



BRITISH
ATHLETICS

COACHING ASSISTANT MANUAL



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INTRODUCTION

COACHING MOTIVATION AND PHILOSOPHY

Coaches are typically caring people who want to help people to be better – in sport and generally, as sport can help people to develop physically, socially, emotionally and mentally. The first step in clarifying your own coaching philosophy is to determine why you want to coach. Reflect on the reasons why you want to be involved in coaching athletes. If it is certain skills that you want people to master or specific achievements in the sport, will this have an impact upon the way that you coach? Consider what you want the athletes you work with to gain from their involvement in the sport. If this includes particular attitudes and behaviours, what does this mean for the way that you coach?

British Athletics has a clear philosophy, it believes in:

- An athlete-centred approach in which the needs of the athlete are placed before the interests of, and pressures imposed by, the club, school, parents or coach
- An inclusive attitude in which all athletes can take part, are valued and encouraged to explore their own potential
- The importance of providing a fun and safe environment
- Encouraging athletes to be involved in their own development and empowered to take greater responsibility for it



Which of the following statements are most important to you?

- “There’s no coach at our club”
- “I think athletics has so much to offer young people”
- “To meet people”
- “I want to give something back”
- “To earn money”
- “My children are involved”
- “To help people fulfil their potential”
- “To achieve personal ambition”

An athlete-centred approach is one in which the needs of the athlete (especially a child, youth or a disabled athlete) is placed before everything else – the activity, the competition, your personal goals and ambitions. In this approach athletes are encouraged to be involved in their own development and empowered to take greater responsibility for it.



Working with athletes is a privilege no matter their age and at what level they perform. If they are striving to improve then it is important that as a coach we too work hard to be the best that we can be. This will be demanding and will take time. What are the personal qualities that you need to be aware of, think about and need to develop as a coach? As a Coaching Assistant what are the important things that you need to know at this stage of your coaching development? The course will have already added to your knowledge about some areas of athletics.

Working as a Coaching Assistant what will be the key skills that you will need so you can become an effective coach meeting the needs of all of the athletes in the group? To achieve this you will need to make the effort to find out more about them by asking and listening to them.

This manual will begin the process of finding some answers to these questions. However, there will be people that you work alongside, other resources and, of course, the athletes themselves who will also contribute to your learning.

This manual has been divided into sections to support your learning. Firstly we will consider some key issues about the environment and audience you will be working with.

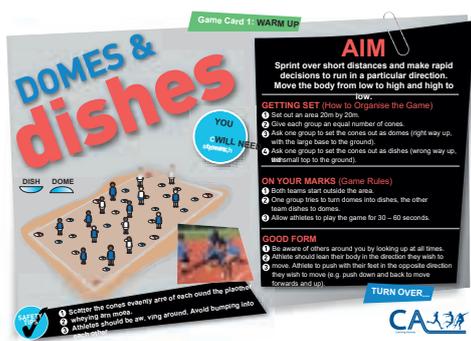
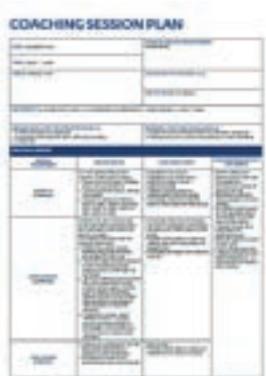
COACHING ROLE

1.1 The Coaching Environment

It is expected that a Coaching Assistant will operate in clubs, schools and local authority environments and will be supported by a Supervising Coach.



Your role is to assist in the delivery of sessions from task cards or session plans under the supervision of the Supervising Coach.



The recommended ratio of coach to athletes during a session is 1:12; if the coaching group is 13 - 24 in size then there should be at least 2 coaches (1 can be a Coaching Assistant). Having gained the Coaching Assistant award these ratios should be maintained to ensure safety and best practice.

1.2 Safety

The Supervising Coach is ultimately responsible for health and safety during the session; however, safety issues can change during activities. As a Coaching Assistant you should pay particular attention to safety at all times, i.e. stopping any hazardous activity, making changes to the activity to make it safer when other athletes and coaching groups are in the area, adjustments for environmental conditions and equipment needs for different athletes. Safety always comes first and a strong emphasis embedded at this stage will provide a firm footing if you decide to access the Coach Award.

The Coaching Assistant should be working with a Supervising Coach at the same venue/ facility. There are certain events where distance from the Supervising Coach is not accepted, i.e. long throws. In these situations the Coaching Assistant should be working in close proximity with the Supervising Coach to ensure safety procedures are appropriately maintained.



All coaches are responsible for the safety and welfare of the athletes. This means that you should always:

- Identify hazards and risks in a changing environment, minimising risks
- Take appropriate precautions to ensure the training facilities are free from hazards, this is essential in the planning phase
- Ensure that athletes are properly prepared for activity, suitably warmed up and wearing appropriate clothing and footwear
- Use suitable equipment for activities including landing mats for high jump, helmets for wheelchair racers, throwing implements that are appropriate for the athlete and their stage of development
- Accept responsibility and a duty of care for all individuals and ensuring their protection from abuse: <http://www.uka.org.uk/governance/welfare-and-safeguarding/>
- Be able to take appropriate action if an accident or injury occurs.



1.3 Child Protection

Coaches have a responsibility to place the needs of all athletes and particularly of young athletes before everything else – the sport, the competition, their own personal goals and ambitions (an athlete -centred approach). They have a duty of care and must safeguard the young athlete and protect them from poor practice and abuse. This will enable you to:

- Identify signs and symptoms that might result from abuse
- Report concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young athlete
- Deal with a child who discloses that they have been abused
- Recognise and deal with bullying behaviour (by another adult or child)
- Identify good practice when coaching young people.

When working with children and young people coaches should:

- Take action if the child or young athlete is concerned about someone's behaviour towards them
- Take action if they are concerned about the behaviour of an adult towards a young athlete
- Be public and open when working with them, avoid situations where they are unobserved
- Not spend excessive amounts of time alone with one child/young athlete
- Not take them alone on car journeys, however short
- Not take them to their home where they would be alone with the child/young athlete
- Never share a bedroom with a child/young athlete,
- Never make suggestive comments (even in fun), and engage in any form of inappropriate touching

Further information is available on welfare and child protection can be found at:

<http://www.britishathletics.org.uk/governance/welfare-and-safeguarding/educare-programme/>

1.4 Adaptation and Inclusion

Every athlete who comes to coaching sessions will come with different motives, needs and goals. In order for each athlete to achieve what they want from the sport, coaches need to be willing to adapt their coaching and programmes accordingly. Your coaching may involve children and young athletes, male athletes, female athletes, disabled athletes, non disabled athletes, adult recreational athletes, high performance and talented athletes, veteran and masters athletes, different stages of development and skill learning athletes.



Each athlete you work with is an individual and has a unique set of motives, needs and aspirations. In being truly athlete centred, you as the coach will need skills to identify these needs and motivations and adapt training sessions to ensure these needs are fulfilled to encourage athlete satisfaction, retention, participation and performance development related to their stage of athlete development and skill learning.

British Athletics adopts an inclusive philosophy, welcoming all people to the sport. Many people choose to take part in athletics because there are so many diverse events, each requiring different abilities and it has a high profile at international level.

1.5 Coaching Disabled Athletes

Disability athletics has an increasing profile in the UK and disabled athletes must be encouraged and supported to join their local athletics club where they can access appropriate training and guidance to develop in their chosen sport.

It is not acceptable to just provide physical access for athletes. Coaches need to actively develop their skills to ensure that disabled athletes can participate and become active club members. Access has a lot more to do with attitude than the physical environment. Coaches need to provide an encouraging and supportive environment for athletes; the focus must be on athletics.

When coaching it is important to understand the previous level of exposure to athletics and other physical activity when starting to work with any athlete. In working with disabled athletes, in many cases the coach is aiming to develop towards the same technical model and the level of impairment needs to be taken into account.

It is important to discuss how an athlete's impairment may impact on the training that you are asking them to do. Remember that the disabled athlete is the expert on their own requirements. When working with disabled athletes it may be beneficial to seek further advice if unsure by contacting your Home Country Athletics Federation for support.

To achieve at the top level in disability athletics requires the same level of commitment, training, lifestyle choices and talent as in the rest of the sport.

ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

Physical Access

- Are the grounds, toilets and buildings accessible?
- Is there accessible parking and is it always available?
- Do you have disability athletics equipment such as racing wheelchairs, seated throws equipment and distance clubs?
- Are new members shown around the facilities?

Social Access

- Are all new members of varying skill and ability levels made to feel welcome?
- Is there an induction pack for new members and is it available in alternative formats?
- Are all athletes encouraged to develop to their full potential and signposted to the appropriate pathway?

General Good Practice

- Always speak to the individual first, not their parent/guardian or friends
- Show new members around the facility to ensure familiarity
- Deal with any physical access issues as soon as possible, do not wait until a new member wants to join the club and requires these changes
- Provide a 'buddy system' and information pack to familiarise new members with the practices within the club
- Offer your assistance wherever necessary, but respect the individual's right to refuse
- Ensure disabled athletes are consulted in any changes to activities that are based around their inclusion
- Be aware that no two people are the same, do not assume that people with the 'same' impairment have exactly the same needs

Good Practice when Coaching an Athlete with a Visual Impairment

- Identify and introduce yourself
- Allow the athlete to take your arm and then guide them to the activity
- Give verbal directions and describe obstacles where necessary
- Some athletes may not have seen other people perform basic motor skills, so don't make assumptions about how basic tasks are performed. It may be that learning skills may require more time and positive reinforcement i.e. if you can't see other people run, or how you do it, then the learning process changes.

Good Practice when Coaching a Wheelchair User

- Ensure you know the accessible routes around the facility and where accessible amenities are located
- Do not touch an athlete's wheelchair, always ask permission before moving an athlete's wheelchair
- Wheelchair racing is very specific; training in a day chair does not provide an adequate cross over to develop fitness. The technique of pushing a racing wheelchair is very important and time spent developing an effective pushing style will pay dividends later. There needs to be a strong element in the training focusing on developing top end speed and training on a soft track is not conducive to this. This is best achieved on a solid smooth surface i.e. on a road, cycle path, rollers/turbo trainers.
- As wheelchair racing is not weight bearing, then generally a higher training load is required to produce the same training effect (compared to runners). For example, a wheelchair racing sprinter would train more like a middle distance athlete
- As the discipline of wheelchair racing/throwing is reliant on equipment it is essential that the athlete learns to maintain their own equipment and optimise their position as they grow and develop
- For a thrower the ideal situation would be for an athlete to have a throwing frame and full tie downs at the track to support their frame. However if this is not possible then it is important to remember that the athlete must be using a chair/stool that is properly restrained. Rules govern the height, and position of the frame in the circle
- The throwing frame is doing the equivalent of planting the foot, so the position of the frame requires much work

Good Practice when Coaching Dwarf Athletes

- When coaching Dwarf athletes be aware that the athlete may have specific needs due to possible skeletal and joint instability
- Most Dwarf athletes have lax joints and their elbows, hips, knees and ankles especially can be unstable
- The Dwarf Athletics Association discourages athletes from events which repeatedly apply 'shock' to the spinal area. In athletics, jumps, middle and long distance running are not encouraged

Good Practice when Coaching an Amputee

- In lower limb amputees, the energy required for daily living and sport activities increases the higher on the leg the amputation occurred. The athletes may grow fatigued more rapidly and this should be considered in planning sessions
- Care of stumps must be considered by the athlete, the athlete must pay attention to breakdown in the skin and related infections
- It is important to wear the right thickness of 'sock' and to keep this dry (especially after exercise)

Good Practice when Coaching an Athlete with Cerebral Palsy

- Cerebral Palsy (CP) may affect the arms, legs, trunk, head and/or verbal communication and can affect one side of the body more than the other or particular limbs more than others. CP affects all people differently
- Athletes may have a lack of coordination, and balance can be affected. Coaches need to consider this in their planning – depending on the impairment, specific conditioning may or may not be beneficial

Good Practice when Coaching a D/deaf or Hard of Hearing Athlete

- Find out which communication method the athlete wishes to use
- Ensure the environment in which you are coaching is not too dark
- Ensure communication support is available if necessary
- Ensure the athlete is able to see the coach clearly
- Ensure there is limited external noise wherever possible
- Ensure you have nothing in your mouth when speaking to the athlete
- Don't speak whilst looking away from the athlete
- Use clear language in explanations wherever possible
- Do not make assumptions, if in doubt – ask
- Keep a pen and paper ready to write things down if necessary

Good Practice when Coaching Athletes with a Learning Disability

- Age appropriate activities must be at the forefront of coaching
- It is inappropriate to place adults with a learning disability in programs for young people. Athletes with a learning disability should be coached with peers of a similar age and ability
- Coaches must be prepared to modify skills and drills to address specific needs
- Be aware that coaches may need to adapt their communication methods and coaching styles to ensure the athlete progresses in the sport, for example: repetition of activities whilst remaining positive and encouraging
- Do not be afraid to ask questions
- Be aware of necessary skills (e.g. basic motor skills) required for success in specific events
- Repetition, structure and routine are often helpful

When disabled athletes approach your club remember that you do not need to be an expert on 'disability' – you are there to provide athletics opportunities!

1.6 An Athlete-Centred Approach

In simple terms this means placing the needs of each athlete before the interests of the parents, club, school or coach. Consider the following situations and think about what an Athlete-Centred Coach would do or say?

- What would an athlete-centred coach say to a team manager that asks an athlete to compete in an event that the athlete has had no training for?
- What would an athlete-centred coach do if the father of an athlete encourages that athlete to accompany him on the long distance training runs that are on his own training schedule?
- What would an athlete-centred coach do if a teacher will only enter a child for the district schools athletics competition on the condition that he/she also plays on the school football team?

How important are listening and negotiating skills in these situations?

What would an athlete-centred coach do with an athlete whose ability was at a different level to the rest of the group asked if they could join the training group?

In terms of:

- physical development and training age
- personal development
- ability/disability

What sort of things would an athlete-centred coach consider when planning a session:

1. To ensure that all athletes have fun?
2. To ensure that all athletes stay safe?

Think of activities in which you could use an involving coaching style to guide an athlete into discovering the best technique to use for a particular skill. How might a non-athlete-centred coach teach the skill? An athlete-centred coach will coach athletes to be as independent as possible.

Keeping Athletes Involved

As a Coaching Assistant you can promote the sport, take an interest in all athletes and encourage them to stay involved and achieve their goals. To retain athletes you should create a positive learning environment where:

- Conflicts of interest and pressure are avoided
- Competition is intense enough for each athlete
- There is fun
- Injury is prevented
- Achievement and success are recognised
- A positive social environment is created and maintained

High standards and good sportsmanship are important. You should:

- Demonstrate and gain respect for the sport, club, other coaches, parents, officials and other athletes
- Promote and reward honesty and sportsmanship, encourage support for and cooperation with other athletes, and stand up for a drug free sport
- Set, and insist on, high standards in terms of punctuality, dress, effort and fair play
- Encourage athletes to keep on trying even if they are struggling to win and lose graciously, not to make excuses for poor performance and appreciate that they can still be successful even if they lose

Remember that the greatest influence on the athletes' values and attitudes towards sportsmanship will be your behaviour. Whether you like it or not, you are their role model and you must always act responsibly and ethically. Your athletes will be looking at you and listening to you throughout all of your instructions and demonstrations.

Developing the fitness and skill of athletes is one of the most important roles that any coach undertakes. It is about more than just knowledge; it is about coaching and training and it constitutes a large part of your role as a coach. It means:

- Having the knowledge, skills and patience to help others to learn and develop their skills at the right pace and at the right time. This does not only mean instructing them in what to do and how to do it, it means being able to communicate with them and involve them in their own learning
- Encouraging the overall development of athletes: physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually
- Developing your technical knowledge and keeping this up to date
- Developing your knowledge of health, fitness and training principles

Good coaches coach people, not just athletics. They are concerned with the overall development of athletes: their educational, emotional, social and physical welfare as well as the important development of fitness and skill.

A truly athlete-centred coach will:

- Ensure all athletes are welcomed to participate, are valued and encouraged to explore their own potential
- Recognise the importance of providing a fun and safe environment
- Encourage athletes to be involved in their own development and empowered to take greater responsibility for it

SECTION TWO:

DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE

British Athletics is the National Governing Body of the sport and provides the strategic direction and management of performance athletics. British Athletics has established a clear vision for the sport – to drive up performance and raise standards in every event, every region and every age group. Called the Power of 10, this statistical step-ladder was designed to inspire athletes to move through club, regional and national levels towards international standards <http://www.thepowerof10.info/>

British Athletics' role is to be the strategic lead and work with Home Country Federations to achieve implementation of policy in key areas. That implementation is focussed on developing a sport that enables participation no matter what age, or background. British Athletics has responsibility for the design and development of the athlete and coach pathway and the educational structures that support it.

British Athletics operates in partnership with Athletics Northern Ireland, England Athletics, Scottish Athletics and Welsh Athletics who are each responsible for the governance of athletics within their respective Home Country. Each organisation has a responsibility for the implementation and delivery of the coach education programme locally.

2.1 Coach Education Scheme

British Athletics acknowledges the vast contribution of everybody involved in the sport and seeks to provide them with sufficient support and training to ensure their roles are both enjoyable and fulfilling. British Athletics has committed to developing a comprehensive coach education and training scheme that will meet the needs of coaches, leaders and assistants and develop them to become better coaches/leaders.

Coaches are provided with opportunities to progress in the coaching award structure, as well as enhancing their experience by learning new areas. The Coaching Assistant award is attendance based. Coaching Assistants should be actively involved on the course, practising the skills learnt. Coaching Assistants who satisfactorily complete the course will be awarded a coaching licence.

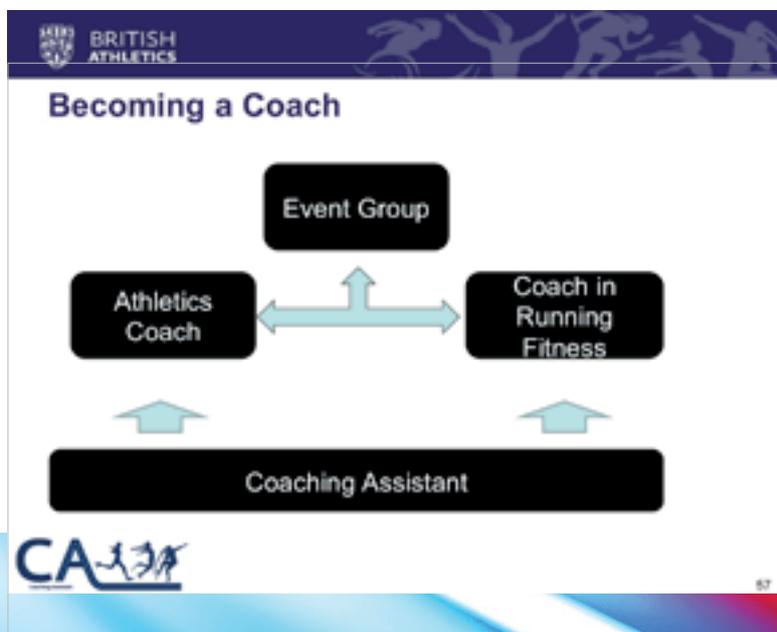
The Coaching Pathway

This award has been developed for Coaching Assistants supporting a coach working with athletes in the Fundamentals, Foundation and Event Group Development stages of the athlete development pathway.

It is important to note that there may be adults that are classified in these stages of development; this award would be appropriate for coaches operating with this athlete group. The focus of the awards are the stage of athletic development rather than chronological age of the athletes.



The coach education structure is based on the needs of all athletes; those seeking fun and participation, novice to world champion, development and athletic performance. The structure reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of athletics; providing coaching support in all running, walking, wheelchair racing, jumping and throwing areas. The Coaching Assistant Award is the first step in the pathway to becoming a coach. Once qualified, you are encouraged to progress along the pathway based on your own personal preference and the needs of the athletes you are working with.



2.2 Coaching Assistant Award

This award will enable you to assist in the delivery of a coaching session from a Supervising Coach designed session plan or a coaching task card. As a Coaching Assistant you will be able to:

- prepare for the delivery of coaching activities
 - prepare for activities, taking into account athletes' needs and motives
 - establish a safe working environment
- deliver prepared activities of the coaching sessions
 - establish working relationships with athletes and others
 - prepare the athletes for the coaching activities
 - support athletes behaviour
 - deliver prepared activities
 - conclude the activities
- evaluate the effectiveness of coaching activities
 - review the activities
 - discuss with support coach
 - contribute to the evaluation of athletes
 - continuously develop personal practice

The Coaching Assistant course is a 2-day taught programme; coaches will need to attend both days. The course will provide you with training and support; you will be expected to participate fully in classroom and practical sessions.



As a Coaching Assistant you will observe coaching practice across a range of run, jump, throw athletics activities, build up your coaching repertoire and develop your coaching philosophy. We hope you enjoy your first coaching experiences, obtain feedback on your coaching performance and gain the confidence to go on developing your skills and expertise.

There should normally be a more experienced and qualified coach present when you are coaching. There is a "Supervised" category of Coaching Assistant for those under the age of 18. In this situation Coaching Assistants must be directly supervised (within sight and sound) of the Supervising Coach. On turning 18 a new full license will be available.

2.3 Renewal

Once you have successfully completed your award British Athletics will issue you with a coaching licence at that level. On successful completion of the course you will receive a Coaching Assistant licence, which is valid for three years. The licence is linked to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Disclosure Scotland or Access Northern Ireland systems. In order to renew your licence you should ensure that your DBS is renewed every three years. You can continue renewing your licence in this way forever if you wish to retain your licence.

2.4 Progression

Coaches are responsible for the ongoing development of their own knowledge and skills. Some coaches believe that once they have gained a qualification, or their athlete has been successful, they have reached the end of the road to learning. However, it is as important to analyse and develop your own coaching skills and performance, as it is to improve your athlete's performance.

This means:

- Being willing to analyse and reflect on your own coaching behaviour
- Finding ways to update your own knowledge, skills and awards regularly from the uCoach website and each Home Country
- Having an open mind to new ideas and different methods
- Learning from other people and being willing to share your ideas and knowledge

There are no shortcuts to becoming an effective coach. This course is just the start of your journey towards coaching excellence. How far you travel will depend on your vision, desire and willingness to go on learning.

This course is a pre-requisite to the Athletics Coach Award, with the information and knowledge you gain here being the foundation for the next level.



The Coach in Running and Fitness pathway is also available to you on completion of this award. This is designed to support the participation athlete, who is either starting out in running or trying to develop and improve their performance.



2.5 Athlete Development Pathway (ADP)

The Athlete Development Model (ADM) relates to the stage of athlete development rather than to the chronological age of the athlete. Many of athletics' traditional practices reflect age development rather than stage of development.

When you were at primary school was everyone the same height and size?

Could they all do sports to the same standard?

Did some seem to be better than others?

What happened as you got older? Did those who were tall at primary school carry on to become the tallest or the fastest or the best at sport or did this change?

The important point is that children grow at different rates. Two athletes with the same birthday may actually be at different stages of maturity. This could be physical, emotional, social or intellectual. When thinking about athletes consider them as having three ages:

Chronological age – their age measured in years from their date of birth

Developmental age – their physical, mental cognitive and emotional maturity

Training age – the number of years that they have been involved in formal structured training

Consider the following young athletes:

	Grant	Gemma	Mohammed
Chronological Age	12 Years Old	12 Years Old	14 Years Old
Developmental Age (Physical)	14 years old Grant is tall for his age having grown three inches in the last couple of months; he has an athletic frame and has cerebral palsy (CP) that affects two limbs	15 years old Gemma is physically and sexually mature and often mistaken for a 16 or 17 year old	12 years old Mohammed is very small for his age, light in weight, although strong; he has as yet very little muscular development
Developmental Age (Intellectual)	12 years old Grant is of a similar cognitive maturity to his 12 year old peers	12 years old Gemma is of a similar cognitive maturity to other 12 year old girls	15 years old Mohammed is one of the youngest in his school class but is more cognitively mature than many of his class mates
Developmental Age (Emotional)	12 years old Grant is of a similar emotional maturity to his 12 year old friends	14 years old Gemma is more emotionally mature than many of her 12 year old class mates	15 years old Mohammed is slightly more emotionally mature than his age group
Developmental Age (Mental Social)	12 years old Grant is as mentally mature as his class mates	15 years old Gemma's mental skills are more like those of an average 15 year old rather than a 12 year old	14 years old Mohammed is at a similar mental stage to other 14 year olds
Training Age	1 year in training Grant has only been involved in regular training for one year	2 years in training Gemma has been involved in regular training since she was 10 years old	4 years in training Mohammed has been involved in regular training for 4 years

It is highly possible that all three athletes may be in the same coaching group but they would all need to be treated slightly differently. Coaches need an understanding of the age and stage of their athletes. Observe them carefully and be willing to adjust their coaching strategies and act in the best interests of the athlete.

Above all, they need to ensure that the athletic experience for each member of their group is enjoyable and satisfying and that it contributes to their overall development.

Reflect on a few of the athletes that you will be working with during your supported practice identifying their motivation, interests, needs and the implications for your coaching.

Add some of your athletes to the following table using the example as a guide:

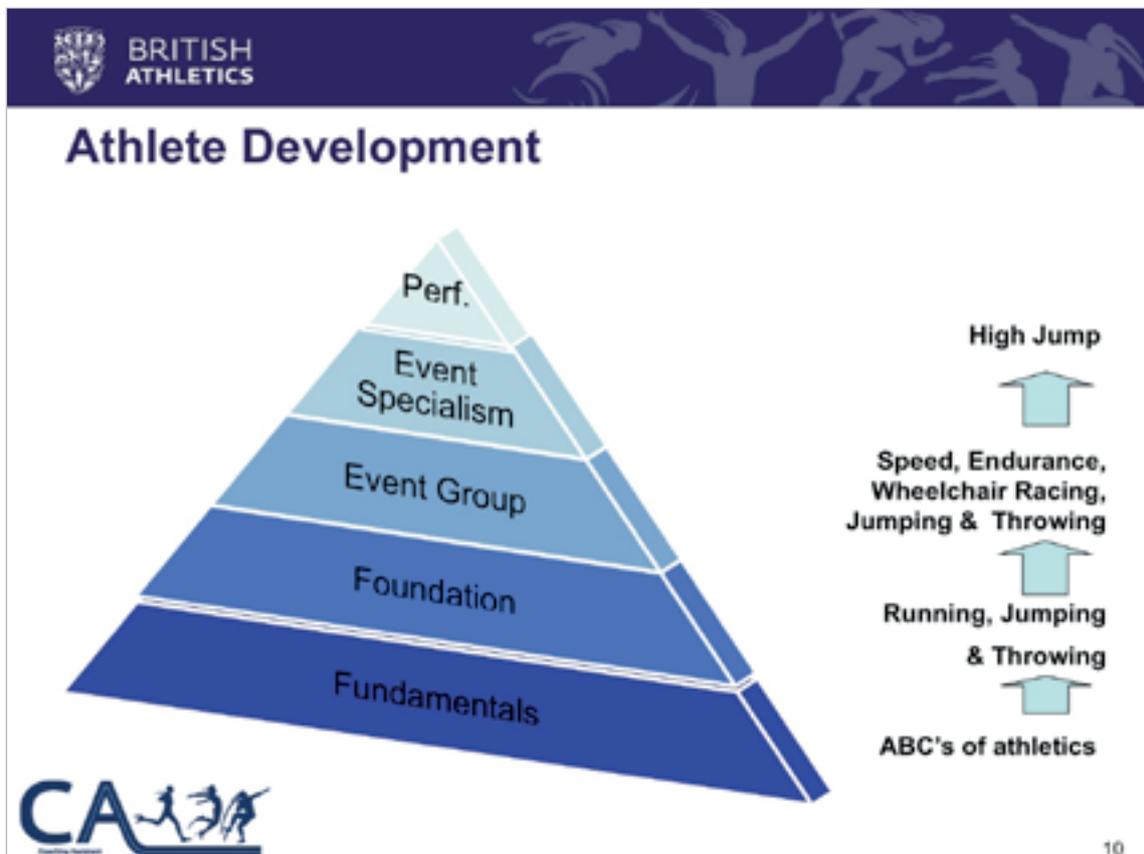
Name (Optional)	Age	M/F	Motivation	Interests	Specific Needs	Medical Info
Ben	12	M	Wants to be the best	Swimming, reading	Slight hearing problem on the left	Had asthma when younger

Coaching Implications:

Stages of development

Whilst in general we refer to young people it is important to consider that this could also include those coming to the sport at an older age.

The diagram below illustrates the stages of the athlete development pathway and the training emphasis that is required in each of these stages. It is important to note that this course will focus on the first three stages of the athlete development pathway only.



Before you begin preparing for the session with your Supervising Coach, it is important to thoroughly analyse your athletes, where they are on the development pathway, their past experiences, injuries, wants and aspirations. This will ensure that activities and programmes are developed to meet the athletes' needs, develop performance, potential and retain athletes in the sport.

FUNDamentals

In terms of chronological age the FUNDamentals stage may cover 6 – 9 year old children. As the name implies the principle underpinning this stage is FUN. This is a crucial stage of development for fundamental movement skills and motor skills development often termed “physical literacy”. The stage should provide the broadest possible movement experience and include activities focusing on agility, balance, coordination, speed, kicking, striking, running, jumping and throwing. This is the most important time to develop basic movement and coordination skills that provide the foundation for sporting involvement and achievement later in life.



In addition to developing these fundamental skills as coaches we should be creating a fun, games based environment in which a child feels confident that they can do these skills well. This is best developed through a multi-sport approach to training. Participation in a wide range of sports should be encouraged and these fundamental movement skills should be well practised before sports specific skills are introduced.

Speed, power and endurance should all be developed using fun games and strength using own body weight exercises. At this stage, competition should be simply for fun, based on a range of activities and experiences and can take place throughout the year.

It is important to realise that this stage is not exclusively for young children. People of many ages and backgrounds come into athletics and begin training. Anyone who does not possess the basic movement, balance and coordination skills should be coached as being in the Fundamental stage of training and coached accordingly.



Fundamentals of Athletics

This period generally covers up to the point of peak growth spurt; it lasts from around 8 to 12 years in girls and 9 to 13 years in boys. These ages are known as the “skill hungry years”, there should be a skill development emphasis through participation in a range of sports but with progressively more attention towards the end of the phase on athletics specific basic skills of running, jumping and throwing. The emphasis should be on frequency and volume rather than intensity, with lots of varied repetition work to develop skill.

High intensity speed work (short duration) and strength work through bodyweight and gymnastics exercises should form the basis of training. Varied strength work with medicine and Swiss ball work is appropriate.

In this phase the athlete is learning how to train and should be introduced to dynamic warm-ups, cool-downs, stretching, hydration, nutrition, sleep, rest, developing basic mental skills (e.g. goal-setting, commitment, imagery, focusing, distraction control and self-awareness). The emphasis should be on developing a training ethic and quality of practice not on competition. Competition should be limited but an enjoyable part of the training process.



Foundation

Between the ages of 11-15 (girls) and 12-16 (boys) athletes undergo major changes in physical development that affect skill and psychological development. Having confidence in their ability to carry out basic skills is crucial in their performance development and whether they choose to participate in athletics or not.

At this stage the appropriate balance between training volume, intensity and competition must be maintained if the athlete is to achieve their optimum potential. Many athletes plateau during the later stage of their careers due to an over emphasis on competition instead of training in this period.

The start of this stage coincides with the growth spurt; this provides coaches with a key reference point. Groups that have been based on chronological age need to be split into individual programmes, or groups based on where athletes are in terms of their technical, tactical and physical development. This allows athletes of similar abilities to train together. As these changes occur at different times, the athletes will begin to develop different training capabilities at different times. Training programmes need to be individualised, which will be challenging for the coach to manage but is very important.

As the athlete's growth accelerates in adolescence the limbs typically grow before the trunk. This may mean that the athlete's coordination will suffer. Coaches should reinforce the athlete's confidence in their skill abilities, and use many skill and coordination drills to improve coordination. Due to these physical changes the athletes can now sustain demanding, longer duration speed-endurance and high-intensity repetition training. Aerobic conditioning should include continuous, fartlek and interval training. Care needs to be taken to avoid excessive weight bearing aerobic work that can result in conditions such as Osgood Schlatters' disease.

Athletes will start to specialise in a group of events and should be encouraged to retain at least one technical event. Technically, the focus is on refining skills and introducing tactics. Mentally continue working on commitment, independent goal setting, perception of pressure and realistic performance evaluation. During this stage, the focus is still very much on training and competition, goals should be more about process than outcome.

The Specialisation and Performance stages will be explained in the subsequent courses of the coach education programme. The athletics activities you will deliver and practise as a Coaching Assistant will relate to the first three stages of the athlete development pathway. The full athlete development model can be read on the uCoach site.



Athletes' needs

Now you have a better understanding of the athletes' stages of development, consider these questions in relation to the group you will be working with.

Chronologically, who is the oldest? Who is the youngest?

In terms of physical development, who is the most mature? Who is the least?

In terms of psychological development, who is the most mature? Who is the least?

Who has the greatest training age? Who has the least?

How will this information affect your planning for the session? Which stage of development most fully reflects the group that you will be working with? Each of the athletes you have identified has a specific range of individual needs. How will you meet their needs to ensure they can achieve their potential?

Look at the start of the session plan template; you should now be able to assist the Supervising Coach in completing the top line. In the 'Athletes' box indicate the numbers in the group who are at the Fundamentals, Foundation or Event Group Development stages?

Session Plan				
Date:	Time:	Venue:	Equipment:	Stage of Athlete Development:
				Fund:
				Found:
				EGD:

Coaching Young Athletes

When working with young athletes it is important to:

- Treat each athlete as an individual and always place his or her needs first
- Provide enjoyment and fun
- Be supportive and encouraging, praising effort more than results
- Be fair and have patience, recognising that people learn at different rates and in different ways
- Set and demand high standards and be willing to deal with undesirable behaviour
- Provide maximum variety of activity to promote skill development
- Ensure equipment is suitable for the developmental stage and skill of each athlete
- Encourage young athletes to develop strength through appropriate exercises
- Avoid practices that involve high impact work (e.g. bounding, power jumping) until an appropriate strength base has been established
- Gradually progress the difficulty and duration of all training
- Be aware of sudden changes in growth of the young athlete and adjust training accordingly
- As much as possible always ensure adequate rest and recovery both between and within sessions
- Encourage children and young people to have plenty of rest



Coaching Adults

It is not unusual for people over the age of 21 to return to the sport having competed as a young athlete. Some people over 21 are even joining the sport for the first time and need to be engaged appropriately.

Awareness of coaching adults and their specific needs is something that will greatly enhance the opportunities for disability athletics. Adults with a physical or psychological impairment are often encouraged to try the sport and we welcome their involvement.

It is important to restate that all of the principles outlined in the British Athletics philosophy section, the code of conduct and roles and responsibilities still apply. It is still very important to uphold the principle of being 'athlete-centred' and begin to assess the needs of the person who arrives wanting to take part in athletics.



Here are some useful questions to consider:

Have they done any sport recently?

What is their training age?

Do they need a medical check up?

Do they have basic skills in sport?

Do they have appropriate equipment?

Whatever their reasons for wanting to take part in athletics, as a coach it is important to remember:

- Treat each athlete as an individual and involve them in the development of programmes and sessions
- Find out what they want from the sport (their motivation) and create situations to meet their needs
- Respect and build on their knowledge, skills and experience in both sporting and non-sporting situations
- Build their confidence and self-esteem
- Ensure they enjoy the sessions



SECTION THREE:

PLAN

3.1 The Planning Process

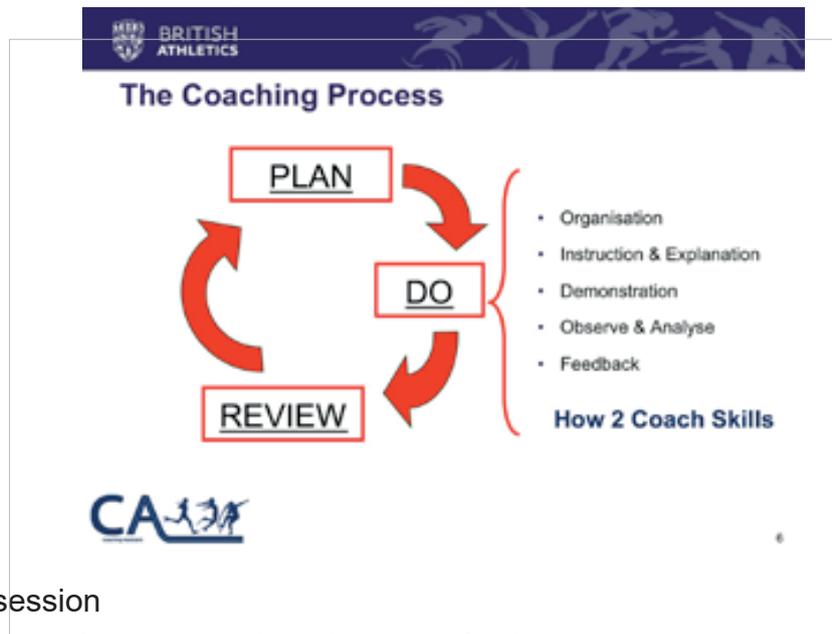
So how do we plan, whether it is for a big project or for a coaching session for athletes at the local club? The process is based on three key steps:

PLAN what is it you are going to do

DO whatever it is you planned to do

REVIEW what you have done

Planning is required for every training session to ensure it meets overall objectives of the athlete and coaches in the short, medium and long term.



Planning for a session

When you begin to plan for a session where do you start? Is it by thinking about what you are going to do, how you are going to do something, or why you will do the task? It is vital to clearly establish the objective and outcome of the session for athletes and coaches alike before adding the detail of the session’s content.

The Supervising Coach will be in charge of the actual session; your role will be to assist them. This can and should include some involvement in planning the content of the session.

What must you consider before making that decision?

- The ages of the people in the group
- The abilities of the people in the group
- The facilities available
- The numbers involved
- The time of year for the session

The Supervising Coach has identified the group, it is now necessary to decide what the key objective is for the athletes for the session, i.e. to work on a three stride approach for the long jump identifying their preferred take-off leg. The objective will form the basis of the content of the session, what the group will actually do during the session to achieve this objective. This is a key part because as a Coaching Assistant you should begin to identify the part of the session that you will deliver.

You will recall that there are several key parts to any session:

The warm up - this should prepare the athletes for the activity that they are going to do in the next part. It needs to be physical as well as psychological

Technical work - this could include some technical drills and skill practices

Fitness elements - this will be specific to the stage of the athlete and their needs related to an event area if that is appropriate

A competitive element - could then be used

The cool down – to bring the heart rate and breathing rate gradually down and conclude the session with the athletes, checking on learning and reinforcing goals

A review - with the athletes of what has happened and a reminder of when the group will meet again

Which section do you plan first?

The key decision goes back to the purpose of the session. The Supervising Coach will identify the session goal for the athletes so make sure that this is completed on the top of the session plan.

Preparing for the session

When you start coaching it may be your first experience of working with a group of young people, adults, veterans or disabled athletes. It may be worth remembering that it could also be a first for them! You need to think carefully about the members of the group before you finalise the plans. Look at the session plan template and begin to complete the details with your Supervising Coach.

Date: agree this with your Supervising Coach

Time: the athletes will also need to know it

Venue: Where is it? What will you use? What facilities are there?

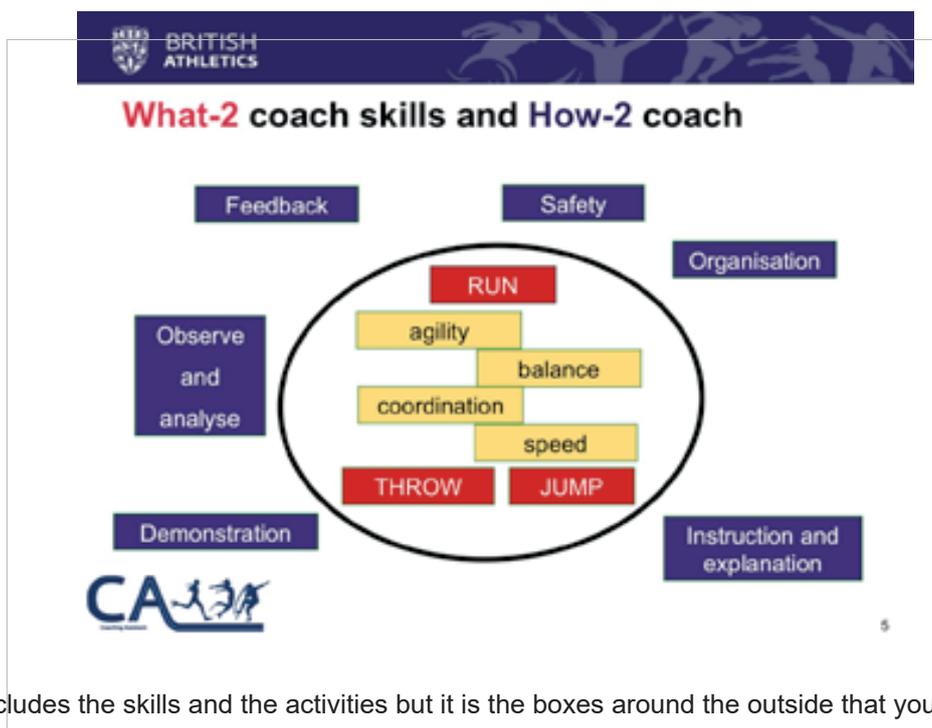
Equipment: you may be able to include things you know are available but can add to it later on.

Athletes: Number, age group, male/female, stage of development, etc.

3.2 Coaching Skills And Knowledge

Throughout the course you will be introduced to a range of skills and knowledge. As prospective Coaching Assistants you will need to increase your knowledge of athletics, events, rules, training sessions relevant to the athletes' stage of development and ability. The athletics technical knowledge we are referring to are known as the "What 2" skills, i.e. what technical aspects to look for when coaching the long jump, etc. The course introduces you to many of these technical elements, also linked to a "How 2" skill. "How 2" skills develop your coaching abilities such as instruction and explanation or demonstration. The "How 2" skills are just as essential as the "What 2" skills and both must be learnt and practised to be successful in coaching.

Once you have decided what it is that you are going to do during a particular unit of the session you also need to begin to focus on another important area: the "How 2 Coach" skills.



The diagram includes the skills and the activities but it is the boxes around the outside that you need to focus on. How will you organise the session? Who will give a demonstration?

Some of the answers will be provided by the Supervising Coach. As a Coaching Assistant you still need to make decisions about the "How-2" skills that you want to use and develop.

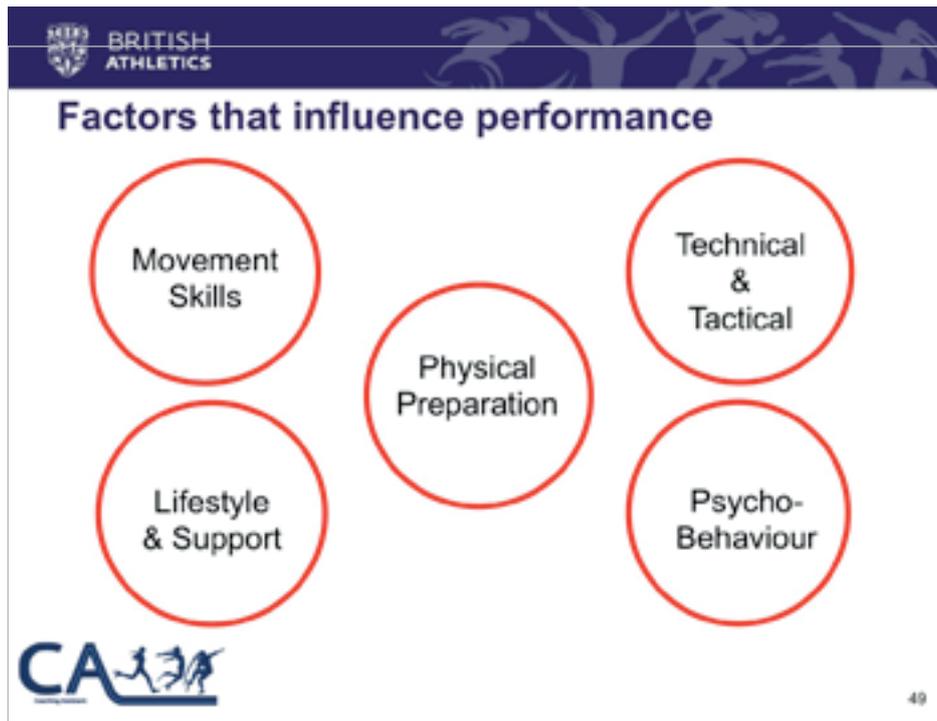
3.3 Performance Factors

Athletics is a collection of activities or events; they are the "What 2" of the sport. So part of the answer as to what is going to be done in the session will almost certainly lie here. However it is still very important to keep asking why it is being done. Will the session be about an event or group of events or will it be about balance, agility, speed, or coordination? The stage of development of the athletes you are working with will also need to be considered.

Consider a closely fought 100m sprint, a tactical wheelchair 3000m race in hot and humid conditions, a closely contested high jump competition and a club throw in wet and windy conditions. What factors do you think will influence the outcome of these events?

Athletes are born with certain physical potentials and these can limit the ultimate performance achieved. A male high jumper that is less than six foot may be less likely to achieve international success; a sprinter is likely to have been born with a high proportion of fast twitch muscle fibres that are needed for speed. The full physical potential can only be realised through a long-term progressive training programme. An individual's personality also appears to be influenced by their genetics. Athletes can learn to strengthen mental attributes such as self-confidence, commitment, control and concentration. The full development of all these attributes requires a carefully considered long-term athlete development programme.

British Athletics has outlined five key aspects as essential for success in an athlete. These are:



Depending upon the stage of the athlete's development, the emphasis and types of activity will be different. British Athletics have developed a model that identifies each of the core factors for each of the different stages of athlete development.

Fundamental Movement Skills

The presence of movement skills is the basic building block of all physical activity, even an adult coming into the sport at a later stage in life or taking up road running needs fundamental movement skills as the basis for the running action. An assessment of these skills is essential and if an athlete had not been fortunate to gain these early in life they should go back and address these skills as part of their training programme.

There are times in a young athlete's life when they are more susceptible to skill development (around the ages of 9 – 12 years), establishing sound technical patterns across the events is essential during this time providing a firm foundation for future athletic training.

The Fundamental Movement Skills are the skills that underpin all other movement, sport and event specific skills. In order to develop effective event specific skills the athlete should first establish a strong fundamentals base.

The Fundamentals of Movement are Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed of movement (ABC's).

Balance

Balance in athletics looks at the athlete's base of support (what part of the body is in contact with the ground), centre of mass and postural control. A definition of balance is "to be stable and correctly aligned allowing performance of effective movement." Balance is affected by the athlete's base of support and centre of mass. On course we looked at how the following affected balance:

- The size of the base of support
- Correct position of the base – e.g. the foot pointing forwards if you wish to move forwards
- The direction of movement – making sure your base of support allows for movement in a desired direction and with control.



The key learning was the importance of providing a stable and balanced position from which to perform all running, jumping and throwing movements. Keeping the centre of mass within the base of support will help the athlete maintain stability. If the centre of mass moves outside the base of support the athlete will lose stability. This is not always a bad thing as the athlete may wish to move in a given direction and in order for them to do this they will first need to lose stability in this direction and regain stability again in the new direction, i.e. at a sprint start.

To develop balance, postural stability and control are key factors. Encourage the athletes to keep a neutral spine by thinking about a balloon fixed to their head, pulling them tall. Encourage the athletes to keep a neutral hips position by thinking about a bucket filled with water. Tilting the hips forward or backwards will spill the water and create bad posture; try to keep all the water in the bucket.

Remember: You first need to be stable and correctly aligned before you can perform any movement effectively.



Coordination

Once you are balanced you need to be able to organise the body and limbs to perform a coordinated movement. Coordination looks at how the athlete can increase the size of force they apply in a given movement and the time they apply the force over using a coordinated sequential movements in the body (better known as the kinetic chain). Coordination also explores the complexity of a skill.

By correctly coordinating the body and its parts an athlete can increase the amount of force applied. An example of this is throwing a tennis ball with an over arm technique. Try experimenting throwing with your preferred throwing arm and then with your less preferred throwing arm. What was different? You may have found that your throwing technique was less effective on your less preferred arm. You may have also noticed that you found it hard to coordinate your body to throw the tennis ball.

Try to consider in what order your body moves to throw a tennis ball (or apply a force to an object). In most cases when throwing for distance you will firstly step into the throw and then use your hips, torso and shoulders to transfer the force to your arm (legs before arms). This is a coordinated body movement. Unfortunately this order may not be as effective in a less dominant arm or leg leading to less force being applied to the movement.



Applying force over a greater period of time

Try bouncing a ball as high as you can, but only bringing your arm to shoulder height. Notice how high the ball bounces. This time try bouncing the ball as high as you can but this time swing your arm from above shoulder height. You should have noticed the ball bounced higher. This is due to the amount of time you were able to apply a force to the ball before release.

Agility

Agility is defined as “the ability to change direction at speed”. This can involve changing direction to the left or right, but also forwards and backward. It is also the ability to start and stop quickly. Agility is a result of the combination of both balance and coordination as an athlete needs to be both balanced and coordinated in order to express force to change direction and speed.

Consider how you can use Fundamentals to help develop running, jumping and throwing actions with the athletes you are working with.



Technical Development

The technical knowledge and detail required by the Coaching Assistant relates to the first three stages of the Athlete Development Pathway. The course activities reflect these stages of development (regardless of athletes' chronological age). As a Coaching Assistant you should be equipped with an understanding of the principles of run, jump and throw so you are able to support a more experienced coach in delivering sessions. An understanding of the basic technical models to develop the foundations for athletics is required. It should be noted that for the athletes that the Coaching Assistant will be working with a multi events approach to athletics development is required. Athletes must be developing their skills in running, jumping and throwing activities simultaneously.

Running

Running at this stage can be categorised as running for speed or running for endurance. There are similarities in the technical models of each; however as speed increases the characteristics of the model alter. The speed events that athletes in these stages of development would compete in range from:

60 - 100m – where maximum speed is required

150 - 400m – where optimum speed is required

60 – 80m sprint hurdles – where maximum speed and rhythm is required

Sprint relays where maximum speed and baton speed is required

The key principles underpinning the movement and the phases of Running for Speed are:

Principles

- Speed = stride length x stride frequency
- Technical efficiency
- Arms are synchronised and counterbalance leg action

Phases

- Support (“Front Support” - with the foot in front of the centre of mass, and “Drive” – with the foot in contact with the floor and behind the centre of mass)
- Flight (“Recovery” – with the foot tucked under buttock, “Forward Swing” – with leg firstly moving forward and then down and backward immediately prior to first foot contact)

On course you were introduced to the Speed and Endurance Technical Templates to reinforce these key points.


BRITISH ATHLETICS

Speed

- Shoulders low and relaxed
- Fast arms elbow driving backward
- Tall posture and high hips
- Heel up and under buttock
- Knees up, toe up
- Land on front half of foot (ball of foot) and drive down and back




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Developing Running Technique

To establish base technical factors at an early stage of development is key. Running with a tall body position with hips high and a parallel knee position during the drive is essential. The shoulders should be in a low and relaxed position (not hunched up to the ears). The arms work in opposition to the legs and should be driven back quickly. The landing position of the foot is on the forefoot and not the whole foot or the toes. There should be a credit card sized space between the heel and the ground.

By the end of the Run – Jump – Throw phase athletes should be able to run at speed demonstrating these technical areas. The importance of technical development at an early age is vital; acquiring new skills at this stage will involve developing new motor programmes. When athletes are pressured or under stress they are likely to revert to the initial skills learnt. It is important to note that when delivering parts of the session the focus should still be on the technical areas rather than the games themselves. Whilst the athletes are performing the activity the Coaching Assistant should be observing the key technical elements during the activity.

The Coaching Assistant should be supporting the development of sound technical principles in developing athletes. The following technical points should be encouraged, observed and developed in conjunction with the Supervising Coach.

Running Action – Full Flight	Running Action – Acceleration	Running Action – Starts	Running Action – Hurdles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High hips – balloon pulling you tall • Active (down and back) foot action • Heels come ‘up and under’ in the recovery phase • Relaxed shoulders and arms • Good posture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward body lean • Push down and back with the feet in a ‘Piston’ like action • Exaggerated arm action in initial steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starts variation - Falling stars/Roll over Start • Basic Crouch Start position (No blocks) • Correct arm and leg spacing – (Measure blocks with 2 and 3 foot measurements) • Good basic set position (90 and 120 degrees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low height hurdles basic technique • Rhythm between hurdles (1 ,2, 3 hurdle) • Correct take off and landing positions • Basic lead leg and trail leg technique

The endurance events that athletes in these stages of development would compete in range from:

600 – 1500m on track

1 – 2KM off track (cross country and road)

There are many similarities between the speed and endurance model. We still wish to attain a tall hip position and a backward drive of the arms, although this drive is not as pronounced as in sprinting, similarly with the knee drive, the knees are not required to raise to the levels of the sprinter due to the difference in speed, rhythm guides optimal speed and efficiency of movement in the endurance events.

Establishing rhythm should be worked on from an early age. With endurance running the foot tends to land naturally on the forefoot or it must land on the heel for race walking. Body position and posture developments can parallel those for speed.

The key principles underpinning the movement and the phases for Running for Endurance are:

Principles

- Speed = stride length x stride frequency
- Efficiency more important than power production
- Arms are synchronised and counterbalance leg action

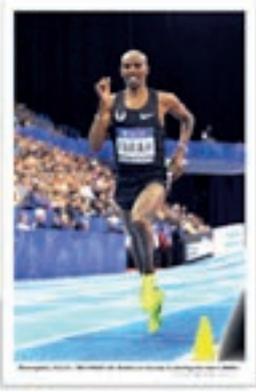
Phases

- Support (“Front Support” - with the foot in front of the centre of mass, and “Drive” – with the foot in contact with the floor and behind the centre of mass)
- Flight (“Recovery” – with the foot tucked under buttock, “Forward Swing” – with leg firstly moving forward and then down and backward immediately prior to first foot contact)


BRITISH ATHLETICS

Endurance

- Tall posture with high hips
- Relaxed shoulders with efficient backwards driving arm action
- Rhythm guides optimal speed and efficiency
- Foot lands naturally underneath the centre of mass, moving down and backwards





Wheelchair Racing

Wheelchair racing is considered as an integrated discipline within the Speed and Endurance Event Groups. Wheelchair racing should be considered as a discipline within the run of athletics activities.

During wheelchair racing athletes will use a specific racing chair designed and set up for racing on athletics tracks or roads. The set up of the chair is individual to the athlete. Technical points are related to using the wheel as a clock face with 12 at the top position. Athletes should ensure that they can comfortably reach to the 6pm position with a slight bend in the elbow. The seat and upholstery should be adjusted to achieve this position.

There are five basic technical points to consider when pushing the racing chair as show to the right.

Proper seat positioning combined with wheel and push rim selection allow for a comfortable stroke and slow release. After completion of the Athletics Coach course, an online Wheelchair Racing module is available for more technical information.

Wheelchair Racing

- Catch push rim at 2-3pm
- Drive at 3-5pm – accelerate onto push rim, drive down extending triceps
- Release push rim at 6-7pm avoid over extending elbows
- Lift and bend elbows to initiate next stroke phase
- Acceleration (with high elbows)

Jumping

Jumping activities for these stages of athlete development should ensure athletes have the foundations to jump for height and for distance. These principles and movements will complement any additional training in future seasons in developing fitness specific to a large number of events. The jumping events and actions we need to focus on are:

High Jump – jumping for height

Long Jump – jumping for distance

Combination jumping is also an important feature of jumps development and preparing for triple jump at a later stage of development.

In disability athletics long jump, high jump and triple jump are competed in for some classifications.

On course you were introduced to the Jumps Technical Template. Speed is vital in the jumping events so correct speed development and technique is important prior to jumping. The approach to any jump should be fast but controllable, optimal rather than maximal. The run-up for any jump should be controlled, accurate and performed at optimal speed. Speed is the key here in order to control the take off. At take off the head and chest should be up and the driving action is upwards and forwards, the hips should be high during take-off and the take-off foot should be active (down and back motion) and flat.

Jumps

- Fast controlled approach
- Active (down and back action) flat foot at take off
- Head up, chest up, drive up
- Extend through the hip, knee and ankle (in that order)
- Tall in the air, hips high
- Soft controlled landing

The key principles underpinning the movement and the phases for Jumping are:

Principles	Phases
Speed of approach	Approach
Angle of take off	Take off
Height of take off	Flight
Rotation control	Landing

High Jump – Jumping for Height	Long Jump – Jumping for Distance
High jump scissors technique	Stride jump technique Fast
J shape approach – starting run up with the outside leg	controlled approach Triple
Triple extension on take off	extension on take off Long
Long and thin in the air Controlled landing	and thin in the air Soft and controlled landing 5 – 6
Drives up free leg	stride approach

Throwing

Throwing activities for these stages of athlete development should ensure athletes have the foundations to perform both a push and a pull throw. These principles and movements will complement any additional training in future seasons in developing fitness specific to a large number of events. The throwing events and actions we need to focus on are:

Shot Putt – push throw

Javelin – pull throw

In disability athletics throws may be performed from a standing or seated position depending on the disability classification.

There are additional event specific throws not covered in this course (Discus and Hammer) that the athletes may develop at a later stage, however the core principles underpinning all throws are the same. On course you were introduced to the Throws Technical Template.


BRITISH ATHLETICS

Throws

- Knees bent with balance on the rear leg
- Rotate and extend rear hip, knee and ankle
- Gradually increase speed
- Transfer balance from rear leg to front leg
- Use the arm(s) fast and last.

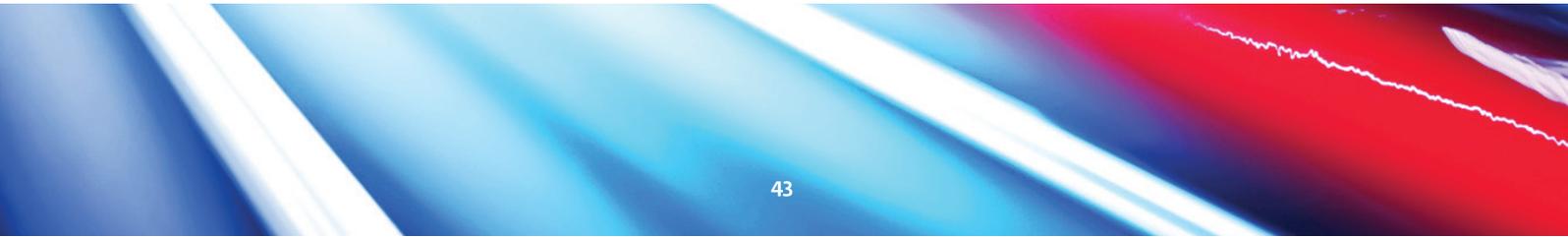



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The basic principles for throws underpin all of the throws regardless of the event or sport. Establishing an early pattern of these movements can provide a firm foundation for future throwing development. All throwing movements start with the legs rather than the arms, as force is transmitted through the body. The legs will move first as the weight is transferred from the back to the front leg. The movement is a slow to fast rhythmical movement building up speed to the point of release of the implement. The low position refers to flexed knees which will enable extension and speed generation ending in a high position at release. Speed of limb movement is essential for throwing events.

Principles	Phases
Speed of release	Preparation
Height of release	Movement
Angle of release (also affected by aerodynamics)	Power position
	Release
	Recovery

Push Throw – Shot Putt	Pull Throw - Javelin
<p>Basic “Power Position” – chin, knee, toe alignment</p> <p>Weight transfer from back to front</p> <p>Hold the implement</p> <p>Low to high</p> <p>Slow to fast</p> <p>Legs before arms</p>	<p>Basic standing throw (with staggered feet)</p> <p>Low to high</p> <p>Slow to fast</p> <p>Legs before arms</p>



Javelin Grip:

- Grip javelin at the rim of the binding cord with thumb and either first or second finger
- Curl remaining fingers around the binding
- Grip should be firm and comfortable
- Javelin runs down the length of the palm
- Wrist is nearest to the javelin point



Shot Grip:

- Rest the shot on the base of the first three fingers of the hand
- Spread these fingers comfortably behind the shot, with thumb and little finger providing support on either side
- Hold the shot under the chin and against the neck with the elbow raised
- Keep the wrist firm



Physical Preparation

Strength is one of the essential fitness components required in all athletics events in different quantities. The strength required for the thrower is different from the strength endurance required by an endurance athlete. Knowing the demands of the event will help you determine the type of physical preparation work that is required. Further information on physical preparation for developing athletes is contained within the Event Group Modules available on uCoach.

Psycho-behavioural (mental skills training)

Psycho-behavioural skills training is an important and sometimes overlooked factor in an athlete's development. Even from an early age skills such as confidence and imagery can have a positive effect on an athlete's development. Coaches can observe strong mental characteristics in athletes at quite a young age which may indicate future sporting success, perseverance, resilience and commitment. At an elite level the psychological edge can mean the difference between winning and losing out on an Olympic medal. As with any training it takes time to develop, starting to build these foundations at an earlier age will help later on in the athlete's career.

Many people believe that athletes either do or do not possess the necessary mental attributes to be successful. However, in the same way that you can train the body to perform better, you can train the mind. Qualities like concentration and self-confidence are often deemed to be essential to successful performance. Both can be enhanced by learning specific techniques e.g. through imagery or use of routines. Goal setting is a powerful technique for building commitment.

It is important to realise that mental skills training should not be seen as a remedial activity for athletes who have particular weaknesses but a skill that can and should be developed in all athletes.

Lifestyle and Support

It is important to remember that for most, athletics is a hobby and fits around a large variety of other lifestyle factors such as school and education, other sports, family and friends, religious practices or social life. At whatever level the athlete is training or performing at it is important to keep in context of the whole lifestyle balance for the athlete and the coach. Coaches should educate athletes regarding hydration and nutrition as well as stressing the importance of adequate rest, recovery and getting enough sleep.

Knowledge of their involvement in other sports and physical activities is also essential to ensure they are not overloading themselves by participating and competing in too many sports without sufficient rest. During times of external stress such as exams, house moves, going to university, family break ups, bereavement, athletes should be able to ease off training. When illness or injury occurs time off or decreased training should be encouraged.

While athletics is important, it is important for athletes to retain some balance in their lives. Training must be fitted in and around other commitments. Balancing all these different requirements is difficult; coaches need to be aware of all the competing pressures and may need to be willing to help athletes cope. Get to know your athletes well enough to be able to help them to realise that life outside sport is important.

Help your athlete to:

- Accept that school education and qualifications are important; very few athletes are lucky enough to become a full time athlete
- Appreciate the support they gain from their families
- Retain friends from outside athletics
- Spend time on hobbies and other sports
- Find sufficient time for rest and recovery

To do this, you may need to:

- Build good relationships with each athlete
- Reduce their training time and load when there are other important pressures in their lives (e.g. exams)
- Liaise with parents and teachers to ensure that athletes do not over commit themselves, have sufficient rest and keep their lives in balance.

3.4 Components Of Fitness

There are a number of different components of fitness each of which have differing levels of importance for each of the events within the sport of athletics.



Coordination enables an athlete to carry out movements safely, efficiently and accurately.

Endurance is needed to help athletes sustain a high work rate, maintain technical quality and concentration throughout a training session or event and to enable them to recover quickly from the high intensity demands.

Flexibility is important so athletes can execute the full range of motion required in their training and/or competitive movements.

Speed is simply how quickly athletes can move themselves or parts of their body.

Strength enables athletes to produce the forceful movements seen in track and field events and avoid injury.

Power (a combination of strength and speed) is required to produce forceful movements very rapidly (e.g. run fast, jump high, throw far, wheelchair racing – downhill pushing); strength endurance is required to perform these movements repeatedly without tiring.

Each component of fitness is of some importance in every event but the relative importance varies. Speed is obviously more important in the sprint events than the endurance events; aerobic endurance conversely is more important in the endurance events. Speed is needed in the take-off for all jumping events and limb speed in all throwing events. Flexibility might be deemed more important in the more technical events (like high jump) but actually is vital in allowing efficient action and reducing the likelihood of injury in all events.

Regardless of their event, athletes should have a balance of all the fitness factors, with emphasis on those most important for success in their event. This has implications for the development of athletes; a broad experience base across all events and components of fitness provides a firm foundation for future athletics success when reaching the point of specialisation.

3.5 Principles Of Training

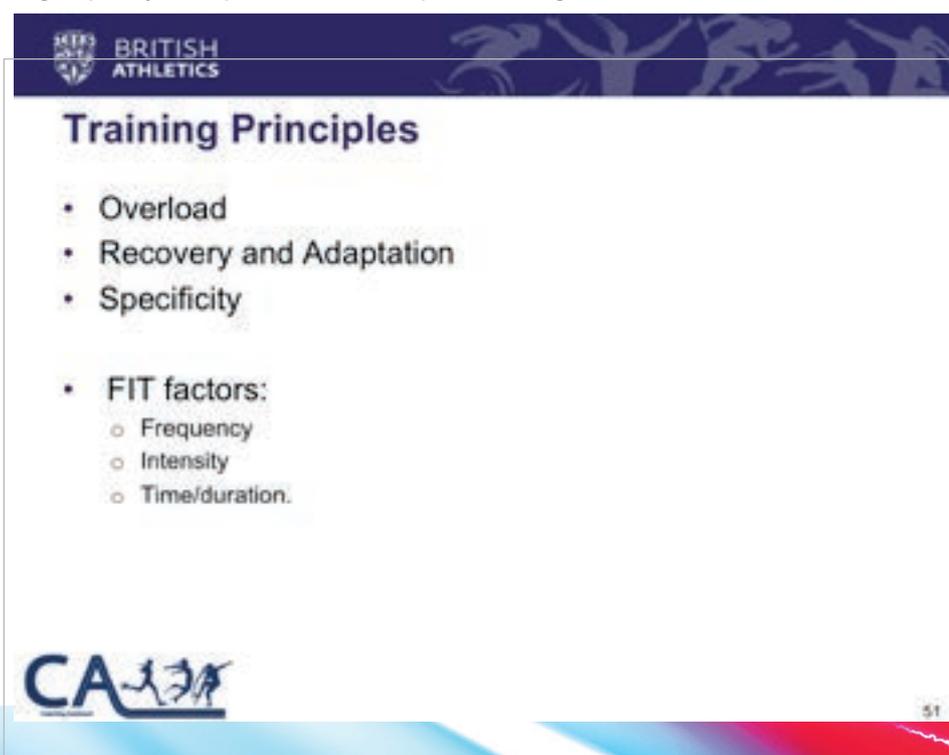
To ensure training sessions and the programmes devised are as effective as possible you need to follow sound training principles. The fundamental training effect is based on the principle of adaptation. The body or mind will react to the stress imposed by training (physical, mental or technical stress) by increasing their capacity to cope with it. The coach's task is to create the conditions that impose the correct level and balance of stress to cause an appropriate adaptation effect. The process of adaptation is governed by other training principles.

The fundamental training principles on which training programmes are based is overload and recovery. For any performance component to improve, the system must be appropriately overloaded, it will then adapt to the greater demands. For example, endurance training overloads the cardiovascular system (heart, lungs and circulation); by making it work harder or for a longer duration than normal, it allows greater amounts of oxygen to be taken in and used to generate energy. Strength training overloads the muscles, causing them to work harder than normal and so be able to contract in a more forceful and effective way.

Technical skills sometimes break down under the stress of competition. To prevent this you need to expose the athlete to similar or more demanding conditions and help him or her to learn to deal with these and produce the desired technical movement. If you want to improve the athlete's capacity to concentrate, you will ultimately need to expose the athlete to increasingly distracting conditions so that he or she learns to use mental techniques to maintain focus.

For training to have an effect the demands of the activity must be greater than those with which the athlete can comfortably cope, this is Overload. The coach's skill is to impose the right training load – too little and there will be no gain; too much and you may cause distress, injury and ultimately debilitating fatigue (overtraining).

The principle of GRADUAL progressive overload suggests that in order to DEVELOP PHYSICAL CAPACITY THE ATHLETE NEEDS TO BE PROGRESSIVELY CHALLENGED. As the athlete adapts the nature of this challenge should be gradually increased. Increase in training loadings should be matched with the body's gradually increasing capacity to cope with, and adapt to training.



The image shows a presentation slide titled 'Training Principles' from British Athletics. The slide lists three main principles: Overload, Recovery and Adaptation, and Specificity. It also includes a section for 'FIT factors' which are Frequency, Intensity, and Time/duration. The slide features the British Athletics logo at the top and the CA logo at the bottom left. The slide number '51' is visible in the bottom right corner.

BRITISH ATHLETICS

Training Principles

- Overload
- Recovery and Adaptation
- Specificity

- FIT factors:
 - Frequency
 - Intensity
 - Time/duration.

CA

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Overload can be achieved by manipulating the FIT factors: frequency, intensity and time.

The athlete can:

F train more frequently (frequency, how many sessions or repetitions)

I train harder (intensity, how close to maximum effort)

T train for longer (duration/time, how many times, for how long)

The adaptation gains actually occur after, not during, the activity in which the system has been overloaded. 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. Athletes must, therefore, be given adequate recovery time between sessions and for a novice athlete, at least one complete rest day each week.

Recovery is vital; it is during the easy and rest periods that the body actually adapts to the load previously imposed through hard training. Ensure athletes have plenty of rest and recovery.

For continual gains to be made, the loads imposed through training need to become progressively harder as the athlete begins to adapt to the increased load imposed (the principle of progressive overload). If the training loads are no longer imposed, there will be a gradual reversal effect and the adaptation effects will gradually be lost (the principle of reversibility). The adaptation effect is also highly specific so the training must therefore be highly specific (the principle of specificity). For example, some coaches may advocate medicine ball exercise to develop speed rather than weight training because the movement patterns are more similar to the event.

For young athletes that maybe involved in training and competition for a number of sports in addition to athletics it is vital for the coach to build up an accurate picture of training loads and rest and recovery for the athlete as a whole. If insufficient periods of rest and recovery are not implemented the likelihood of injury and fatigue related illness, susceptibility to colds and infections may increase, as the body does not have sufficient opportunity to recovery.

3.6 Injury

Injuries can and will occur in sport but both the frequency and severity of injuries can be significantly reduced through good coaching practice. Accordingly all coaches have a responsibility to take every possible precaution to prevent injuries from occurring and to take appropriate action if an injury occurs. Best practice would advocate listening to the athletes concerns regarding niggles and pains and record incidences of injury and athlete complaints. Ongoing issues should be referred to an appropriate specialist for further investigation.

Injuries occur for two main reasons:

1. **Sudden-onset injury**; injuries resulting from unexpected incidents, for example, a trip, a fall, a collision, or other sudden movement that excessively loads the body and results in a breakdown. The possibility of such events may be reduced through effective organisation and conditioning.
2. **Gradual-onset injury**; injuries that occur as a result of repeated overload without adequate recovery. Such injuries typically occur as a result of poorly constructed training plans, inadequate communication between coach and athlete, poor movement biomechanics, and/or inadequate conditioning practice. The incidence of such injuries can be greatly reduced through enhancing coach-athlete communication and athlete feedback, through ensuring adequate rest and recovery strategies, as well as appropriate movement skill and muscular conditioning.

It should be noted that the majority of the injuries experienced by young athletes are 'overuse' in nature. These injuries are common in athletics and tend to result from:

- Poor technique (e.g. shin soreness in walks, elbow injury in javelin)
- Unsuitable equipment (e.g. throwing too heavy implements)
- Inappropriate training programmes (e.g. lifting weights that are too heavy or working on power before athletes have developed a good strength base)
- Overtraining (consistent long term imbalances between stress and recovery). Overtraining decreases performance and increases the risk of illness and injury
- Undetected physical imbalances or fitness limitations
- Inappropriate training loads imposed on young athletes. Particular care needs to be taken with young athletes where the body is still growing. Bones, muscles and joints are not fully developed until athletes are around twenty years old. In addition, body tissues tend to grow at different rates and young people are particularly vulnerable during growth spurts occurring in adolescence. Training loads should be carefully monitored and controlled during growth spurts.

Injury Management

Coaches should gain first aid qualifications to ensure they take appropriate action when injuries occur.

Ensure athletes seek qualified professional advice as soon as possible if:

- Major injuries are sustained (fractures, severe bleeding, head injuries, where there is a complete tear of the injured tissue, significant swelling and bruising with severe pain even at rest)
- Moderate soft tissue injuries (to muscles, joints, tendons) occur that involve moderate swelling, bruising and pain on movement.

With all soft tissue injuries always follow these procedures:

R rest the injured part. This means stopping the activity and not trying to train through it

I apply ice or a cold compress regularly (10 – 15 minutes every 2 – 3 hours) to reduce the swelling. Do not apply heat (hot water, bath, shower) for the first 48 hours; after that time alternating hot and cold can accelerate recovery by stimulating blood flow

C use some form of compression (e.g. strapping) to prevent swelling

E elevate the injured part to reduce swelling

D diagnosis by a medical specialist as soon as possible

To reduce the likelihood of injury:

- Ensure athletes always warm up and cool down thoroughly
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear (e.g. spikes for high jump, gloves for wheelchair racing)
- Correct poor technique, avoid continuing exercise with poor technique particularly when fatigued
- Seek advice when there are minor niggling injuries, don't wait until they become a major problem
- Work on both sides of the body to reduce imbalances (particularly important in the hurdling and throwing event where one side of the body tends to work harder)
- Follow medical advice when injuries occur
- Be aware of any technical and/or coordination changes that may occur as a result of injury
- Ensure additional coordination training is conducted prior to returning to full training
- Build up to full training gradually after injuries

Illness

Illness may be defined as “poor health resulting from disease of body or mind; sickness”. As well as injury coaches must bear in mind athletes’ illness. In young athletes traditional childhood illness such as chicken pox would spread quickly through a training group. Athletes that have an infection should not be permitted to train with the group until the illness has passed. To avoid cross infection it is not recommended that athletes with any form of infection, including flu, train with their group. As a general rule of thumb if the illness is below the neck lay off the training for a while, you may continue to train with a head cold or sore throat. Coaches may want to monitor the incidence of illness in their athletes as this may flag up immune system issues, presence of anaemia or other developing medical conditions that may have an effect on the athletes training capabilities.

Nutrition

Eating the correct amount of the right foods at the right time can improve performance and help athletes recover between training sessions and after competitions. To achieve this, athletes need to pay attention to their eating and drinking habits for 365 days a year – not just on those days prior to competitions. For more information on how to eat like a champion see <http://ucoach.com/document/eat-and-drink-like-a-champion/>

Tips for healthy eating:

- Always eat breakfast
- Buy own drinks bottle and keep drinking and sipping (even when they are not thirsty)
- Drink before, during and after training and competition
- Eat 5-7 portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- Eat enough food to support not just their sporting demands but for all their bodies needs (these are even greater if the body is still growing)
- Eat foods rich in calcium and iron
- Eat more carbohydrate and sufficient protein
- Avoid high fat foods and foods that contain processed fats.

The following table will be useful in ensuring that programmes cover all areas of the factors influencing performance for athletes in the first three stages of development.

	Movement Skills	Technical - Tactical	Strength and Conditioning (Physical)	Mental Skills (Psycho – behavioural)	Lifestyle
Fundamentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agility, balance and coordination • Running • Jumping, hopping, and bounding • Throwing and catching • Striking and kicking • Gliding • Buoyancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic movement • Run, Jump, Throw activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed: 0-4s • Strength: through gymnastic exercises • Endurance through speed-based games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence • Motivation • Imagery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics of sport • Importance of good nutrition and hydration
Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agility, balance and coordination • Running • Jumping, hopping, and bounding • Throwing and catching • Striking and kicking • Postural control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills to develop Running, Jumping and Throwing in a multi event environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed: 0-4s • Strength: through gymnastic exercises and free-weight training technique • Endurance through a balanced range of rhythmical activities (intermittent speed work, running on different surfaces and longer distance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal setting • Motivation • Self-awareness • Focus • Imagery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics of sport • Importance of good nutrition and hydration • Session structure • Commitment to training
Event Group Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agility, balance and coordination • Running Jumping, hopping, and bounding • Throwing and catching • Postural control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills related to Running, Jumping and Throwing in an event group specific environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximal speed, lactate speed • Strength: free-weight training technique loaded and increased use of plyometrics as strength develops • Aerobic and increasingly Alactic Endurance through a range of rhythmical activities (high and low intensity intermittent speed work, running on different surfaces and longer distance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal setting -independent • Motivation • Perception of pressure • Performance evaluation • Focus • Distraction control • Imagery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of good nutrition and hydration • Session structure • Commitment to training

Setting Goals

As a Coaching Assistant it is important to have some sense of where the athletes need to go. Why do they do certain training activities followed by others? How will you know if they are improving and what will they do next? It is a good idea to have goals for the athlete (normally set by the Supervising Coach) and personal coaching goals.

A good goal that can be easily evaluated and monitored is a SMART goal.

Specific	Be precise	Three step run up for the Long Jump
Measurable	Something that can identify progress	All have identified their preferred foot for take off
Agreed	Something that both parties agree to work on	To ensure “buy in” from athlete/ coach
Realistic	A good possibility that the goal can be achieved	Close to athletes’ current level of experience and skill
Time bound	When will the goal be achieved	To be completed within a stated period of time

It could look something like this when written down:

“Use a three-step approach so the athletes can identify their preferred take off foot by the end of the session”.

Session Goals

It is important to note that the session goal says what the session will focus on and when it should be achieved. As a Coaching Assistant you need to record it on the session plan and communicate it to the athletes so that it is accepted. Finally you will need to review it at the end of the session with the Supervising Coach to identify who from the group did and did not achieve the goal and decide if it needs to be focussed on again.

Personal Coaching Goals

In addition to the goals for the session it is important to select goals for yourself and your own development as a coach. Your choice of personal coaching goals is up to you; think about the feedback you were given about your coaching process skills during your coaching practice on day 2 of the course. Which of them needed more attention? For example, instruction and explanation or demonstration?

3.7 Identification Of Hazards And Minimising Risks

A coach is responsible for the safety and welfare of others and as a Coaching Assistant you also have a duty of care when it comes to health and safety. There are many hazards that can lead to a safety issue in athletics and as a Coaching Assistant you have to be aware of these and develop your understanding of how to identify and respond to them. This takes time and can be dependent upon experience.

On the course you were introduced to safety principles that should be adhered to:

Safety	Why?	How?
1. Assess risk: area, equipment, athletes	Check for hazards and risk factors prior to session so they can be eliminated or minimised prior to session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look around the area • Make safety checks on any equipment being used • Check athletes clothing, footwear, etc.
2. Keep checking safety: area, equipment, athletes	Risks and hazards may change during the session due to environment changes, others users, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to be vigilant of safety issues • Observe changes in weather and facility users
3. Keep athletes on task set	Ensure that athletes continue to complete the activities safely, following instructions and with well-organised groups to ensure maximum activity and minimal disruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce instructions on activity • Keep all actively involved • Keep other equipment out of reach
4. Follow correct coaching practice and progressions	To make sure they are all following a structured programme. Ensure the progressions are suitable for the group as it reduces likelihood of behaviour issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use session plan/task card as a guide, be familiar with it • Ensure groups are active and split to maximise involvement

It is good practice to develop your awareness of the safety issues at the facility that you regularly use. Consider these questions to assist your safe practice:

What are some of the safety hazards at the athletics track where you are based?

Who in the club do you report any hazards to?

Who in the club can you talk to if you are concerned about one of the athletes in your group?

What equipment is suitable for the athletes you are working with?

What do you need to do to ensure that athletes are properly warmed up and can cool down at the end of the session?

How will you ensure that the training session is suitable for the group?

What do you need to do if an athlete is injured while in your care?

Who in the club is first aid trained?

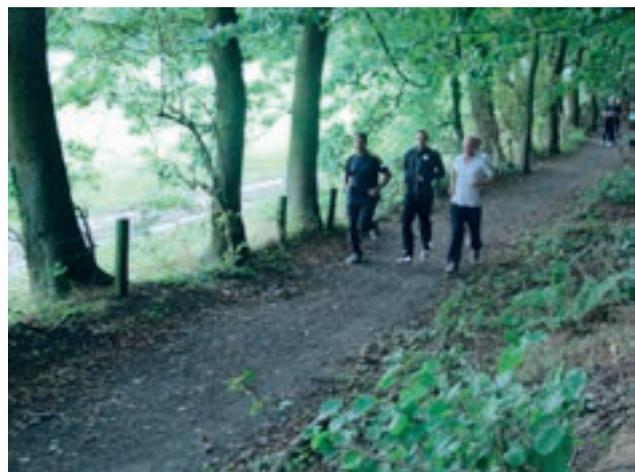
Who has the contact numbers for parents?



The ultimate responsibility for safety during the session lies with your Supervising Coach; however it is best practice to quickly learn and become familiar with safety hazards, risks and methods to minimise them. As part of every coaching session a risk assessment is a useful tool in checking the suitability of the environment and the potential risks. Centres and facilities will have their own risk assessment procedures but it is important to establish a routine of conducting risk assessments and safety checks to ensure your safety and the safety of others. Hazards and risks may evolve during a session and these need to be identified and minimised or stopped immediately.

Coaches should ensure they are:

- Able to assess risk and take appropriate steps to ensure that the training facilities are free from hazards. This is a key part of the pre-session planning and organisation
- Ensuring all of the athletes are properly prepared, checking clothing and footwear, making sure they are properly warmed up for what they are going to do
- Using equipment that is suitable for the group i.e. landing mats for high jump that are the right size and depth, javelins or other throwing implements that are suitable for the stage of development, running distances that are suitable for the members of the group
- Accepting responsibility for all of the individuals within the group. Your group may include young people who may misbehave
- Protecting athletes from any form of abuse. This includes physical and emotional abuse as well as from inappropriate training demands. You will need to consider the age and stage of development of the athletes in the group to ensure the sessions are suitable
- Know what to do if an accident or an injury occurs. Who is qualified as a first aider, where help can be found? A knowledge of the facilities emergency procedures, fire exits and assembly points is essential to maintain the safety of the group should an emergency situation arise



3.8 Organisation

Detailed planning and organisation can make for a well-run session. Fail to plan therefore plan to fail. Coaching Assistants should know and understand the environment in which they are coaching, what areas are available for use? Who will be the other users at that time? Are any activities restricted?

Your Supervising Coach can help you with the planning issues and will have a good knowledge of the facility, environment and the athletes. There may be times when all the safety checks have been completed and you are working with a small group of athletes on your own and a new safety hazard becomes apparent, the safe plan you made may no longer be safe and the activity should be modified. Take care not to take on too many athletes; the suggested coach to athlete ratio is 1:12 (including Coaching Assistant). Ensure these ratios are maintained; this will assist with group organisation and management and provide a better experience for the athletes.

Ensuring athletes are actively involved throughout the session is key to maintaining their interest and involvement and will aid with any emerging behaviour management issues. Young athletes who are waiting for a while for their turn can become distracted, good organisation and planning of the activity can prevent this.

Organisation	Why?	How?
1. Plan in advance how you will manage people, equipment and space	Clarify numbers of athletes so they can be split into suitable groupings for manageability and involvement Establish coaching area, where the equipment will be set up, how much is required, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with Supervising Coach session plan including athletes' backgrounds, numbers, needs, etc. • Establish coaching area, shared use of facilities and equipment, etc.
2. Check and re-check that plan is safe during activity	To limit the likelihood of accidents and any behaviour management issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss it with Supervising Coach and ensure it is adhered to, re-checked and modified if necessary during the session
3. Group athletes according to number, ability and activity	Ensure athletes are active and involved so behaviour issues are minimised Help can be sought to manage smaller groups if required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In discussion with Supervising Coach, decide on group sizes and maybe different ability groups
4. Use group size to control intensity and involvement	Maintain athlete involvement in the activity so there is less opportunity for young athletes to get up to mischief, play with equipment and wander off etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Split group into more manageable numbers ensuring you maintain an appropriate coach to athlete ratio of 1:12

Communication is a vital part of your coaching repertoire; all the technical knowledge in the world is useless to you unless you are able to communicate effectively to your athletes. Part of this involves building up relationships with your athletes. It is important to:

- Learn and use athletes' names
- Smile and make eye contact with each athlete
- Show interest and respect in each athlete
- Coach the athlete rather than the sport



3.9 Behaviour Management

One of the frustrations of being a volunteer is when you have planned what you think is an exciting session, the athletes all arrive and you spend too much time managing the annoying behaviour of one or two in the group. What can you do?

As a general rule behaviour management issues in athletics are more apparent in children and young athletes groups. Adherence to appropriate coach athlete ratios can help ensure that group control is more effectively managed. Large numbers of young athletes with only one coach can lead to problems and potential safety issues during the session not just for your athletes but for other facility users as well.

A few first steps will help:

Group size: It is recommended that a ratio of 1 coach (may include Coaching Assistant) to 12 athletes is maintained. Sometimes this is difficult but it is important to establish some limits on numbers. Remember, it is an issue for the club as much for the individual coach.

Get there early: If you are there waiting for the group to arrive you can establish an immediate standard for the group and you can be ready for them.

Territory: Mark out your area for the group and make sure that all other coaches are aware. This is a basic safety issue as well as a practical one. Remember that your group has as much right to be there as any other!

Ground Rules: Identify some basic rules with the group. Ideally involve them from the outset and limit it to two or three positive statements. For example:

- When the coach talks we all listen
- We only use equipment when asked to by the coach
- When the coach puts their hand up we all stand still and listen
- Before we cross the track we must look to our left and right

Reinforce the rule: 'Thank you for listening' always works much better than a shouted plea for silence.

Remember the 'praise sandwich'. If you must give a negative for behaviour find something to reinforce what they have done well. 'When you all stood still it was easier to demonstrate the drill'.

Some rules work better with younger groups but all rules work well if they are agreed.

Safety: If there is any threat to the safety of an athlete then a shouted 'stop' is always more effective for the coach who has not had to raise their voice too often already!

What if that does not work?

For most of us it is the little things that really annoy. For example, the child who arrives late, the one who always keeps talking or the one who will not have a go at an activity. Really bad behaviour is much easier to respond to. Fortunately, it is very rare at an athletics club.

It is helpful to think about the cause for what you see as annoying or bad behaviour. After all, they have arrived to do athletics, you are keen to coach them and the others in the group also want to get on with the activities.

Have a good look at the athlete and ask yourself are they:

Bored - Are the activities too easy, unchallenging, repetitive or not suitable for their stage of development?

Unmotivated - Are they unmotivated towards what they are doing in this group? Does the athlete want to be there? Are they interested in athletics or is it babysitting them? Are they only enthusiastic about one event group (i.e. throws)? Are they in the right group for their interests and to meet their needs? Are they tired? Do they have other things going on outside athletics that are on their mind?

Experiencing lack of success - Is there an imbalance between winning and losing? Is there sufficient focus on developing skill? Are the activities set at too high a skill level for the athlete? Does the group organisation not reflect differences in skill levels? Are they comparing themselves and their performances with more talented younger athletes at this stage? Are they growing and their coordination is affected?

Having problems outside the sport – Are there issues at home and or school? Has there been a house or school move, parental break up, death in the family, significant life event? Bullying or abuse?

Attention seeking – is the athlete seeking attention from coaches, someone else, peers, for approval? Do they seem like they have something to prove to the group?

Anxious or worried – Are they actually frightened by success or failure in the activity?

Sometimes success can raise expectations of others and for themselves. Failure can create a sense of anxiety and damage their feelings of self esteem.

Struggling with learning or developmental issues – Athletes will have different processing abilities and may find the coaching style does not fit with their learning style. An athlete with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may find listening for long periods difficult and they may be labelled as exhibiting poor behaviour when this is not the case. An understanding of the athlete's background should help to clarify the situation and assist the Coach and Coaching Assistant in supporting all athletes to encourage their learning and development.

These behaviour issues can manifest themselves in many ways. With the athletes it could be poor attention span, not listening, refusing to take part in an activity, bullying, name calling, swearing, wandering away from an activity, inappropriate use of equipment. The ability to ultimately control the group and create a positive learning environment for all athletes will depend upon your rapport with the group, the role model that you display, keeping the group size manageable and your organisational skills. Once you have thought about it there are quite a few things that you can do.

- Get to know your athletes
- Why do you think they are there?
- What is their motivation for attending?
- What athletics activities/events are they interested in?
- Can you ensure that the activities and sessions are fun and that they meet the athletes' needs?
- Have you set and shared your expectations and any ground rules for behaviour?
- You may feel the need to issue an athlete code of conduct covering behaviour.

If these preventative strategies are already in place as part of your preparation for the session, you are on a strong footing to manage any behaviour issues that may arise. Evaluate the session in conjunction with your Supervising Coach to establish the causes and then identify any suitable action. Your sessions may change to incorporate more variety, include different activities, be more competitive and have a higher fun emphasis. In terms of your communication and coaching style you may make more of an effort to praise and reinforce good behaviour, decrease group sizes so athletes can have more attention and support, give athletes a focus on skill development rather than performance, or provide athletes with targets or goals for the session.

As a Coaching Assistant an athlete causing problems is not only your burden; use the Supervising Coach to assist you with any issues and respond to any poor behaviour straight away ensuring that any actions taken (time outs, taken out of session, speaking to the athlete) is reported to the parents/carers on collection and recorded by the club for future reference.

Remember, looking after a group is about the 'How 2' skills of coaching. It takes time and practise.

SECTION FOUR:

DO

4.1 The Coaching Session

The session has been planned with the Supervising Coach, you have both agreed on the roles you will play during the session and you are ready. Before you consider the style that you will use, what will you do next?

Re-look at the things that were said about safety and ask yourself the following:

- What do you need to take with you to the venue?
- Is there anything that you need to plan for with regards to safety? The group itself, the venue or what you will need to do in case of an accident? Who will you contact for example?
- When will you need to arrive at the venue?
- When does it open?
- What will you do when you have arrived?
- What will you do as the athletes begin to arrive?
- Who is looking after the register?
- Are there any checks that you will need to do with the athletes?
- What will you need to think about at the end of the session?



Remember that although the emphasis is on safety much of the above will help to ensure that the session runs well and that the athletes enjoy what they do.

The Supervising Coach has a clear role in ensuring that the athletes undertake the activity in a safe environment. As a Coaching Assistant it is also your responsibility to keep checking the area and the activity for safety whilst the athletes are involved. This responsibility starts before the session begins and only ends once each of the athletes have been collected by a responsible adult, and the equipment has been put safely away. It is important to stay focussed on the athletes in your group and not become distracted by parents or others unless they are having an impact upon safety.



4.2 Warming Up

The warm up prepares the athletes physically and mentally for the activity to come. It should relate to the main body of the session in preparing the athletes for the actions and activities that will make up the main part of the session.

The four key objectives of a good warm up are:

- Gradually increase the temperature of the body and muscular system
- Ensure that the athlete can move through an appropriate range of motion for all the activities they will encounter during the upcoming session
- To rehearse movement and coordination skills prior to the main activity of the session
- To psychologically prepare the athletes for the challenges of the training session

The warm up should start slowly and gradually increase in intensity and should be fun, variety is the key.



Coaching Style

Each of us will have our own coaching style and will spend most of the time using it. However, it is important that we recognise that each athlete will have their own learning style. Some will learn more quickly by listening to instructions, others by watching demonstrations and some by having a go and discovering good technique for themselves. Therefore some athletes will not learn as quickly when being coached in the style that you are most comfortable using. It is important that you learn to coach in various styles so that you can cater for all of the learning styles in your group and to use the most effective style for each situation. The best coaches can move between the various styles. Set yourself a goal to coach a session in a style that you may not use naturally.

There are situations when one style may be more appropriate than another:

- Tell when safety is an important issue
- Show when a new skill is being introduced
- Involve as often as possible to encourage self discovery.

BRITISH ATHLETICS		
Characteristic of Coaching Styles		
<p>TELLING</p> <p>Heavy on command and instruction</p> <p>Coach led</p> <p>Coach centred</p> <p>Coach makes all decisions</p> <p>Useful with large group where safety is paramount or time is short</p>	<p>SHOWING</p> <p>Emphasis on demonstration, this is how to do it</p> <p>Coach led</p> <p>Coach and athlete centred</p> <p>Coach invites questions and ideas but then makes the decisions</p> <p>Useful with practical skills, with novices and younger athletes</p>	<p>INVOLVING</p> <p>Uses self-discovery and questioning to raise awareness</p> <p>Athlete – led</p> <p>Athlete – centred</p> <p>Coach uses questions to raise awareness, athlete makes decisions</p> <p>Use whenever possible, maximises learning and retention</p>
<p>NOW RELATE THIS TO YOUR OWN COACHING PRACTICE AND THE EFFECT ON THE ATHLETE</p>		
<p>CA</p>		

4.3 Developing Your Coaching Skills

It is really important to recognise that people learn in different ways. Generally each individual has a preferred way of learning whether it is an intellectual activity or a physical one. For example:

- Some like to learn as much about the new skill as possible before they have a go. It could take them some time before they try out the skill and they may choose to watch others for a while as they analyse what is going on
- Others just want to dive in and have a go. They do not mind making mistakes and in fact quite enjoy doing so. They may be good at self-correction
- There are some who like to watch demonstrations. These could be provided by you, the coach showing the activity, a picture, someone else or a video
- Verbal instructions can help others rather than visual cues. The instructions will need to be clear and pretty precise
- A demonstration with the time to go and think about it before they have a go
- There will be some who prefer a combination of the above

Think of athletes in your group who may fit into any of the skill learning styles above. Use the boxes below and identify what it is that they do. In the end box record what you need to do. Some examples have been included.

Style of Learning	What they do	What do you need to do?
The thinker	Stands at the back quietly	Make sure they can see and hear
The 'have a go' athlete	Always first in the queue	Let others have first go
The watcher	Always asks for a second demo	Go to their group early on
The listener	Ask for more information	Give clear information and a quiet demonstration
The Combination	A mixture of the above	All of the above



As a Coaching Assistant you need to be aware of the differences in learning styles and to remember that if an athlete does not understand an instruction it is probably an error made by the coach not the athlete. A real skill in coaching is to find different ways to say the same thing for individuals within the group.

Stages of Learning

Whatever their preferred way of learning, people tend to progress through a series of stages when they are introduced to new skills.

Stage one: the understanding or introductory stage. They have to think about what they are doing. The novice is making efforts with the basics; many will make errors as they do so, some will learn it quickly and move on.

Stage two: The practising or intermediate stage. Once they have managed the basics then they make fewer errors. The athlete begins to refine the skill and can perform it reasonably well and regularly. With some skills it is a stage that athletes could stay in for quite a long time. They have mastered the basics yet are still prone to errors and uncertainty.

Stage three: The maintaining or advanced stage. The skill can be reproduced with minimal effort and concentration on a regular basis. It can also be achieved in a variety of settings and circumstances.



Whilst the stage of learning is important, what is more important is your role as a Coaching Assistant at each of the three stages. For all coaches it is important to develop both verbal and non verbal communication skills for all athletes.

Style of Learning	What they do	What do you need to do?
The understanding or introductory stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simple explanations and demonstrations • Emphasise and praise the correct action, regardless of outcome • Give intermittent feedback, take care not to give too much or be too complex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give only 2 key points • Check for understanding • Build on the key points above i.e. “the arm was in the right position” • Use the key points before and after an attempt • Avoid adding another point not yet introduced
The practising or intermediate stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the athletes practise the right action under the correct conditions • Use questioning to get athletes to give their own feedback, analyse and correct their own performance • Avoid jumping in with feedback too quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the technical models • Is the action at the right intensity or speed? • Use questioning to raise awareness i.e. “Where do you think your elbow was?” is better than “your elbow was low” • Let them have more than one go. Self correction can happen if you let it and the key points were clear
The maintaining or advanced stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use minimal interventions • Help athletes to set new goals • Never assume that learning has stopped • Help athletes to practise to maintain and fine tune skills • Help athletes to perform skills under pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe more • Invite them to set their own goals i.e. “What would you like to achieve” better than “tonight you will.....” • Revisit skills or progress existing ones • Include a skill unit regularly • Create opportunities for competitive situations

Practice Strategies

You have now established how athletes learn by progressing through the stages and the sort of things you should do to assist their learning at each stage. Your aim is to help their learning and ensure retention rather than forgetting. To do this, it is useful to think about more general practice strategies such as:

- Determining whether the learner views the skill as simple or complex
- Should the coach introduce the whole skill or break it down into parts?
- How should you introduce complex skills?
- Should you have fewer and longer practice sessions or more frequent and shorter sessions?
- How useful is mental practice?

Techniques are the basic building blocks of skilled performance and are simply the most efficient way for that individual to solve a physical task or problem within the rules of the sport.

A simple skill is one that an individual can perform with very little practise and can quickly move into the second stage of learning.

Complex skills are ones that an individual finds more difficult and take more time to learn. The same task presents different difficulties to different people, so do not assume that everyone should learn things the same way or at the same pace. The task may also present difficulties to the same person at different stages of their growth and experience.

Simple and complex are relative terms when used to describe athletic skills. Coaching skills means that we must evaluate how the learner views the skill. It does not matter whether the coach views a skill as simple or complex; it is the athlete's thoughts and views that decide the difficulty of the task.

As a general rule:

- Introduce a skill by a demonstration and/or an explanation
- Let the athletes have a go
- Observe them carefully several times to ensure what you are seeing is a consistent picture
- As necessary, provide some feedback about the action, not the outcome, preferably without having to stop the practise. This will show you whether a particular athlete finds the new skill simple or complex
- If it is simple, they can continue with practise
- If it is complex, you will need to consider which of the different ways to teach complex skills to use.



Whole-Part-Whole Learning

If the technique proves to be complex for the learner and the athlete is having difficulty trying to grasp the basics, you may need to break it down. For example, you may break it down into component parts and practise each part separately before putting it back together.

Triple jump provides an example:

- Having tried the whole triple jump technique, you might practise a single part of the movement e.g. step phase and then put it back into the whole movement practise – hop, step, jump. This whole-part-whole works quite well where there is a lot of information to be gained and where the components are largely sequential, as in the triple jump
- It can then be put back together again, either by gradually putting the components back together or by returning to the whole technique
- However, there is still some argument for trying to teach the technique as a whole. While the component parts are easier and quicker to learn and accomplish, there may be poorer skill retention
- There is some evidence to suggest that if the action is practised as a whole, it will take longer to learn but retention is better.

Breaking down complex actions into sequential parts may result in short term gains; practising it as a whole will take longer but long-term retention is better.

Shaping and Chaining a Complex Skill

Breaking things down into parts does not work so well where the component parts need to be carried out simultaneously and or rapidly, such as in sprint hurdling or the shot put. Here the time between take off and landing and movement across the circle is very short and the leg, arm and trunk actions all happen at the same time. Skillful execution depends on the correct and smooth coordination of the parts and dividing the technique by body parts tends to interrupt the timing. If learners are struggling with this type of skill you can practise in two ways:

Simplify the action, modifying or leaving out some parts and adding them back in later. This is referred to as shaping and is suitable for complex actions with simultaneous parts. It involves:

- demonstrating and explaining the whole action
- demonstrating a simplified technique that includes the most important actions
- letting them practise the simplified technique
- gradually building on the strengths, developing the weaknesses and adding components until the technique is shaped into the full action

Sample shaping of a complex skill – the hurdles

Hurdling is frequently seen as a complex skill by beginners because of the technical rules of the event and the fear and apprehension learners may have about hitting the hurdles. The essential thing in hurdling is rhythmic sprinting. Shaping the hurdle skill should encourage this rhythmic sprinting, remove any fear factor and gradually introduce the technical elements. Here is a possible sequence to shape this skill over several sessions:

- athletes sprint over 5-10 sticks on the track. Sticks are adjusted so that athletes have 3 strides between
- sticks are replaced with very low obstacles that offer no resistance if hit
- hurdles set at the lowest height and with no, or low, toppling weights replace low obstacles
- hurdle height is gradually increased to competition height and the hurdle spacing moves to competition distance for the learners' age group

Breaking it into parts is referred to as chaining, as it is like the links of a chain. This is suitable only for complex actions with sequential parts for it involves:

- Demonstrating and explaining the whole action
- Demonstrating and explaining the first part/link of the chain, and letting them practise it
- Demonstrating and explaining the first two parts/two links, and letting them practise the two parts
- Demonstrating and explaining the first three parts, then letting them practise these three together and so on until you build the whole technique

Sample chaining of a complex skill – the javelin

The javelin throw can be broken down into the following links:

Link 1 - Standing Javelin throw

Link 2 - 3 step approach with implement withdrawn and throw

Link 3 - 5 step approach with implement withdrawn and throw

Link 4 - 9 step approach, withdraw and throw

Link 5 - 13 step approach withdraw and throw

Chaining is quite different from shaping:

- In chaining each part is practised just as it is performed in the finished, whole skill.
- In shaping the first attempts may be so rough or simplified that they hardly resemble the finished skill at all.

Frequency and Intensity for Skill Development

Often the timing and frequency of practice sessions is determined by factors outside your control such as the availability of facilities or equipment, the convenience of athletes or your own time constraints. However, it is worth thinking about how to make the most effective use of practice time. Ideally, having some practice most days is highly effective for learning, providing there is:

- appropriate time for rest and recovery
- motivation to maintain effort

However, you also need to consider the type of technique. Certain types of skill learning will require different approaches and more discrete techniques, such as jumps and throws. They appear to benefit from the short term gains accrued from longer skill practice sessions. However, these gains may be more readily lost over time for retention is often poor. Fatigue and motivation can also become a problem. The development of more continuous techniques, such as the running events, seems to benefit from shorter, more frequent skill training sessions. Short term gains may be less but long term retention is good.

In general, remember:

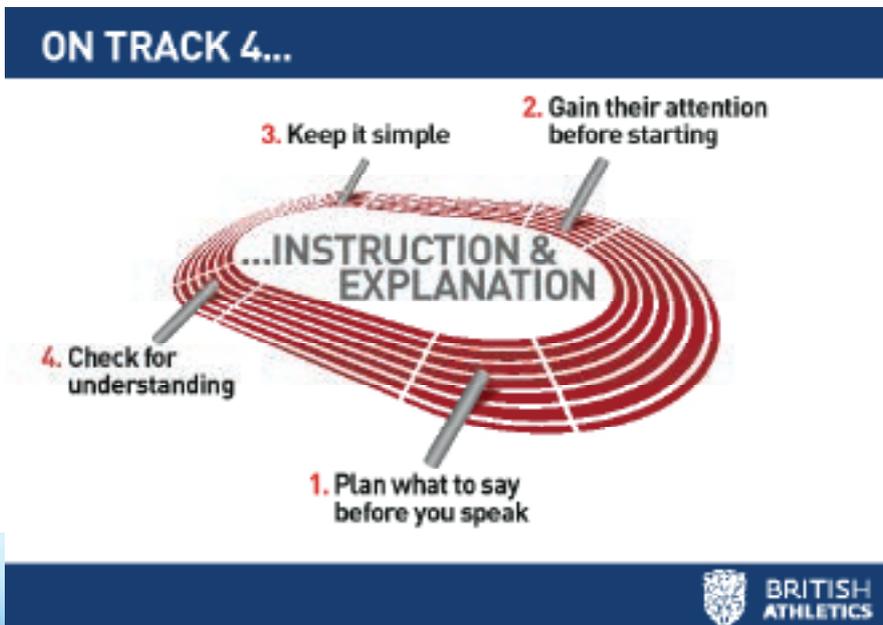
- Consider the age and stage of development of the athletes
- The more experienced and motivated the athlete, the longer and more frequent the practice sessions can be
- Fewer, longer skill practice sessions tend to produce more rapid short term gains but retention and longer term learning is compromised
- Shorter, more frequent skill practice sessions usually result in better long term learning and retention
- Provide more rest and recovery time where the skill is potentially demanding, e.g. hurdling, or dangerous, e.g. pole vaulting.

4.4 Instruction And Explanation

Look at the ‘Instruction and Explanation’ process again. What do the four points really mean and what should you actually do or say?

Instruction and Explanation	Why?	How?
1. Plan what to say before you speak	New group, new situation and new role. They are excited, you are nervous and need to be precise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write it down • Test it • Practice it • Make it loud
2. Gain their attention before starting	They all need to hear You need to be in control Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide where to stand • Can they see you • Can they hear you
3. Keep it simple	So they know exactly what to do Does it suit the group and the mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear language for the age of the group • Provide 1-2 key points • Speed and tone of voice • Be aware of non-verbal messages
4. Check for understanding	To make sure that they heard and understood Avoids embarrassment To check that your explanation was clear and understood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask at least one to repeat a key point • What was the first key point? If there are two points • Ask another if they have not understood, then it is up to you to make sure they do

If you watch a Coach who has these skills it may appear easy. It is if you practise! Write down the questions that you will use, practise saying them out loud and be confident. Ask your Supervising Coach for feedback on things that will help you improve. Be specific – ‘Was my voice clear?’ For example is better than ‘How was it?’

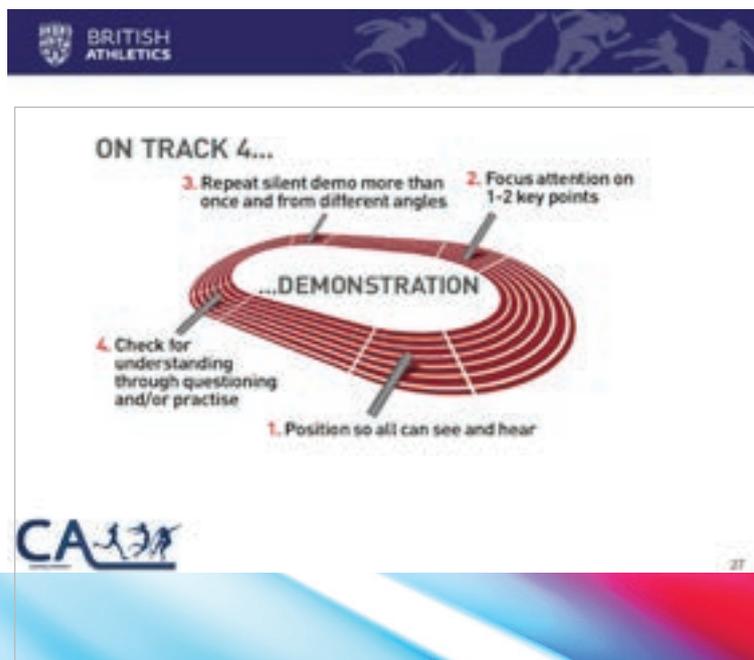


4.5 Demonstration

In your preparation you will have made a decision about the following;

- Does the group need to see someone doing the activity first? If yes then you will need to prepare for that
- What level is the group at in terms of the activity and their stage of development? This will have an impact upon the complexity of the demonstration
- Is the group at the understanding (introductory) stage; the practising (intermediate) stage; or the maintaining (advanced) stage of learning this skill?
- Can you do a demonstration that will be accurate for the group? If the answer is no then who will you ask to do it or will you use video or pictures?

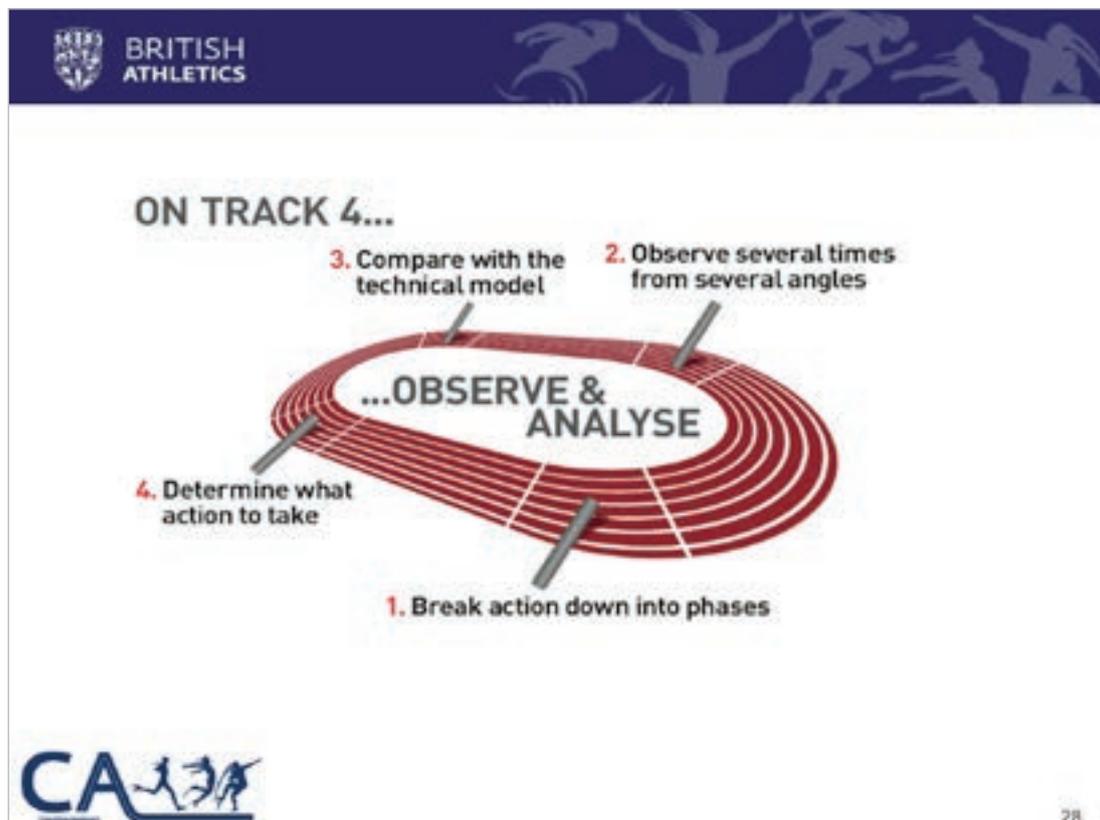
Demonstration	Why?	How?
1. Position so all can see and hear	Can you see all of them? Make sure that they are not distracted by others, i.e. parents/guardians or athletes. Can they hear you? Are they facing the sun or a bright light?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If needed then move around • Ask them if they can see you if not sure • Ask if they can hear you • Make it fun and whisper to check • Ask the other coach to check for you
2. Focus their attention on 1 – 2 key points	Even adults struggle with more than one point! It will help you focus on the points as well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear on what you will say • Use simple words for the key points • Be quiet when you do the demonstration so they can watch
3. Repeat silent demonstration more than once and from different angles	Children like to mimic so let them get a good idea They cannot take it all in one go	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move your position if needed to ensure that all can see/hear • Stop and refocus the group on what it is they need to see • Maybe use slow motion
4. Check for understanding through questioning and/or practice	Involve them Check for understanding Did they really see what you wanted them to? You may need to repeat They learn by doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check to hear if they got the key points. "Give me one key point" is a good start • They will tell you what they saw – let them, it tells you if you were clear • Watch them closely, it will tell you if they did hear



4.6 Observation And Analysis

Watch and compare what you see with the technical model for the activity that they are doing. They may all be doing the activity well; alternatively there could be many variations from the technical model that you are looking for. So what do you do? Before giving any feedback to individuals it is important that you consider the following:

- Let them have more than one go before you do anything. Remember that when learning something new, self correction can happen as they have more attempts. If the Coaching Assistant intervenes too early then it can delay individual learning
- Look for the key technical points that you highlighted in the demonstration. If the process is correct then they will need to master these before progressing
- Know the technical model or points that you want to observe
- Look for errors across the group that will help them all to progress. It may be that the key points that you have started with are too demanding at this stage. They could equally be too easy and you will need to move them on more quickly than you anticipated
- If you are not sure then a quick discussion with the Supervising Coach could help



Observation and Analysis	Why?	How?
1. Break action down into phases	<p>Most athletics events are full of complicated movements</p> <p>You can only see one or two at a time</p> <p>It is easy for you and them to be distracted by other movements</p> <p>It gives you points to focus on</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember those key points that they were given • Use the technical model
2. Observe several times from several angles	<p>Things do look different from another view</p> <p>Movement can be hidden by a limb</p> <p>It mirrors the process that you did in the demonstration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move around regularly and view from all four points • Front, each side and the back • Decide which is most helpful for that movement and that athlete
3. Compare with the technical model	<p>You want to get the athlete to be able to perform as needed in the event</p> <p>It provides a clear model to work from</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the model with you until you are confident
4. Determine what action to take	<p>Take time to think</p> <p>Did they understand your demonstration?</p> <p>Are there issues common to more than one athlete?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes nothing • If something needs to change when can it be done? • How will it be done? • Take your time

This is one of the most challenging yet extremely rewarding parts of coaching. One of the essentials is to develop a 'coaching eye'; the ability to observe those movements that really makes a difference to the athletic performance. It needs practise. When you are watching any activity you could practise focussing on a particular movement. For example, can you compare the technical model for jumping to a footballer jumping to head the ball or maybe throwing in using the throws technical model? What about a netball player as they jump or a hockey player as they run or strike the ball? If we want the athletes to practise then as coaches we also need to take opportunities to develop our skills.

4.7 Feedback

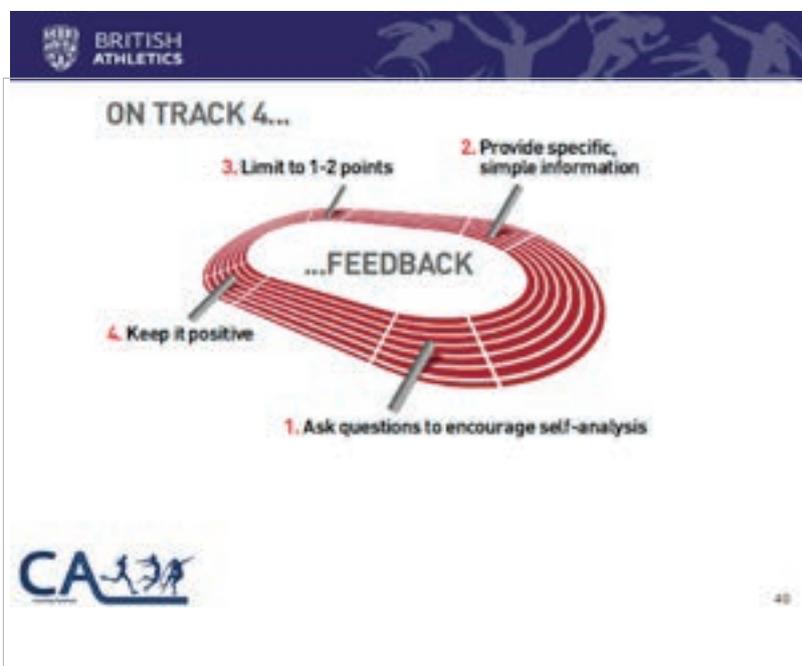
Look at the process introduced on course and consider the following:

Feedback	Why?	How?
1. Ask questions to encourage self-analysis	<p>Highlights intrinsic information available to the athlete. What did they see? What did they hear?</p> <p>What were they aware of as they did the activity?</p> <p>You can learn about the type of feedback that suits them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you notice about your flight? • Tell me about the sound that your feet made as you ran up • What position was your arm in as it went behind you in that drill? • What were you looking at as you ran over that hurdle?
2. Provide specific, simple information	<p>When learning something new it is important to be clear</p> <p>Use language and terminology that is appropriate to the age group and event group</p> <p>It will reinforce learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You could say, “what I saw was...” • Avoid only saying “good” or something similar. It may have been but you need to be precise about what was good so they can repeat it next time
3. Limit to 1 – 2 points	<p>For the same reason as in the demonstration Keep it simple and clear</p> <p>Use the key points from the demonstration</p> <p>Any more and you will confuse both them and you!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind them of the key points or even ask them what they were • Use intrinsic questions if you can
4. Keep it positive	<p>It keeps the focus on what you need them to do Any criticism can be included alongside a positive Two positives to one negative is a safe rule</p> <p>The whole focus is on helping them to learn, to stay interested and to achieve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep it honest – they will know if they deserve praise. For example “you achieved.....but I noticed that....” • You could use intrinsic questions to get them to focus on what they did and where there may have been errors

It would be useful to ask your Supervising Coach to observe your coaching and keep a note of the feedback you provide to the athletes. Do you jump in with your observations, “I noticed that your shoulders were hunched” or do you use questions to encourage self reflection “What position were your shoulders in during the end of that run?” It is all too easy as coaches to jump in with our observations regarding what we have seen and there are often many things to pick up, don't forget the athlete can only focus on 1 – 2 points at a time, keep the feedback relevant and in relation to the same points for that session.

There is great value in trying to draw out and raise awareness of the athletes own “intrinsic” awareness. By asking questions such as “What position were your arms in at take-off?” This encourages the athletes to reflect on their own sense of awareness; this can be developed from a young age.

We often hear “good” “well done” “faster” “relax those shoulders” etc. What do these statements mean to the athlete? What does good really mean? Was everything about it good? Without specific feedback how will the athlete know how to replicate the situation for the next repetition? The timing of the feedback is also important; consider how they process it, if it is shouted during a repetition as opposed to when they have time to discuss it at the end.



4.8 Cooling Down

A cool down gradually decreases the body systems back to their pre-exercise levels. This consists of low level activity of a decreased intensity such as jogging or walking and stretching. During this section the stretches can become more developmental and will generally be held for longer (20 – 30 seconds). Stretching for flexibility may also be included in the main body of the session.

During this period it is not only the body systems that have attention, the coach can use this time to attain feedback on the session, the athletes progress and efforts, the achievements of the session goals and provide information regarding the next session.



Ideally a completed session plan will look like this:

Date: 13th May Time: 6:30-7:30pm		Stage of Athlete Development: Foundation	
Venue: Local track, mild and dry		Age group of Athletes: 10-12	
		Size of group: 20	
Equipment: Cones, pit, rake, mats, tapes, scoring sheets			
Session Goals for the Athletes (WHAT): By the end of the session the athlete will be able to... focus on body position on take off and flight		Personal Coaching Goals (HOW): By the end of the session I will have... provided a demonstration of a standing long jump using two key points	
Session Component	Unit Detail	Coaching Points	Organisation/ Safety Key points
Warm Up 10min	5mins of shuttle activity including – walks, skipping, running, bounding, hopping and star jumps, split jumps and 2-footed jumps Kangaroo time – teams of 5 – 6 athletes. Team has 20 jumps to score as many points as possible	Use jumping grids with 4 lines for different intervals Land on mats Helper required for scoring	Head up, chest up, drive up Soft landing with knees bent Hips high in take off Head up, chest up, drive up
Main Session Unit A 30mins	Standing Long Jump – all athletes to have 3 practises after demo Further 3 measured attempts into pit or using mats Short approach long jump – using 5 – 7 stride approach into a 1 footed take off into pit Measure and mark approach run	Coach Demo Use jumping grids along side of pit to maximise involvement	Soft landing with knees bent Optimal approach speed Drive up with eyes looking ahead Don't look for board
Main Session Unit B 10mins	Team competition into pit from a short approach, each team member has 2 jumps and scores points for landing on set zones	Involve athletes in measuring, scoring and recording	
Cool Down 10mins	Jogging into walking (3 minute circuit) followed by stretching of lower back, hamstrings, quads, calves and hip flexors. Min 20 – 30 seconds hold.	Position athletes so all can see the stretches	Breathe out and relax into stretches Hold stretch position for at least 20 seconds

SECTION FIVE:

REVIEW

5.1 Reviewing The Session

The session has gone well; the athletes have all left or been collected by their parents. They said that they had enjoyed what they had done and said thank you. You can tell by the way that they greeted their parents that they really meant it. Time to think about what went on and how you can learn from the session and prepare for the next one.

There are two principal ways that you can think about the session that has happened:

- Review it with the Supervising Coach
- Reflect on your own

What information would be most helpful to you as a coach? The Supervising Coach may have a great deal of experience in giving feedback to other coaches or may be like you, developing the skills involved. You may need to be proactive in this area to ensure that you get the feedback that you most need.

When you ask a Supervising Coach to let you work with them make sure that you also ask them to agree to provide you with some feedback and agree when it will happen. Make sure that the Supervising Coach is aware of the personal coaching goal that you have written into the session plan, sharing this prior to the session. Sometimes it is very useful to ask the Supervising Coach to give you specific feedback on something that worries you. For example:

- Was my voice clear enough?
- Did I keep quiet when I did the demonstration?
- Could they all see what I was doing?

It may be easy to do after the session but could also be better left until later on. This will give both of you time to relax and think. It should also ensure that more time is given to this valuable exercise than often happens at the end of a demanding club night. Whichever is agreed it may be necessary for you to take the lead. There are some straightforward questions and statements that you could use to open the discussion.

- What do you think went well?
- I was most pleased with ...
- What I think I need to improve was....
- What do you think I need to work on.....
- If I am to focus on one thing for next time it will be....
- Which one thing do you think I need to focus on for next time?

Remember that when you observed the athletes and then gave feedback you were working to ensure that you gave accurate information based upon what you had asked them to do. It was honest and positive with any criticism sandwiched between a couple of positives about what went well. The review needs to be the same, use the review section of the “Role of the Coaching Assistant” section on the uCoach website.

5.2 Self Reflection

The following is a useful tool for you to use when you think about the session and the role that you played. Focus on those parts of the session that you lead.

Personal Coaching Goals (HOW-2): By the end of the session I will have...

This is the goal that you write in the session plan. It is about you and the “How 2” skills that you are going to use. Make sure that it is the same goal as the one you wrote on the session plan!

Was the Personal Coaching Goal fully achieved in this session?

This is a statement to show whether you met the goal stated above

What did you do that may have caused this?

Was it because you thought about the words to use? Because you positioned yourself or them well?

What else went well with the session?

Were there any other things that went well with the session?

What was it that you did to enable this?

Again reflect on what you might have done to cause this

What went less well?

What aspects of the session were not achieved?

What did you do that may have caused this?

Were the instructions not heard? Were there too many key points given?

What information and feedback did you receive from your Support Coach during or after the session about your coaching and the achievement of your Personal Coaching Goal?

Did the Support Coach say anything to you during the session? What about the athletes? Did they say anything? Did anyone else give you feedback: parents, other coaches, etc.

What do you know want to improve in your coaching?

When you have looked at and thought about all of the above, what are the key things that you need to work on? Keep it precise so that it can be used as a personal goal next time, i.e. make sure that you only give two key points during the demonstration or observe athlete from four positions

What exactly are you going to do to improve your coaching in this area?

You know what you need to do. How will you do it? Tell your Supervising Coach what it is you have chosen for a goal. Ask the Supervising Coach for feedback on that area. Ask another Coach to watch what you do. Ask the athletes

What support do you need to achieve this?

This could be reviewing other coaches, or reading material online or attending workshops

Who will provide this support?

Parents, athletes, another coach

How will you measure your improvements and success?

This will depend upon your goal. I used two key points. The athletes could do the section I demonstrated. They understood the key points.

The above review gives you an opportunity to think about what happened in the session. The table below could be used to help you think about all of the 'How 2' skills.

Area	What I did well	What I need to work on
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed the rule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce the rules
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouped athletes for the main task evenly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups according to ability
Instruction & Explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned what I would say 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move so they can hear
Demonstration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used two key points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep quiet!
Observation & Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watched from all sides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid telling them
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used involving questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen and be patient

You should now be able to discuss the next session plan for the group with the Support Coach including those areas for which you will be responsible. Choose one coaching skill to develop and record it in the personal coaching goal box of a session. It may be the same one as before or something else that you have discussed and planned with the Support Coach.

SECTION SIX:

CONTINUOUS PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Your journey and learning as a coach will never end, the Coaching Assistant award is the start point, even if you decide to stay at this point there are a broad range of areas that you may wish to learn more about that will benefit your coaching and the athletes' development and performance. There are important sources of information that you need to be aware of:

- Your Home Country Coach Education contacts will be able to provide you with information regarding CPD opportunities in your area
- These may also come from outside the sport, i.e. fitness testing or strength training
- There are some key organisations that you need to be aware of, these can provide information, books and equipment as well as courses
- In your region there may be a development programme run by experienced coaches. With their permission you may be able to attend these, watch and learn from their experience
- Coaches in your own club apart from your Supervising Coach
- Finally, and possibly most importantly, the athletes that you work with. Watch them, listen to them and seek their feedback. The chances are that they are more aware of what is happening at times than the coach!

Your choice of development opportunities is up to you, what are you interested in, passionate about, would benefit from more knowledge? Your relationship with your Supervising Coach is vital and it is hoped that this level of support, discussion and feedback would continue in your coaching regardless of whether it is required for a qualification or your own personal development.

You may wish to investigate a few of these areas in support of your coaching:

Strength training	First aid
Flexibility	Health and safety
Diet and nutrition	Coaching process skills
Circuit training	Fitness testing
Fundamentals of Movement	Heart rate monitoring
Multi skills coaching	Skill learning
Athlete development	

Coaches are responsible for the ongoing development of their own knowledge and skills. Some coaches believe that once they have gained a qualification, or their athlete has been successful, they have reached the end of the road to learning. However it is as important to analyse and develop your own coaching skills and performance, as it is to improve your athletes' performance. This means:

- Being willing to analyse and reflect on your own coaching behaviour
- Finding ways to update your own knowledge, skills and qualifications regularly
- Having an open mind to new ideas and different methods
- Learning from other people and being willing to share your ideas and knowledge.

There are no shortcuts to becoming an effective coach. This course is just the start of your journey towards coaching excellence. How far you travel will depend on your vision, desire and willingness to go on learning.

Useful links:

Organisation	Contact Details	Main interest
IAAF (International Amateur Athletics Federation)	www.iaaf.org	General Athletics
European Athletics Association	www.european-athletics.org	General Athletics and Coaching
Activity Alliance	www.activityalliance.org.uk	General Disability Sport
British Paralympic Association	www.paralympics.org.uk	General Disability Sport
British Blind Sport	www.britishblindsport.org.uk	Blind Sport
Cerebral Palsy Sport	www.cpsport.org	Cerebral Palsy Sport
Deaf UK Athletics	www.ukdeafathletics.org.uk	Deaf Athletics
Dwarf Athletics Association	www.daaa.org	Dwarf Athletics
Mencap Sport	www.mencap.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/leisure/mencap-sport	
UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability	www.uksportsassociation.org	Learning Disability Sport
UK Coaching	www.ukcoaching.org	General Coaching
1st4Sport	www.1st4sport.com	General Coaching





CLEANATHLETICS

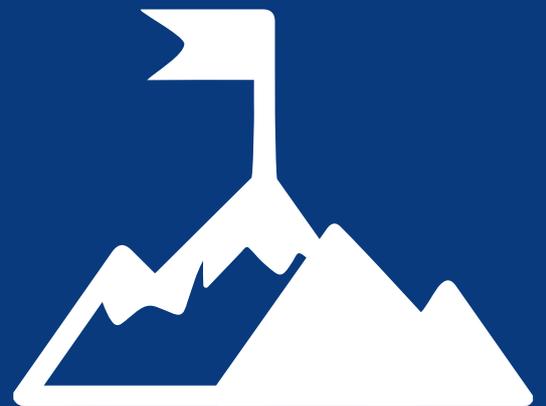
Vision

- Athletes with the confidence to train, compete and win clean amongst clean peers
- A wider athletics community engaged in, enjoying and taking pride in Clean Athletics



Mission

- To support those who compete clean
- To protect the spirit of our sport
- To promote Clean Athletics to our sport and empower athletes to make informed and responsible choices
- To promote the principles of Clean Athletics with our partners



**SHARE AND SUPPORT THE
CLEAN ATHLETICS VISION**

#CLEANATHLETICS

www.uka.org.uk/cleanathletics

enquiries@cleanathletics.org.uk