

Sample Training Session

Concrete goals should be established prior to each practice. For example, a coach might designate introducing a new skill, team strategy, or conditioning as the primary goal of a single practice session. At the end of the practice there should be some opportunity for the athletes to demonstrate what they have learned in relation to the desired objective set forth by the coach. A practice lacking goals runs the risk of being inefficient for all of the participants.

Everybody plans differently but practice plans that have been committed to paper provide a clearer direction and accountability, versus the plans scheduled in mind only.

Organization of a Practice:

1. Equipment needed
2. Practice objective
3. Practice activities
4. Warm-up
5. Practice of previously taught skills
6. Teaching and practice of new skills
7. Practice under competitive conditions
8. Fitness
9. Cool-down
10. Coach's comments
11. Evaluation of the practice

Equipment needed- condition of the equipment, sufficient equipment for number of participants

Practice objective- state succinctly the goals of the session.

Practice activities- specific time frame for each activity (i.e. 7 minutes for line drills, 20 minutes controlled scrimmage)

Warm-up- every practice should begin with a proper warm-up (10-15 minutes). A proper warm-up consists of comfortably raising the athletes heart rate, stretching appropriate muscle groups, and mental readiness. At the end of 15 minutes the athletes should be prepared to learn/practice. Warm-up is not a time to put the athletes through rigorous exercise.

Practice of previously taught skills- after the warm-up segment is completed run the athletes through a previously taught skill. By reconfirming previous skills the athletes gains confidence and is now prepared to acquire a new skill.

Teaching and practice of new skill- Usually this portion of practice requires the largest amount of time. Generally only one new skill is taught per session. A coach's ability to design drills with increasing difficulty will keep the learning process lively for the participants. But be careful not to advance too fast, otherwise athletes could become frustrate and discouraged.

Practice under competitive conditions- Competitive conditions (mini-games, drills associated with outcome results, or game like simulation activities) allow the athlete to apply what they have learned as well test what they need to work on.

Fitness- Both anaerobic and aerobic levels of the athlete should be improved during the course of the season. Aerobic foundation is the ability to take in, transport, and use oxygen. Aerobic conditioning includes the following: low intensity, long-duration activity, and medium distance with occasional increase in intensity, resistance work such as hill running once a week. Anaerobic threshold is achieved once excess lactic acid is produced. Once Anaerobic Threshold is achieved, the body's energy system recruits less efficient muscle fibers to produce work. Fortunately, the athlete can be trained to increase work output at the threshold point. This increase occurs through interval training, and pace training. The Anaerobic Threshold generally falls somewhere between 85%-95% of maximum heart rate. Maximum Heart Rate is determined by taking $220 - \text{your age} = \text{Maximum Heart Rate}$.

Cool-down- Often overlooked, the cool-down is just as important as the warm-up. This is an opportunity to have the athletes stretch and reflect on the practice/competition.

Coach's Comments- review how the team practice/compete, what goals were achieved, inform the athletes of their next commitment.

Evaluate Practice- immediate assessment of the productivity of your practice will lead to a stronger session next time. Examine what goals were achieved and those that were not. Then make the necessary adjustment for the next session.

(Source: Martens, R., (1997), Successful coaching, Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL (2nd edition) pp.67-69, 104-105)

Prevention of Injury

- Conditions of Venue:
 - Coach should routinely inspect the facility from a safety perspective.
 - Handicapped accessible
 - Surface condition (wet/dry) mark off unsafe areas
 - Teach the participants how to use the equipment safely
 - Perimeter (i.e. walls or fences)
- Equipment
 - Coach should routinely inspect the equipment for defects
 - Condition
 - Meet NGB standards
- Athletic readiness
 - Skill level
 - Proper warm-up
 - Group by ability
 - Avoid Mismatches- inequalities in size, strength, and skill

(source: Dougherty, N.J., Auxter, D., Goldberger, A.S., & Heinzmann, G.S., (1994) Sport, Physical Activity, and the Law. Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL, pp.256-258)

Warm-up and Stretching Activities

Generally, warm-ups should be approached as preparation for practice or competition. Overlooking a proper warm-up increases probability of injury. Most coaches would recommend a 10-15 minute warm-up. The warm-up should raise the athlete's respiratory, heart rate, and body temperature prior to stretching. Stretching is more effective when the body temperature

has been elevated. Stretching should focus on the of major muscle groups that are to be implored during the activity. Holding the stretch for 10 seconds is recommended.

Some coaches have discovered that a warm-up that includes some agility and/or basic skill progression allows the athlete to prepare both physically and mentally for the upcoming session. For example, a soccer warm-up could run as follows:

1. Light jogging
2. Agility drill
3. Stretch a major muscle group
4. Agility drill
5. Stretch a different muscle group
6. Agility drill
7. Stretch a different muscle group
8. Skill drill (passing)
9. Stretch a different muscle group
10. Skill drill (dribbling)
11. Stretch a different muscle group

(source: Martens, R. (1997), Successful coaching, Human kinetics, Campaign, IL (2nd edition) p. 102)

Basic Sport Skill

Three stages of Learning:

1. Mental Stage
2. Practice Stage
3. Automatic Stage

In acquiring a new skill, an athlete progresses through the above stages in sequential order. In the mental stage the objective is to understand the skills necessary to perform the desired task. Athletes will progress at various paces. Mental sequential order is imperative. Once the athlete understands the movements required to perform the skill they enter the practice stage. It is in the practice stage that the athlete begins to acquire the skill. Generally speaking, the practice stage requires the most amount of time. As the athlete progresses, the mental energy required to perform diminishes. In Practice stage, timing and coordination become crucial to the development. The athlete reaches the automatic stage when the skill can be correctly performed repeatedly. In the automatic stage, the athlete greatly diminishes the mental energy required to perform the skill. A good coach progresses along this path but, in accordance to the athlete's development, makes the necessary corrections. If the athlete is still in the practice stage, it is useless to teach them a more advanced skill. Wait until the skill becomes automated before attempting higher levels of competency. (Martens, R., 1997, Successful Coaching, Human Kinetics, Champlaign, IL, p73-74)

The following is a list of Coaching resources:

Positive Coaching Alliance <http://www.positivecoach.org/>

American Sports Education Program <http://www.asep.com/>