



A confident coach might demonstrate skills personally

Teaching styles and guidance

Andy Wrathall looks at two factors that are vital when coaching or teaching in sport and PE. Both can have a major effect on the development of a performer.

The various teaching or coaching styles that can be employed and the different types of guidance that are available can determine whether a training session is a success or not. These factors greatly influence the motivation and enjoyment levels of the athlete.

Teaching style

Think about your last A-level PE lesson or coaching session. What was the teacher or coach like? What teaching or coaching style did he/she employ? The selected style can have a huge impact on how much is learnt. If the style chosen is appropri-

ate, the outcome will be an enthusiastic, confident and motivated learner, who will improve his/her skill level and develop an understanding of what is required to make progress. In order to decide which is the most suitable teaching style, the teacher or coach must first consider:

- the coach's personality and abilities
- the type of activity
- the performer(s)

Coach's personality and abilities

An **extrovert** coach is open and sociable, whereas a more **introverted** coach will be unwilling to put him/herself in an uncomfortable situation. If the teacher is confident in the sport, he/she might demonstrate skills personally. On the other hand, a coach who lacks confidence might use a participant for demonstrations. Good coaches are aware of their own personality and will select a style they feel comfortable with.

Type of activity

How is the skill classified (**open/closed**, complex/simple, **gross/fine**)? The skill classification will determine which teaching style is best.

Nature of the performers

The following questions should be asked about the performers:

- What previous experience do they have?
- What stage of learning are they at?
- How motivated are they?
- What are their ages and gender?
- What size is the group?

Once these three areas and the coaching environment (e.g. facilities, weather, space, equipment) have been considered and assessed, the coach can decide which style of teaching is most appropriate. Mosston and Ashworth (1986) have developed a 'spectrum of teaching styles' (see Figure 1).

Command style (A)

The command style of teaching is also known as the authoritarian approach. The teacher makes all the decisions and the learners have little input.

Reciprocal style (C/D)

In this instance, most decisions are made by the teacher but the learners are allowed to offer their views. A task may be set and the group is required to complete it.

Discovery style (F)

This involves the teacher (or facilitator) guiding the learner towards the correct

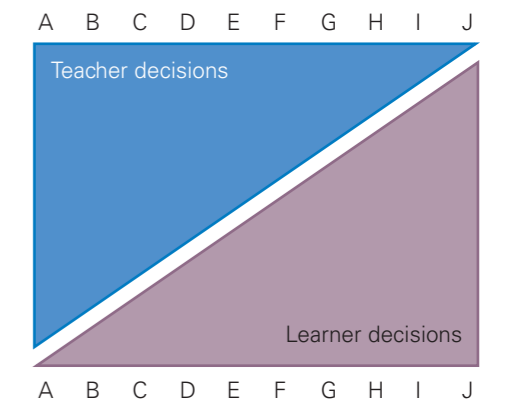


Figure 1 Mosston and Ashworth's spectrum of teaching styles

Table 1 Teaching styles

Style	When to use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Command	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Large or hostile group ■ Beginners ■ Dangerous situations ■ Complex tasks ■ Limited time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Instructions clear ■ Keep control ■ Can give information quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No learner input ■ Misunderstanding can develop ■ Little social interaction ■ Does not develop creativity or responsibility ■ Can be demotivating (boring)
Reciprocal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ More experienced learners ■ Simple skills ■ Limited danger ■ Time available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clear objectives ■ Promotes interaction ■ Generates new ideas for coach ■ Individual feedback can be obtained ■ Learners have some responsibility over learning and develop self-confidence ■ Maintains motivation ■ Teacher still in control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Difficult with beginners and large groups ■ Slow development if poor communication ■ Learners unable to analyse own movements ■ Time-consuming
Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Creativity needed ■ No right or wrong outcome ■ Performers have (or need to develop) good interactive skills ■ More experienced learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Encourages creativity ■ Responsible for own learning ■ Work at own pace ■ Increases motivation and self-confidence ■ Improves communication and interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Difficult for beginners ■ Slow development if poor communication ■ Hard to monitor progress with large groups ■ Learning not same with all learners ■ Time-consuming
Problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No correct outcome ■ No time constraints ■ Experienced performers ■ Interaction required 	Same as for discovery above	Same as for discovery above plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dangerous if incorrect techniques used ■ Incorrect techniques could be obtained without teacher input