March 28, 2017

Competition-Coaching Introduction L2T

Step 10:

Planning a practice

Reference Material
for Dryland Workshop

Table of content

This section on Planning a Practice complements the information provided in the Reference Material for Introduction to Community Coaching (sections 5.2, 7.3 and 7.4) and Community Coaching (sections 5.1.4, 6, and 10.3), and is directed primarily at supporting you in your role as a coach working with children in the Learning to Train stage of athlete development.

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 Key Questions to Consider When Planning a Practice

When you are planning a practice there are key questions you ask yourself, such as:

- ❏ Who are my athletes?
- ❏ What are the logistics?
- ❏ What are the safety risks and how should I prepare for them?
- ❏ What skills/abilities should be trained at this stage?
- ❏ What am I trying to accomplish with my practice?
- ❏ How do I ensure the practice is challenging and therefore interesting to each participant?
- ❏ How will I organize my practice?
- ❏ How am I going to deliver my practice?

The purpose of this section is to provide you with materials that will assist you in answering these questions and to prepare you for successfully coaching children in the Learning to Train (L2T) stage of development.

10.1.2 Logistics Chart

Facilities/Equipment	Days/Times Available	Restrictions
Dryland		
On-Snow		
Indoors		

Your Logistics Chart Checklist

- ❏ To what facilities do you have access (e.g. wax room, terrain park, hills suitable for downhill technique sessions, day lodge, ski area groomed for classic technique/skating technique, school gym for indoor exercises, safe paved area for roller skiing, lit trails, etc)?
- ❏ What restrictions are there on the use of the facilities and equipment you need (e.g. roller ski area is too flat, you have to share the only good lit hill with another group, the day lodge is too crowded, grooming is undependable, the lit trail loop is short, etc.)?
- ❏ On what days and at what times do you have access to the facilities you need (e.g. Tuesday, 7 PM - 9 PM)?
- ❏ What equipment do the athletes possess (e.g. skating and classic skis, roller skis, etc)?

10.1.3 Practice Planning Sheet #1 (sample)

Team/Program: _____ Location: _____ Time: _____

Date: _____ Duration: _____

Objective(s): _____

Equipment: _____

Activities **Goals:** Athletic abilities, type of effort, length, intensity, movements, etc.	**Key Points/Messages** Guidelines, Safety, etc.
Introduction (duration = min)	
General Warm-up (duration = min) **Specific Warm-up** (duration = min)	
Main Part (duration = min)	
Warm-down (duration = min)	
Conclusion (duration = min)	

March 28, 2017

Practice Planning Sheet #1 (working copy)

Team/Program: _____ Location: _____ Time: _____

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Activities **Goals:** Athletic abilities, type of effort, length, intensity, movements, etc.	**Key Points/Messages** Guidelines, Safety, etc.
Introduction (duration = min)	
General Warm-up (duration = min) **Specific Warm-up** (duration = min)	
Main Part (duration = min)	
Warm-down (duration = min)	
Conclusion (duration = min)	

10.1.4 My Practice Plan

10.1.5 The Parts of a Practice

A model practice has five parts:

- ❑ **The Introduction:** The coach prepares the site and equipment, welcomes the athletes and tells them what will happen during the practice. This is also a good time to assess the general status of the athletes (e.g. do they have appropriate equipment and clothing?).
- ❑ **The Warm-up:** The coach plans activities that gradually activate the athletes and prepare them physically and mentally to effectively perform the main part of the practice. The warm-up consists of two parts: (1) general and (2) specific.
  - ✓ General. The general warm-up aims to raise the body temperature until the athlete perspires, to allow for progressive muscle stretching.
  - ✓ Specific. The specific warm-up, which is sport-specific, aims to prepare the warmed muscles for the types of movements the athlete will perform in the main part of the practice. The movements in the specific warm-up should mimic those of the main part, gradually building in intensity and range of motion.
- ❑ **The Main Part:** The coach ensures a smooth flow of activities that are challenging for the athletes and help them improve their sport-specific abilities and fitness. The activities chosen must be appropriate for the age, fitness and ability levels of the athletes.
- ❑ **The Warm-down:** To initiate the recovery of the body, the coach plans low-intensity transition activities between the more intense efforts of the main part and the end of the practice. The coach also plans for some time for athletes to stretch.
- ❑ **The Conclusion:** The coach provides comments on the practice and gives athletes an opportunity to provide feedback. The coach ensures that the practice ends on a positive and friendly note. The coach also provides some information about the next practice or game.

10.2 Designing Activities for Practices

10.2.1 Choosing and Designing Activities for Practices

The art of practice planning lies in making good choices about activities. As the figure below shows, the activities you choose and the way you run them should be guided by three factors: the goal of the activity, the sport itself and the athletes you coach.

- ❑ Establish a goal for each activity you choose.
- ❑ Choose a goal that is appropriate for the athletes, taking into consideration their maturity and their proficiency in the sport.
- ❑ Teach the activity (duration or number of repetitions, speed of execution, tasks the athletes perform) with the intent of achieving the goal.

Figure 10.1

By taking into account the specific needs of athletes and the characteristics and demands of each activity, you can select the type and conditions of practice that are most appropriate. This way, you increase the probability that the desired learning or training effects will occur. The procedure below is recommended when planning the activities of a practice.

- ❑ **Step 1**: Determine what you want the athletes to be able to do. This may be a long-term goal, one that may take several practices or even weeks to achieve.
- ❑ **Step 2:** Assess the nature of the task you want the athletes to be able to do in terms of the skills (open vs closed, discrete vs serial vs continuous) and the athletic abilities (physical, motor, tactical, mental) involved.
- ❑ **Step 3 (*):** Given the nature of the task and its demands, determine whether it is appropriate to the age and development stage of the athletes, as well as their stage of skill development. If your answer to these questions is YES, then proceed to Step 4; if the answer is NO, return to Step 1 and make the necessary adjustments.

- ❏ **Step 4 (*):** Decide whether the task needs to be broken into distinct parts or if it should be executed as a whole.

- ❏ **Step 5:**Determine the type of practice that is most appropriate (massed vs distributed, constant vs variable).

- ❏ **Step 6**: Determine the practice conditions that are most appropriate.❏ **Step 7:**Given your logistics and the equipment available, select or design sport activities that meet the above criteria.

- ❏ **Step 8:**Define the measures of success for the activity.

- ❏ **Step 9 (*):**Identify potential risk factors associated with the activity, and take them into account in the activity you design.

- ❏ **Step 10:** Think about the best way to explain the activities to make it easy for athletes to understand what the activity is about and how it should be performed.

Notes:

1) Steps marked with an asterisk (*) involve safety considerations.

2) The above guidelines apply to the planning part of a practice only. The delivery of a practice involves additional coaching skills related to interaction with people, group management, teaching and learning, intervention, etc.

Order of Activities in the Main Part of the Practice

Practices often feature several activities aimed at developing a variety of abilities. Paying attention to the order in which the activities take place in the main part of the practice may improve your chances of achieving the goal for that practice. Here are a few general guidelines to help you determine the optimal order of activities.

- ❏ Early in the main part of the practice athletes are not tired, so try to plan for:
  - ✓ Activities to acquire new techniques, skills or motor patterns.
  - ✓ Activities that develop or require coordination or balance.
  - ✓ Activities that develop or require speed.

- ❏ Then consider:
  - ✓ Activities that develop or require speed-fitness.
  - ✓ Activities that develop or require strength.
  - ✓ Activities that develop or require strength-fitness.

- ❏ Later in the main part of the practice athletes may be tired, so try to plan for:
  - ✓ Activities to consolidate skills already acquired
  - ✓ Activities that develop or require aerobic fitness.
  - ✓ Activities to develop flexibility.

10.2.2 Activity Worksheet #1 (sample)

Practice session date: _____

Athletes: _____

Name of the activity: _____ Warm-up ( ) Main part ( ) Warm-down ( )

Duration: _____ Objective(s): _____

_____

Equipment needed: _____

Description and diagrams: (Athletic abilities to be trained, purpose, movements, types of effort, duration, etc.)

Directions/guidelines to give athletes: _____

Success criteria: _____

Risk factors/safety guidelines to give to athletes: _____

Notes/comments: _____

Activity Worksheet #1 (working copy)

Practice session date: _____

Athletes: _____

Name of the activity: _____ Warm-up ( ) Main part ( ) Warm-down ( )

Duration: _____ Objective(s): _____

_____

Equipment needed: _____

Description and diagrams: (Athletic abilities to be trained, purpose, movements, types of effort, duration, etc.)

Directions/guidelines to give athletes: _____

Success criteria: _____

Risk factors/safety guidelines to give to athletes: _____

Notes/comments: _____

10.2.3 Classifying Sports Skills

A skill is the ability to do something well. Most sport skills involve a movement or a series of movements. A skilled sport performance can therefore be characterized by the following:

- ❏ High certainty in bringing about the expected end result.
- ❏ High precision.
- ❏ Efficiency, e.g. it is performed with minimum energy expenditure or in the shortest possible time.

Sport skills are classified according to whether the movements involved:

- ❏ Are performed in a stable and predictable environment.
- ❏ Have clearly defined start or end points.

Some sports are easy to classify, because they involve few well-defined skills; however, this is not the case for others that may involve a variety of skills performed in different conditions or situations.

The tables that follow provide basic information about how to classify skills and what sports showcase which kinds of skills.

Knowing the type of skills that are featured in your sport, or that are called upon in certain situations, may help you make planning decisions about what activities to choose for your practices and how they should be run.

1) Classifying Sport Skills by the Stability and Predictability of Their Environment

Closed Skills	⟷	Open Skills
The movements are performed in an environment that is both stable and predictable.	The movements are performed in an environment that is predictable, but changing.	The movements are performed in an environment that is unpredictable.
Sport examples: • Archery • Athletics (throws, jumps) • Bowling • Diving • Figure skating • Gymnastics • Shooting • Swimming in a pool • Weightlifting	Sport examples: • Cross-country skiing • Luge • Cross-country running • Golf • Road cycling • Alpine skiing • Speed skating • Yachting	Sport examples: • Combative sports • Racket sports • Team sports

Note: As indicated by the middle column (↔), there is a continuum between purely closed skills and open skills.

2) Classifying Sport Skills by the Distinctiveness of Their Beginning and End Points

Discrete Skills	Serial Skills	Continuous Skills
Distinct and easily determined beginning and end points.	A series of discrete actions linked together.	Actions are repetitive. No distinct and easily determined beginning and end points.
Examples of discrete skills: • Catching a ball • Throwing a punch • Swinging a golf club • Throwing a ball	Examples of serial skills: • Gymnastics routine • Figure skating routine	Examples of continuous skills: • Cycling • Running • Swimming • Cross-country skiing

10.2.4 Stages of Skill Development

Developing Sport Skills

It may take months or even years of practice for an athlete to reach the "Refinement" stage as defined in the following chart. Also, the vast majority of athletes will never reach the "Creative Variations" stage. Consequently, at the "Competition Coaching - Introduction" level, few coaches work with athletes who achieve an advanced stage of skill execution. Therefore, the focus should be on ensuring that the fundamentals are correct and that they can be performed in a variety of situations and conditions.

- ❏ When learning a skill, athletes progress through predictable stages. The chart on the following page outlines some key concepts about the stages of skill development and the needs of the athlete at each stage.
- ❏ While each athlete can be expected to go through each stage, the time and the amount of practice necessary to progress from one to the next can vary greatly from one athlete to another.
- ❏ The stages of skill development described in the following chart (initiation, acquisition, consolidation, refinement and creative variations) apply regardless of the type of skill or how it is classified.
- ❏ It is important that you recognize the stage of skill development your participants are at, as well as the specific needs they have at each stage, and that you plan your practice accordingly (i.e. that you select the right types of activities and the appropriate way to run them).

Skill Development Stages Chart

Beginner		Intermediate	Advanced	
Initiation	Acquisition	Consolidation	Refinement	Creative Variations
Key Points to Look For				
The first contact the athlete has with the skill. The athlete may have no idea of what to do to perform the skill.	The early stage of learning, where the athlete becomes capable of: 1) Coordinating key components of movements; and 2) Executing them in the correct order, thus performing a rough form of the skill. The movements are not well synchronized or under control and they lack rhythm and flow. The execution is inconsistent and lacks precision. The athlete has to think about what he/she is doing while performing the skill. Both form and performance tend to deteriorate markedly when the athlete tries to execute movements quickly or is under pressure, as may be the case in a competitive situation.	The athlete can execute the movements or the skill with correct form. Movement control, synchronization and rhythm are good when performing the skill under easy and stable conditions. The movements can be repeated consistently and with precision under these conditions. Some elements of performance can be maintained when the athlete is under pressure, conditions change or demands increase, but performance remains inconsistent. The athlete begins to develop a more personal style.	The athlete can execute the movements in a way that is very close to the ideal in terms of form and speed. The performance is very consistent and precision is high, even under very demanding conditions and in situations that are both complex and varied. Only minor fine-tuning may be necessary to achieve optimal execution, and a fairly personal style is established. All components of the movement have been automated, which enables the athlete to focus on the environment while performing and to make rapid adjustments as necessary. The athlete can reflect critically on his/her performance to make corrections.	This stage is achieved only by the best athletes in the world. The movements can be performed according to the ideal, and the athlete has developed a personal style that is efficient. Personal interpretation of movements or personal movements can be combined into unique patterns in response to specific competitive situations.

Beginner		Intermediate	Advanced	
Initiation	Acquisition	Consolidation	Refinement	Creative Variations
At this stage, athletes need to…				
1) Have a clear mental image of what correct execution looks like. 2) Understand the fundamental positions, stances, and patterns of the sport or skill. 3) Feel safe when performing the skill. 4) Reach a comfort level with some movements or feelings that may be unfamiliar and that are part of the skill to be learned.	1) Understand clearly what they have to do, and have a good mental picture of the task. 2) Perform a lot of repetitions at their own pace and under conditions that are stable, easy and safe. 3) Practise on both sides, if appropriate. 4) Find some solutions by themselves through trial and error, based on feedback from the coach.	1) Be exposed to a variety of situations, and perform a lot of repetitions under varied conditions. 2) Have clear objectives for both form (correct execution) and the result of actions. 3) Be challenged by more complex and demanding tasks or conditions, and find more solutions through trial and error, based on less frequent feedback from the coach. 4) Practise the movements or the skill in conditions where fatigue prevails or that replicate competitive demands and deal with the consequences of errors.	1) Be exposed to complex or demanding competitive situations that require the skill to be executed at a very high level. 2) Learn how to solve problems they encounter.	1) Be exposed to complex or demanding competitive situations that require the skill to be executed perfectly. 2) Develop their own solutions.

10.2.5 Planning Guidelines

- ❏ As the Skill Development Stages Chart on the previous page shows, the needs of athletes differ depending on their stage of skill development. Athletes' needs should guide the goals you have for practices that aim at developing skills.
- ❏ For practices that aim at developing skills, you should ensure that the goals, as well as the activities in which the athletes are involved, are adapted to the needs of the athletes and that the conditions in which these activities take place also match the athletes' capabilities. Selecting or designing appropriate activities and identifying suitable conditions in which they take place are therefore critical steps in planning your practice.
- ❏ You will likely have to allow for the fact that not all athletes are at the same stage of skill development. This can be dealt with by planning different activities for different groups of athletes or adapting practice conditions to different athletes' needs.
- ❏ You can plan the activities and tasks that athletes will do during a practice in many different ways. Athletes can perform:

  1) the whole skill, or only parts of it,
  2) many repetitions without rest, or rest for varying amounts of time in between repetitions, or
  3) the same task several times in a row, or distinct movements or actions each time either in a predictable order or in random order.

- ❏ The most effective activities/tasks, types of practice or practice conditions may also vary with the skill to be learned (open, closed, discrete, serial or continuous) or the athletes' stage of skill development. Additional adjustments may be necessary to take into consideration the age of the athletes. Planning guidelines for activities and practice conditions that support skill development at various stages are proposed in the following pages.
- ❏ The CCC Athlete Development Grid in section 2 of this Reference Material (Athletes and their Sport Needs) specifies what movement and technical abilities to train, as well as the priority for training these abilities at various ages and levels of competition.

10.2.5 (a) Activity Planning Guidelines for Various Stages of Skill Development

Recommended Practice Conditions	Stage of Skill Development			
	Initiation (First contact)	**Acquisition** (Movement patterning)	**Consolidation** (Correct execution in variable conditions	**Refinement** (Minor improvements)
Surrounding environment	Stable and predictable, free of distractions	Stable and predictable, free of distractions	Increased variability and distractions in the environment, but not to the point where movement patterns deteriorate	Competition conditions
Decision-making	No decision-making or options from which to choose	Simple decision-making, maximum of two options	More complex decisions to make, increased frequency of decision-making, and more options (3-4)	Complex decisions, as many options and at the same frequency as in a competition
Speed of execution	Slow and controlled	At athlete's own pace	Increased, variable, and close to competitive demands	Similar to conditions in competition
Number of repetitions	As needed, depending on athlete's general motor development	High	High	As many as possible
Risk factor	Completely safe conditions, errors of no consequence	Low-risk conditions	Less than or similar to what is encountered in regular competition	Similar to a high level of competition
During training, the emphasis should be on…	Basic stances and positions; getting the idea of what the movements are about, look like	Global execution and general form of the movement	Maintaining the form of movements and some performance consistency under a variety of conditions and under stress	Creating conditions that stress the specific elements that need adjustments

10.2.5 (b) Planning Guidelines for Part, Progressive Part or Whole Practice

Type of Practice	Definition	Examples	Most Effective For or When …	Not Recommended For or When …
Part Practice	A complex skill is broken down into distinct parts that are practised separately	Breaking down a gymnastics or a figure skating routine into parts	1) Skills that involve some risk in the early stage of learning 2) The parts are performed relatively independently of each other in the real skill 3) Serial tasks of long duration where errors in one part do not affect the actions in the parts that follow 4) Slow serial tasks where the parts do not affect each other	1) The interaction between each part is high 2) An error made or a change happening in one part affects the actions in the part that follows 3) Discrete skills that are short, are performed fast, or involve balls or objects on a trajectory 4) Coordination of different parts of the body is important (hand and foot motion) 5) Continuous skills
Progressive Part Practice	Parts of a skill are gradually integrated into larger blocks that come progressively closer to the real, whole action	1) Linking some parts of a gymnastics or a figure skating routine in the order in which they will be performed 2) Skating and stick handling in ice hockey	1) The task has parts that interact with one another, and adjustments may be necessary as a result of events that occurred in a previous part 2) The learner has reached a stage where linking actions in a complex skill no longer poses safety risks	The learner cannot yet link critical parts or actions in a complex skill, and this poses safety risks
Whole Practice	The learner practises all parts of the skill in the right order from the outset	1) Golf swing 2) Throwing a ball 3) Swinging a bat 4) Kicking a football	1) Continuous skills 2) Discrete skills that must be performed rapidly and in which various parts of the body are involved 3) Coordination of different parts of the body is important (hand and foot motion)	The learner cannot yet link critical parts or actions in a complex skill, and this poses safety risks

10.2.5 (c) Planning Guidelines for Massed or Distributed Practice

Type of Practice	Definition	Examples	Most Effective For or When …	Not Recommended For or When …
Massed Practice	1) An approach to practice in which a given task or movement is repeated many times in a row without pauses or rest, OR 2) Where the pauses or the rest between each repetition are **short** compared to the duration of the actual task or movement itself	1) In cross-country skiing, over a two-minute period, shifting weight from one leg to the other and gliding as long as possible each time without using poles 2) Punching a bag for three minutes	1) Discrete skills or tasks that are very short (and where movements are therefore performed rapidly), in particular during the acquisition phase *(Note: in some cases, such as throwing, some rest between repetitions may be necessary to avoid injuries)* 2) During the acquisition and consolidation stages of skill development 3) The energy requirements of the task are not too high 4) The activity or the task performed poses little risk	1) Continuous or serial skills or tasks that require a lot of speed or coordination and where fatigue can build up and affect the quality of execution 2) Fatigue developing during the session increases the risk of accident or injury, particularly toward the end of the practice
Distributed Practice	An approach to practice in which the pauses or the rest following each repetition of a task or movement are **long** compared to the duration of the actual task or movement itself	In track and field, practising an all-out start from the blocks over 10 or 15 metres five times, with a one-minute recovery consisting of light jogging and walking between each repetition	Continuous or serial skills or tasks that require a lot of speed or coordination and where fatigue can build up and affect the quality of execution or increase the risk of accident or injury	

10.2.5 (d) Planning Guidelines for Constant, Variable or Random Practice

Type of Practice	Definition	Examples	Most Effective For or When …	Not Recommended For or When …
Constant Practice	A practice sequence in which the same tasks or movements are repeated under the same conditions from one repetition to another	Throwing a ball 10 times at the same speed, from the same spot, to the same target	1) The athlete is in the initiation or acquisition stage of skill development 2) Massed practice is an effective method	The athlete is beyond the initiation or acquisition stages of skill development, in particular, for discrete or open skills
Variable Practice	A practice sequence in which the same tasks or movements are repeated but where one aspect of the execution is changed from one repetition to another	Throwing a ball 10 times, but varying **one** of the following each time: speed, distance, velocity, target	1) The athlete is in the consolidation stage of skill development 2) Massed practice is an effective method 3) Distinct skills or movements are performed during the same practice	The athlete is in the initiation stage of skill development
Random Practice*	A practice schedule in which various discrete or serial skills that are required for performance in the sport are practised in random order, and where the learner does not practise the same task on two consecutive attempts	1) In tennis, moving backward to do a backhand, then serving, then moving forward to return a volley 2) In basketball, practising non-repeating types of shots	1) Serial skills that are already acquired 2) Skills that are both discrete and open 3) The athlete is in the consolidation stage of skill development, or is beyond this stage 4) When distinct skills or movements are scheduled to be performed during the same practice	The athlete is in the initiation or acquisition stage of skill development

*There is strong evidence that random practice, while sometimes associated with inferior performance in the short term, results in superior performance in the long term. In other words, when constant practice is used to learn a skill or task, the performance during the session is often better compared to random practice, but the latter promotes better skill retention and overall performance in the long run. This suggests that random practice may be a very effective approach for both discrete and serial skills, as well as for open skills. The reasons for this may be that random practice causes athletes to forget short-term solutions to the task at hand; this could engage them actively in the learning process, by eliminating automatic repetitions.

10.2.6 Important Notes

Performance versus Learning

- ❏ Motor performance is the participant's behaviour when executing a task, as determined by the coach through qualitative and/or quantitative assessments.
- ❏ Learning refers to the permanent change in the motor performance (or skill) as a result of practice.
- ❏ A reassessment of motor performance at a later date (retention test) is therefore necessary to determine if skill learning has indeed occurred.
- ❏ Failure to appreciate the difference between performance and learning can lead to a misinterpretation of an athlete's progress or actual capability to execute a task independently and consistently.
- ❏ It is important to establish a distinction between how well a skill can be performed during a training session, and how well the participant performs when it counts, i.e. in competition.

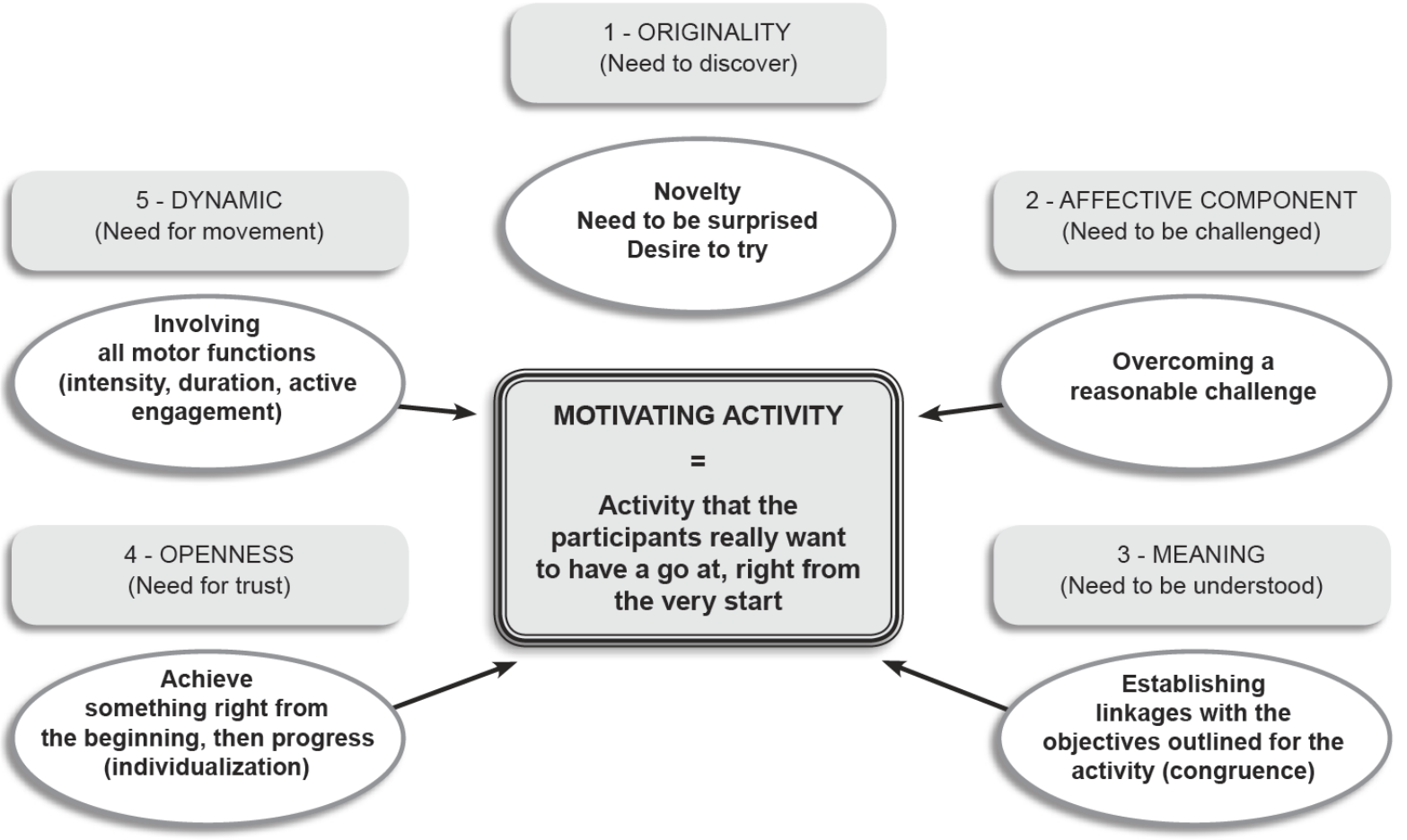
Rate of Improvement and Amount of Practice

- ❏ Improvements in skill occur rapidly in early practice, but more slowly in later practice. Learning occurs in stages, with a different rate of improvement associated with each stage.
- ❏ The amount of practice is the single most important variable that leads to motor performance improvements and skill learning.

Short and Long-Term Effects of Using Specific Practice Conditions

- ❏ Both variable and random practice conditions have been shown to positively affect learning, to promote the ability to transfer the skill into another environment and to increase generalization because they are challenging to the athlete and promote effortful, problem- solving activities during movement repetitions.
- ❏ Repeating the same task many times under the same conditions (blocked practice) usually results in good performance improvements in the short-term.
- ❏ Repeating the different tasks under variable conditions (random practice) usually results in inferior performance improvements in the short-term compared to blocked practice, yet it promotes greater learning in the mid to long-term as determined by retention and transfer tests.
- ❏ Coaches who incorporate a problem-solving approach to skill training by using random practice may need to educate participants and their parents about the short and longer-term effects of this method, as opposed to other approaches, such as blocked practice.

10.3 Five Criteria to Develop Challenging Activities That Motivate Athletes to Learn



Principle: An activity does not necessarily have to feature all criteria simultaneously to be considered "motivating"; rather, the coach must decide which of these criteria should apply in a given situation in order to generate an optimal level of interest in the participants.

10.3.1 The Challenge Zone

Matching the Difficulty of the Activity with the Skill Level of the Participant

When the requirements of an activity are too demanding for the athlete's ability, he/she may become anxious or discouraged and therefore may have difficulty learning. On the other hand, when the requirements are not sufficiently demanding, the athlete may quickly show signs of boredom or lack of interest. The difficulty level associated with the task must therefore be "optimal," i.e. the athlete must feel that he/she has the ability to succeed but that the activity represents a challenge. In other words, the athlete will be motivated to learn when challenged at the appropriate level, which implies that there must be a reasonable chance of either success or failure when he or she performs a task. As a general rule, if the athlete's success rate is approximately two times out of three, then the activity represents a suitable challenge.

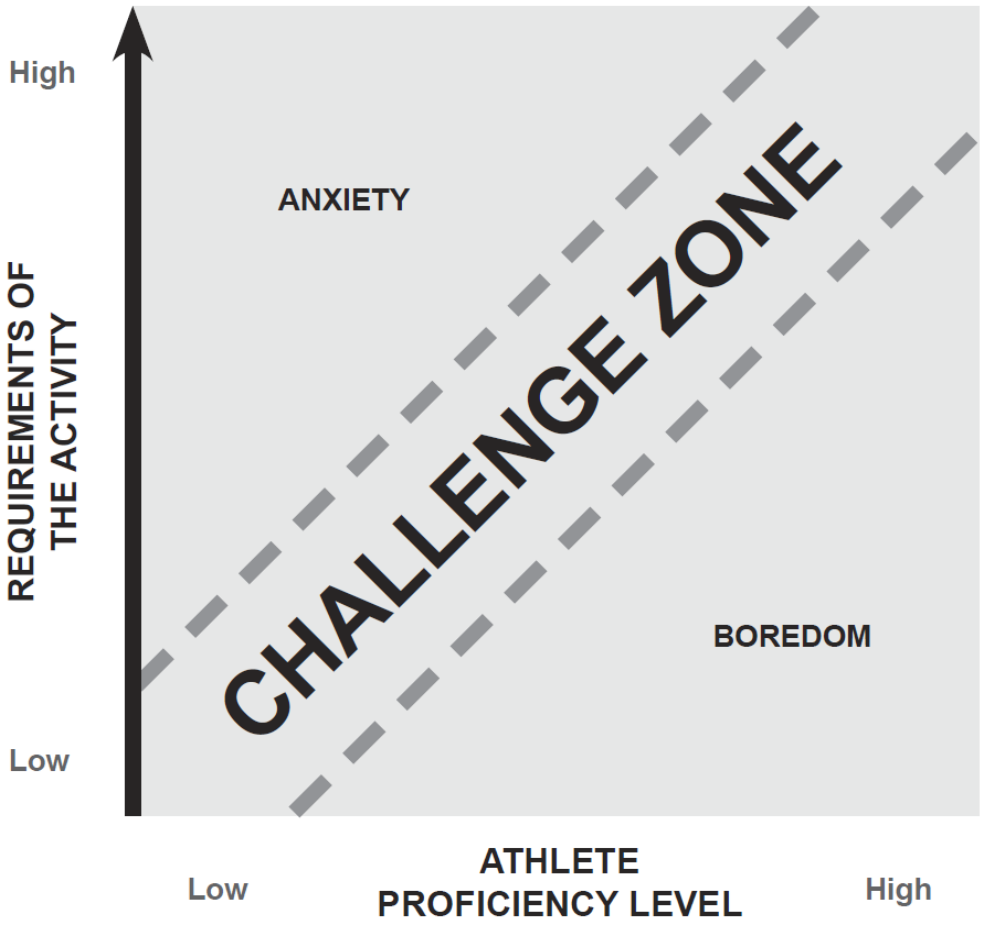


Figure 10.2

10.3.2 Practice Planning Worksheet #2 (sample)

Team/Program: _____ Location: _____ Time: _____

Date: _____ Duration: _____

Objective(s): _____

Equipment: _____

Activities **Goals:** Athletic abilities, type of effort, length, intensity, movements, etc.	**Key Points/Messages** Guidelines, Safety, etc.
Introduction (duration = min)	
General Warm-up (duration = min) **Specific Warm-up** (duration = min)	
Main Part (duration = min)	
Warm-down (duration = min)	
Conclusion (duration = min)	

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Practice Planning Worksheet #2 (working copy)

Team/Program: _____ Location: _____ Time: _____

Date: _____ Duration: _____

Objective(s): _____

Equipment: _____

Activities **Goals:** Athletic abilities, type of effort, length, intensity, movements, etc.	**Key Points/Messages** Guidelines, Safety, etc.
Introduction (duration = min)	
General Warm-up (duration = min) **Specific Warm-up** (duration = min)	
Main Part (duration = min)	
Warm-down (duration = min)	
Conclusion (duration = min)	

10.4 Practice Planning Checklist

Structure and Organization

- ❑ The practice is organized and well structured (introduction, warm-up, main part, warm-down and conclusion).
- ❑ The length of the practice is appropriate for the age and ability level of the athletes.
- ❑ Full use is made of available facilities and equipment to achieve the practice goals.
- ❑ Activities are planned so that there is minimal waiting time for the participants.
- ❑ The transition from one activity to the next is planned in such a way as to minimize the time wasted.
- ❑ In the main part of the practice activities are sequenced optimally relative to each other.

Nature of the Activities

- ❑ The practice includes a variety of activities.
- ❑ Athletes have sufficient practice time during each activity.
- ❑ The activities have well-defined goals, and the purpose of the tasks involved is clear.
- ❑ The activities are adapted to the skill and fitness level of the athletes.
- ❑ The activities are appropriate to the growth and development stage of the athletes.
- ❑ Practice conditions are adapted to the athletes' stage of skill development.
- ❑ The activities present exciting and reasonable challenges to the athletes and are chosen or designed so that the success rate by the participants when performing the task is about 65-70%.

Safety

- ❑ Potential environmental, equipment/facilities and human risk factors have been considered, and the activities are designed accordingly.
- ❑ An Emergency Action Plan is available.

10.5 Practice Planning Tips

- ❏ Always include a warm-up in your practice plan. Never skip or rush the warm-up, as this may lead to injury. If you are short on time, consider having athletes warm up before the practice; for instance, if facilities are available for only a limited period of time.
- ❏ Get help from anyone who is available. For example, parents can help by arranging stations so that you can maximize the time your athletes are active. In this case, make sure your assistants are familiar with your practice plan and give them simple and clear tasks.
- ❏ Avoid activities and games that eliminate people – the athletes who need the most practice will probably get bumped first.
- ❏ When you plan an activity that involves opposition, pair up athletes with similar ability levels so that they can challenge each other and each has a fair chance of success. This may also reduce the risk of injuries.
- ❏ Think of all the skills required to perform the drill! A drill or an activity might be relevant to your sport or to the long-term goal you have in mind, but the skill or fitness level of your athletes AT THIS TIME may be such that they cannot really benefit from it.
- ❏ Be realistic about the actual number of skills your athletes can learn in a season. For some skills, it may take a lot of time and practice for athletes to go beyond the Acquisition stage.
- ❏ Always make sure that athletes have mastered the fundamentals of their sport before you plan for more advanced techniques. However, it is a good idea to start developing tactical and decision-making skills early on. To do this, put your athletes in quite complex sport-specific situations that require them to use their observation skills, analyze the situation and come up with possible solutions.
- ❏ Plan for fun – can you find a way to develop a skill or ability through a game or activity the athletes enjoy doing? Ask athletes which activities they like the most; use those ones often, or try variations of them to achieve specific goals.
- ❏ Be creative when athletes have to do a lot of repetitions, as is the case in the Acquisition and Consolidation stages of skill development. Although your athletes may have to work on the same fundamental movements in many practices to acquire the correct motor patterns, you can avoid monotony by using different activities or games that require the movements and looking for new and fun ways of doing them.
- ❏ Take time to get athletes to talk about their own performances and discuss what they think is important to work on improving individually and as a team. Try to build this into your next practice plan.
- ❏ Use random practice whenever possible, as it promotes better long-term performance improvements.
- ❏ Better long-term improvement in performance can be achieved by not making practices too predictable.
- ❏ Motor tasks that do not produce extreme fatigue or muscle soreness can be practised daily.
- ❏ Tasks that do produce marked fatigue or muscle soreness should not be practised every day

and recovery between practices must be longer. Alternate the days where these skills or tasks are performed with recovery days, or with days where other, less tiring skills are practised. For skills that involve some impact or where exhaustion can occur, it may be necessary to practise them only every third day.

- ❏ Be aware of athletes' physical capabilities before you ask them to do physical activity (growth and development). Keep in mind that there could be significant physical differences between athletes the same age.
- ❏ Simulate competitive situations in practice. Include all elements of the game or competition in your practices, e.g. rules, competition protocols, interaction with officials, respect for opponents and teammates, etc.
- ❏ Make a list of all the skills that athletes should be coached in, given their age and experience – this becomes a key element of your development plan.
- ❏ The first time you play a game or conduct a drill, it may not be as successful as you might like – athletes may need more time to learn it. Give the activity a name, so that they will recognize it immediately in the future.
- ❏ Find out what your athletes like and dislike about practice. Keep a file or a list of favourite drills, activities and games. Don't be afraid to repeat a game or drill – we enjoy doing the things we like to do.
- ❏ Keep a binder that has EVERYTHING in it: medical information, player information, rosters, directions, systems of play, team rules, etc. Keep a written or electronic record of what you do in practice.
- ❏ Make a list of EVERYTHING: have a TO DO LIST (generic sheet for every day/practice).
- ❏ Make a list of all your "systems of play", break them all down into parts and organize drills for each individual concept. Break down all concepts into different options. Develop a drill for every option.
- ❏ Try to keep things as simple as possible.

Practice does not make perfect, it only makes permanent. Perfect practice makes perfect, permanently.

10.6 Planning a Practice: Self-Assessment

To rate your ability to plan a practice, circle the number at right that best represents whether you achieve the corresponding statement at left (Never, Sometimes, Often, Always).

I plan practices that are well organized by…	Never	Some-times	Often	Always
Identifying my athletes' ages, abilities and performance levels on the plan	1	2	3	4
Indicating a clearly defined goal for my athletes that is consistent with their growth and development stage	1	2	3	4
Including an introduction, warm-up, main part, warm-down and conclusion on the practice plan	1	2	3	4
Outlining on the plan the facilities and equipment needed to achieve practice goals	1	2	3	4
Indicating a timeline for the practice	1	2	3	4
Ensuring that activity durations are consistent with athletes' growth and development stage	1	2	3	4
Identifying factors that need to be checked to ensure safety (environmental, mechanical, etc.)	1	2	3	4
Positioning my practice plan in an overall season plan	1	2	3	4
Describing the rationale for the practice goals	1	2	3	4
Describing practice activities through the use of illustrations, diagrams and explanations	1	2	3	4
Indicating on my practice plan the key performance factors (coaching points) that will be highlighted in the practice	1	2	3	4
I design activities that improve athlete performance by…	**Never**	**Some-times**	**Often**	**Always**
Ensuring they are appropriate for my athletes' growth and development stage	1	2	3	4
Ensuring that they contribute to achieving overall practice goals	1	2	3	4
Ensuring that they are safe (environmental, mechanical, etc.)	1	2	3	4

Ensuring that they contribute to the development of skills	1	2	3	4
Ensuring that they contribute to the development of athletic abilities	1	2	3	4
Identifying appropriate work-rest ratios, target training loads, and target intensities	1	2	3	4
Sequencing activities so they enhance skill development and induce the desired training effects	1	2	3	4
Indicating variations or modification of practice conditions that challenge athletes	1	2	3	4
Integrating mental skills (goal setting, visualization, arousal control, focus, etc.) into each practice	1	2	3	4
Promoting basic decision-making by athletes	1	2	3	4
Ensuring that they are appropriate in relation to the location in the season plan	1	2	3	4
Indicating objectives that are based on analysis of the athlete or team during competition	1	2	3	4
Indicating adaptations that will assist athletes returning from injury	1	2	3	4
I have designed an Emergency Action Plan that specifies	**Never**	**Some-times**	**Often**	**Always**
The location of telephones (cell or land lines)	1	2	3	4
Correct emergency telephone numbers	1	2	3	4
A medical profile for each athlete under my care	1	2	3	4
The location of a fully stocked first-aid kit	1	2	3	4
Designated roles for a Call Person and a Person in Charge	1	2	3	4
Directions for reaching the practice site (map, address, etc.)	1	2	3	4

DATE: _____

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