

**Equestrian
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The awarding body for equestrian activity



EQL Level 2 Certificate in Coaching

Learning Resources

**Developed in Partnership with the
National Source Group for Equestrian,
The Coaching Development Action Team**



EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS COACHING



SECTION ONE

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INTRODUCTION

What is coaching?

In the 1600's the verb "to coach" meant "To transport a valuable cargo from one place to another". 400 years later we have the same interpretation; we are helping a valuable equestrian athlete to improve their performance from their current level to their desired level.

Coaches set exercises, practices and tasks to teach skills correctly, encourage practice of proper techniques, resulting in quicker skill learning and improved performance.

Coaches help make sport a safe, enjoyable and rewarding experience for participants by taking a participant-centred philosophy. This means that everything a coach does, he/she does with his/her participants in mind. Session plans are designed to maximise learning and enjoyment. Exercises are created to help participants learn. Feedback is given to help them improve. Questions are asked in order to help participants to develop their own problem-solving skills. Everything a coach does should be with the aim to help their participants become independent, self-teaching sports people.

The opposite coaching philosophy to this is a coach-centred one. This is where everything is done to suit the coach, no matter what the effect upon participants. A coach-centred coach doesn't involve their participants in decision making or ask their opinion. A coach-centred coach believes that they are the expert and that participants have nothing to contribute to their own learning process. The Coaching qualifications follow a participant-centred approach.

The Coaching Process involves a coach:

Planning, Doing and Reviewing their activities on a continual basis

Planning:	Planning and Organising Identifying participant's needs Planning activities and exercises to meet needs and progress development Checking facilities and equipment are safe to use
Doing:	Guiding, Challenging and Directing Introducing session goals Conducting a warm up to prepare horses and participants mentally and physically and reduce the risk of injury Provide demonstrations to show key points or correct action Allow opportunities to practice skills Observe and analyse practice to point out and correct ineffective/incorrect practice Conduct a cool-down to prepare horse and participants for the end of the coaching session and to minimise the risk of injury.
Reviewing:	Monitoring and Evaluating Evaluating the session against targets and goals Identify areas for improvement Design adaptations to plans based on participant performance, needs and goals

Coaching is about developing and improving people and their behaviour in a sporting context. Coaches develop people in various ways:

- Technically – by developing good technique and learning new skills
- Physically – by improving physical condition
- Socially – by learning to co-operate with others

Psychologically – by learning to control emotions and develop self-confidence
Personally – by learning life skills, developing values and attitudes

The Equestrian Coaching 'Tools'

One thing that makes equestrian coaching more exciting and challenging than many other sports is that the 'tools' that we use are not inanimate objects. Our horses and ponies have minds of their own and they don't always think in the same way as their riders, drivers or handlers! Horses and ponies react to the actions of the rider, driver, handler and vaulter, plus the actions of any other equines around them and the environment. It is important to keep this always in mind when you are thinking about, and practicing, your coaching skills.

The Role of a Level 2 Coach is:

- To prepare for, deliver and review coaching sessions:
- Review participants' needs
- Establish a safe coaching environment
- Develop participants' performance
- Conclude sessions
- Evaluate participants' performance and the effectiveness of sessions
- Monitor personal coaching practice

The role of the coach is to create a supportive environment in which participants feel confident and encouraged to give their best performances.

Coaches facilitate their participants in:

- Increasing and gaining knowledge
- Learning skills
- Changing attitudes and beliefs (so that participants achieve beyond their original expectations for themselves).

As participants become more knowledgeable and experienced, they should start to take over the guidance of their own development, using the coach as a trusted sounding board, rather than as a fount of all knowledge.

Underpinning Knowledge and Understanding for a UKCC Level 2 Coach:

- Safe and ethical coaching practice
- Welfare of participants during coaching sessions and within the coaching environment
- Effective communication
- The techniques, skills and tactical aspects of your discipline
- How to assess participants' learning
- The methods to modify and adapt coaching sessions to meet participants' needs, abilities and stage of development
- Sources of information and methods to evaluate coaching sessions and the coaching process
- The methods to reflect and improve personal coaching practice
- How to plan to modify/adapt
- How to manage risk at sessions
- How to modify activity in response to changing environment
- How to evaluate sessions
- How to differentiate between a learning and a performance gain
- How to observe activity and participants
- How to plan progressive sessions
- How to adapt sessions for people with particular needs

- How to deal with child protection issues
- How to create an inclusive learning environment
- How to evaluate self
- How to give clear instructions/explanations
- How to evaluate participants
- How to collect and use information
- How to show and tell
- How to set up and stand back
- How to structure questions to encourage thinking/feeling
- How to structure sessions
- How to prepare participants for sessions
- How to provide demonstration
- How to set up groups
- How to observe and manage individuals within the group context
- How to listen
- How to use verbal/non-verbal communication methods
- How to observe basic movement and tactics
- How to generate feedback
- How to set up group activities, prepare equipment and venue
- How to build rapport
- How to question for understanding

Key elements of the Coaching Process:

The Coaching Process is a continuous cycle of:

- Goal Setting (what do I and what do my participants want to achieve?)
- Observation (where are they now?)
- Gap Analysis (what do they need to do in order to achieve their goal?)
- Action Planning (how will they achieve their Goal?)
- Motivating (how to help them maintain commitment to their journey?)
- Monitoring and Evaluating (how are they getting on against plan?)
- Feedback and Review Plans

Coaching within an equestrian context combines several skills:

- Providing a safe and supportive environment
- Removing unnecessary distractions or interferences
- Directing a person or group along the path from their present stage of learning and development to their future goal
- Developing skills and capabilities
- Developing new strategies which can be applied in multiple situations
- Providing new information
- Helping to shape participants' beliefs and values (particularly children)
- Using your experience to encourage your participant to follow the "best way"
- Guiding someone to discover their unconscious competencies and overcome internal resistances and interferences
- To help a participant extend their own knowledge
- To promote self-esteem and confidence in the participant

IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING THE NEEDS OF PARTICIPANTS

Collecting information about your participants to help you plan coaching sessions

Before you plan your coaching session(s), ideally you need to know what your participant(s) want to gain from learning with you. This information is easily collected by telephone when a prospective participant first contacts your establishment.

If you are going to be coaching someone on horses/ponies belonging to your establishment, you will also need to know some information, such as height, weight and experience in order to help you plan which horse or pony and which group a participant would best be suited to work with.

Some useful information to collect would also include finding out how many coaching sessions the participant is interested in having. Your plans will be very different for a participant who wants to book 3 sessions to focus on one area of their riding/driving/vaulting than they would for a participant who wanted to sign up for weekly sessions with an indefinite finish time.

Here is an example of a Participant Information Form. Please add anything that would be relevant for your particular equestrian activity to make the Form complete for you:

Date:

Name:

Address:

Tel No:

Email:

Where did you hear about us?:

DOB:

Height:

Weight:

Any medical issues (e.g. asthma):

Doctor's Name and Tel No:

Any disabilities:

(Will they require any specialised equipment or particular assistance?)

Why do you want to start taking sessions?

What are your riding/driving/vaulting goals; now, within the next 6 months, and beyond (if appropriate to ask now)?

What experience with horses have you had to date?

Have you worked in group sessions before? Yes/No

Where have you had equestrian coaching before?

How often do you ride/drive/vault?

How would you rate your competency? (To gauge confidence levels)

Beginner / Novice / Experienced / Very Experienced

(Ask them for specifics of what they have done e.g. canter or height of jumps – this often identifies those people who think they are experienced, but who aren't!)

What other exercise do you do and how frequently?

Have you had any significant horse-related incidents/accidents in the past?

Signed (participant):

Understanding why participants choose your equestrian activity

Everything is done for a reason. Get to know your participant and their motivations. Their reasons for participating will differ and vary from:

- Personal improvement
- Health and fitness
- Making friends
- Fun
- Winning
- Exhilaration and excitement
- Feelings of personal control

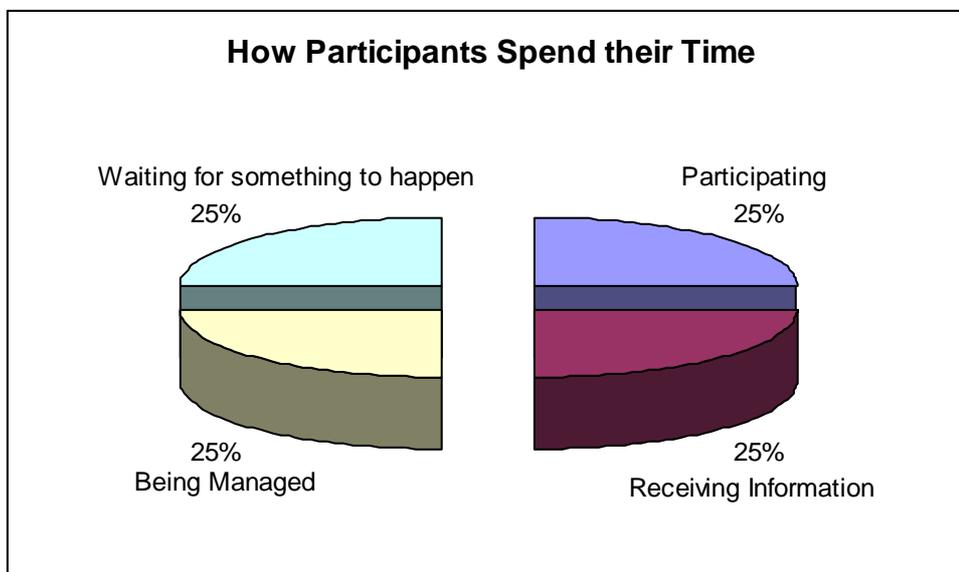
P Chelladurai, a Canadian Leadership Theorist, found that athletes value coaches who offer them:

- Training and Instruction
- Reward
- Democracy and social support
- But, rarely autocracy

This research suggests that the ideal coaching environment to motivate your participants is an emphasis on skill development, positive feedback and concern for self-esteem and personal development.

How can a coach help their participants maintain motivation?

It is estimated that sporting participants spend their time as follows:



This indicates that there is more than 50% of a participant's time that could be used more effectively during coaching sessions.

By focusing upon the practical and technical issues of coaching, for example using your voice so that people can hear and understand you, being organised and being able to communicate, then this should help you to increase the amount of time your participants spend participating in the coaching session.

In order to maintain participant motivation during inevitable periods of the session when they are not participating (for example waiting for their turn), it is important that coaches also develop their social skills, for example, sense of humour, open-mindedness, patience and motivating abilities. These are all important to develop good positive working relationships with your participants. If you have a good relationship, your participants will be more likely to respect your knowledge and abilities as a coach.

This balance between social and technical sides of being a coach ensures that you keep a holistic view of your participants; acknowledging their lives outside of their riding lessons. This will make a participant feel valued and want to perform better.

People are motivated in two distinct ways:

- Internally and
- Externally

Internal motivation (also known as intrinsic motivation) comes from personal reasons why people choose to participate. These may include; developing skill, to have fun, to improve or to challenge oneself.

External motivation (also known as extrinsic motivation) is drive that comes from others. Examples of external motivation include; to increase social status, to get approval from coaches, peers, parents or to win material rewards.

Helping participants to develop high levels of internal/intrinsic motivation

There is no doubt that both types of motivation exist for most of us whenever we commit to doing something for the long term. However, it is vital that as a coach you help your participants identify and develop their own personal reasons (internal/intrinsic motivation) as these will sustain them through the inevitable tough times when they may experience frustrations with their learning, disappointment with the speed of their progress or loss of confidence

Part of your role as you develop your coaching skills will be to select the appropriate coaching content and coaching style to enhance your participants' personal (intrinsic) motivation levels.

Helping participants to Learn

People learn best when they want to learn. Motivation is very important to effective learning. One of the best ways to ensure your participants are interested from the very beginning is to explain why they are learning the particular skill you will be practising. By relating it to their goals you will enable them to tap into their own motivation.

How can a coach affect a participant's motivation to learn?

Coaches play a part in helping their participants to be motivated to learn and continue with coaching sessions. One of the ways that a coach can affect a participant's motivation to learn is to recognise that people have different ways of learning. These are often referred to as Learning Styles:

Learning Styles

Over the years we develop learning 'habits' which enable us to learn more from some experiences than from others. These 4 learning 'habits' or styles are known as:

- Activist
- Reflector

- Theorist
- Pragmatist

Activists

Activists want to get on with trying something new. Therefore, you will need to explain new exercises succinctly and build in variety to your coaching sessions. They do not like to have to listen to long explanations or follow precise instructions to the letter.

Activists will be ideal subjects to demonstrate a new task or skill to the rest of a group coaching session.

Reflectors

Reflectors are good listeners, cautious and careful. They tend to adopt a low profile in a group situation and they tend to shy away from participating.

They will want to watch a demonstration and have an exercise fully explained before attempting it for themselves.

Theorists

Theorists tend to be perfectionists who aren't happy until they get something right. They are keen on learning the principles behind skills. They like logic. They frequently ask "Does it make sense?" "How does this fit with that?" They like explanations and demonstrations in detail. Make sure they don't practise one thing over and over again to the detriment of their equine partner!

Pragmatists

Pragmatists are keen on trying out new ideas and techniques to see if they work in practice. Like Activists, Pragmatists will want to get on with trying something new. If you are teaching a skill which you are breaking down into parts, make sure you explain how it fits into the whole; otherwise Pragmatists can be quick to dismiss something if they don't understand its benefits or relation to something else.

We all display a mixture of learning styles, but most of us have a preference for one or two over the others.

It can help us work with other people if we have some insight into their preferred style(s). We can often gain that insight by listening to the sort of language that they use. No one example is an absolute guide to a preferred style, but if we listen for patterns of phrases, we can often get a picture of the way that a person approaches new experiences in terms of learning.

Phrase	Learning Style
So what use is that then?	Pragmatist
Tell me, how does that work exactly?	Theorist
I'll have a go	Activist
So how did you come to that conclusion?	Theorist
I want to think about that and come back to you later	Reflector
So how does that work in practice?	Pragmatist
Don't just talk about it – have a go	Activist

I can't decide now. I'll tell you tomorrow	Reflector
So what does this idea come from?	Theorist
Don't bother me with the detail; what do I need to know	Pragmatist
What do we do first?	Activist
What do we do again?	Reflector

In addition to the information on Learning Styles above, we all also have another set of learning preferences based on how we like to receive new information. These are:

- **Visual** Learners – learn best through demonstrations and diagrams
- **Auditory** Learners – learn best through explanations
- **Kinaesthetic** Learners – learn best through demonstrations and practising

It is useful to be aware of these preferences because you can adapt your coaching sessions to satisfy all 3 preferences. Equestrian coaching is well placed to help you incorporate all 3 preferences because of its very nature; mostly when we are teaching new skills:

- We describe it and explain how to do it (**Auditory**)
- We provide a demonstration of how to do it (**Visual**)
- We ask participants to try it for themselves (**Kinaesthetic**)

It's useful to be aware of your own learning preference as this will influence how you share new information. For example, if your preference is Auditory, you might occasionally be tempted to leave out a demonstration and go straight from explaining the new information to getting your participants to try it out. If you were to do this, you would miss out the necessary element of a demonstration or diagram for visual learners.

Exercise 1 - Learning Preference Checklist

Read each sentence carefully and think about how it applies to you. For each question, give it a score that best describes you using the following scale:

- 5 = Almost always
- 4 = Often
- 3 = Sometimes
- 2 = Rarely
- 1 = Almost never

	Score
1. When reading, I say the words in my head or out loud	_____
2. I take lots of notes on what I read and hear	_____
3. I take notes, but never go back and read them	_____
4. I can study better when music is playing	_____
5. I use my fingers to count and I move my lips when I read	_____
6. When I get a great idea, I must write it down immediately or I'll forget it	_____
7. It's hard for me to picture things in my head	_____
8. When beginning an article or book, I like to take a peek at the ending	_____
9. I can't remember a joke long enough to tell it later	_____
10. I prefer someone to tell me how to do something, rather than reading instructions myself	_____
11. I don't like to read or listen to directions; I'd rather just get on with it	_____
12. I prefer to talk to people face to face	_____
13. I remember what someone says better than what they look like	_____
14. I like to complete one task before starting another	_____
15. I can remember something better if I write it down	_____
16. When I can't think of a specific word, I use my hands a lot and call something a "what-cha-ma-call-it" or a "thing-a-mi-jig"	_____
17. I need to discuss things to understand them better	_____
18. I understand maps, charts and graphs easily	_____
19. I forget names, but remember faces	_____
20. I don't like reading books	_____
21. I usually shake hands when I meet people	_____
22. I fidget a lot	_____
23. I often say "well done" to people	_____
24. I like to be tidy	_____
25. When I am angry I go silent	_____
26. I use a lot of hand gestures when I talk	_____
27. I use phrases like "that sounds right"	_____
28. When I get angry I grit my teeth and clench my fists	_____
29. I prefer to talk on the phone	_____
30. I tend to talk fast	_____

Write your scores for each of the above questions in the boxes below and then total up your scores to find your Learning Preference.

	Visual	Auditory	Kinaesthetic
Question No.	2 =	1 =	3 =
	6 =	7 =	4 =
	9 =	10 =	5 =
	12 =	13 =	8 =
	15 =	14 =	11 =
	18 =	17 =	16 =
	19 =	20 =	21 =
	24 =	23 =	22 =
	25 =	27 =	26 =
	30 =	29 =	28 =
TOTAL			

INTERPRETING YOUR RESULTS

Mostly Visual:

You have a preference for visual learning and take in new information through pictures, diagrams, charts, films and demonstrations. You learn by visualising what you are learning and creating pictures or diagrams.

Mostly Auditory:

You have a preference for auditory learning and prefer the spoken word. You enjoy discussions and a good test for your learning is to explain something to someone else.

Mostly Kinaesthetic:

You have a preference for motor and kinaesthetic learning and enjoy "hands on" activities and getting physically involved. You enjoy demonstrations.

You may be surprised at your results – you may have a very clear preference of one style over another. However it's more likely that you have a balance between the 3 preferences. It's worth noting that 60% of people have multiple learning preferences.

How can you use this new information to help you plan your coaching sessions?

THE TECHNICALITIES OF EQUESTRIAN COACHING AND RECOGNISING DIFFERENT COACHING STYLES

Effective coaching involves incorporating the knowledge to know when, why and how to adopt particular coaching methods and how to recognise participants' learning preferences with the knowledge of available resources that the coach needs and how to implement the activities into a coaching session so that the athletes learn what it is that the coach wants them to learn. The ability to adapt exercises to suit the situation and achieve desired outcomes.

Coaches should also learn from other sports that support what they are doing (e.g. endurance can learn from long-distance sports, such as running or cycling). Looking to other sports also allows the use of common principles for tactical development. New learnings can come from any source. Needs to evolve over time – coaches need to develop a willingness to experiment.

Coaching Styles

How you coach will be influenced by your values and beliefs. This is also known as a Coaching Philosophy and will form your guidelines for your actions. Often we are not consciously aware of our values and beliefs and this can sometimes result in our appearing harsh or unjust in dealing with our participants. Therefore it is important to acknowledge what guides our behaviour. Issues that will form our Coaching Philosophy include our beliefs about:

What **ROLE** we play as the coach in relation to others involved with the participants. For example, do you believe that as the coach, your opinion should be the deciding opinion in any conflict?

The amount of **CONTROL** we believe our participants should have in deciding upon their own goals for the sport.

The importance we place on **COMPETITION** in relation to learning, fun and well-being.

How important we believe it is to stick to the **RULES** of our sport. This also includes the ethical issues of using substances and gadgets to increase performance.

How **HARD** or **FREQUENTLY** you believe your participants should train.

How **IMPORTANT** you think sport should be in people's lives. Do you think that people should play sport to live or live to play sport?

Take a few moments to think about what you want to achieve from progressing your coaching career and how you feel about the issues above. Your beliefs will provide a framework for your style of coaching; as much as we think that we can be adaptable to changing circumstances and participants' needs, our coaching philosophy will always be running in our heads.

Therefore if competition is very important to you, you may not find the greatest satisfaction in coaching participants whose goals are to socialise and have some fun. However, you would work very well with people – no matter what their level of experience – whose goals are to progress quickly and compete, both to improve their own abilities, and against others. Please do not fall into the mistaken idea that because competition is important to you, you will only find a compatible attitude amongst high level competing participants.

It is important that you share your views on these key issues with your participants and their parents so that you are all clear about each others' expectations from the coaching relationship.

Exercise 2 - What's important to you in your coaching career?

Take a few minutes to answer the following questions. This will help you define your values and beliefs regarding coaching:

Why are you studying to be a better equestrian coach?

What would you like to do with your coaching career?

Describe your ideal coaching participant (e.g. dedicated, competitive, beginner, particular equestrian activity, disabled etc)

Why would they be ideal?

What attributes are important to you for a coach to display? Tick as many as apply to you:

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| Loyalty | Friendship | Helping Others |
| Challenging | Achievement | Competence |
| Recognition | Creativity | Work Alone |
| Participation | Stability | Motivation |
| Enthusiasm | Health | Competition |
| Knowledge | Precision | Flexibility |
| Authority | Quality | Integrity |

Add any attributes that are not on this list but are important to you:

What strongly held beliefs do you have as a coach?

How do you feel about being late for appointments?

How do you feel about other people being late for appointments?

COACHING STYLES

TELL & SHOW used:

- with groups
- when there are safety problems
- when introducing new skills

Sometimes over-used by coaches.

SET UP & STAND BACK used:

- with well structured activities that let learning happen through the activity
- to encourage tactical/decision making thinking

Coach stays quiet, observes and then adapts activity to provide challenge and success.

QUESTION & EMPOWER uses:

- questioning to encourage riders to make decisions and take responsibility for their own learning.

Very powerful coaching style
demanding considerable skill

Exercise 3 - Which situations would be more suitable for each style?

Situation:

Style:

A weekly rider learning to jump for the first time

An experienced participant who competes regularly on their own horse

A group of adults who ride together regularly

A group of children riding at a pony club camp

A group of disabled children learning to vault

A novice adult rider

One member of the group fall off their horse/pony during the session

A team (e.g. horseball) working on team tactics

Exercise 4

How do you prefer to be coached?

How would you describe your coaching style?

What coaching style does your coach mentor have?

Developing your own Coaching Style

Effective coaches inspire loyalty, trust and confidence. Therefore your coaching style needs to reflect your natural personality.

Demonstrating sincerity, commitment to your personal beliefs and individuality are all considered to be important to participants. Therefore be yourself and don't try to be someone you're not. It will be very hard to pretend to have certain qualities over a longer period of time. Your natural style of coaching will attract a particular type of participant to you and you will more likely have greater success with a participant who enjoys your style than if you try to adopt a different style to your own.

Participants value consistency from their coach. It gives them security and a feeling of familiarity. Therefore be consistent in your approach when explaining exercises, correcting errors and giving feedback.

For example: When you are giving an instruction, explain what you expect to see the participant doing (and the result in the horse). For example, "prepare to trot", what do you expect the participant to be doing whilst they prepare?

A participant-centred coach is sensitive to the needs of his/her participants. You do this by continually evaluating the coaching session and checking with participants for feedback regarding their understanding, enjoyment etc of the exercises. An effective coach takes this self-evaluation and participant feedback during the session and uses it to be flexible and prepared to change activities if they are not providing what the participants want or need.

The quality in a coach desired by athletes above all others is FAIRNESS. All your participants have a right of equal access to your time and experience.

Creating an outline coaching session plan

Remember the 5 Ps of Preparation:

"Poor Preparation Precedes Poor Performance". "Those who fail to plan, plan to fail". Thorough planning and preparation will repay you in easy-to-run coaching sessions that are effective and fun.

Key issues to consider when preparing your coaching sessions include:

- Identifying your participants' needs and setting goals for the series of sessions
- Selecting session goals and content (to include warming-up, practices and cooling-down)

Reviewing Participants' Needs

- What are your participants' specific needs and goals?
- What is the ability level of the participants in your group?
- What are your specific goals?
- Do your goals match your participants' goals?

A coach's job is to identify what his/her different participants need from them. Good coaches coach people, not the sport. Sport is merely the medium through which coaches help performers to develop. Coaches must base their programmes, sessions and practices on the individual needs and aspirations of the participants to help motivate them to progress.

Things to take into consideration when planning programmes include your participants’:

- Goals and aspirations
- Personality
- Development stage, strengths and weaknesses
- Psychological responses to different situations (e.g. anxious when under pressure, frustrated by lack of progress etc)
- Unique personal situation (e.g. level of parental interest or pressure, non-sporting commitments)
- Special needs or disability

How well do you know the people you coach?

The most effective coaches get to know their participants as individuals – not just as sports people. Following this approach will enable you to be able to coach anyone – able bodied, disabled, children and adults alike, because you will be able to take your knowledge of the individual – what they are capable of, what they are motivated by etc - and adapt your technical knowledge to their needs.

Do you know some participants (the ones you like more) better than others? Have you made any assumptions about participants without collecting the facts? How can you find a way to find out more about all your participants (and their parents if appropriate)?

Goal Setting

When you have thought about your clients’ needs and desires, the next part of planning your coaching sessions is to decide what is to be achieved during the sessions. The goals you set for your sessions will need to take account of your participants’ current situation – their strengths and weaknesses.

There are some rules for setting goals; it’s known as setting SMART Goals:

They need to be SPECIFIC – what will your participants be able to do by the end of the series of sessions? For example if you were planning for a novice group of riders, and your goal was to increase their confidence, what would they be doing to demonstrate this increased confidence? It’s important to have specifics so that everyone can identify whether your goal has been achieved or not.

They need to be MEASURABLE – for example if you were planning for a novice group of riders, and your goal was to increase their confidence, how would you be able to measure an improvement in confidence? More importantly, how would your participants measure their improvement? It’s a very important aspect of keeping your participants motivated if they can see that they are progressing towards their goals.

Goals need to be AGREED by all parties. There is no point in you setting goals as a coach if your participants aren’t also interested in achieving them. If you are coaching children, their parents/carers also need to buy into the goals you propose. The goals you choose may well have implications on your participants over and beyond your coaching sessions, for example cost or time implications.

Any goals you set must be REALISTIC. You will need to use your experience to decide what realistic achievements can be reached in the time you have available and starting from the strengths and abilities of the participants you are planning for.

Finally, give your goals a TIME deadline – this possibly will be the natural conclusion of the coaching programme, but you may also be working on short-term programmes which will contribute to a longer-term goal and this is where setting deadlines will be very helpful.

Examples of smart goals:-

“Introduce the basics of the 3 point seat and help riders to practice this in 3 paces.”

“Introduce vaulters to the simple dismount, using mechanical horse and where appropriate practice on lunge horse at walk.”

Adapting Plans for Different Participants

You will need to be aware of how to adapt your coaching programmes for delivery to different types of participants, for example children or people with disabilities.

The following guidelines from the Pony Club and RDA should help you to adapt coaching programmes that you have, which have not been specifically designed to be presented to groups of children or people with disabilities:

Sports Coaches play an important role in the development of children’s basic motor skills and their long-term attitudes to, and enthusiasm for, sport and physical activity.

The following 5 rules apply when coaching children:

1. Put children first
2. Make it fun
3. Involve parents and carers
4. Reward effort as well as achievement
5. Develop the athlete – then the equestrian

It is widely acknowledged that top level performers begin the process to achieving sporting excellence in childhood. It has been estimated that it can take more than 10 years to create a top sporting performer. Therefore, children need to value and enjoy the experience of physical activity. Coaches have a crucial role to play in these essential early stages of development.

Balyi’s Long-term Athlete Development (LTAD) model promotes sport as a valuable activity which should be enjoyable and contribute to a healthy lifestyle. There are 3 main outcomes of LTAD:

- Lifelong participation
- Improved performance
- Physical literacy

There are 5 stages to Balyi’s LTAD Model:

1. Fundamentals (ages 6-8 years)
2. Learning to Practise/Train (ages 9-11 years)
3. Training to Train (ages 12-14 years)
4. Training to Compete (ages 15-17 years)
5. Training to Win (ages 18+ years)

Stage 1 Fundamentals Participant Ages 6-8 years

Participants need to be offered a wide variety of fun and creative activities with no specialisation encouraged. Activities should focus upon developing basic motor skills such as running, jumping, throwing and catching. Involving parents and carers during this stage greatly increases long-term participation.

Stage 2 Learning to Practise/Train Participant Ages 9-11 years

Participants begin to apply basic skills and fitness to their preferred activities and begin to reduce the number of different activities that they participate in. The emphasis is on learning how to train, not on the outcome of the training. However an element of competition may be introduced during these ages (not more than 25% of the training programme). Coaches should concentrate on identifying and correcting any skill or fitness deficits.

Stage 3 Training to Train Participant Ages 12-14 years

Activities are focused towards preferred sports/disciplines with more individual programmes designed. Coaching sessions should still emphasise training and practice with small amount of competition introduced. However, focus should remain on participation and practice not on outcome. This is the peak growth spurt time for children, so changes in height, weight and co-ordination should be monitored.

Stage 4 Training to Compete Participant Ages 15-17 years

Developing sport-specific skills and techniques. Individual goals and training requirements usually identified during this stage.

Stage 5 Training to Win Participant Ages 18+ years

Participants focusing full-time on the sport/discipline in question. Emphasis on specific training to achieve and maintain optimum performance at competitions.

How to coach in line with LTAD recommendations:

Make it Fun

Successful coaching sessions for children involve laughter, enjoyment, excitement and fun.

Children get bored easily. Plan a variety of stimulating exercises to challenge them and encourage creative thinking and problem-solving.

Include several sports/disciplines

The more variety there is to a child's sporting experience, the more enthusiasm they will have for exercise and the more likely they will find the discipline which they enjoy the most. For example, pony club games which focus on passing batons and collecting flags and the riding becomes second nature, or vaulting exercises to teach balance and rhythm and confidence around horses.

It's important to explain to both the children you coach and their parents/carers why you are introducing lots of different sports and skills so that they don't mistake your wide education with a lack of planning!

Involve parents and carers

They will be bringing their children to your sessions and so if they aren't enthusiastic, neither will their children be!

To keep parents' and carers' interest, they need to understand what you are hoping to achieve and how you will go about achieving it. Encourage them to participate in the coaching sessions as assistants (if appropriate).

Make sure you speak to parents/carers before and after coaching sessions to answer any questions and make them feel part of their child's experience.

Develop basic motor skills

Improving on basic motor skills such as running, jumping, balancing, catching, throwing (hand-eye co-ordination) will help children develop control of their bodies which will help their riding and vaulting. Young children need to develop these skills before being channelled down a specific sport's techniques. These skills are best learned between the ages of 5 and 12.

Children learn a great deal by copying others – their friends, teachers, parents/carers and coaches. Imitation is powerful, so it is important that you provide models that are technically and ethically sound. This also relates to the way that you speak to people (children will copy your sarcasm or your motivation – you choose which kind of participant you want to create!).

Find ways to include these basic motor skills during your warm-up and cool-down activities. Remember children have more confidence than adults and are more willing to try new skills and less afraid of failing. Therefore don't be afraid to push them to develop these skills as they often make very rapid progress.

There are 3 stages to skill development:

Stage 1: Understanding

Show children what you want. Never assume they know. Explain in simple terms. Be prepared to explain several times in different ways. Remember attentions spans are limited so keep everything as simple and short as possible.

Stage 2: Practising

Explain why you are asking the children to carry out exercises and make sure they are fun – look at their faces – if they're not smiling, they're not having fun! Give lots of feedback, especially pointing out specific improvements or achievements so that they can begin to link your feedback to what they have actually done. Also remember to praise effort as well as achievement.

Stage 3: Performing

Children react more slowly than adults so give them small chunks of information and as much time to think about it as they need. When coaching beginners, start by making most of the decisions for them, explain why the decision was made and encourage them to think for themselves next time.

Plan practice sessions which offer only limited choices. Make practices fun and varied and close to real performances so that children understand why they are practising. Tell children what you are doing and discuss with them what to do next, encouraging their planning and problem-solving skills to develop.

Put children first

Be aware of potential risks and injuries and take positive action to prevent them happening. Part of minimising risks is to be aware of children's fitness levels and capacity. Another essential element to minimising risks is to be aware of your own limits and not to teach activities or skills that you don't understand and cannot deliver safely

Don't judge children by their age alone

Muscle strength is proportionate to the size of the muscles. Therefore small children are disproportionately weaker than older children. Young children have relatively large heads, which affects their balance and relatively short legs which will affect several aspects of riding and vaulting.

Just before the adolescent growth spurt, children's arms and legs are disproportionately long, which often makes them clumsy and uncoordinated.

Strength increases with age, but muscle development does not occur at the same pace with all children of equal ages. Children of the same age can be as much as four years apart in physical development.

Remember weight increases with height, so remember to regularly check your children's weights and heights to make sure they are working with the most suitable horses and ponies for them (and for the horses and ponies!).

Matching adolescents with horses

If you are being asked for advice about purchasing a horse or pony for one of your clients, it's worth bearing the following guidelines in mind:

With boys, on average, the growth spurt reaches a peak around the age of 14, although it can start as early as 12 or as late as 15. Boys normally reach their adult height around the age of 17 or 18.

Girls, on the other hand, start growing at around the age of 12 years old, although their growth spurt can start from 10 or not begin until 14 years old. By the age of 15, girls will normally have reached full adult height.

Part of your role as a children's coach is to help children understand the changes to their bodies and come to terms with them. With riding these physical changes may be heightened by a child becoming too tall or heavy for their beloved childhood pony and you will need to help them through this loss process.

Some other points about coaching children

Children breathe more quickly than adults and must therefore work harder than adolescents or adults to provide the oxygen their muscles need. As a result, children don't recover from exercise as quickly as adults. Therefore they need to be monitored to avoid exhaustion. Children will often not be as aware of their own limits as adolescents or adults.

With smaller bodies and quicker breathing, children lose water more quickly than adults. Therefore make sure that they drink plenty of water (not fizzy drinks – they dehydrate further).

Smaller bodies are more sensitive to heat and cold, so bear this in mind when you are planning your coaching programmes and take into account weather conditions, exercises and location of the coaching.

Giving feedback to children

If you are inexperienced in any practice it is hard to assess your own performance. You can help children to develop their own assessment skills by telling them when they are doing well and making it easy for them to tell you when they have difficulties.

The key to assessing difficulties is to focus on one or two specific aspects of the skill or practice that they are finding difficult.

Children and competition

We may think that sport helps children to learn to work together and develop positive attitudes to fair play. However for some children the competitive element of sport takes them by surprise and they may react negatively to the reality that in competition some will succeed whilst others will fail. This can affect their self-esteem and create stress.

As their coach, you are in a unique position to create a positive reinforcement that effort and progress are just as important as winning. Indeed it has been found that long-term success depends upon comparison against one's own benchmarks and progress, not with comparison against others.

As children grow they are developing their self image. This is influenced by the aims they have, their achievements, other's achievements and feedback from adults. Children are much less able to rely on their own judgement, due to their lack of experience. Therefore comments from other children and adults can be very powerful. That is why it is important that you foster a positive attitude and demonstrate how you want your participants to behave in your coaching sessions and generally towards themselves and others.

It's very important to recognise the power of the social group surrounding an individual. As we grow and develop, we are influenced by anyone significant around us. This includes parents, teachers, friends and coaches. Friends' influence grows significantly from the age of 9 years old and during adolescence, peer groups can become the dominant influence, sometimes conflicting with parents and authority. Teenagers often judge themselves by whether their friends approve of what they do. Children are easily led, anxious to please and prone to over-enthusiasm.

Coaches can give young people new standards for self-judgement. By giving them positive feedback you can show them strengths they never knew they had and build up their confidence. Your positive encouragement and support will help them to trust their own judgement instead of doing what other children think they should do. By doing this you can balance peer group influence on young participants.

Your attitude when coaching children needs to be that participating can be sufficient. Too often, losing is regarded as failure and only by winning are people deemed successful. Focusing too highly on outcome over performance creates stress, which is counter-productive to performance anyway. Fear of failure and the consequences of losing have been shown to be the major reason why children drop out of competitive sport.

When you are setting outcomes with children, keep the focus upon setting goals based on performance rather than winning. Performance success can be measured in terms of effort, improvement and personal bests – all achievements that individuals can have some control over. People feel more motivated to do things that they can see they have some control to achieve them.

Use praise and encouragement, not insults and humiliation to motivate your participants. Treat everyone as equal, don't ignore children who are less gifted/able and bear in mind that for most children, your sport is neither the only interest they have, nor their most important interest.

Encourage parents/carers, teachers and other influential adults in your participants' lives to share your aims and value of participation over outcome. Make sure you speak to them every time you see them, so that they can ask any questions. Ideally, hold a briefing session for them when you first start coaching their child so that you can share your aims and your expectations regarding conduct (for example dress code and time keeping).

Practical coaching tips for children

Under 6's

Very young children learn through play. Because they have no experience to use for comparison, they rely on coaches to tell them how well they are doing.

Keep it fun and make everything about playing

Keep it simple – teach step by step

Praise every small advance

Age 6-9

Children are starting to separate results from actions, but they still find it hard to separate ability and effort and have a tendency to attach the results they get to how hard they try. Be careful not to reinforce this by telling children that they will do better if they try harder.

Be patient – introduce new tasks one at a time and step by step

Encourage – they will still rely heavily on your feedback

Let them explore their limits

Reduce fear of failure by encouraging them to try new activities, whatever the outcome

Age 10-13

Children start relying on their own judgement, as well as listening to others around them, although they still have a tendency to think that trying harder will overcome a lack of ability. Lack of ability can be hard to accept at this age and may result in children dropping out of the sport. Help children you coach at this age to set themselves realistic standards and goals so that they don't start to drive themselves for perfection.

For all ages

Set realistic goals

Help children acknowledge and work within their natural ability limits

Positivity

- Look to praise rather than offer constructive criticism
- Beginners need more praise than more skilful participants who will interpret constant praise as insincere

- Praise effort more than results
- If a good performance is followed by a mistake – still praise the good performance. People don't make mistakes on purpose
- Acknowledge that the most successful people have a higher rate of mistakes – the more you try the more likely you will make mistakes, but also the more likely you will succeed
- Don't mix praise with criticism e.g. "good approach, but ..."

The word "but" can be very negative. It has the effect of negating what was said just before it. For example;

"You did very well, but you were too quick on the last transition..."

This focuses the mind on the last part of the statement – the criticism. How about instead:

"You were quite quick on the last transition, but you did very well."

You have still included the correction, but in the correct place in the sentence.

- Praise good behaviour to encourage it
- Don't use hostility, sarcasm or shout. It sets a bad example – your participants will use you as a role model, plus it is humiliating and demotivating.
- Practice the behaviour you expect from your participants
- Give children a clear idea of the behaviour you expect from them
- Involve children in making the rules and determining the penalties – they will more likely to follow them and discourage rule-breakers.
- Don't use more activity as a punishment – use negative reinforcement as punishment i.e. remove the child from the activity. If you use more activity as a punishment you are encouraging them to become demotivated to participate in sport
- Don't threaten, give rule-breakers one warning and then impose the penalty
- One penalty is enough – don't perpetuate the issue by reminding and reinforcing penalties
- Be consistent and fair – even star performers must serve penalties, even if it impacts upon the team as a whole
- Reward good behaviour
- Be sensitive to emotional outbursts. Children get tired and grumpy and are less able than adults to control their emotions. Hormonal changes can also produce emotional reactions. Expect emotional outbursts, take children's worries seriously and be caring in your handling of them.
- Children take time to understand the concept of teamwork. Young children play as individuals. Help them to develop teamwork by helping them to learn the rules of teamwork and their individual tasks as members of the team. Keep rules of games simple, keep teams small and swap people around to different roles within the team so that they understand what each other do and how their behaviour affects others.
- Change rules if necessary to be applicable to children's current abilities, so that they can gain a sense of achievement. Make the arena smaller to accommodate children's reduced athletic ability. Use equipment suitable to ensure safety, for example using children's stirrup irons and leathers instead of adult ones.

Disabled participants

You do not necessarily need special training to work with disabled people in sport. What you do need is sport-specific knowledge and skills, combined with the confidence and understanding to make any necessary adjustments to the ways in which you already work in your own sport. You also need to get to know the individuals you are working with. All good coaches coach people, not sport and if you take this approach then by getting to know your individual participants you will be able to adapt your sport knowledge to their needs to deliver effective coaching sessions for them.

A very important focus when coaching disabled people is to focus on what they can do, rather than concentrate on the medical label for their condition. You will find this out by asking them and/or their carers.

Some tips for coaching and communicating with participants with the following disabilities:

Hearing Impairment

- Stand still and face participants. Talk to the participant, not the interpreter.
- Speak slowly and clearly, but don't shout. Don't chew or cover your mouth with your hand.
- Use a small hand-held dry-wipe marker board for written instructions.
- Use gestures and demonstrations.
- To get their attention wave your hand or touch the person on the shoulder (or knee if they are mounted).
- Keep everyone involved by explaining any comments, questions or jokes made by group members.
- Check that participants understand and are not just copying you or others.

Speech Impairment

- Be patient – don't rush them or finish their sentences.
- Check that you have understood them correctly by summarising or repeating back what you think that you heard.
- Ask them to repeat anything you don't understand or write it down.

Visual Impairment

- Gain their attention by using their name.
- Use clear, accurate verbal instructions and check for understanding.
- Make sure you tell participants when you have finished and are moving away from them.
- Ensure the arena is free of obstacles and clutter.
- Supply any written information in a suitable format such as CD, large print or Braille.
- Help participants familiarise themselves with the coaching environment by describing the layout of the arena, the location of key items (eg equipment, exits, potential hazards etc).
- Use your voice to give them a sense of location, direction and distance.

With all three impairments listed above, ensure that you use a balance of exercises and demonstrations which use all of the senses so that a participant can experience the maximum benefit from the session whilst minimising their dependence on the sense which is impaired.

Physical Impairment

- Some wheelchair users consider their wheelchair to be part of their personal space so avoid touching or resting upon the wheelchair – treat it as part of the person sitting in it.
- It is easier to talk to someone sitting in a wheel chair if you are also sitting or squatting – your eyes will be level with each other.
- If you are required to push or help someone get from their wheelchair to a horse or carriage, ask them how they would like you to do this.

Learning Disability

- People with a learning disability may find it difficult to learn some skills at the same speed or to the same level as others. However, do not make assumptions; either about an individual's ability or motivation to achieve something.
- Ask your participant. Only if they are unable to tell you themselves, ask their carer.
- Treat people by their age, not by their apparent level of ability.
- Use simple, straightforward language.
- Use gestures and demonstrations.
- Check understanding by asking them to tell you what they should do next (after you have explained or demonstrated at least once before).
- Give time for skills to develop and repeat them often and in a variety of ways.
- Break skills down into easily-learned steps.
- They may be less aware of safety precautions and accepted rules of behaviour

(Extracted from Sports Coach UK's "How to Coach Disabled People in Sport")

Due to the nature of equestrian activities disabled participants are potentially more vulnerable than other participants, not least of all because of the movement that is imparted to the disabled participant, therefore certain checks should be made prior to any coaching session.

In the first instance you should have knowledge about the participant's disability or condition, the symptoms and the relevance of the disability or condition to your equestrian activity. For example the participant may need special mounting procedures and/or tack plus the affects that the activity will have on the disabled participant and their condition must be taken into consideration. In most cases the activities will be beneficial to the welfare of the participant but you should be aware that in some cases the equestrian activity might be contra indicated.

Here are some checks for you to consider:

I understand the participant's disability/condition and the symptoms of that disability/condition.	
I understand the affects the symptoms may have relevant to the context of my equestrian activities e.g. Abnormal balance/ coordination / communication / comprehension / concentration / mobility/ eyesight / hearing / physical ability/mental ability/muscle tone/behaviour or there may be sensory loss	
I have checked that the participant does not have any other associated medical problems e.g. uncontrolled epilepsy	
I have checked that the participant does not have emergency medication that I need to know about.	
Do I need consent from a parent or guardian before this person can participate?	
I need to check or confirm details with the participant's medical advisers, carers/ teachers.	
I have an appropriate horse in terms of training, temperament, type/shape and it is up to carrying the required load. (Some disabled participants maybe unbalanced and sit 'heavily')	
Does the participant need any special equipment or adaptations to the normal equipment?	
Do I have correctly trained helpers, i.e.: Leaders, side walkers etc to assist if necessary?	
Does the participant require additional assistance during activities? Where? When and how much?	
Can I provide coaching that will be progressive, significant and enjoyable to this participant?	
Mounting: Do I need to physically assist in transferring the participant to the horse /carriage? Then do I have safe procedures and agreed manual handling procedures for mounting; appropriate facilities; horses trained for non-standard mounting procedures?	
Dismounting: Do I need to physically assist in transferring the participant from the horse /carriage? Then do I have safe procedures and agreed manual handling procedures for dismounting; horses trained for non-standard dismounting procedures?	
<i>Am I competent to coach this disabled participant?</i>	
<i>Should consult with someone that is experienced in coaching disabled equestrian participants before coaching this person?</i>	
<i>Should I refer the participant to someone that is more competent?</i>	

PLANNING THE CONTENT OF A COACHING SESSION

Generally, sessions should be structured along the following lines:

- Introduction, explanation of session goal and warm-up
- Main area of Coaching Session, containing:
 - o Progressive practice of skills or techniques (e.g. practicing transitions to and from canter)
 - o Some form of full activity (e.g. riding a figure of 8 in canter with transitions over X)
- Cool-down, recap on session, evaluation of progress toward session goal, and look ahead to next session.

The Introduction

In your introduction, you should explain the goals for the session and, if applicable, show how this session fits into a longer-term plan for the participant(s). This will help your participants to put a context to what they will be learning.

Your introduction should include a warm up to prepare both participants and horses mentally and physically. You should aim for a general warm up to increase circulation, raise body temperature and aid stretching. After a general warm up, you can also include some specific skills warm up (for example adopting jumping position during trotting or cantering)

The Main Section

Once your participants are warmed up, you can progress to practising skills or techniques which will contribute towards achieving your session goals. For example, if you are teaching a group of riders learning to jump, you may decide to start with trotting poles, in order for your riders to practice riding to the middle of a fence, whilst also cementing their practice of their jumping position from the warm-up.

If it is applicable during the session, the practice phase should lead into real or simulated sport activity. Taking our example from above, this may include giving riders a small cross pole to jump, so that they experience their horse leaving the ground whilst they cement the practice of taking the jumping position and aiming for the middle of the fence for take off, progressing to a small cross pole.

Cool-Down and Summary

It's very important that you build in some cool-down and revision time into your coaching sessions. Your participants shouldn't get into the habit of finishing an exercise and then leaving the session - remember your role of coach is to demonstrate best practice and this isn't the ideal way for anyone to treat their muscles - neither is it great for horses!

The cool-down phase helps everyone return to their pre-session physical and mental level. Whilst your participants are cooling down you can take this time to review with them the aims of the session, comment on the relative success or attainment of the goals. This is also an excellent time for you to take feedback from your participants about their learning, enjoyment and comments on the session. These comments will inform how you address the next session.

Pre-Session Organisation:

One of the skills of a coach is to be organised. Therefore, having decided upon your goals and content for your coaching session, professional coaches organise their sessions in advance. This includes:

- Booking a facility (or checking to make sure it has been booked)
- Organising other staffing
- Knowing the size of arena or area to be used
- Equipment needed
- Planning the layout of equipment in the facility
- How long the session will be
- Organising safety checks of the equipment
- Planning how to divide your participants into groups (if applicable)
- Planning how and when to progress participants from one activity to another, so that your coaching session runs smoothly and activities and exercises flow and develop learning.
- Planning what instructions and demonstrations might be needed
- Deciding where you will arrange your participants so that they can hear you with minimal distractions for instructions and demonstrations
- Contingency plans – what you will do if your participants don't progress as you planned or how you will adapt your session if the weather affects your plans (for example ground too hard for jumping or weather is wet).

In Riding for the Disabled (RDA) the pre-session organisation would also include:

- Checking participant's Application Form (detail of the disability/condition) and respond to that information.
- Consultations to confirm and expand the details regarding the participant disability/condition (e.g. with participant, doctor, nurse, physiotherapist, parent, teacher, speech and language specialist).
- Inform potential participants if their disability/condition means participating in equestrian activities are contra-indicated and confirm this in writing to participant.
- Confirm consent to participate (if required) has been obtained
- Arrange suitable horses, matched to the participant's disability are available.
- Arrange any special equipment (e.g. tack, mounting) required is at the venue
- Check there is a suitable waiting area and supervision/assistance for the participants
- Organise trained helpers to be available, brief helpers
- Check if participants need an assistant to be available to carry/administer their medication.

Pre-session planning will help your participants enjoy their session and progress toward your goal more smoothly as each activity builds upon the previous one. If your sessions are organised, this will also reduce the amount of time spent waiting around for something to happen. You can also think about a number of alternative activities that you can have available should your participants finish exercises more quickly than you anticipated, or exercises not work as you had expected (for example you may plan for a group session with 10 participants, but due to late cancellations or lameness in horses, only 5 participants arrive for the session. Therefore you may progress through your planned activities more quickly with a smaller number in the group).

As part of your pre-session organisation, you must plan how to establish a safe coaching environment. This is covered in the Health and Safety section of these Learning Resources on page 44.

Delivering Coaching Sessions

During each coaching session, the skills you will be drawing upon will include:

- A variety of coaching styles and methods to help your participants learn
- Identifying strengths, errors and weaknesses; building on strengths, reducing errors and strengthening weaknesses
- Communicating effectively
- Using demonstrations and explanations appropriately
- Analysing performance and adapting practices to help learning and development.
- Advising and directing helpers

Plan for evaluation of sessions

It's important to evaluate each of your coaching sessions as this will help you to plan the coaching sessions that follow on.

It's a good idea to start a coaching journal so that you can record your plans, and results of your coaching sessions. This will help you identify the results of activities that you carried out and whether or not you will keep them in your coaching repertoire.

Suggested areas for your Coaching Journal:

- Participants' Progress
 - o How did the activities help the participant's learning of the skill/techniques?
 - o What progress did I observe in each participant?
- Performance against Coaching Session Targets
 - o Did we get to where I had planned by the end of the session?
- Future Targets
 - o Do I need to revise my targets for this group/participant?
- My Coaching
 - o What am I really pleased with regarding my coaching?
 - o What could I improve on if I were to run the same session again?
 - o How did the participants respond to my instructions?
 - o Did the participants appear engaged and motivated during the session?

On the following pages there is a set of blank Coaching Session Planning Forms that you can use to design your own coaching sessions. There are some examples of coaching session plans in Appendix 2 at the back of these Resources.

Coach's Name: _____

Coaching Participant Record (Number) _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Telephone number: _____ Emergency contact details: _____

Information	Implication for participant and/or coaching session	Appropriate goals for 4 linked sessions
Height		
Weight		
Age		
Medical Issues/disabilities relevant to activities		
Present experience of activity		
Present level of participant competence		
Present level of participant fitness		
Participant's goals for the linked coaching sessions		

Is there a need to refer this potential participant rider elsewhere? If so, why and how will this be done?

Outline linked coaching sessions plan

Objective of linked sessions: _____ Assessor Signature and date: _____

Session	Resources and equipment needed	Duration	Key technical content	Coaching style to be adopted	Aim/goal of each session
1					
2					
3					
4					

How to complete 'Outline linked coaching sessions plan' form:

Resource requirement:

In this column you need to ensure that you list all the equipment/resources you require. You should name the horses/ponies you intend to use and who is going to ride them. You should also state where the lesson will be held (e.g. field, outdoor or indoor school) and any extra resources you will need (e.g. three trotting poles, cones, assistant if required). Make sure that you think carefully about everything that you require and this will ensure that you will not suddenly find half way through the session that you are unable to continue because something has been forgotten.

Duration:

In this column you need to put the length of time the session is going to take. This will help you to ensure that you have planned enough activities for the complete session.

Mode of Delivery including technical content:

In this column you will need to ensure that you put down what you are going to coach and how you are going to do it. For example you may be going to have a group of four riders who are going to learn about their diagonals for the first time. You would need to put this in this box and then describe how you are going to approach this.

Coaching style to be adopted:

There are three coaching styles:

Autocratic (do as I say)

Democratic (involves riders in decision making)

Laissez faire (there is little direction from the coach and riders are allowed to do what they what to do)

You may use a selection of these styles and should write down which part of the session you are going to use which style.

Aim:

In this column you should write the aim of your lesson. The aim is your overall "hope" of what you want the session to achieve for example in the case of diagonals your aim might be "to introduce the riders to the concept of diagonals, their use and the practical application of them".

Coaching Session - Planning Form

Level 2 Session Plan

Coach's Name: _____

Date:	Venue:
Time:	Duration:
Participants Names:	
Number of Participants:	
Session Number:	Number of sessions in this series:
Equipment/Resources (include helpers if required)	
Session Goals Objective and Aims	
Time	Activity
	Warm-Up/Introduction
	Main Content
	Cool-Down/Summary
Injuries	
Evaluation/Action from this session	

Horse Suitability Profile

Rider name and number: _____

Coaching session number: _____

Criteria range	Your choice of ideal	Reason for choice
"Job" of the horse		
Type of Horse		
Behaviour of horse		
Fitness level and condition		

Risk Assessment

Coaching Candidate name: _____

Coaching session number: _____ Assessor Signature and date: _____

Date of risk assessment: _____ Date risk assessment due for review: _____

Hazard (the danger)	Current Risk (high, medium, low)	Who is at risk?	Current Steps taken to reduce risk (e.g. care, helpers, signs)	Further steps required to reduce risk where not currently adequately controlled

PLANNING AND PREPARING LINKED EQUESTRIAN COACHING SESSIONS

There are some similarities but also some differences between planning one-off coaching sessions to planning a series of coaching sessions. Let's address the similarities first:

- The need to consider the environment you will have in which to coach
- How much time you have available
- Ensuring your coaching session includes a variety of activities
- Dividing the time available between all planned activities
- Any safety issues
- What facilities and equipment you will have at your disposal
- The need to work on the following areas:
 - o Skill development
 - o Physical conditioning
 - o Mental skills
 - o Tactical development
- The need to prepare as much in advance as possible to ensure smooth running

In addition to the areas to consider above, when you are planning a series of coaching sessions, you will need to include and consider the following:

- How to make a logical progression from each coaching session
- How to evaluate progress against plans and goals as the sessions progress.
- How to adapt plans as the sessions progress.
- How to assess whether the goal set at the start of the session is still applicable in light of the actual activity that has taken place during the sessions

Whether you are planning a one-off coaching session or a series of sessions, you will meet participants with varying needs and therefore it's a good idea to have a variety of exercises that teach the same learning point or skill.

As part of your development as a coach, you need to be working with and observing more experienced coaches. As you do this, observe what exercises they use when coaching. Which ones appear to be more effective? Which ones create fun for the participants? It's a good idea to create your own **coaching resource book**; a notebook or file where you keep exercises that you can use to teach different aspects. Aim to collect/create enough activities in your coaching resource book to reinforce particular skills in a variety of ways to cater for the changing needs of your participants and to maintain their interest. You will continue to build up this resource throughout your coaching career. What can you learn from your observations of other coaches that you can use in your own coaching?

Although we recommend that you have a variety of exercises, these need to be "up your sleeve" so that you can bring them out as and if necessary. When you are a fairly new coach, your temptation will possibly be to show how much you know. Resist the temptation to put all of the exercises you have into one session. Include enough different exercises to allow your participants to practice new activities in depth and in a variety of different ways. Don't try to do too much in one session. Watch more experienced coaches and observe how many different exercises they include in each session – it will probably be less than you expected.

The extra activities that you have in your coaching resource book will be useful for you to draw upon them if you find that you have done all that you have planned for during this session.

It's important to mention that despite all the best laid plans, a coach needs to be adaptable during the coaching session. Just because it's in your plan, it doesn't mean that it will be appropriate to carry it out. You need to be constantly monitoring and evaluating your

participants' progress during the session, their learning and enjoyment of the activities you organise. You need to be able to adapt your plan to their needs as they emerge.

Examples of Content - 6 Coaching Sessions for a group e.g. Pony Club

Overall aim – to develop balance of canter

1. Aim to improve balance in walk and trot
2. Aim to improve balance in changes of direction and school figures
3. Aim to improve balance in canter
4. Aim to improve balance in transitions
5. Aim to improve balance using trot and canter poles
6. Aim to improve balance over small fences

Helping Participants Learn

Coaching is about helping your participants to learn. If you can teach participants a skill they can perform well, you will help them give themselves confidence and motivation to continue with their equestrian activities.

Learning is not directly observable on its own, but will be demonstrated through a gradual improvement in performance over time.

People learn best when they are:

- Actively involved – plan to ensure your participants are participating more than they are watching and listening
- Able to understand how and when skills are used – explain why they are learning a particular skill
- Able to build on their own experience and skills – link new skills to your participants' existing knowledge
- Interested and motivated – how can you make your sessions fun and engaging?
- Able to see their own improvement – as a coach it's vital that your feedback emphasises the positive aspect of their performance, not just the negative elements.

In addition, children have some further needs to maximise their learning:

- Keep information short and simple – both descriptions, demonstrations and practice
- Keep groups small and match ability – no-one likes to feel they are the worst performer in a group, so match ability rather than chronological age.
- Ensure variety by changing the exercises frequently.
- Reward effort and ability – don't only acknowledge success, make sure you acknowledge your participants attempts, no matter what the outcome.

How to structure coaching sessions to enhance learning

People remember more of what they've learned at the beginning and end of a session than they do in the middle of the session. How could you use this knowledge to help you in your coaching sessions?

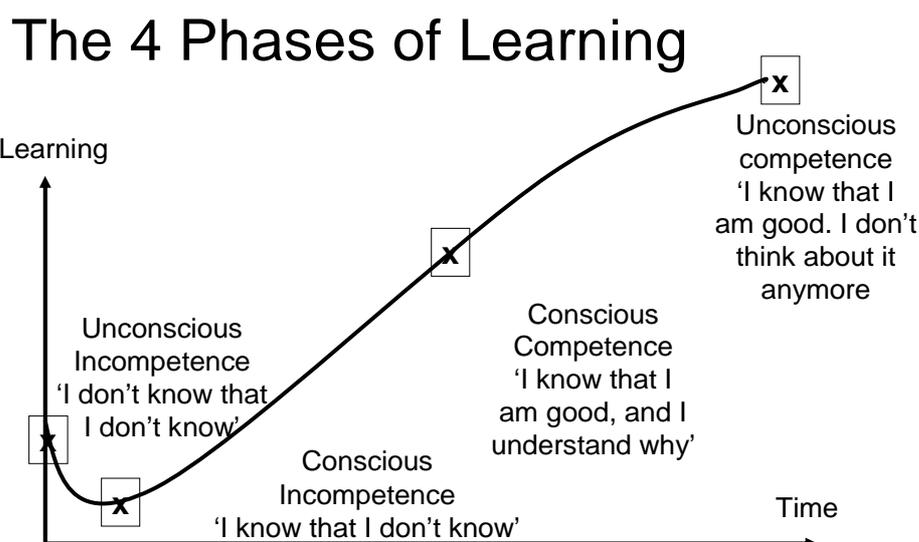
- Break sessions up into smaller sections, with lots of beginning, middle and ends.

- This will support concentration spans also.
- Recall is improved when information is regularly reviewed. Without review, information is forgotten almost immediately. How can you build review into your coaching sessions? Example – your rider jumps a fence, you ask “what did you think happened on the turn into the fence?”
- People remember context better than they remember content. How could you use this knowledge to help you in your coaching sessions? Example – remind your rider before he rides to the next fence, what happened before on the turn into the fence

Phases of Learning

When people learn new skills, they go through 4 phases of learning:

- Unconscious incompetence
- Conscious incompetence
- Conscious competence
- Unconscious competence



Anytime people learn something new they will pass through the four phases of learning. They may not spend equal amounts of time in each phase and some participants may spend weeks or months in a phase and may never get completely to unconscious competence in all their equestrian activities.

The first phase is called **Unconscious Incompetence**, or “blissful ignorance”! At this stage of learning a new skills we are unaware of everything that we need to learn in order to become competent at the skill. This is the stage when most people observe someone else performing the skill and announce “that looks easy, I’m going to have a go, after all, how hard can it be?!” This is often the stage when novice participants book their first lessons. When organising a coaching session for participants it’s vital to gather information about participant’s height, weight, fitness levels, sporting background, experience etc.

The second phase is called **Conscious Incompetence**. This stage usually kicks in very early on in a novice’s first coaching session. Once their horse starts to move independently, and you

hear your participant ask where the brakes are, then you know they have moved into this learning phase!

However, this phase does not only apply to novices, it applies whenever a new skill is being learned. This phase is crucial to skill development and participant motivation. It's often the stage when confidence dips and can be the time when a participant decides to continue or quit.

At this stage the coach should provide a demonstration and explanation of the skill. As a coach you must be patient with your participants when they are at this stage of learning. Don't teach too much in order not to overload them. This is especially important if you are good at the skill and are tempted to want to prove your worth as a coach. If you over teach at this stage of your participant's learning you will demotivate them, and possibly cause them to stop coming to you for coaching.

The third phase is called **Conscious Competence**. The participant is able to perform skills but needs time to practice them to embed them. Coaches should think of lots of different exercises that enable participants to practice the same skill in different ways. At this stage, you don't need to point out mistakes that your participants are aware of – this practice stage is an opportunity for them to start to detect their own errors and make adjustments for themselves.

The fourth phase is called **Unconscious Competence**. This is when someone displays skills that appear to be "automatic". The best way to move a new skills through to this fourth stage is to allow the participant sufficient practice at the skill in isolation and then to build coaching exercises which enables the participant to use the skills whilst performing a series of activities. For example, once a participant has mastered the light/jumping seat, both on the flat and over poles and on the ground and individual small fences, the coach should introduce the participant to a small course of fences. The idea is that the participant will consciously focus on new aspects of riding the course and the jumping position will become an unconscious skill that the participant just does without thinking about.

Sometimes at this stage, a participant can become over-analytical of their performance and this can start to have a detrimental affect on the performance. This is something to watch out for as a coach – sometimes you need to tell your participants to stop analysing and let it happen.

Teaching Skills

There are 2 main ways to teach people skills:

1. Shaping
2. Chaining

Shaping

Shaping involves teaching a skill as a whole and accepting that the participant won't be perfect first time. To begin with, some parts, or finer detail, of the skill are left out and then added later, once the basic skill has been mastered. For example, when you first put a novice onto a riding or vaulting horse/pony, you help them on and let them experience the feel of the horse's movements underneath them. Only later do you focus upon the detail of the correct mounting process.

During the shaping process the skills becomes more refined as you develop strengths and reduce weaknesses and introduce more detailed elements of the skill.

Chaining

Chaining is the opposite of shaping. Whereas when teaching using the shaping method, you teach the skill as a whole, when teaching using the chaining method, you break the skill down into a series of small steps. Participants can then practice each step independently of each other. Once all steps have been competently mastered, they can be linked together.

An example of teaching a participant to ride or drive a serpentine using the chaining method may involve the following steps:

- Explaining what a serpentine is
- Revising or teaching balance
- Revising or teaching half-halts
- Revising or teaching change of trotting diagonals (or canter lead changes)
- Revising or teaching turns
- Revising or teaching straight lines
- Revising or teaching spatial awareness (dividing the area into equal sizes for the serpentine to be ridden)

The particular skill you are teaching will lend itself to the appropriate method to choose. Generally people find big movements easier to learn than small accurate movements, so shaping may be the best approach with a beginner. Also a simple movement or technique is best taught as a whole (for example mounting). Complex movements with many subsidiary parts (for example Pony Club Team games) may be best taught in a chain.

Safety when Coaching and How to manage risk during coaching sessions

Safe and ethical coaching practice

As part of a coaching role, coaches should contribute to imparting how to live and what to value in life, particularly when coaching children. Your coaching ethics serve as a moral guide for you; they should not simply be a list of roles that you follow. Ethical codes of conduct should adhere to the spirit of the game. They should cover desired behaviour, not only what shouldn't be done (for example "we treat each other with respect"). Your code of conduct can't tell everyone how to behave in every circumstance, but should help people to answer the question "what should I do?"

Learning within sport can inform and teach cultural norms and values. However, there are also counter-examples that sometimes occur in sport, for example allowing violence, aggression, sexism, racism, homophobia, bullying, drug usage etc. As coaches, we must set an example to our participants by discouraging these behaviours, both by what we say – but more importantly, by how we behave.

Sport can be seen as a moulder, as well as a mirror, of social values. It is a catalyst for moral growth, personal development and social justice.

Managing risk

Every sport contains an element of risk. Part of a coach's role is to conduct sessions in a safe manner and to ensure you are aware and up-to-date and proactive regarding health and safety issues. An example risk assessment can be found on page 38.

Planning for safe coaching

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA) states that employers have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their employees, customers and users and all other people involved.

Safe coaching begins with an in-depth knowledge of your sport and the practices within it. Without this you will not appreciate fully the potential hazards in your sport.

Make sure you make your participants are aware of safe practice guidelines at the start of every session. Ensure safety notices are prominent and encourage participants to read them. Tell your participants what they must do in the event of an emergency or accident (eg is someone falls off their horse/pony, the whole ride must halt).

When planning your coaching sessions, ensure that:

- the equipment you are planning to use is working
- your sessions will be properly supervised with an appropriate ratio of staff to participants
- your session plan includes practices which are appropriate to the ability and size of your participants
- that you know emergency procedures and have access to first aid provision.

When you are planning your coaching sessions, you must take into account the size of venue you have and the safe number of participants you can accommodate in the space provided. The number of participants you can accommodate will also be influenced by the ability of the participants and the activities you are planning. Remember, as well as safety, that you want your participants to be active for as much of the coaching session as possible and not standing around waiting to take their turn.

Delivering Safe Coaching Sessions

Make sure that you establish rules for practices and exercises so that your participants do not get in the way of each other. For example the rules of the school – passing left to left etc. Make sure your participants understand this and know which is their left!

Know how to use any equipment you plan to use, how to check it, how to carry it, assemble it and store it. For example flat jump cups on back poles.

Your participants' clothing and equipment must be checked at the start of each session to ensure that they conform to safety standards. This includes hats, shoes, tack etc

Ensure warm ups and cool downs are always included in coaching sessions and plans to minimise any potential injuries from muscles not being prepared etc.

Dealing with Injuries

No matter how carefully you plan your sessions, accidents will happen from time to time and it is essential that you know what to do in the event of an injury occurring to one of your participants of your sessions.

The following guidelines should be adhered to:

- Only diagnose and treat injuries within the limits of your capability
- If in doubt, do nothing until qualified personnel arrive
- Always keep calm, and if necessary prevent others from attempting to make the patient comfortable by moving them
- Offer comfort and reassurance whilst ensuring the safety of others
- Try to remember exactly what happened and record it so that you can report it to the emergency services.

You should always have access to a telephone (landline or mobile). This is even more important if working somewhere remote (for example in the middle of a field).

You should have a list of qualified first aiders, together with a list of relevant contact telephone numbers, including the nearest casualty department (next to the telephone is ideal, or in your mobile phone's Contacts list or Address Book)

In the event of an accident, record all that happens clearly and accurately. An Accident Report Form provides a useful guide as to the kind of information you should record. You should keep all completed records on file. Make sure you report all accidents to the head of the establishment, or head coach.

Insurance Cover

Whilst there is no legal requirement for you to have insurance cover, it is strongly recommended and your governing body should be able to help you with contact details of insurance schemes to cover public liability, professional indemnity and personal accident insurance. Your employer should provide this cover for you whilst you operate on their premises; however, if you choose to carry out any coaching on a freelance basis, your employer's insurance would not cover you.

EVALUATING AND DEVELOPING YOUR OWN COACHING PRACTICE

Assessing Participants' Learning

One of the coach's roles is to maximise the learning opportunities for participants. Coaching is not only about assessing participants' performance or achievements, but it is also about helping your participants to learn for themselves. Creating learning opportunities enables a coach to assess the usefulness of the coaching session or programme and to make changes to improve learning.

How do you assess what a participant is learning?

The first place to start when you are assessing learning is to remind yourself about what it was you were trying to achieve with this participant in this session (ie your goal). Secondly, to think about what it was that you expected your participants to learn from the activities. For example, if your session was focused upon transitions, some example learnings would be:

- What transitions are
- When to use transitions
- How to apply transitions
- How to apply transitions without thinking (unconsciously)
- How to maintain the horse/pony outline through transitions
- Using transitions to improve the balance and impulsion of the horse/pony

What you would expect your participants to learn would be governed by:

- Their current knowledge and practice
- The exercises you chose for the session

Different ways to assess learning

There are many ways to assess your participants' learning, ranging from informal to making written, formal records of learning. You should be making assessments of your participants' learning whilst the coaching sessions are underway as well as at the end of a series of sessions (when your participants have reached their goal). Assessing learning along the way is known as formative assessment. Assessing learning at the end of a series of coaching sessions is known as summative assessment. Some of the key ways to assess learning are as follows:

Informal

Informal ways of assessing learning include:

- Asking participants questions during and at the end of each session to check their understanding.
- Observing participants during practices to observe whether they have understood your instructions and also are able to self-correct if they make an error, or get a different result with their horse/pony than expected.
- Asking participants questions about previous coaching sessions to test their recall of information covered during that session.
- Keeping a journal/portfolio or diary of your coaching sessions with participants and suggesting that your participants keep a journal or diary of their coaching sessions so that you can both refer back to previous sessions. A written record will help you to keep a record of your progress, effort and achievement towards goals. A journal or

diary also offers an opportunity for reflection of thoughts and feelings regarding performance.

- Video recordings of participants during sessions that they can watch and compare with previous attempts at an exercise or practice.
- Peer reviews (participants giving each other feedback)
- Informal tests, activities or competitions to allow you and participants to judge their progress towards their expected goals.

Formal

Formal assessment of learning includes:

- Examinations and tests judged by outside assessors.
- Written forms of participant/coaching session plans, actual outcomes, and observation by another coach
- Written participant assessment and feedback forms (an example is on the following page).
- Written participant feedback forms (satisfaction surveys).

Participant Assessment and Feedback Form

Date: _____

Coach's Name: _____

Participant's Name: _____

Horse's Name: _____

Coaching Session Goal: _____

Participant	Needs Work	Fair	Good	Excellent
Position on Flat				
Jumping Position				
Feel and Effectiveness				
Participant dedication				
Participant determination				
Willingness to learn				
Personal fitness				
Comments on Assessment:				
Overall impression of combination:				
Areas to work at:				

Signature of Coach: _____

Methods to reflect and improve personal coaching practice

Research shows that coaches often over-estimate how effective and knowledgeable they are compared to the views of their participants. This is the opposite in coaches who have the best records of producing winners (athletes rate coaches higher than they rate themselves). This seems to suggest that an important element of coaching is self-awareness and reflection to improve personal coaching practice.

Reviews are an important part of coaching. Coaches review their participants' performance and progress and should also be reviewing their own performance and progress. Regularly reviewing your past performance will contribute significantly to your improved future performance. The following questions are a good place to begin your review of your coaching performance:

- **What do I want to review?**
Think about the specific areas of your coaching that you want to review, perhaps giving instructions or keeping control of a group.
- **Describe an 'ideal' performance**
If you were doing this particular task perfectly, what would you be doing? Do you particularly admire another coach who performs this task really well? How do they do this?
- **What do I think went well?**
What did you do that resembled your 'ideal' coaching performance? What were you pleased with? What feedback were you given or results did you observe?
- **What could have worked better?**
On reflection, what could you have done better? If you were to run exactly the same coaching session again, what would you do differently? What was missing from the 'ideal' performance you identified?
- **What have I learnt from this review?**
Having answered the questions above, what have you learnt that you can apply in your future coaching sessions?
- **What will I do next time to improve?**
What will you do differently? How will you set up your coaching session to ensure success? What one thing done differently would have the most positive impact upon your future coaching sessions? If you made that change, what difference do you think it would make?

Evaluating your Coaching Practice

It's not just the participant who judges your performance, but also parents, club members, employers, supporters, sponsors and club owners. So when you are evaluating your performance, you need to think about it from many different perspectives. You will be judged in many different ways. The four most common areas that you will be judged upon are:

- **Enjoyment factor:** how much did your participants enjoy their experience being coached by you
- **Safety:** did participants feel safe, did the coaching session look safe?
- **Success or Failure record:** how much did participants learn, how has their skill improved?
- **Cost:** this is usually balanced against the first three judgement areas. The question participants, and those around them, will ask is "Was it worth the money?"

According to top coaches, in order to be judged a more effective coach, it is best to focus on the observable, practical, technical and measurable characteristics of coaching (such as teaching, asking questions, explaining and demonstrating and observing and correcting).

The Qualities of a Good Coach

Participants are looking for their coach to demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Patient
- Experienced
- Good communicator
- Knowledgeable
- Motivator
- Sense of humour
- People manager
- Adventurous
- Flexible
- Organised
- Not just a dictator
- Open minded
- Able to teach
- Punctual
- Makes good use of his/her voice
- Uses time wisely

Using the following checklist, give yourself a score out of 10 for all of the above qualities at the end of each coaching session.

It would be useful to ask a colleague and a participant to score you out of 10 for these characteristics also on a regular basis, so that you can get specific feedback from others that will help you to become a more skilled and effective coach

Coach's Name:		Date of Coaching Session:	
Characteristic	Personal Score (out of 10)	Colleague Score (out of 10)	Participant Score (out of 10)
Patient			
Experienced			
Good Communicator			
Knowledgeable			
Motivator			
Sense of Humour			
People Manager			
Adventurous			
Flexible			
Organised			
Not just a dictator			
Open-minded			
Able to teach			
Punctual			
Uses voice effectively			
Uses time wisely			

Questions to help your reflection:

- What was I trying to achieve? Did I set clear goals and have a clear plan?
- How did I come to the plan? Did I involve the participant/s?
- Why did I intervene as I did? Was it necessary?
- How disciplined are my participants? Are they always dependent on me or do they take some personal responsibility?
- How did my participants feel at the end of the session? Do I always ask what the participant feels at the end of the session?
- Did I achieve what I set out to achieve, did I keep to the plan regardless of progress/setbacks and not take account of process?
- Is my communication clear and effective? Do I listen as much as I talk? How engaged were my participants in their own learning and development?
- How well do I use questioning?
- Does my feedback genuinely help participants to progress?
- What went really well in my session and can I identify why?
- What might I have changed in the session and why?
- What will I do differently next time?
- Do I need to change the way I do things next time with this participant?
- Am I still motivated to coach (this participant)?

Another very useful way to evaluate your own coaching is to ask someone to video you in action. When watching the video from the privacy and comfort of your own sofa, you can then ask yourself the following questions, taken from scUK's booklet "The Successful Coach":

- Did I present a professional image?
- Was I well organised? Was all the equipment ready and in place?
- Did my participants understand the goal for the session?
- Were my instructions clear and concise?
- Could everyone hear and see me?
- Did I provide sufficient demonstration?
- Did I ask my participants if they understood what to do?
- Did the practices develop in logical sequences?
- Were the practices appropriate for my participants?
- Was there appropriate rest between practices?
- Did I offer advice and assistance when required?
- Did I listen?
- How much time did I spend talking?
- How much time did participants spend practicing?
- Did my participants enjoy the session?
- Did I enjoy the session?
- Was my session goal achieved?

Underpinning Knowledge and Understanding

Effective communication

In order for your coaching sessions to be enjoyable and effective for your participants, you need to create good communications between yourself and your participants. Communication is a 2-way process and involves both the skills of giving and receiving information – talking and listening. You can learn a great deal simply by listening and asking questions.

Rules for good communication:

- Make eye contact – it conveys interest
- Listen
- Accept responsibility for your communication

- Clarify that your message was received and understood as you intended
- Use simple, direct language, avoiding jargon and explaining technical terms
- Be aware of your body language and how it can affect the interpretation of your message
- Be flexible – how many different ways can you give your message?

It's worth acknowledging that because communication is a 2-way process, the person you are talking to needs to listen and vice-versa. Because often when two or more people are communicating there are other distractions going on around them, every word or gesture can be open to misinterpretation.

As a coach, you need to recognise the potential discrepancy between what is sent and what is received. Therefore you need to develop flexibility of communication. For example telling a rider to "put their heels down" may create all kinds of results in the rider's legs, purely because of how they interpret what you have said. Therefore, if you give an instruction and they do not do what you instructed, it may not be because they haven't heard you, but because they have misinterpreted HOW to do what you have instructed. That's why it's important to be able to explain things in different ways to appeal to different participants' interpretations and needs.

It isn't what you say it's the WAY that you say it!

When you coach, you can influence the effectiveness of your coaching session in two ways; by what you say and how you say it.

The content of what you say needs to be correct and simple. But it is not just enough to deliver correct instruction. The way that you communicate also has a big impact on whether your participants will listen, understand and put into practice your advice and instructions.

You need to pay attention to both your verbal and non-verbal communication. Think about the tone you use, the volume and the rhythm, plus your body language and gestures and facial expressions. Some studies suggest that over 90% of your communication is interpreted through the way that you speak and your non-verbal gestures. Non-verbal gestures include:

- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Body posture
- Clothes
- Appearance
- Eye contact

Here's an example to demonstrate the power of how you say words and how they can change the meaning of the sentence:

Read the sentence "Today we're going to work on canter transitions" out loud 8 times, each time emphasising a different word, starting with "Today" and working along the sentence, as follows:

- "**Today** we're going to work on canter transitions"
- "Today **we're** going to work on canter transitions"
- "Today we're **going** to work on canter transitions"
- "Today we're going **to** work on canter transitions"
- "Today we're going to **work** on canter transitions"
- "Today we're going to work **on** canter transitions"
- "Today we're going to work on **canter** transitions"
- "Today we're going to work on canter **transitions**"

Although the words don't change, the meaning and emphasis of each sentence alters when you stress different words.

Be aware that people will only believe what you say when your non-verbal communication supports the words you use. Therefore, if you are praising someone for their effort, but at the same time raising your eyebrows (suggesting sarcasm), they may not perceive your feedback as genuine!

Similarly if you are irritated during a coaching session, you will convey this through the way that you talk and your body posture and gestures.

Encouragement or demotivation?

As we have said before, when a participant has come to you for coaching, they have decided that you are influential and important to their learning and development. Because of this they will listen and accept a lot of what you tell them. As a coach you must be aware of, and respect, the power that you have in this relationship. Therefore, making what seem to you, harmless, off-the-cuff, remarks about participants and their performance can have a big influence on shaping beliefs, attitudes and future behaviour. If you want your participants to be motivated and confident and to behave in an ethical way – to each other and in the future – then your comments will have a major influence on that.

The golden rule is to remember that at all times you cannot NOT communicate! Unless you're a world-class professional poker player, you will give away your true feelings through your facial expressions and non-verbal signals.

TRY IT OUT FOR YOURSELF:

How do you feel if someone is speaking to you and making the following gestures?

Crossed arms and frowning?

Pointing and waving one finger in your direction?

Do you remember how your parent's voice sounded when they called you when they were angry with you?

Listening Skills

Successful communication must be 2-way – listening is a skill that coaches must develop. Coaching is not just about telling others what to do and how to do it. You must give your participants the opportunity to express their own views, needs, hopes and fears. Therefore listening is a core coaching skill.

There are two aspects to listening when you are coaching. The two aspects are:

1. Your listening skills

2. What you do to ensure your participants can hear and listen to you.

In this section we will focus primarily on your listening skills. What you can do to maximise the possibility of your participants' listening to you is discussed in more detail in other sections in this Learning Resources (for example "using demonstrations").

Self-Assessment Exercise:

Assess Your Current Listening Skills, complete each statement as honestly as you can:

If I had to choose between speaking and listening, the choice would be

I tend to interrupt people when _____

I find it easy to listen to people when _____

When I listen to someone, I tend to _____

People I tend to find it difficult to listen to include _____

Listening comes easy to me when _____

I become easily distracted when I am listening if _____

If I can't have my say, I feel _____

The best listener I know is _____ because

I like people who listen to me because _____

If you're feeling brave, ask one of you friends, colleagues or even your supervisor/mentor to complete these statements about you!

Listening is a very important, but often neglected communication skill. It is just as active a process as talking, yet most people think that the major responsibility for good communication rests with the speaker.

The purpose of listening is to fully understand. This is vital in the coaching relationship that you as a coach listen to fully understand your participants':

- Goals
- Challenges with your instructions
- Fears
- Level of enjoyment
- Level of motivation
- Needs during the coaching session

There are two parts to spoken communication – speaking and listening.

Our parents and teachers spend a lot of time and effort teaching us how to speak properly, how to pronounce words and syllables etc. We are taught how to speak, but we are rarely taught how to listen. The result of this is that we learn to hear rather than learn to listen.

Listening is taken for granted; we assume that if we are speaking then the other person(s) will listen. However there are several levels of listening, ranging from “not at all” to “fully engaged”.

However, when two or more people are communicating, they are not in isolation. Every moment, there are hundreds of stimuli to which we respond and hundreds which we filter out, as we judge them as being unimportant at the time.

Try this exercise

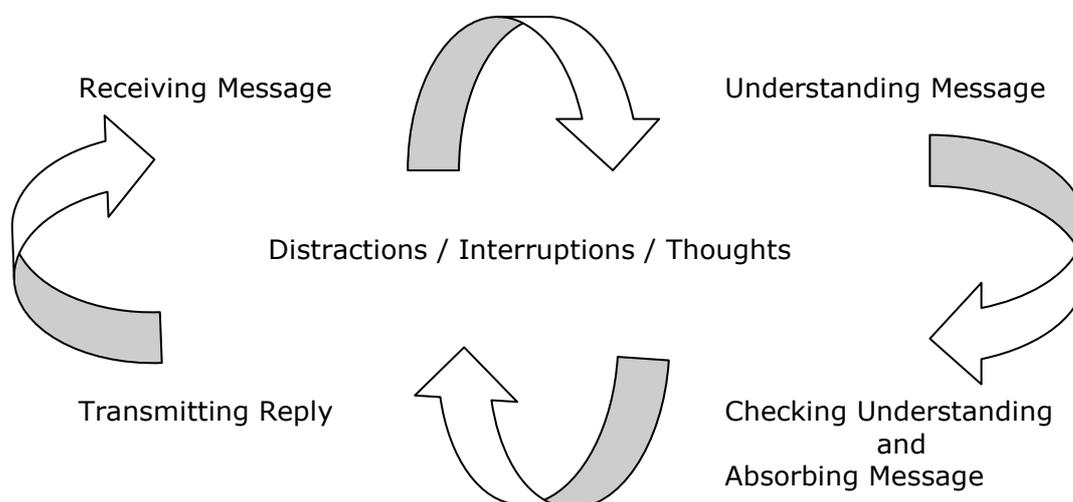
Sit quietly for a minute and become aware of the huge number of thoughts that go through your mind during that minute. It is estimated that we think at around 500 words per minute. How many different thoughts were you aware of? And that’s without any other distractions. Now imagine if you were to add the potential distraction of someone else talking to you and the thousands of different ways that their words could direct your thoughts and you will understand how listening is a discipline that needs to be nurtured.

Deterrents and Impediments to Listening

There is a difference between hearing what someone has said and really listening to what they are saying. One of the ways that you can get to know your participants much better is to truly listen to them.

Hearing is not listening. We hear with our ears. But to truly listen, we need to engage our minds and bodies. Anyone without a hearing impairment can hear; it’s an inherent skill. However not everyone listens as listening is an acquired skill. Listening involves not only hearing but also interpretation and response.

The Communication Cycle



Listening involves:

- Connecting with another
- Transmitting and hearing messages
- Demonstrating that what you hear is important

When you are listening, you are often paying more attention to your own internal dialogue and thoughts that to what you’re hearing. You may think you’ve heard what another person is saying before and finish off their sentence (either out loud or in your head).

Exercise:

List all the barriers to listening that you can think of. Here are a few examples to start you off:

In the Office: - The telephone
 Being distracted by paperwork or emails
 Other people entering the office
 Other people waiting to speak to you

Add your own ideas for your own situation

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

During Coaching sessions: - Other participants
 Other coaching sessions taking place in the same location
 Observers of the coaching session

Add your own ideas for your own situation

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Listening is an active skill that we can all improve. There are 5 components of listening: eye contact, listening, interpretation, evaluation and reaction.

Eye Contact – Looking at the person who is speaking

Listening – to what the person is saying

Interpretation – Making sense of what they are saying.

Evaluation – do you agree with them? Deciding whether you think they expect a verbal response or not (i.e. have they asked you a question or issued an instruction, which they expect to be followed by action, rather than a verbal response?)

Reaction – Deciding how you want to respond (remembering that you cannot NOT communicate, so even if you choose to ignore their communication, your ignoring them is still a response!)

5 Steps to Communicate	Process	Functions Used	Type of Communication
1	Make contact, look at someone	Eyes	<i>Receptive Communication</i>
2	You are spoken to	Ears	
3	You understand	Brain: <i>Comprehend vocabulary and, grammar then interpret</i>	
4	You form an answer	Brain: <i>Vocabulary and grammar then create a reply</i>	<i>Expressive Communication</i>
5	You answer	Voice: <i>Lips, tongue, vocal chords, muscles</i>	

How do you know when someone isn't listening to you?

- Their body language – not looking at you
- They are engaged in an activity which is taking all of their attention
- They are displaying negative body language

How does it make you feel when someone doesn't listen to you?

Do you always give people your full attention when you are supposed to be listening to them?

How to improve your Listening Skills

Start noticing when you are not listening and bring your awareness back to the speaker.

Practice the skills of Repeating, Summarising and Paraphrasing:

Repeating – involves saying exactly what was just said. For example, a participant may say "I'm scared". You reply "You're scared?" Repeating what has been said indicates that you have heard what has been said, but not necessarily that you have understood.

Summarising – involves extracting the essence of what was said and displays that you have understood. For example, a participant may say “Every time I ask him to canter his head shoots up.” Your summary of what they said might be “So you’re telling me that you’re having trouble maintaining his outline on canter transitions?”

Paraphrasing – involves substituting your words for theirs, this is useful for you to check that you really have understood the meaning of what they said. For example, a participant may say “I can’t stop him.” You may paraphrase what they said to check your understanding by asking “Are you having trouble with halts or is it something else/more specific?”

Ways of Listening

As a coach, you are responsible for both your own listening and to make what you say interesting and understandable enough for your participants to want to listen to you above all other distractions. In this section we are primarily concerned with your own listening skills.

When coaching, your aim should be to be fully listening. This means not just appearing to be interested, but conveying to the other person that there is nothing more important to us than them right now. Being able to clear your mind of your own thoughts and internal dialogue is the first step to being able to completely focus on what another person is saying to you.

There are different ways to listen:

Active listening – active listeners are attentive and fully engaged. They show interest and ask questions and clarify points to help them understand.

Mind reading – the mind reader doesn’t give the speaker much time. They already think they know what is going to be said, or want to have their say. They will often finish another’s sentences, jump to conclusions and interrupt.

Pretending – the pretender just hears the words but they go over their head. Others will often describe them as “in one ear and out the other”.

Motivating – the motivator will respond to what they are hearing with encouraging remarks and supportive statements. They acknowledge success and give praise, making the speaker feel motivated and inspired.

Developing the Qualities of a good Listener

There are 6 key qualities to a good listener:

Respect

A coach listens with respect for what a participant, colleague or parent has to say. Even if you think you have heard it before, it is important to the speaker and they are entitled to your respect.

Genuine Interest

A genuine listener feels and expresses genuine interest in others.

Empathy

Experience your participant’s world through their eyes. If you have empathy you will be less likely to judge, for example if one of your participants is fearful or unconfident of doing something. If you do not have empathy, you will find yourself saying things like “Oh for goodness sake, it’s easy” in response to a participant’s comment of “I’m scared”.

Seeking Clarity

A good coach shows clarity in their own thinking and also helps their participants gain clarity with their thoughts. This can range from helping your participants define their goals, through to describing what they are experiencing during the coaching session.

Mental Agility

A good listener is able to reflect back the essence of a conversation, to summarise the situation. This often gives the original speaker new insights into what they said.

Timing

Timing is knowing when to ask a questions, when to stay silent and when and how to interrupt.

The use of silence

In ordinary conversation a period of silence is usually uncomfortable and we generally have a tendency to try to fill the gaps of silence with conversation. However when you are coaching, silence is a useful tool. It enables thinking to be uninterrupted. It allows people to make new connections in their head and can lead to new thinking patterns.

Experiment with using silence during your coaching sessions – you don't have to be talking to your participants continuously! Some riding coaches insist that participants are silent during the lesson so that they can listen and concentrate and become aware of their thoughts and actions.

Successful Listening Tips

- Remember you have two ears and one mouth – use them in that proportion!
- Expect to be interested. If you expect to be interested in what's being said then you will be more likely to listen and to find what you hear interesting. If you expect to be bored, you will be less likely to listen and won't find it interesting.
- Give your full attention – make eye contact, don't check your text messages whilst someone is speaking to you!
- Stand or sit up straight – physical slouching encourages mental slouching.
- Focus on the main themes of what's being said, rather than the individual words.
- Give verbal encouragement to show you are still listening.
- Check you have understood the message/comment by repeating what the person has just said for example, "So Clare, you said "this will be scary". Does that mean that you are worried about doing x?"
- Don't finish other people's sentences or interrupt them
- Don't anticipate the message before the speaker has finished

Questioning Skills

If you are not telling or instructing your participants, how can you help a participant to develop? Through using questions. Questions are extremely powerful because the coach can use them to direct the participant's mind to think about their performance, to check understanding and to enhance learning.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word 'Question' as "A sentence worded or expressed so as to obtain information".

Questioning is a core skill for a coach. It follows on from listening and observation. Questioning is a natural activity. We're naturally curious and learnt early on in life to ask questions to make

sense of the world. The most successful coaches continue to maintain their natural curiosity to help them to develop their participants.

By asking questions of your participants you will help them to develop their awareness of their skills, talents and knowledge and self-evaluation skills. This will enable them to continue their learning outside of the coaching situation.

Asking questions enables your participants to learn to think for themselves and not become dependent upon a coach. This will help them to develop and rely upon their intrinsic (internal) feedback. This is a skill that will be very important for an individual to develop for when they find themselves in situations where they need to make decisions for themselves (eg a competition or practising at home)

It is good coaching practice to develop your questioning skills. So the golden rule is: whenever possible don't tell, ask a question instead.

You shouldn't approach your coaching sessions with a set of pre-prepared questions. Your questions should arise from listening to your participants. Coaches need to be able to adapt their skills to the situation and participant mix that they encounter.

There are different types of questions

The way that you ask a question affects the response that you receive. You can ask a question in a way that invites a full response or in a way that invites only a yes or no response. To get a more detailed response from participants, coaches use OPEN questions. Open questions begin with the following words:

- How
- What
- When
- Where
- Tell me.....
- Can you describe.....

e.g. "Can you tell me how you would plan an upward transition?"
" What did you feel the horse do when you turned off the track?"
" When do we use half-halts?"

Open questions invite the responder to give more detail and clarify. This is a way for you as a coach to check their understanding.

Compare the following two questions:

e.g. "Do you know how to make a canter transition?"
"Tell me, what are the aids for a canter transition?"

The first question is a CLOSED question. It invites the response of "yes" or "no", with no further elaboration.

The second question is more useful if you want to check understanding and that learning has occurred. When you are teaching a new skill and have demonstrated it, you would use open questions to check understanding before sending participants off to practice. For example, after a demonstration, you could ask:

"Do you understand what to do?" (closed) or
"So, when you start, what's the first thing you do? And the second?...." (open)

Asking an open question would be more useful in this situation so that you can be more confident that your participants will go off and practice the new skill in the correct way! If you only asked the closed question ("Do you understand?") you may be surprised by the results you get during the practice time!

How to convert a closed question to an open question

Closed

Did you feel that?
Is winning important to you?
Do you understand?

Open

What did you feel as you did X?
What is important to you about winning?
What do you do first when you want the horse to do X?

Sometimes it can be useful to ask closed questions, for example:

"Has everyone checked their girths?"
"Have you ridden this horse before?"

The use of closed questions in these instances allows the coaching session to continue without endless discussion. Can you think of 5 more useful closed questions for your particular equestrian activity?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Asking **questions that contain assumptions** can be useful. There are things that are not said within conversations that nevertheless are accepted as part of the message because they have to be true for the communication to make sense.

Question

What did you learn from that?
Which exercise was the most fun?

Assumption

You learnt something
The exercises were fun

Exercise:

What other effective questions can you ask that contain assumptions? Think of 3 for your particular equestrian activity:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Because questions can be very powerful – they direct the listener’s mind, it’s important to think about what you want to ask and how you will ask it. Here are some examples of questions that aren’t very useful for a coach to use:

Asking **Multiple Questions** (2 or more questions are asked at the same time) can be confusing.

e.g. Tell me what you did best and what you would like to improve on?

Leading Questions can be useful for exerting your influence, but may be frustrating for participants if used inappropriately.

e.g. Don’t you think that the best riders can ride any horse that’s given to them? Shall we swap horses within the group to gain experience of riding other mounts?

In this example question, the views of the coach are very apparent from the question. By implication there is a ‘right’ answer and the form of the question puts the participant under pressure to agree.

Leading questions often begin with words like; “Don’t you think that...?”, “Have you thought of.....?” or “What about trying.....?”

Why not ask why?

You may have noticed that questions beginning with “Why” have not been mentioned. Asking “Why?” provokes interesting responses. Most often the response to a question beginning with “Why” is; a reason, a justification or an excuse. None of these raises a person’s awareness. Asking one of the other open questions will create much more awareness. Compare the two questions and decide for yourself:

“Why do we use half halts?”
“When do we use half halts?”

Why is also a very generic word, if we want to get more detail, then using another open question prefix (such as: what, how, when) is more useful:

Participant “I can’t do this”

Coach “Why not?”
 Or
 “What is it specifically that you can’t do?”

Asking the “What” open question takes the participant’s statement from the whole exercise to the specific part where their challenge lies.

Reframing Questions from Negative to Positive

From time to time your participants will hit a plateau or brick wall in their learning and development. They may well ask themselves disempowering questions to try to make sense of their lack of progress; for example:

“Why can’t I get this right?”
“Why aren’t I as good as.....?”
“Why am I so nervous?”

Asking themselves “Why?” is unlikely to give them a positive solution to their problem. Help their learning, by asking them questions rather than telling them what to do; for example:

Participant: "Why can't I get this right?"
Coach: "What can you do to begin to get it right?"

Participant: "Why aren't I as good as.....?"
Coach: "What can you learn from?"

Participant: "Why am I so nervous?"
Coach: "How can you solve this problem?"

By reframing a "Why?" question by using the question "How?", you are inviting your participant's brain to contribute to solving their problem.

Exercise:

How would you use open questions to clarify the following statements?:

Example: "I can't do transitions."

"What transitions in particular do you feel you can't do?"

"Who told you that you can't do transitions?"

"Where do you find transitions the hardest/easiest?"

"When do you find transitions the hardest/easiest?"

"How do you prepare for your transitions?"

Your Turn:

"They told me that he (horse) has always been difficult to lunge/jump/canter"

"What _____"

"Who _____"

"Where _____"

"When _____"

"How _____"

"I always forget my dressage tests/show jumping courses/reining pattern"

"What _____"

"Who _____"

"Where _____"

"When _____"

"How _____"

"I've never been able to"

"What _____"

"Who _____"

"Where _____"

"When _____"

"How _____"

"I need to learn to control my nerves"

"What _____"

"Who _____"

"Where _____"

"When _____"

"How _____"

Note for Coaches:

Most people's experience of being asked questions is from school where answers were either right or wrong. This was reinforced through tests or exams. This encourages people to come up with the answer that the teacher (questioner) wants and to discount their own thoughts.

As a coach you need to be aware that many people still hold the belief that there are right or wrong answers. Some participants may even seek your approval to check if their answers are acceptable.

With equestrianism, there are some right and wrong answers to questions; particular regarding technical descriptions. However, participants' personal experience of what they feel when undertaking an exercise is also valid. Therefore one of the gifts you can give to your participants is to know the techniques of your skill to let them know when the horse/pony is looking correct, but let the participant decide how they learn how to store that information so that they can recall it again and again. For example, rather than instructing a participant to put their "heels down", tell them when their legs/feet are in the correct position and let them find their own way to capture that feeling for themselves.

Giving Feedback

A major benefit of having a coach on the ground is that the coach has a view of participants that they cannot gain for themselves. Therefore, it's important that you become comfortable with using feedback to help your participants improve their performance. Firstly you need to observe the participant performing the technique a number of times so that you can identify the cause of the error.

Identify the cause – is it that they are doing something wrong or that you have communicated to them in a way that has caused confusion? Remember the barriers to communication we looked at earlier.

After you have delivered your feedback, give pointers for improvement and let your participants practice again. When correcting errors, it's vital that you also maintain positive reinforcement during the coaching session. Therefore your feedback should include comments upon things that your participants are doing well as well as comments about areas in which they could improve.

Here are some guidelines for how to provide feedback:

- Be specific
- Express in a positive way
- Give detail of when you saw the element you are providing feedback on happen, so that the participant can relate your feedback to a specific instance during their performance
- Give feedback to individuals intermittently, so that you allow them time to process each bit of feedback

Personal influences that affect the feedback that coaches give their participants

Your opinions about the participant will have an impact on your expectations of performance, how much feedback you give, what feedback you give and when you give feedback. You need to get to know your participants as individuals outside of the equestrian activity so that you can tailor your feedback for them in ways that will suit them best.

Participants will infer a relationship between the feedback you give them and their perceived ability. Your perception of a participant's ability will influence the type of feedback you give. The participant's interpretation of your feedback will influence her/his perception of her/his own competence.

Be wary of the following coaching stereotypes:

- Coaches often give participants whom they perceive to have lower ability more encouragement as the coach often has lower expectations of their progress.
- Coaches often have higher expectations of participants whom they perceive to have higher ability and therefore expect superior performance from them. Sometimes will ignore good performance and often will focus only on the mistakes made. This may be because the coach assumes that the participant knows that they have higher ability. However, this assumption can cause demotivation for participants.

It's important to remember that your aim is to build self-confidence and motivation, so while you're observing and analysing in your preparation to give feedback, it's also worth bearing in mind the following tips:

- Consider how much feedback your participant can cope with at any one time and in any one session. If you give too many areas for improvement at once; at best, they may forget everything you've said and; at worst, you may overwhelm your participant and demotivate them.
- Will the participant receive the feedback more positively if given individually or in front of other people? Generally the guide is that feedback about a participant's behaviour is best delivered individually and probably after the coaching session. However, the exception to this is if the participant is being particularly disruptive and influencing the whole group. If this is happening, you will probably want to deal with the behaviour straight away and in this example, you might get a better response by addressing the behaviour of the group in general during the session and then taking the participant leading the behaviour to one side after the session.
- Remember to give feedback which is both positive and corrective. With the exception of complete novices, very young children and some disabled participants, most people are very well aware of the mistakes they have made. Therefore it is often more useful to ask the participant how they are performing (you are asking them to evaluate themselves). This benefits the coaching process in two ways:
 - The coach is not always delivering corrective feedback
 - The coach is helping the participant to develop their own skill at the technical skill
- A tip on making this most effective: if you ask your participant for their self-evaluation, their answer may well be something like "That was awful" or "Dreadful". Your role is to ask questions to identify specifically what they thought was awful. In order to learn and improve, the participant needs to identify exactly what it was that gave them the impression that it "was awful". If they don't, then they won't be able to learn from it and improve.
- How your participant will receive and interpret your feedback. Using the suggestion above, to ask the participant to evaluate their own performance will help reduce any negative impact of your delivering corrective feedback to them.
- Your congruence of your non-verbal behaviour and how you say things, with what you are saying. For example saying "Excellent" in a sarcastic tone will be received with different interpretation to your saying "Excellent" when you really mean it.
- Equality of feedback is important to all members of a group. Adolescents place a lot of importance on their peers and are aware of equality or not of feedback to themselves and their peers for what they perceive as similar performances.

- Adolescent females perceive corrective feedback as an indicator that they have failed, or only praise as an indicator that the coach thinks they can't do any better.
- Coaches need to be able to give tough feedback when it's needed (for example telling a participant that they need to make extra effort).
- When giving feedback, the coach must assess the individual in front of them. Do you give feedback immediately or does the participant need to think about their performance first? How much feedback can your participant take on board at once? What's the most important thing you want to give feedback about and how will this help the participant to improve their future performance?
- When delivering a review/feedback, also include what made the performance successful as well as unsuccessful. It's important to review success so that the participant can reproduce it again.

Feedback is the key to successful performance and a vital part of coaching. Through feedback coaches should aim to give praise and build upon strengths, reduce errors and strengthen weaknesses. Coaches give feedback based upon their observations and through the use of other evaluation techniques (e.g. video analysis). The information fed back can help participants to develop, especially in the early stages of learning. In addition to this external feedback, coaches should encourage participants to use their own senses to obtain feedback about the movement, especially when skills are developing and becoming more automatic.

It is important to give participants time to consider their own feedback before providing any additional external feedback. Coaches should think carefully about precisely how and what information to give participants.

Criticism without helpful information

e.g. "You're on the wrong canter lead"
"Your feet are too far forward"

Negatively phrased corrective comment

e.g. "Don't lean forward"
"Don't drop the contact"

Positively phrased corrective comment

e.g. "Sit up and imagine a piece of string attached to the top of your head"
"Count the strides out loud as you feel them"

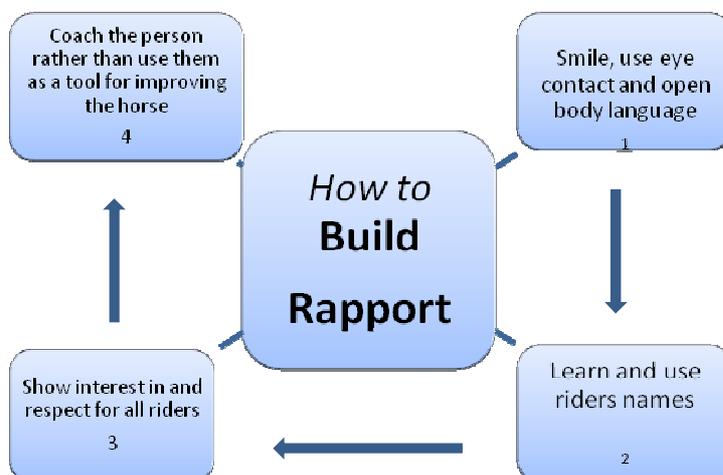
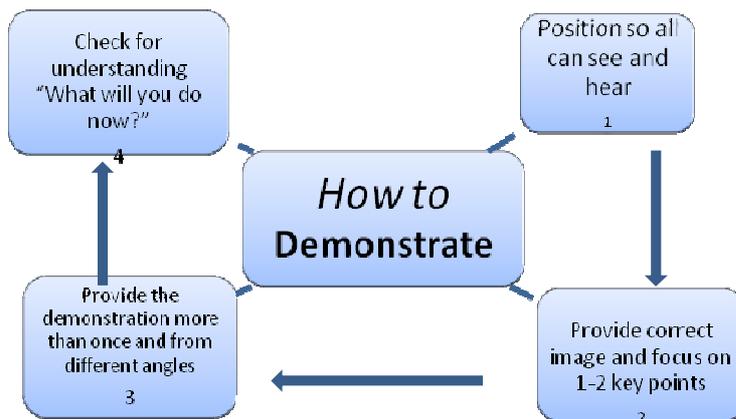
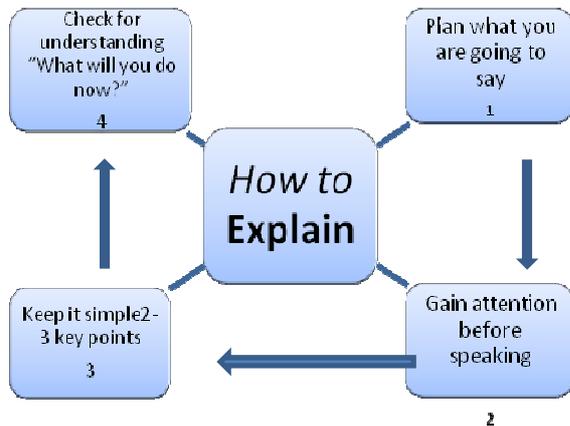
Constructive feedback is the most useful as it is positive and enables the participant to take alternative action.

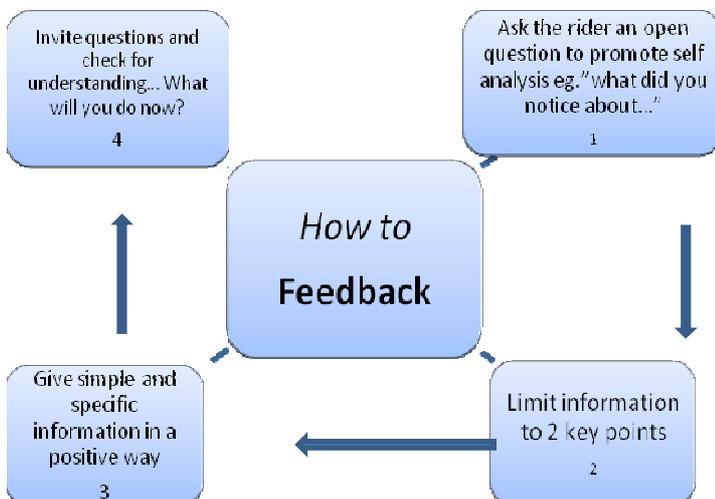
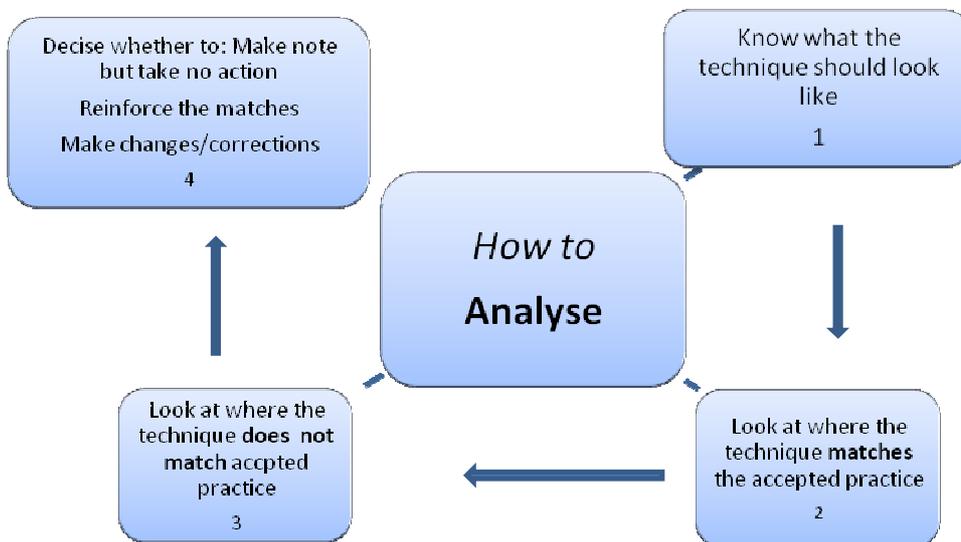
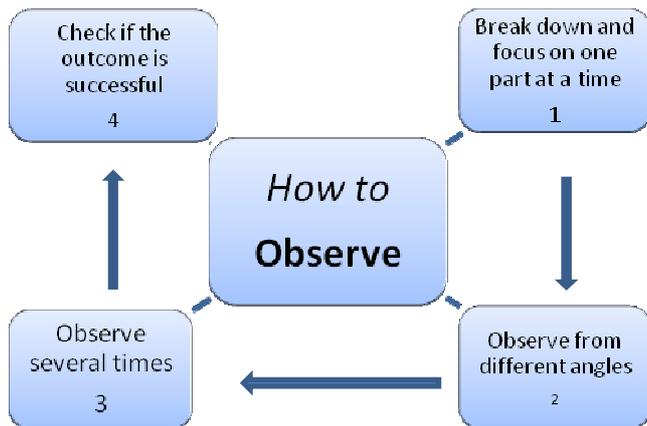
Coaches can provide this corrective feedback in an even more effective way if they adopt the feedback sandwich approach:

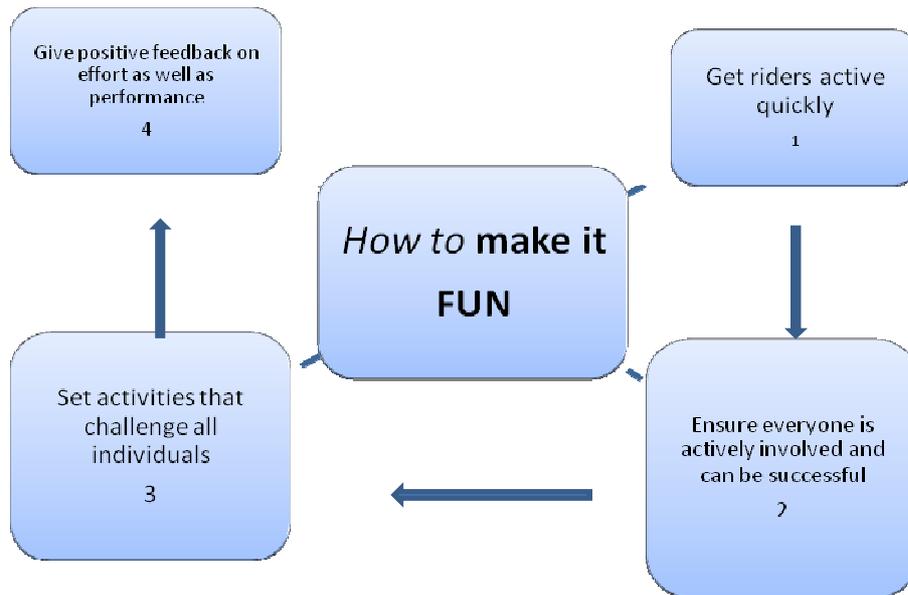
Initial praise, followed by positively phrased corrective comment, followed by more evidence based praise.

How to Coach Skills

At level 2 there are seven key 'how' to coach skills that form the basis of good coaching practice. They are simple and easy to follow making basic coaching techniques efficient and effective. Each of the seven techniques start with the box numbered 1 and then move in a clockwise direction







Physical preparation and the rider

Physical fitness of the Rider

Rider Fitness may be considered as “the state of a body to move effectively and function economically in response to demand and still have enough energy left over to handle any emergencies, which may arise.” Fatigue is not just physical it also prevents the mind from staying focused.

Principles of fitness

To ensure the training sessions and programmes you devise are as effective as possible, you need to follow sound training principles. The fundamental training effect is based on the principle of **adaptation**. The body or mind will react to the stresses imposed by training (physical, mental or technical stresses) by increasing their capacity to cope with it. The coach’s task is to create the conditions that impose the right stresses to cause the adaptation effect. The process of adaptation is governed by other training principles. The following are the key fitness principles:

Overload. For training to have an effect, the demands of the activity must be greater than those with which the rider can comfortably cope. The skill is to impose the right training load – too little and there will be no gain; too much and you can cause pain, injury and ultimately overtraining effects. To try to get this right, you need to manipulate the training volume (how much, i.e. training frequency and duration) and intensity (how hard, i.e. how close to maximum effort). The training load is therefore determined by the FIT principles:

- F** **frequency** (how many sessions)
- I** **intensity** (how much effort)
- T** **time or duration** (how many times, for how long).

Progression. To ensure continual adaptation, the loads imposed through training need to become progressively harder as the rider begins to adapt to the increased load imposed. For example, a rider should be able to increase the number of specific movements carried out in a given time.

Specificity. Adaptation occurs in response to the specific stress imposed. Training must therefore be highly specific. For example, show jumping involves balance, core stability and the ability to make quick changes in balance when moving at speed. Therefore training should be used to help this type of specific need.

Reversibility means that if the training effects gained are not maintained through a continued programme of training, they will be lost (*if you don't use it, you lose it*). Typically where training improvements are gained slowly, the reversibility effect also appears to be slow; fast gain methods (crash fitness programmes) suffer more rapid loss if training is not maintained. This is an important principle to remember in the recovery phase of the annual programme.

Rest/Recovery is perhaps the most important training principle in fitness programmes for the training adaptation effects occur **after**, not during the activity. The body adapts to the stress imposed during training afterwards and it cannot do this fully unless some recovery time is allowed. The more intense the training load, the longer the recovery period. Do not expect riders to train hard all the time; this will result in overtraining where the body fails to recover and adapt to the training load. Hard training sessions should be followed by easier ones, to allow the body not only to recover, but also to become fitter as it adapts to the hard training. It is during the easy/rest periods of training that the body recovers and adapts to the demands of the hard sessions, therefore allowing the player to train harder the next time.

NB: A rest day (from training **and competition**) is therefore really important each week.

Recovery may not always mean complete rest or inactivity, in some situations active recovery may occur through light jogging or by working on a different training component (e.g. flexibility). Likewise, massage, swimming and relaxation sessions can help to aid recovery.

Individual differences. The skill in designing training programmes is to tailor them to the individual needs of the players – based on their physical strengths and weaknesses.

Variety is also important to increase enjoyment and challenge the body in slightly different ways. **NB:** This should permeate all aspects of training (technical as well as physical, warm-up/cool-down and the actual session).

COMPONENTS OF FITNESS

Components of fitness can be divided into categories as follows:

Component	Definition	Benefits
Suppleness	Ability to move joints through an entire normal range of movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves harmony and balance Allows rider to be more economical with movement and delays the onset of muscle fatigue Energy is conserved
Speed	The efficiency with which the body delivers oxygen and nutrients needed for muscular activity and transports waste products from cells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases efficiency of heart Reduced heart rate at given workload Increase in body's ability to take in and transport oxygen Reduced perception of effort /quicker response time
Stamina	Muscular endurance –the greater the amount of force a muscle or muscle group to perform repeated movements with a sub maximal force for extended periods of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to resist fatigue Increase staying power Ability to avert mistakes
Strength	Muscular strength is the greater the amount of force a muscle or group of muscles can exert in a single effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases Lean Body Weight (L.B.W) Increases Bone density Increases muscle size and strength. Increases tissue strength

Fitness should mimic the **desired function** of the appropriate body areas. Riding unlike any other sport requires the rider to compensate for another living weakness (the horse) if required, and demands that both sides of the body work in unison.

Note: An unfit rider is a danger to himself and his horse and every pound of an unfit rider counts twice on a horse's back. A horse can efficiently carry one-sixth to one quarter of his own weight.

Suppleness is required at a high level for all riders. Stiffness in joints has a domino effect stiff bones will continue up the body joint by joint e.g. ankle –knee –hips etc. This stiffness is not due to lack of muscle capability but caused by reduced range of movement.

Strength and Core Stability enough strength to maintain correct riding position and to control the horse with appropriate aids with maximum amount of self control and minimum amount of force.

Speed. Heart and lung endurance. Aerobic is the main respiration the rider needs, as is the most energy efficient.

Training zone pulse rate for the event rider will be 85% to 90% of Maximum heart rate (MHR). MHR is found by subtracting your age from 220.

Example

220 - 40 years = 180 x .85 = 153

A heart rate of 153 is where a 40 year old rider should be training. A lower heart rate does not provide sufficient demands on the body to increase fitness and a higher heart rate may put undue stress on the body.

Stamina. i.e. endurance of muscle power essential for balance and posture e.g. abdominal muscles.

Fitness is lost in one third the time it takes to gain

- 1st - speed
- 2nd - strength
- 3rd - stamina
- 4th - suppleness.

These components may be developed through a combination of exercises when mounted, yard work and floor exercises. Pilates and yoga type exercises are particularly relevant to riding. All activities that help with core stability, balance and alignment are key to competition riders.

Physical fitness and its application within coaching session

Identify the components of fitness required for the show jumping rider in order of importance	Rank the components in terms of what the rider are lacking in most.	How will this be included in training e.g. (on the horse) /lifestyle (off the horse)

Present level of fitness

This can be determined through a range of tests

Take pulse at rest and record over findings over a minute. Use a block, step about 20cm high step up and down briskly for three minutes. Rest one minute and take pulse. The lower the pulse rate the fitter you are

Pulse rate increase

	MEN	WOMEN
EXCELLENT	Below 68	Below 76
GOOD	68-79	76-85
AVERAGE	80-89	86-94
BELOW AVERAGE	90-99	90-109
VERY POOR	100+	110+

Warming-Up

In the same way that riders will always warm-up their horse prior to training or competition so it is important for the rider to warm-up. The following give a rationale for rider warm-up:

1. *Achieve full soft tissue extensibility* (ie muscles, tendons and ligaments). This means all soft tissue is warmed through increase blood supply, has been taken through the range of movements likely to be experienced in riding and jumping in particular
2. *Achieve full joint mobility* (Note joint mobility and muscle extensibility are not the same thing). This is about taking joints through the range of movements that they are likely to be taken during riding and jumping
3. *Prepare the cardio-vascular and respiratory systems* for hard activity
4. *Increase the muscular temperature system to optimal state* i.e. heat the deep parts
5. *Stimulate reflex activity, balance and coordination*. This is a key point to warming up as it will stimulate muscle receptors and proprioceptors. (Muscles are controlled by proprioceptors which are receptors sensitive to the position and movement of the body. They detect the stretch and tension of a muscle and send messages to the spinal cord to enable it to adjust its signals to the muscles).
6. *Psychologically prepare the rider*. The warm-up can take place on the horse through a series of deliberate exercise or on the ground. If a rider is particularly stiff and slow to warm-up it may be important to warm-up of the horse otherwise the rider may 'block' the warm-up of the horse. Other variables such as the individual, temperature and time of year and the activity should be taken into account.

Guidelines to a warm-up

Stage	Name	Aim
1	Pulse raiser, jogging, easy stretches/dynamic mobility	Increase pulse rate and temperature. General preparation
2	Second pulse raiser and purposeful stretches	Heart rate increases further, joint mobility and muscle extensibility
3	Activity increase to working level	Increase to max heart rate and mobility and full mobility and extensibility work

Core Stability and Pre-habilitation

Core stability is the development of the key core muscles around the trunk (the core is the spine and its attachments, largely back and abdominal) it provides effective distribution of force and pelvic control during movement. As the horse has three dimensional movement the rider needs to be effective in absorbing the energy from that movement to remain balanced and in control. Energy absorption appears to be the main determinant of muscle injury, if riders have good core stability the muscle is able to absorb more energy. Hence this is a key area of fitness for riding. Good core stability will also help to reduce imbalances.

Most riders have imbalances and weaknesses, it is the coaches role to identify these and help the rider to recognise them, recognise the effect they will have on the horse and take action. It is not the coaches role to resolve the imbalances, this should normally be tackled by an expert and a physiotherapist is the best point of referral. Activities that can help the rider are; Pilates, Tai Chi, yoga, use of the swiss/fitness ball. The more a rider works on pre-habilitation the better they will be prepared to physically ride through reduced fatigue, ability to focus on technique, and prevention of injury.

BUILDING YOUR PORTFOLIO

Creating Portfolio Evidence

As part of your assessment process to qualify as a Equestrian Coach, you will be expected to provide a portfolio of information, for example risk assessments, coaching session plans etc to be included in your portfolio of evidence. This is to prove that you have an awareness of their existence and a working knowledge of their use.

What is a portfolio and how do I put it together?

This is the folder that contains all of the evidence that you have generated towards the qualification. It should contain all of the assessor observation sheets, witness testimonies, personal statements, case studies and any other supporting information that you might think supports the demonstration of your competence in relation to the national occupational standards (photographs, diagrams, record cards, policy documents etc).

When putting the portfolio together (portfolio-building, you should try to do it logically-remember that this may be a useful thing to show any prospective employer in the future and it will also be examined by the external verifier.

- Make up a title page with your name, the name of the award and the year on it.
- Have a contents page: you may not be able to number this until the portfolio is complete
- Insert a personal profile: who you are, your job title and role, your line manager (if applicable)
- A matrix that cross-references all of the evidence to ensure that you have demonstrated all of the performance criteria and points of knowledge and understanding for the Level.

APPENDIX 1

Recommended Reading - Equestrian

Pony Club

"The Manual of Horsemanship" ISBN 1872119565
"The Instructor's Handbook" ISBN 0954153189
"Longeing and Long-Reining"

British Equestrian Vaulting

"Equestrian Vaulting" by Jutta Wiemers ISBN 0 85131 595 X
"Stretch and Strength" by Jutta and Hanna Weimers
"Training for Vaulting Coaches" by Isabelle Bibler and Emma Drinker
"Vaulting My Sport" (Video)
"That Winning Feeling" by Jane Savoie

British Eventing

"British Eventing Rule Book"

British Dressage

"Advanced Techniques of Dressage"

Endurance GB

"Riding from the Inside Out" by Lisa Champion
"Equine Exercise Physiology" by David Marlin
"Going the Distance" by Marcy Pavord
"The Little BHS Book of Endurance"

Scottish Equestrian Association

"Complete Horse Riding Manual" by William Micklem
"Success from Within" by Brendan Hackett
"Training Show Jumpers" by Anthony Paalman

The British Horseball Association

Polocrosse

"Polocrosse Let's Go!" by Jean Still ISBN 1 875381 26 0
"Polocrosse – A Practical Guide" by Mandy Choice ISBN 1 86389 006 8

The British Horse Society

BHS Videos and DVDs – Stages 1, 2, 3 and PTT

Kenilworth Press Publications:

The BHS Training Manual Series – Stages 1, 2, 3 and PTT
Learn to ride with the BHS
Teaching Children to Ride
Themed Lesson Plans for Riding Instructors, ISBN 1872119891
Everyday Jumping for Riders and Instructors
Progressive Schooling Exercises

The BHS Instructors' Manual for Teaching Riding, ISBN 1872119565
Coaching Skills for Riding Teachers, ISBN 978-1-905693-08-5

Allens Publications:

Course Companion for BHSAI
Course Companion for BHSAII
"Teaching Riding" by Josephine Knowles

"Coaching the Rider" and "Teaching Jumping" by Jane Houghton-Brown

The Association of British Riding Schools

"The Principles of Teaching Riding, "The Official Teaching Manual of the ABRS" by Julian Marczak and Karen Bush
"Drills and Formation Riding" by Shirley Renowden
"An Instructor's Pocket Guide to Safe and Interesting Hacking" by Tony Silverman

Riding for The Disabled Association

"RDA Instructors' Resource" (Section A.31 lists reading material)
"RDA Instructor Development Workbook and Activity Guide"

British Show Jumping Association

"101 Jumping Exercises for Horse and Rider" by Linda L Allen ISBN 1 58017 159 1
"The BSJA Coaching Manual" by Lars Sederholm

Recommended Reading - Coaching

Brookes, T. (2004) *How the Body Works in Sport*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-55-5

Cabral, P. Carpenter, F. and Crisfield, P. (2003) *The Successful Coach: Guidelines for Coaching Practice*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 0-947850-16-3

Cabral, P. and Crisfield, P. (Eds) (2003) *Motivation and Mental Toughness*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-24-5

Campbell, S. and Crisfield, P. (2002) *Making Sport Fun*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 0-947850-56-2

Carpenter, F. and Ledger, P. (Eds) (2001) *Physiology and Performance*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 0-947850-24-4

Crisfield, P. (2003) *Analysing Your Coaching*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-14-8

Foxon, F. (2001) *Improving Practices and Skill*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-13-X

Galvin, B. and Ledger, P. *A Guide to Planning Coaching Programmes*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-00-8

Hagger, M. (2003) *Coaching Young Performers*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-15-6

Kerr, A. and Stafford, I. (2003) *How to Coach Disabled People in Sport*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-54-7

McQuade, S. (2003) *How to Coach Sports Effectively*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-52-0

NCF (2003) *Coaching Young Performers*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/sports coach UK. ISBN 1-902523-6

NCF (2003) *Sports Injury – Prevention and First Aid Management*. Leeds: Coachwise Business Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-850601-68-2

NCF (2005) *The Successful Coach – Guidelines for Coaching Practice*. Leeds: Coachwise Business Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 0-947850-16-3

Robertson, K. (2002) *Observation, Analysis and Video*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-16-4

Sneyd, S. (Ed) (2003) *How to Coach Sports Safely*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-50-4

Sprunt, K. (2003) *An Introduction to Sports Mechanics*. Leeds: Coachwise Solutions/The National Coaching Foundation. ISBN 1-902523-64-4

APPENDIX 2 - Example Coaching Session Plans

Level 1 Session Plan

Coach's Name: _____

Date:	Venue: Indoor school
Time:	Duration: 15 minutes
Participants Names:	
Number of Participants: 4	
Session Number: 1	Number of sessions in this series: N/A
Equipment/Resources (include helpers if required)	4 ponies correctly tacked up with headcollars under bridles and lead ropes attached. 4x Level 1 coaches.
Session Goals Objective and Aims	Goal/Objective/Aim By the end of the session the riders will be able to alter their stirrups correctly.
Time	Activity
	Warm-Up/Introduction Ponies lead into school and lined up. Aim of lesson discussed. Discussion of how to check stirrups correctly before mounting and reasons why this is important. Riders undertake leg and arm circling exercises and check stirrup length. Individual Level One coaches assist riders with this and other tack checks. Riders mount.
	Main Content Discussion as to how to alter stirrups correctly. One rider lead to front of group and used to demonstrate correct and incorrect method. Riders attempt to alter stirrups. Level One coaches assist. Ride sent out going large with Level One coaches leading/assisting as necessary. Basic exercises in walk and trot including changing the rein and transitions. Ride turn in and attempt to put up and then put down stirrups a hole. Ride go large and undertake a basic trot exercise to the rear of the ride. Ride turn in.
	Cool-Down/Summary Discussion as to why it is important to alter stirrups correctly. Ask questions of individuals and involve all riders. Level One coaches assist in correct dismount procedure and assist riders with putting up stirrups and loosening girth.
Injuries	
Evaluation/Action from this session	

APPENDIX 2 - Example Coaching Session Plans (Cont.)

Level 2 Session Plan

Coach's Name: _____

Date:	Venue: Indoor school	
Time:	Duration: 60 minutes	
Participants Names:		
Number of Participants: 4		
Session Number: 2	Number of sessions in this series: 4	
Equipment/Resources (include helpers if required) 4 ponies correctly tacked up. Trotting poles. 2 wings/bloks		
Session Goals Objective and Aims By the end of the session the riders will be secure in light seat and will be confident to ride over a single trotting pole in light seat.		
Time	Activity	
	<p>Warm-Up/Introduction</p> <p>Before entering the school ensure riders have undertaken dynamic mobility exercises. Mount ride in school. Recap as to last session and strengths and weaknesses. Send ride out to warm up in open order on left rein with stirrups at flat length. Change to right rein. Turn ride in.</p>	
	<p>Main Content</p> <p>Recap on stirrup length and shorten stirrups. Work as a ride in all three paces and on both reins progressing the length of time each individual spends in light seat. Turn ride in. Put out single trotting pole at B away from the track. Send riders over this individually. Involve riders in discussion as to strengths. Send whole ride out, safe spacing and ride single pole in light seat. Accent on keeping rider's balance and riding a good liner to the centre of the pole.</p>	
	<p>Cool-Down/Summary</p> <p>Ride walk going large with feet out of stirrups to allow legs to stretch. Turn in. Discussion as to strengths and weaknesses and next session.</p>	
Injuries		
Evaluation/Action from this session		

APPENDIX 2 - Example Coaching Session Plans (Cont.)

Level 2 Session Plan

Coach's Name: _____

Date:	Venue: Indoor school
Time:	Duration: 60 minutes
Participants Names:	
Number of Participants: 4	
Session Number: 3	Number of sessions in this series: 4
Equipment/Resources (include helpers if required) 4 ponies correctly tacked up. 5 trotting poles. 2 wings/bloks	
Session Goals Objective and Aims By the end of the session the riders will be riding confidently over a series of trotting poles in good form in light seat.	
Time	Activity
	Warm-Up/Introduction Before coming into school ensure riders have undertaken usual dynamic stretching exercises. Mount ride and recap and discuss objective of this lesson. Send ride out in open order on right rein to working as individuals with stirrups at flat length. Change rein and work on left rein. Turn in.
	Main Content Shorten stirrups and work as a ride in light seat, checking security of riders and independence of hands. Turn ride in and put out single trotting pole at B away from the track. Send riders out as individuals to ride in light seat over pole. Discuss strengths with ride. Put out three poles at suitable distance for ponies. Send riders out as individuals to ride the line of poles. Repeat on other rein. Send ride out together with suitable distances apart to rode line of poles in light seat in trot on both reins. Turn ride in. Take two poles away and get individuals to ride single pole in canter.
	Cool-Down/Summary Whole ride walk large with feet out of stirrups to stretch. Turn in and discuss strengths and weaknesses and next session.
Injuries	
Evaluation/Action from this session	

APPENDIX 2 - Example Coaching Session Plans (Cont.)

Level 2 Session Plan

Coach's Name: _____

Date:	Venue: Indoor school
Time:	Duration: 60 minutes
Participants Names:	
Number of Participants: 4	
Session Number: 4	Number of sessions in this series: 4
Equipment/Resources (include helpers if required) 4 ponies correctly tacked up. 5 trotting poles. 2 wings/bloks	
Session Goals Objective and Aims By the end of the lesson the riders will be jumping a single cross pole confidently.	
Time	Activity
	<p>Warm-Up/Introduction</p> <p>Before mounting ensure riders have undertaken normal stretching exercises. Mount in school. Recap and discussion of this lesson and progression. Start with stirrups at shorter length. Send ride out to warm up in open order in light seat on left rein. Change rein and work on right rein. Turn ride in.</p>
	<p>Main Content</p> <p>Discussion re. progress from trotting poles to single fence and use of neckstrap. Put out single pole. Send ride out to ride over in light seat. Turn ride in. Put out three poles and send out ride to ride over line of poles at a safe distance in light seat. Turn ride in. Use two of the trotting poles and wings to make small cross pole with placing pole. Riders to approach individually. Discuss strengths and weaknesses. Repeat as many times as necessary using both reins (changing over placing pole).</p>
	<p>Cool-Down/Summary</p> <p>Ride walk large with feet out of stirrups to stretch. Turn in. Discussion as to strengths and weaknesses and how lessons will progress.</p>
Injuries	
Evaluation/Action from this session	