

3.2.1: Meeting the needs of participants in coaching sessions

The coach should always take account of the age, sex, level of ability, stage of learning and level of experience of the participants. This information will have a major impact on the coach's session planning as it will determine the following:

- the **length** or **duration** of the coaching session
- the **activities** and **types of practice** included in the session
- the **technical language** used by the coach during the session
- the **types of guidance** used by the coach during the session
- **prior knowledge** or **prior experiences** that can be accessed by the participants.

Ability, age and sex

The age of the participants is a key consideration if the coach is involved in sporting activities such as rugby union, football, tennis or cricket as there are different laws or rules and different versions of the full sport for younger age groups.

The coach must ensure that the activities in their sessions are based on the correct laws and the version of the sport for the age group of the participants.

Different sports also have different rules and regulations about the ages at which boys and girls can play in the same teams and when the teams must be single sex. Knowledge of the sex of the participants is therefore also a key consideration for the coach, particularly if the participants are children.

Review of competitive performances

If sports coaches are coaching athletes or teams currently taking part in competitions, races or matches, they should use their performance reviews and analysis of previous performances when deciding on the content of their coaching sessions and the feedback they give the participants.

The coach might access **quantitative** and **qualitative** performance data which might include the use of **intrinsic and extrinsic feedback** and **knowledge of performance** (KP) and **knowledge of results** (KR).

Data regarding the next opponents might also be available to the coach so that the tactics for the next match, race or competition can be considered.

If the athlete or sports team are not in the competition phase of the year, the coach will review the outcomes of the previous coaching sessions when planning the next session.

Consideration of appropriate activities

The coach must consider the activities to be used in any coaching session. They must be appropriate to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the participants. The coach will have to consider the types of practice and types of guidance to be used. This will depend on the level of ability and experience of the participants.

The types of guidance are **visual** (especially useful when learning a new skill), **verbal** (often used with visual guidance), **manual** and **mechanical** (especially good for the first-time performance of complex skills).

The types of practice are **whole practice** (suited to simple skills), **part practice** (suited to complex skills), **fixed practice** (suited to closed skills, such as a forward roll) and **varied practice** (suited to open skills such as catching and passing a netball).

