



# The Role of the Coach

Resource Playbook

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# The Role of the Coach

The role of the coach is multidimensional, complex and challenging. It is also one of the most rewarding aspects of being involved in sport. The coach facilitates the athletes to engage in sport, with peers, opponents, supporters, and to encourage themselves to improve. Coaches must take on numerous roles as they engage with athletes, family members, officials and other stakeholders. Roles can range from teacher to advisor, mentor to motivator - all of which are important roles supporting athlete

All Special Olympics coaches should familiarize themselves with [Article 1 - Sports Rules](#). This documents notes the roles and responsibilities of coaches, players, officials and other stakeholders, as well as noting codes of conduct for each respective role.

- |   |              |   |              |
|---|--------------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Teacher      | 5 | Mentor       |
| 2 | Demonstrator | 6 | Psychologist |
| 3 | Assessor     | 7 | Planner      |
| 4 | Advisor      |   |              |

McKenzie<sup>1</sup> (2013) described coaching as “A constant rollercoaster”, but Horton (2014)<sup>2</sup> feels it is more of ‘fun fair’ full of rides - some scary, some exciting and many rather ordinary

<sup>1</sup>McKenzie, E. 'Joys of turning poison chalice into silverware', Rugby Heaven, <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/rugby-union/union-news/joys-of-turning-poison-chalice-into-silverware-20130327-2gup2.html#ixzz2OmsGSIRI>. Accessed 04/02/2020.

<sup>2</sup>Horton, Peter. (2014). 'The Role of the Coach'.



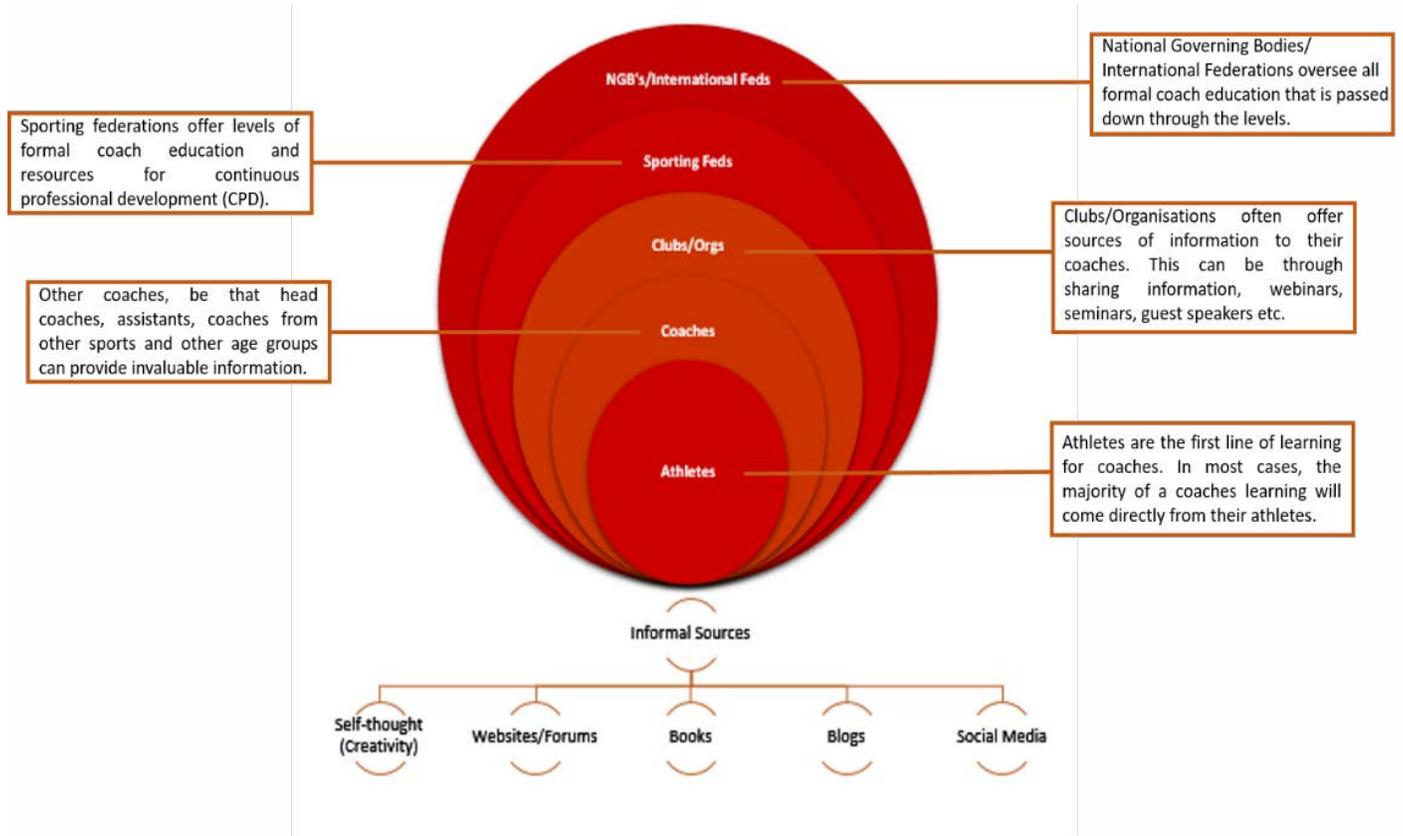
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Coaches have a responsibility to continually improve their knowledge, maintain best practice and keep up with developments and innovations in their sport to fully meet the needs of their athletes.

Due to 'new age' resources in the form of social media and other online means, such as websites, blogs, video content and easier access to books, manuals and sport specific information, coaches have greater accessibility and visibility of information to assist them in improving their coaching practice.



The coach has to deal with a wide variety of situations, groups of people or individual athletes, each of whom is unique in terms of personality, physique, skills, experience and motivation (Horton, 2014). This is even more applicable to the SO coach as their role will involve working with athletes of varying cognitive and physical abilities. Coaches should have an open mind, strive to learn, have a drive to help others succeed and wish to continuously develop themselves to a standard of best practice.



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# Coaches Continuum Framework:

The Coaches Continuum Framework (CCF) shows the constructive coaching process that SO encourages coaches to use. The CCF focuses on 4 key components of coaching that will assist coaches in carrying-out best practice while ensuring the athletes are at the center of their coaching.



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**PREPARE** – All training sessions should be planned prior to arrival. This reduces on the spot pressure on the coach, results in a better training session for the athletes, and allows for better progressions of trainings as sessions go on.

## How?

- Set out a strategy (for your next session and upcoming block/season - Periodization);
- The topic of the session;
- Determine what you will deliver to your athletes;
- The key deliverables (points);
- Potential progressions and regressions (if necessary for groups of individuals).

**FACILITATE ATHLETES** – All sessions should be athlete-centred and should consider the individual needs of each athlete when it comes to progressions.

## How?

- Identify and cater for the individual needs and differences of your athletes;
- Build relationships with your athletes;
- Go at each athlete's own pace;
  - This includes continuously challenging each athlete to improve.
- Match/Pair them up with athletes of a similar ability level;
- Praise efforts;



**ADAPT** – Session structure should not be rigidly followed. Coaching is dynamic, meaning that it must be adjustable in the case of something unplanned happening. This means that your plans should always include several options. You should be prepared with a back-up activity, a progression or a simplified activity if you find it is simply not working as planned. That is ok! It happens to all coaches, the difference is that, effective coaches, are prepared for it!

## How?

- Observe how athletes are performing the designated task;
- Demonstrate best practice/technique;
- If required, adapt/change components of the session to suit the athletes;
- Assist athletes with difficult components when needed;
- Offer feedback to assist athletes;

**Note:** If an activity is not working, even after you have tried to modify it, then stop! Move on to something else that has previously worked and afterwards have a debrief with your athletes to try and solve why it did not work. If you can identify that it is not working so can the athletes!



**REFLECT** – Reflection is a key component of the coaching process. It presents coaches with the opportunity to self-analyse and self-improve after a training session.

## How?

- Evaluate how the session went;
  - Time management; Content; How you spoke to athletes; The delivery of key points;
  - Were you Clear, Concise and Consistent? (3 C's)
  - What went well?; What could improve?
- Reflect at multiple points during your training block/season
  - Are you meeting your set strategy?
  - What has been going well?; What could improve going forward?
- Adjust
  - Post-reflection, identify what you would change to improve your next session.
- Be critical, constructive and honest with yourself.
- Use a 'critical friend'
  - Ask another coach, sport assistant or a friend to observe your session and to give honest feedback.
  - Have an open-mindset; be open to other people's ideas.

When reflecting on a session it is so important to look at yourself, your actions, the language you used, the directions you gave and the environment you created.

If the athletes execute an activity well, what was it you did as a coach to support that happening, or not happening if they did not execute the activity well?

How are your actions and behaviours impacting the athlete's actions and behaviours?

We have a tendency to focus on how athletes perform the skills or activities, but not how we made it possible or created the correct environment for them to perform.

Consider if you:

- i. Gave clear instructions about the activity
- ii. Demonstrated the activity to a high standard
- iii. Gave the athletes an opportunity to practice and settle into the activity
- iv. Provided feedback to those who required it
- v. Gave further opportunity to practice and implement the feedback



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# Responsibilities of a Coach

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**You are responsible for facilitating athletes playing sport, learning and having fun.**

Very important to remember that it is about the athletes!

**Responsibility to safeguard and protect athletes.**

Carry out Safeguarding courses as required by local law.

**Create an environment where athletes can become the best they can be.**

Always look for improvement (this can be sport-related ability or knowledge/understanding).

**Challenge your athletes!**

**A strong understanding of the sport you are coaching.**

**A strong interest and commitment to creating positive sport environments and to the development of people, through sport.**

**Continually improve your knowledge and understanding of best practice.**

**“Coaches are the greatest thieves”**

Coaches are expected to take as much information as possible from others. No coach will tell you that they construct every activity they carry out with their athletes. They simply take an activity that another coach has run and adapt it to best-suit their own athletes!

Learn more about Protective Behaviors here  
<https://learn.specialolympics.org/>



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# SO Coaching Roles

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Level	Details	Roles
<p><b>Level 1</b> Sports Assistant</p>	<p>Pre-Coach level</p> <p>Tailored for volunteers interested in assisting at Sport Training who may/may not wish to progress to coaching.</p> <p>Focuses on a General Orientation to SO Sport and provides volunteers with foundation level knowledge to equip them to be able to support coaches in and around the field of play during sport.</p> <p>Theory based and focuses on SO Knowledge and Sport Knowledge</p>	<p>*Roles are not compulsory but may include:</p> <p>Field Set Up</p> <p>Athlete Escorting</p> <p>Looking after drinks/snacks</p> <p>Kit/Facilities set up</p> <p>Supporting Competition Management teams</p> <p>Supporting coaches at competition</p> <p>Helping to organize transport, equipment, facilities in your club</p>
<p><b>Level 2</b> Coach Assistant</p>	<p>Certifies volunteer to assist a coach at SO Training and competition.</p> <p>First coaching stage, provide coaches with the basic understanding of the principles of coaching, coaching SO athletes.</p>	<p>Support the Head Coach</p> <p>Coaching sports skills</p> <p>Planning sessions</p> <p>Delivering elements of the session</p> <p>Team coaching (working with other coaches)</p> <p>Observation and feedback to athletes</p> <p>Communicating effectively</p> <p>Caring about athletes and their development</p>
<p><b>Level 3</b> Coach</p>	<p>Second coaching stage, prepares coaches to lead their athletes both at training and competition.</p> <p>Further development of coaching skills, lead coach role.</p> <p>Focuses more on the Skills of coaching and how to practically apply these skills, rather than knowledge acquisition.</p>	<p>Athlete Escorting</p> <p>Provide administrative support to the Head Coach as required</p> <p>Kit/facilities set up</p> <p>Observe athletes during training sessions and provide feedback where appropriate</p> <p>Take responsibility for your own learning</p> <p>Where required fill the role of the Head Coach at SO competitions</p> <p>Plan and lead sport training sessions in a full season plan</p> <p>Provide sport-specific technical instruction to your athletes</p>



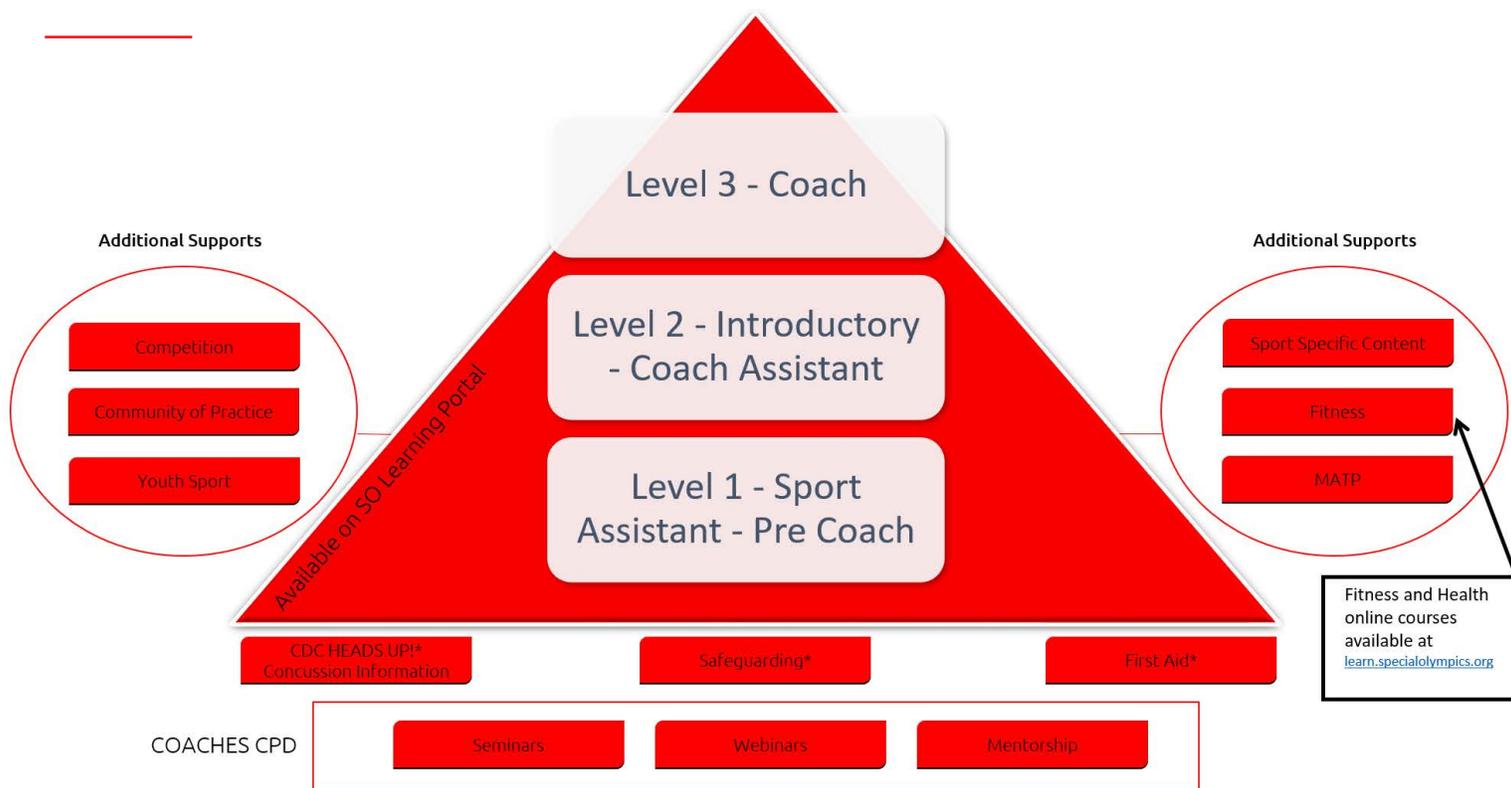
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# SO Coach Development Framework





# Become a Better Coach

“The progression from Coach Assistant to Head Coach is non-linear, i.e. you don’t follow a straight pathway to become a Head Coach. For many reason, coaches may wish to remain in one of the three other roles specified (Sport Assistant, Coach Assistant & Coach). Some coaches, though extremely knowledgeable and experienced, prefer certain duties for which they may be or seem qualified” – ICSF4

Qualifications have tended to associate lower levels of qualifications with the coaching of children and young participants and the higher tiers with coaching in the (high-) performance (professional) context – this is not always the case, sometimes our best coaches work at the younger age groups.

If you are a Coach Assistant, but do not intend to be a Head Coach, be the best Coach Assistant you can be! This goes for all coaches.



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## Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1998)<sup>3</sup> suggest that coaches learn best when:

- Their prior experiences and abilities are recognized and they are encouraged to reflect and build on them;
- They are motivated to learn and find the relevant learning materials;
- They are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning;
- The environment is positive and supportive to minimize anxiety, encourages experimentation and challenges them appropriately;
- They have plenty of opportunities to practice and apply the information to their own context;
- They are involved and engaged in their own learning;

## ABC – Always Be Curious!

Coaches have a responsibility to improve and expand their capabilities on an ongoing basis to fully meet the needs of their athletes.

A successful coach is one who creates an environment and provides skills for lifelong participation in sport.

## Set out your Values and Coaching Philosophy

It is important for coaches to have values and beliefs when it comes to how they want to deliver information to their athletes.

Values are:

- Individual to the person
- Often influenced by background/environment
- What you feel is important to you
- A guide for your behaviour
- Considered in your decision making

An example of a coach's values would be:

- Athlete-centred
- Be Curious
- Relationship > Performance
- Effort is everything
- Challenge (everything)

Your Coaching Philosophy is guided by your values. In return, it guides your decision-making process and ultimately your actions. In addition to your values and beliefs, your philosophy sets out a guide for your coaching practice. Often there can be a conflict between perceived coaching philosophy and the practical output, i.e. the coach does not coach the way they believe they do. It is important for the coach to use their philosophy as a set of principles in their coaching practice to ensure they are sticking to their beliefs.

## An example of a coach's Philosophy would be:

An athlete-centred approach in which I will look to be engaging, challenging, but keep fun at the centre of all tasks and challenges. I will strive to continuously improve my own knowledge and challenge myself, as much as I do my athletes, but taking myself out of my comfort zone.

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**Task: When reflecting on your coaching practices, examine if you are coaching in line with your values. Write out each of your values as a coach and write one line beside each value explaining how you are (or are not) coaching in line with them.**

\*An example of this task is in appendix 1 at the end of this document.

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<sup>3</sup>Knowles, M., Holton III, E., & Swanson, R. (1998). *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*. San Diego, CA: Elsevier.

<sup>4</sup>International Sport Coaching Framework - [https://www.icce.ws/\\_assets/files/iscf-1.2-10-7-15.pdf](https://www.icce.ws/_assets/files/iscf-1.2-10-7-15.pdf).

<sup>5</sup>Lyle and Cushion, 2010. *Sports Coaching*. Elsevier, London, United Kingdom.



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# Skills, Tips and Tricks for an SO Coach

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## Qualities and Skills of an inclusive coach<sup>6</sup>

**Patience:** Recognising some participants will take longer to develop skills or make progress than others

**Respect:** Acknowledging difference and treating all participants as individuals

**Adaptability:** Having a flexible approach to coaching and communication that recognises individual differences

**Organisation:** Recognising the importance of preparation and planning

**Safe practices:** Ensuring every session, whether with groups or individuals, is carried out with the participants' safety in mind

**Knowledge:** Utilising knowledge of training activities and how to modify them in order to maximise the potential of every participant

- Use a range of coaching styles, including lots of visual demonstrations and visual cues.
- Praise when success is achieved, encourage when not.
- As you get to know your athletes, learn what coaching styles and approaches help them to learn best. Each person is unique!
- Build routine and familiarity into your sessions.
- This can be especially helpful for athletes with autism spectrum disorder and they can feel prepared for what is to come. Changes to schedules, plans and expectations can be especially challenging.
- Plan and allow for additional time to offer support or to adjust the plans as needed.
- Give clear concise instructions and repeat them frequently. Use trigger words to condense instruction and be consistent with terminology.
- Demonstrate specific coaching activities one element at a time, and progress at a pace that your athletes can manage.
- Where applicable pair up your participant with a supportive fellow participant who has the ability to explain concepts clearly, concisely, and patiently.

## Coaching Models to assist coaches:

### CHANGE IT

- **Coaching Style** – demonstrations, use of questions, role models and verbal instructions.
- **How** to score or win
- **Area** e.g. size, shape or surface of the playing environment
- **Number** of participants involved in the activity
- **Game Rules** e.g. number of bounces or passes before scoring attempt
- **Equipment** e.g. softer or larger balls, or lighter/smaller bats/racquets
- **Inclusion** e.g. everyone has to touch the ball before the team can score
- **Time** – e.g. How many... can you score in 30 seconds

### TREE<sup>7</sup>

- **Teaching/Coaching Style** Adapt the way you communicate with your athletes
- **Rules/Regulations** Simplify/Change the rules and regulations to make your activities more inclusive
- **Equipment** Modify the equipment you use so that participants can access your activities
- **Environment** Adjust where the activities happen and how they are structured to accommodate all ability levels

### STEP<sup>8</sup>

- **Space** Increasing or decreasing the size of the playing area or increasing or decreasing the distance between targets.
- **Task** Varying methods of completing a task, e.g. throwing a ball underarm, overarm or with both hands.
- **Equipment** Modifying the equipment used, e.g. using different sized balls, but allowing the athlete to use the ball that best suits them.
- **People** Match athletes of similar abilities together for a task.

<sup>6</sup>SportAUS, Becoming an Inclusive Coach, [https://www.sportaus.gov.au/coaches\\_and\\_officials/coaches/coaching\\_specific\\_groups#inclusive\\_coaching\\_](https://www.sportaus.gov.au/coaches_and_officials/coaches/coaching_specific_groups#inclusive_coaching_)

<sup>7</sup>Cara.ie, The Tree model, [https://caracentre.ie/sdm\\_downloads/tree-model/](https://caracentre.ie/sdm_downloads/tree-model/)

<sup>8</sup>The Inclusion Club, STEP Model, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Clq8J0tmZZA>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30FiiPyaJ3s>



## Planning as a Coach:

Planning is one of the most important aspects of being a coach.

Planning in advance allows the coach to:

- Be prepared for their next session,
- Know what the next progressions will be and,
- Allows them to cater for each athlete's individual needs prior to the training session.

As SO sport seasons can vary depending on the sport, the resources/facilities available, the region and the weather, season planning will be different for each coach. However, the basic principles remain the same.

### 1. Start from the end and work backwards.

By starting from the end of your season, you are able to note where your competitions will fall. This allows you to optimally plan training sessions and test competitions for your athletes in preparation for their keynote events (be that local, regional, national or World Games).

### 2. Identify how many sessions per week you will train.

This should be consulted with key stakeholders (your athletes, their families, the facility, your local SO club/region). This will allow you to plan what days you will train each week which will allow your athletes to appropriately prepare their schedules.

This also allows you to ensure that your training days do not follow directly after competition days. This ensures athletes have enough recovery time after performance.

### 3. Identify key skills that your athletes should learn and a program for development for those skills.

Skill development should follow the 'Progressive Overload' principle.

Progressive Overload – Gradually making a task more difficult, but allowing the athlete to adapt before introducing the next progression. For example, a swimmer being able to swim 25m. Begin with 15m. When they are confident in doing that task, increase the distance to 20m and eventually 25m.

To know what skills athletes require, coaches should get to know their athlete's current capabilities. This can be done with some simple skill assessments.

### 4. Allow your plan to adjust depending on the circumstances.

Circumstances can change on a session to session basis. You might have a different number of athletes training than originally planned, one of your coach assistants is unavailable so you cannot carry out your planned session or you forgot some equipment needed for the session. These are common disturbances to training sessions.

Have alternatives prepared in advance in the event something like this happens rather than having to think on the spot.

UNPLANNED SCENARIO	REMEDIES
Less/more athletes than planned for:	<p>Can you do the planned session with different numbers?</p> <p>If not, push the session back to next week and carry out an alternative session with the same training session objective.</p>
Coach Assistant is unavailable:	<p>Did you require them to assist your athletes within the session?</p> <p>Can you adjust group numbers and carry out the same tasks with less coaches*</p> <p>Can you get a coach assistant from another group to help?</p> <p>Can you get an ex-/older athlete to help out</p>
Forgot Equipment:	<p>Could you borrow equipment from another group/the facility?</p> <p>Could you use another piece of equipment instead? E.g. Group athletes by t-shirt colour instead of using bibs.</p>

\*in line with SO and local safeguarding requirements



## Coach-Athlete Relationship:

The relationship a coach has with their athletes is different to any other type of relationship, parents, friends, family and teachers for example. Often, these roles can overlap, parents or teachers can be coaches too. It is very important than when coaching athletes in a particular sport that all your feedback should be about their performance in that sport and not about any other external factor e.g. them not doing their homework on time!

The coach-athlete relationship has been well researched and has been shown to have a significant impact on athlete and coach performance. Jowett and Poczwardowski broadly define the Coach-Athlete relationship as “a situation in which a coach’s and an athlete’s cognitions, feelings, and behaviours are mutually and causally interrelated” (pg. 4). So, if you are an SO gymnastics coach and your athlete is committed and trusts you (cognitions and feelings), they are more likely to respond to your instructions more enthusiastically (behaviour). In return, by noticing the athlete’s commitment, trust and responsiveness, you as a coach will return these sentiments to the gymnast by showing similar if not greater commitment, enthusiasm and trust, as well as showing greater interest in them as an athlete and a person<sup>9</sup>.

The above example is obviously portrayed as though the athlete shows positive signs. However, it is not uncommon for athletes to show negative signs also, for example, lack of enthusiasm, less commitment, little or no trust. This can have the same effect on the coach as the positive outcomes have, i.e. the coach will have less interest and trust in that athlete. Nonetheless, a coach should always look to build a positive, committed, trust-based relationship with their athletes.

### Tips to Develop an Effective Coach-Athlete Relationship

1. Get to know your athletes
2. Support and encourage your athletes
3. Develop a good sense of trust
4. Understand your athlete’s feelings
5. Set realistic and challenging goals
6. Understand what motivates your athletes



<sup>9</sup>Jowett, Sophia and Poczwardowski, Artur, (2007) “Understanding the Coach-Athlete Relationship” from Jowett, Sophia and Lavalley, David, Social psychology in sport pp.3-14, Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics



## APPENDIX 1

<u>My values:</u>	<u>My Coaching:</u>
1. Athlete-Centred	- Adjusting session to suit the needs of my gymnasts
2. Be Curious	- Asked my assistant coach for feedback on my coaching
3. Relationship > Performance	- One athlete wasn't feeling it today (home-life stress) so we had a chat and she did 50% of workout (50% > 0%)
4. Effort is Everything	- 2 gymnasts at different ability levels, praise given for max effort although technique needs work - feedback given to athlete.
5. Challenge (Everything)	- What could I have done to be better? - Could have pushed 'Gymnast 1' and 'Gymnast 4' more tonight





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Date:

# Session Planner

Practice Focus

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Warm Up

\_\_\_\_\_ Minutes

Aerobic	Dynamic Stretches	Basics & Conditioning
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Transition

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Drills/Skill Building

\_\_\_\_\_ Minutes

Notes

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Transition

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Game Play

\_\_\_\_\_ Minutes

Notes

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Cool Down

\_\_\_\_\_ Minutes

Fitness Lesson of the Day

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Tips & Reminders for Athletes

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