYS FOR ATHLETES WITH DISABILITIES

There are many international pathways for athletes with disabilities:

- Wheelchair basketball is a Paralympic sport for both men and women. World Championships are also conducted at junior and senior level;
- Athletes with an intellectual disability are able to participate in activities conducted by Special Olympics and at World Championships conducted by INAS (an organization that is a member of the International Olympic Committee);
- Athletes with a hearing impairment are able to participate in World Championships conducted under the auspices of the ICSD (International Committee of Sports for the Deaf).

The specific opportunities available in each country will vary. In some countries the national basketball federation is also involved in sports for athletes with a disability, although this is not the case in all countries.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Answer each question below as quickly as possible. Record your answer and then listen to your answers.

What instruction would you give at practice to:

   a. divide the team into 3 lines on the baseline, with one line at each intersection with the 3 point line and the third line under the basket;
   b. have players in groups of 2 with each group having one basketball;
   c. get the group to divide into two teams, with the 5 players that started the last game in one team and the substitutes at the start of the last game in the other team;
   d. stop the activity and have players assemble in the corner of the court where one of your assistant coaches is standing.

2. Do you have names for each activity that you use? Ask five separate athletes to describe how a particular activity works, but only give them the name you have for that activity. Are they correct?
3. Write down a description of the skill level of your most skilled player and least skilled player. Reflect upon your last practice – were both athletes challenged in each of the activities? Discuss with a coaching colleague how could you have varied activities to better cater for both athletes.

2.4 ADMINISTRATION

2.4.1 KEEPING RECORDS

Some records that coaches should keep are:

- a list of players that have trialled for the team;
- any assessment that the coach made of players relative to the selection criteria;
- a record of attendance at practice and games;
- any incidents that have occurred at practice or in a game (e.g. a player hurting their ankle in a rebounding situation, a confrontation between two players);
- practice plans, with any notes or reflections about the practice;
- any correspondence between the coach and players or their parents;
- notes on the performance of players and their development during the season;
- pre-game objectives and goals and notes made during the game.

Often the simplest way to keep these records is in a diary. Coaches may also choose to keep the records electronically and there are a number of programs that can assist with such record keeping.

2.4.2 COMPUTER SKILLS

Using spreadsheets, email and word processing are common tasks for a coach and can make the administration and management of a team more efficient. Access to the internet will provide a coach with an avenue to:

- find information to scout upcoming opponents – statistics, game reports, game video;
- find information to help with their own development – coaching clinics and articles, "X's and O's" analysis of trends in basketball or what specific teams are running;
- make contact with colleagues and other networks.

There are also a range of programs designed for coaches to carry out tasks such as:

- creating a playbook – enabling the coach to diagram plays. Some also enable the coach to animate the players to produce a video showing the movement in the play;
- team management – enabling the coach to communicate with players;
- practice planning – preparing practice plans and keeping a record of performance at practice;
- communication tools – enabling the coach to speak with players wherever they are in the world;
- management – assistance in booking flights, hotels or ground transport and a range of other management tasks.

2.5 COMMUNICATION

2.5.1 CONTACT WITH JUNIOR ATHLETES

CONTACT WITH ATHLETES

A coach must communicate with the athletes in the team about many things and with junior athletes this communication should include the parents.

Many young players will have their own phones, and communicate regularly via social media channels (such as Facebook), messaging tools (such as WhatsApp), SMS or other electronic communication methods (such as Email). Coaches should be careful in how they relate with young players.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTACT WITH JUNIOR ATHLETES

Coaches should follow the following guidelines when making contact with junior athletes:

- Keep communication relevant to basketball;
- Do not "Friend" junior athletes on social media platforms such as Facebook. If you wish to use social media, set up a specific account for the team;
- Let parents know how you will communicate with the players and ask them to be included (some parents may insist that a coach's communication is with the parent and not the player);
- Use social media or text to communicate to all athletes (e.g. advising them of a change in training venue). Do not communicate individually with athletes;
- Avoid commenting upon the performance of other players when communicating with players. Keep comments related to their own performance;
- Do not make negative comments about officials or other teams;
- When meeting with athletes, have another adult present (whether that is a manager or parents) or conduct the meeting in a public venue.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Discuss with a coaching colleague whether or not they use social media (e.g. Facebook) for keeping in contact with athletes. If possible, discuss with a school teacher whether or not they use social media.
2. How would you contact your athletes with an urgent message (e.g. the location of practice changes only a couple of hours before practice).

LEVEL 1

COACH

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT

3.1 UNDERSTANDING THE GAME

3.1.1 UNDERSTANDING THE GAME FROM A COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

Coaches watch games differently to how fans do.

The coach is focused on "why" things happen (e.g. how did the player get open to receive a pass) and how to influence what will happen next (e.g. how do we stop the player getting open), whilst the fan is generally more focused on "what" happened (i.e. who scored).

Some players or coaches instinctively have a better "feel" for the game than others, however anyone can develop their understanding of the game. Watching games and discussing them with other coaches or players is the best way to develop an understanding of the game.

Unfortunately, TV coverage of games tends to focus very much on the ball which reduces the ability to see how the play develops overall, and it is often better (where possible) to watch games at the court. Taking notes during the game can help, although this will often result in the coach missing parts of the game whilst they are writing. If the coach wants to make notes, doing so during breaks of play is best.

When watching games, coaches may pick particular players to watch, focusing on their movement without the ball (which for most players represents the majority of their time on court). At times, players will influence the play even though they did not receive the ball (e.g. a player cutting may attract a help defender which leaves a teammate open).

The particular tactics that a team is using will be of interest for a coach, however they may be more interested in how (and when) those tactics are changed and what effect that has on the tempo and momentum in the game. Discussing this with colleagues will also develop the coach's understanding as they will get an insight into how other coaches "read" the game and attempt to influence what is happening.

FOLLOW-UP

1. What activities have you done in the last six months to develop your understanding of basketball?
2. Discuss with a coaching colleague what activities they do to develop their understanding of basketball.
3. From where do you prefer to watch a basketball game? Discuss with other coaches where they prefer to watch from.

3.2 COACHING STYLE AND PHILOSOPHY

3.2.1 PRODUCTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE APPROACHES TO COACHING

Coaches watch games differently to fans.

"REPRODUCTIVE" APPROACH TO COACHING

The reproductive approach to coaching is where the coach adopts an "authoritarian" style, specifically directing the athletes and requiring them to make few decisions in the learning process. This approach is most suited to the early stages of skill learning and even then should be used sparingly. Examples of this approach are:

- Command - a skill is demonstrated and athletes perform that skill receiving direct feedback from the coach.
- Reciprocal - players work in pairs. Whilst one performs the designated skill their partner provides feedback. The coach gives specific criteria for the partner to provide feedback.
- Self-Check - players work independently on a task, comparing their execution with a "checklist" prepared by the coach (which may include diagrams or photos). This may be most effective if it is filmed.
- Inclusion - the coach designs a task that has several levels of difficulty, catering for varying levels of ability, and athletes choose to work at the level at which they feel challenged.

A coach may use a reproductive approach in parts of a training session, particularly if dividing athletes into "skill stations", where different activities are performed in different areas of the court.

"Skill stations" can be particularly effective (and necessary) if there is a relatively large number of athletes on one court.

"PRODUCTIVE APPROACH" TO COACHING

The productive approach to coaching is designed to engage the athletes in the learning process and is the one that coaches are recommended to utilize most often, even with young athletes.

Examples of a productive approach are:

- Guided Discovery - the coach guides athletes toward identifying the appropriate "solution" through using structured questions (e.g. for concepts of play) or focusing on an outcome but allowing the player to discover how to best achieve that (e.g. skill learning – make the ball spin backwards as you shoot).
- Problem Solving - similar to guided discovery, in this approach there might be a number of potential solutions and athletes either work by themselves or as a group. This is most suited to complex tasks, such as improving the defensive pattern in a particular situation.

With guided discovery, it may be helpful if the coach explains why the outcome they have asked for is preferred.
For example:

- make the ball spin backwards when you shoot so that if it hits the ring it will bounce upwards and may still go in;
- shoot the ball with a high arc because it increases the mathematical chance of the ball going in,
- pass the ball in front of a moving player so they can run onto it (the player experiments with how far in front it needs to be);

Questioning the athletes is an important aspect of the productive approach to coaching, such as:

- What are three ways your opponent may guard your cut off a down screen? What do you do in response to each method?
- We discussed some key offensive concepts to beat a "man to man" defence. As a defender, how would you respond to those strategies?

3.2.2 DIFFERENT APPROACHES ACCORDING TO AGE OF ATHLETE

Coaches must understand that some children improve faster than others, and must try to adapt to this.

Coaches should treat each child as an individual, like a "tailor" who is sewing "tailor-made" suits.

Coaches must follow a general working plan with all players on their team, which respects the individuality of each player, making demands according to their characteristics, and helping each of them to develop their own talents.

Some general considerations in relation to the age of players must also be kept in mind.

UNDER 12 PLAYERS

At this age, perfecting basketball fundamentals is not the most important aspect. It is enough for the players to know the most basic skills and to start to develop them. Making practice fun so that the players want to practice is the most important consideration.

The players should be introduced to good techniques for the basic skills. Bad habits (e.g. only using their preferred hand, shooting off balance) should be discouraged.

It is important, though, that coaches allow players to explore how to perform a skill rather than dictating specifically how it must be done. For example, asking players to shoot with a "high arc" because it increases the chances of going in and then allowing them to explore how to do that.

The coach's role is to guide the player's exploration of how to perform the skill, making changes only when necessary. It is also important that players accept responsibility for their part of being on a team. They have made a commitment to be on the team and accordingly should come to training, should train hard and should not disrupt the training. The role of being a player on a team is an important lesson at this age group. It is not about whether they are a "guard" or a "centre" because all players should play all positions. However, being a good team member is also a skill that can be learnt.

Players need to develop confidence that they can perform the skills which are needed when playing the game. They must develop the initiative of using basketball fundamentals even if they make mistakes. And they should have a reasonable number of positive experiences that will make them want to keep on playing.

Daily fun and the personal initiative of players are very important aspects to take into account when coaching mini-basketball.

13-14-YEAR-OLDS

A coach of players aged between 13 and 14 must realise that even if some of the players appear to be physically bigger, they are still young teenagers. At this age they are going through a stage of great emotional vulnerability in which they need to vindicate themselves (for example: they would be inclined to abandon the game if they feel like they are not in control).

Furthermore, many of these players are getting used to playing basketball, which might make them feel insecure and less competent than in previous years.

It is also likely that teams will include players who have been playing for a number of years as well as players who are just starting. This can affect both the confidence of the less experienced (as they see other players able to do things and feel that they have "failed" because they can't) and the interest level of the more experienced, who may not be adequately challenged playing against significantly less skilled team mates.

Coaches of these players must help the less skilled players to adapt themselves progressively to this higher level of requirements. Coaches must go into more depth concerning the development of technical fundamentals and individual tactical decisions (the decisions taken on the 1x1, 2x2, 3x3, etc.).

However, they should try not to go too fast, because the players need to assimilate what they are learning, and they need to feel safe obtaining the reward of being in control.

At the same time, the coach needs to ensure that the more skilled players are also being challenged, which is important to keep them interested.

One way to do this is to place different demands upon players in an activity. For example, less experienced players may be able to dribble and pass with whichever hand they want but more experienced players must use their non-preferred hand. At these ages, it is important not to limit the players. On the contrary, coaches should improve the possibility of obtaining better results in the future by allowing players to do any kind of task (for example: they should all be able to fast break in any position). All players need to be introduced to perimeter and post skills.

The players will probably make many mistakes while they are still learning. The coach must try to combine working on areas of weakness with giving the players the opportunity to perform skills and techniques that they are already proficient at, to ensure that they can get some satisfaction out of it.

While working with children of these ages, coaches must set up multiple situations that players can control and that will improve their self-confidence.

It can be particularly effective for the coach to define "success" not just by scoring points, but by using the right process. Indeed, many activities can be used where there is no shooting. For example, passing games, where the objective is to reach a certain number of passes, get the ball to a certain position on the court or have all players touch the ball a certain number of times.

15-16-YEAR-OLDS

When working with teams of 15-16-year-olds coaches should maintain an overall perspective of the formative process of the players, but they should measure with a greater detail the particular needs of each player: what are they missing? What aspects should we work on to improve their resources?

USING DIFFERENT COACHING STYLES

Within a team there will be many different personalities and the coach must work with each of them, striving to get the best outcome for each of them. This means:

"Employing a variety of coaching approaches is important because different types of content requires different approaches to instruction… In deciding what approach to adopt the coach should consider the intended learning outcomes of the training session or part of a session".[5]

Broadly, there are two approaches to teaching and coaching, namely reproductive and productive.[6]

5 Dr Cliff Mallet, How do you coach?, Sports Coach (ASC), Vol 28, Number 2

6 Mosston, M, 1966, Teaching Physical Education: from command to discovery, Charles E Merrill Books, Columbus, Ohio

3.2.3 LTAD - MAKING FUN A FOCUS

The overwhelming reason why children play sport is to have fun and equally the main reason that they stop playing sport is because they are no longer having fun.

However, there are also developmental reasons why it is better for the long-term development of players to have a broad range of fun-focussed activities when initially involved in sport.

The most effective sport development and training programs around the world discourage year-round specialization in a single organized sport and, generally, use cross-training methods to develop a full range of skills to prepare young people for specialization at age 15 and older. [7]

During the ages of 6-13, children should be encouraged to "sample" and explore a range of different sports, hopefully developing a love of being physically active as well as enjoying the individual sports. Specialising in one sport at this stage of development is not recommended, with "sampling" leading both to a longer engagement with sport (throughout the child's life) and is also being a consistent factor in creating successful professional players.

"Talent Development" is often used to justify the need for players to specialize from an early stage, although research has concluded that:

Initial proficiency in a motor skill has little relation to later performance. Early mastery pays a dividend for a while, but then others catch up. [8]

During this first stage of athletic development, children are learning movement fundamentals as well as the skills associated with particular sports and are also developing their sense of sportsmanship and ethics as well as learning to work as part of a team. Having fun is what engages them with sport and a coach's focus should be on fostering that enjoyment.

7 National Association for Sport and Physical Education. Guidelines for Participation in Youth Sport .Programs: Specialization Versus Multi-Sport Participation [Position statement]. Reston, VA: Author; 2010.

8 United States Anti-Doping Agency, True Sport: What We Stand to Lose in Our Obsession to Win, 2012, p46

3.2.4 GAMES-BASED APPROACH TO COACHING

A "games-based" approach to coaching uses activities that teach the "nature" of the sport and includes skills from the sport at a pace dictated by the learning of the participants.

For example, rather than having two players simply pass the ball back and forth, a coach may play a game where teams race to make a certain number of passes. The game could involve passing standing still or on the move, depending upon the skills of the players.

In the "games-based" approach the coaches also ask questions to stimulate the players to think about the game and to discover how and when to use the skills when playing that game and, more importantly, when playing the sport itself. For example, the coach may ask:

- What do you have to do with your body to catch the ball? (Possible answers: hands up, keep watching the ball, move toward the ball);
- How do you make sure that a pass gets to the person you are throwing to and doesn't hit the ground? (Possible answers: pass to someone close, step forward when passing, pass with two hands).

The technical detail on how to perform skills is still important in a games-based approach, the difference is in how and when that information is presented to the players. In a traditional approach, but the coach describes the skill, giving instruction on aspects of the skill, and then has the players perform the skill in a "closed" setting. Under a games-based approach, the coach sets up an activity, explains the outcome (i.e. first team to make 10 passes wins) and then the players start trying.

Some athletes will need more detailed instruction than others, and this can be done during and after the activity.

The coach can then vary the activity (to either make it easier or harder), with a focus on the kids being active for as much time as possible.
An example of this approach is:

PASSING GAME ACTIVITY

- Two teams with the same number of players have one ball each.
- Players must stand within a set area of the court (e.g. within the 3 point line, half court etc) – the more players there are, the bigger the space needs to be.
- Players cannot pass to the person that passed to them.
- Teams count each pass to see which team gets to the set target first (e.g. 20 passes).
- If the ball touches the ground, the team lose one point.

After 3 or 4 minutes, the coach stops the activity to ask:

- What do you have to do with your body to catch the ball? (Possible answers: hands up, keep watching the ball, let the ball come into your hands);
- How do you make sure that your pass reaches the person and does not touch the ground? (Possible answers: not try to pass too far, step forward when passing, pass from chest not above the head).

The coach then varies the rules of the activity as follows:

- Players must now move and catch the ball;
- Players must stop when they catch the ball.

After a further period of playing, the coach asks other questions (and during this questioning is when the coach may provide some technical instruction):

- What do you need to look at to make a successful pass? (Possible answer: position of all players on court)
- Where do you throw the ball? (Possible answer: in front of the teammate)
- What do you need to get the ball? (Possible answers: move to the ball, hands up, call for the ball)

They could then make a further variation to the activity:

- Only one ball and the team without the ball attempts to intercept passes (they cannot take the ball from a player's hands).
- If the ball hits the floor, or is intercepted, the other team immediately make passes to attempt to reach the target.

At the conclusion of the activity the coach asks further questions:

- What can you do to avoid someone that is putting pressure on the person with the ball? (Possible answers: pivot, pass fake, move toward the teammate or even behind them)
- What is the best position to try and intercept the pass? (Possible answers: distance from opponent, staying between them and the ball)

Another advantage of the games-based approach is that skills are not learnt in isolation or a "closed" context but are usually learnt under game-like conditions.

3.2.5 DIFFERING COACHING STYLES

There are many things that will impact a coach's style. Some of these factors are intrinsic and part of the coach's personality whilst other factors are extrinsic (e.g. teachers or coaches that they have had).

What is most important is that a coach uses a style that is authentic for them, not simply adopting or "acting" what they have seen other coaches do.

COACHING STYLES

Just as each athlete is an individual, each coach is an individual too. And whilst coaches may use different approaches in different situations, they will most likely have a particular style that characterizes their personality.

There are many descriptions used for the various coaching styles that exist – no one style is right or wrong, they are merely different. Each style has advantages and disadvantages and it is important that coaches are aware of these.

COACHING STYLE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Authoritarian coach		
• Strong unwavering disciplinarian • Demand maximum effort from everyone all the time • Little input from players	• Well organized • Good team spirit when winning • Clear expectations and goals set and understanding of the "big picture"	• Dissension when losing • May be feared or disliked • Athletes may feel "dis-empowered"
Businesslike coach		
• Focused with a logical and well planned approach • Up to date with trends in the game • Seeks input from players but makes final decisions	• Sets clear performance indicators • Reviews and evaluates performance – willing to change • Asks players questions and asks for input	• May set goals that are too high for some team members • May be seen as distant or aloof
"Nice Guy" coach		
• Well liked • Thoughtful and personable • Involves players in determining team decisions	• Gets on well with players, particular those with the same temperament • Players "buy into" the team plan	• Players may take advantage of coach's cooperative nature • Difficulty in making decisions unpopular with players
Intense coach		
• Strong emphasis on winning • Driven and focused on what needs to be achieved	• Focused game plan • Sets high expectations	• High anxiety often transmitted to players • Often has "outcome" focused goals, but lacks detail of the "process"
Easy-going coach		
• Very casual • May give impression of not taking game seriously	• Well-liked • Empowers players	• May not prepare well for training / games • Teams may lack preparation to deal with adversity

Coaches are often depicted in movies and the media as being authoritarian – yelling directions, issuing penalties and making decisions in isolation. This style of coaching can also be seen every weekend, with coaches walking along the sidelines, yelling at teams and often the coach adopts this demeanour because they believe that is how coaching is supposed to be done!

It is a common trap for coaches to adopt the style of another coach or mentor when they are coaching, rather than being themselves. The style a coach uses will reflect their personality, but must also reflect the athletes that they are coaching.

For example, an authoritarian coach is renowned for being strict. With older athletes, they may enforce this by yelling at players and quickly taking them out of the game if they do not follow a team rule. But with younger players, they may speak more gently and use a timeout to remind them of team rules, rather than taking them out of the game.

WHAT IS YOUR COACHING STYLE?

Coaching style is closely linked to the coach's personality and it is often more accurate to describe that a coach discovers, rather than chooses, their natural coaching style. In addition to their personality, a coach's preferred style will also be influenced by coaches or teachers that they have had or worked with or athletes that they have coached.

It is not uncommon for a coach to change their style as they become more experienced as a coach, although this is often down to them being able to use different styles in different situations rather than changing their "natural" style.

No coaching style is considered better or more effective than any other but this does not mean it is unimportant for a coach to understand their natural or preferred style. Having an awareness of preferred coaching style (which is generally the behaviour that a coach will default to) is important in developing a rapport with players.

For example, if a coach has an assertive and authoritarian style and is coaching very experienced athletes the athletes may have an expectation of having their opinion heard and having the opportunity to discuss tactical situations. If the coach is aware of the potential conflict in styles they can devise an appropriate strategy. For example, with experienced athletes an authoritarian coach may:

- designate times where there will not be discussion and the coach is responsible for whether or not correct technical decisions are made (e.g. timeouts, pre-game meetings);
- seek input from the experienced players following games (as part of the review process);
- allow some decisions to be made by the players (e.g. point guard determines offensive set unless the coach specifically instructs what to do).

In reflecting upon their preferred coaching style a coach may ask people that know them well (e.g. family, players they have previously coached or work colleagues). However, they should not ask "what do you think is my coaching style?" and instead should ask them to consider:

- How do I tend to make decisions?
- How do I react when people disagree with me?
- How do I prepare for activities (e.g. meetings, holidays)?
- Who generally makes plans for activities between me and my friends?

Considering such factors will give a coach insight into their style.

3.2.6 COMMUNICATION STYLES

USING DIFFERENT APPROACHES WHEN COMMUNICATING

Communication is a fundamental part of coaching and there are a number of different communication styles. Which style a coach uses will largely depend upon their overall coaching style, but will also depend upon the context in which they are communicating.

These styles can be described utilizing the framework of the DISC personal assessment model originally developed by Dr William Marston:

- Dominance - this is direct and decisive communication. It is typically suited to technical instruction, particularly in a time-sensitive situation (e.g. adjusting team tactics in a game);
- Steady - this is two-way communication, where the coach asks the athlete questions to guide them, rather than providing direct instructions. This is suitable where there is more time (e.g. developing team rules);
- Influence - this is energetic, highly interactive and provides motivation to athletes. It is most suited to "non-technical" communication but where a situation calls for high motivation (e.g. half time team talk);
- Conscientious - this is detailed and well planned and is most suitable where athletes are confident in their ability to execute what is asked of them (e.g. season planning).

Most of all, the coach should respect each athlete. Coaches may feel frustrated when they believe they have explained something several times only to have a player ask a question about that very thing! Perhaps the athlete wasn't listening, but it is also possible that the coach's explanation was unclear.

Instead of being frustrated, the coach should be thankful that the athlete has asked the question as the alternative is that the player is unsure but says nothing, which is much more likely to result in something going wrong!

Particularly where the coach feels they have already answered a question, they may use other athletes to answer – asking a teammate "what would you do in that situation?" can result in the team learning from each other.
Or, if the teammate also doesn't know, it may be further evidence that the coach has not communicated their message effectively.

3.2.7 HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT - "ATHLETE-CENTRED" APPROACH

"The welfare of athletes is the foremost concern to coaches in designing, implementing and evaluating appropriate practices and competitions." [9]

Coaches should not see their players as chessmen that they can move as they please. Young players are not the coach's pawns to simply be moved and directed by the coach. They are people that have, and know, their rights. No coach will be respected if they do not, in turn, respect their athletes.

An athlete-centred approach recognizes that through sport coaches play a central role in the development of children that will impact in all areas of their lives, and that it is through their expertise that the coach makes a contribution to the achievement of outcomes by the athletes. Coaching is no longer, if indeed it ever really was, about the achievement of the coach. The achievements of the coach are merely a reflection of the achievement of the athlete.

PLAYER'S RIGHTS

It is now widely accepted and acknowledged that players, and particularly junior athletes, have the following rights:

- The right to participate in sports competitions.
- The right to participate in competitions whose level is suitable to the abilities of each child.
- The right to have a qualified coach.
- The right to play as a child or teenager and not as an adult.
- The right to take part in making decisions about their sports activity.
- The right to practice their activity in a safe and healthy environment.
- The right to receive appropriate preparation in order to be able to compete.
- The right to be treated with dignity.
- The right to have fun while practicing sports.

From these rights we recognize four guiding principles which coaches must embrace and that when followed will lead to appropriate behaviours in sport.

Coaches should also hold parents and athletes accountable to also abide by these behaviours:

- Fairness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Safety

Fairness does not imply, for example, that all players have exactly equal playing time – although that might be an approach which a coach takes, particularly with very young players. However, fairness does require that the coach is open and "transparent" about how they make decisions.

It would not be fair to stop a player from playing because they missed training, unless the coach has first set the expectation that all players must attend training and that missing training would mean that they would not play.

These guiding principles apply equally outside of a sporting context and are important lessons for athletes to learn.

9 International Sport Coaching Framework, Version 1.2, Human Kinetics, p9

3.2.8 HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT - TEACHING NON-BASKETBALL SKILLS

TEACHING NON-BASKETBALL SKILLS

A coach of young people is in an almost unique position to influence each child's overall development, not just their athletic development. A coach of young people teaches:

1. Sport competences:
   Technical, tactical and physical requirements for participation at various levels. These competencies form the traditional core of sport and are the specific skills needed to play the game – both individual and team skills;
2. Personal competences:
   Capabilities that relate to the development of the whole person and may be supported and developed through participation in sport. These have been further grouped into social, cognitive and emotional outcomes;
3. Life course competences:
   The combination of sport and personal competences and experiences that positively contribute to the individual life course. For example, the ability to apply effort to undertake practice and achieve a goal can also be applied to study at school.[10]

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

A person's health is perhaps one of the more obvious aspects that may be enhanced through participating in basketball. This includes:

- Physical development of the players, including coordination.
- Healthy life habits related to the practice of sports, such as nutrition, hygiene and self-care habits.

However, coaches must also be aware that participation in inappropriate activities could pose serious and significant risks to athletes:

- Risk to the physical development of players (for instance, a training strategy based on lifting weights as a means of developing strength would be damaging for players of mini-basketball).
- Risk of major or chronic injuries that in some cases may affect the long term physical development of young players.
- If the activity is very stressful or discouraging, it is very probable that the players will not enjoy it and therefore will not develop a "habit" of enjoyment from participation in physical activity.
- Risk that in order to improve their performance and control the pain of their injuries, the players could end up taking doping substances, thus seriously harming their health. This behaviour could give rise to an addiction to drugs, given the high vulnerability of people at this young age.

Accordingly, coaches must prepare their plans taking into account the particular athletes they are working with. Activities must be suitable to each athlete and any complaint by an athlete that "something hurts" should be treated seriously.

Coaches should not hesitate to inform parents of feedback that an activity "hurts" and the parents may then seek a medical opinion.

Particularly at various stages of growth, young children may be susceptible to problems from an activity that otherwise would not be problematic.

But first we look at some of the personal competences that participation in sport, and in particular a team sport like basketball, can develop. Each of these competences will have a much wider application in the lives of a player than simply their playing basketball.

10 International Sport Coaching Framework, Version 1.2, Human Kinetics, p35

COMMITMENT

Coaches should be clear on the commitment they require from players and hold athletes accountable for fulfilling this commitment to the team.

Making a commitment requires that sometimes the player will have to give up certain personal wishes or make certain sacrifices for the group. This requires players to think about others and not just about themselves, and it takes some personal discipline to be able to do this.

The coach must emphasize the importance of the commitment the players are making. If a player does not attend practice sessions, their court time in games may be reduced. Even though there will often be good reason why a player cannot attend a practice (such as family or school commitments), the coach should reward those players that make the commitment and attend training.

It is important that the coach communicate their expectations (and the consequences if they are not met) at the beginning of the season.

It may be that the coach decides not to impose a penalty when a player has a good reason to miss training. However, the coach should still have rules about how the player communicates their absence.

Young people are at a stage of their personal development where focusing on their own needs is often the highest priority – typically they act based on what they want or feel at that particular time. They may prefer to go to the movies with friends rather than attend team practice. By clearly stating the expected commitment and then requiring players to abide by that commitment, the coach will assist players to develop this important skill.

PERSEVERANCE

Young people are often characterized as following short-term wishes - when they do not like something, or it turns out to be uncomfortable for them, they give it up and if something is too complex or requires a continuous effort, they do not do it.

This characterization of teenagers is perhaps even more applicable than when it was originally written 20 years ago with the modern generation that have grown up in a computer age where communication is instant and the pace of life is quicker than ever before.

Skill development takes time. Whether an individual or team-based skill, players will (and must) fail many times while attempting a skill before they develop the confidence and ability to execute it. Perseverance is especially important when the players go through hard times: for example, if they make mistakes, play poorly or try things but do not immediately obtain the results they wanted.

Coaches must give the players the confidence to persevere by identifying their improvement and not just praise the outcome or berate the failure to achieve the outcome.

Each player develops at their own rate and some will pick up skills quicker than others, and this can be a source of frustration for players if they are not progressing as quickly as their team mates.

The coach must be careful not to compare the progress of one player to another (e.g. “Jane can do this, why can’t you?”).