

Fun Do



GAA Fun Do

COACHES RESOURCE



A GAA Games
Development
Fun Do Initiative



Promoting the GAA
Code of Best Practice
for Youth Sport



THE IRISH TIMES

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Images and video footage of all young people have been used with the permission of parents or guardians.

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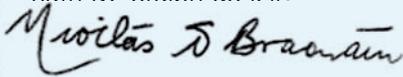
Is chúis mhór áthais dom cúpla focail a scríobh ar fhoilsiú an leabhair thábhachtaigh seo.

The GAA Fun Do Learning Resource Pack is the product of an enormous amount of research and preparation and I want to extend my thanks to all those who have had an input into this vital resource. It is designed to promote participation for all, and to present Gaelic games as a fun recreation for our youth as they learn the skills and techniques of Gaelic games in a healthy, structured and relaxed environment.

The programme is intended to address the social, physical and psychological needs of young players and as such is an exciting and progressive development for the Association. It aims to cater for different levels of development, for differing abilities and needs and to develop a sense of fair play with an overall purpose of encouraging children to reach their full potential.

The GAA has a proud history of innovation in the area of Games Development. I extend my thanks to the countless thousands of coaches, teachers and parents who have been proactive in this area over the years. Their contribution is a large part of the reason that the GAA continues to thrive and develop across the country. This latest initiative has the potential to make an enormous difference to the lives of young people who are attracted to our games and for this reason everyone involved with Fun Do should be extremely proud.

Ráth Dé oraihb an léir



Nioclás Ó Braonáin

Uachtaráin



1

COACHING AND GAMES DEVELOPMENT



INTRODUCTION

The Grassroots to National Programme (GNP) is the GAA's strategic programme for Games Development. It aims to maximise participation and optimise playing standards in Gaelic games.

The programme is underpinned by the OTú Games Development Model which consists of three strands; the Pathway to Elite Performance (PEP), the Skill Through Effort Project (STEP) and the Coach, Administrator and Referee Education Programme (CARE for ALL).

Each strand refers to a key area of development:

1. GAMES

PEP

PATHWAY TO ELITE PERFORMANCE

Key Stage 1 of the Grassroots to National Programme

To ensure that Players – be they Kids, Youths or Adults – are provided with a balanced and coordinated programme of Games – appropriate to their needs and level of ability – as set out in the Pathway to Elite Performance.

2. SKILL DEVELOPMENT

STEP

STEP THROUGH EDUCATION PROGI

Key Stage 1 of the Grassroots to National Programme

To compliment the Games with an incremental series of Skill Development activities - delivered in Clubs and Schools - as part of an integrated Skill Through Effort Project.

3. EDUCATION

The logo for the STEP program, featuring the letters 'STEP' in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. Each letter is contained within a white rounded square with an orange border, and the squares are arranged horizontally.

STEP THROUGH EDUCATION PROGI

Key Stage 1 of the Grassroots to National Programme

To underpin the Games and Skill Development activities with an integrated programme of Coach, Administrator and Referee Education, within which provision is made for Applied Lifelong Learning (ALL).

The integrated implementation of activities from each of the three strands provides the optimal means for achieving the aims of the GNP, and ensuring that people 'Play and Stay with the GAA'.

THE PATHWAY TO ELITE PERFORMANCE (PEP)

PEP

PATHWAY TO ELITE PERFORMANCE



The Pathway to Elite Performance is a Gaelic Games specific player development pathway which outlines the key playing opportunities available to players as they progress through their playing careers. The opportunities are appropriate to their needs and abilities as they mature.

The model is comprised of four key stages:

- Fun Do (Recreation)
- Can Do (Talent Identification)
- Want To (Talent Transfer)
- Will Do (Elite Performance)



The model is comprised of four key stages: Fun Do (Recreation), Can Do (Talent Identification), Want To (Talent Transfer) and Will Do (Elite Performance). These stages are spanned by three phases - Play to Learn (Kids), Learn to Compete (Youths) and Compete to Win (Adults) - which reflect the focus of participation as players develop.

The Recreation (Fun Do) Stage is structured so that young participants can 'Play to Learn', i.e. develop the underlying techniques of Hurling and Gaelic Football through activities that are 'Fun to Do'. The acquisition of technical proficiency during the 'Fun Do' Stage will enable young players to progress to the Talent Identification (Can Do) Stage with a sense of belief in their own ability i.e. where they feel they 'Can Do' what's required of them as they 'Learn to Compete'. By the time individuals reach the Talent Transfer (Want To) Stage, they will have decided whether they 'Want To' commit the time and make the effort required to participate at a higher level of competition. At the Elite Performance (Will Do) Stage, players will be expected to display the mental toughness and focus required so that they 'Will Do' justice to themselves as they 'Compete to Win'.

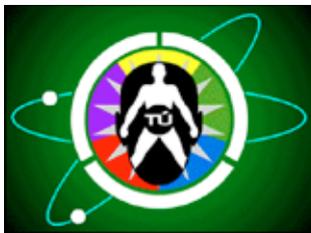
The core construct on which the Pathway is based is the fact that participation in games enables players to meet a host of needs, e.g. social (make & be with friends), physical (be active/keep fit) and psychological (experience a sense of enjoyment and achievement), appropriate to each stage of development. The Pathway identifies the opportunities that meet these needs, and when the needs of the player are met they are more likely to 'Play and Stay with the GAA'.

When players, – for whatever reason – are denied participation, it will inevitably result in dropout. When the focus of participation is too intensive from too young an age, be it through over-emphasis on formal competition or winning or regimental training, players may also choose to dropout or may suffer burnout. Similarly, when young players are required to sustain focus for too long a period, or feel under pressure to deliver because not enough provision for fun or recreational inputs have been made by the Coach, they may choose to stop participating or will at least will not derive a sense of satisfaction that well organised and appropriate participation should provide. The Pathway to Elite Performance helps guide us as we aim to avoid improper focuses of participation and to provide appropriate opportunities.

In summary the Pathway to Elite Performance is designed to provide regular games which:

- Cater for differing levels of development and varying competitive abilities/needs
- Guarantee full participation, fair play and frequent prospects of success
- Encourage players to deliver on their true potential, i.e. make the effort required to improve individual and team performance.

THE OTÚ COACHING MODEL



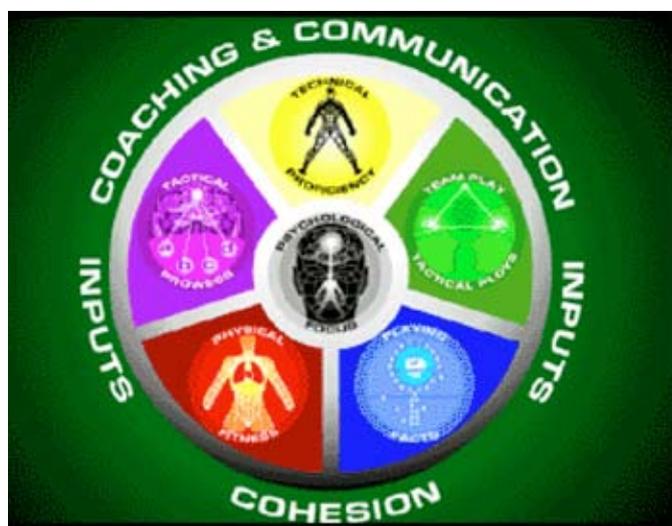
Quality coaching is one of the key requirements to ensuring that participation is maximised and playing standards are optimised as players progress through the Pathway to Elite Performance.

To support quality coaching the GAA have devised the OTú Coaching Model.

The OTú Coaching Model is a blueprint which provides the basis for organising Training Programmes which enable players to deliver on their True Potential and achieve Total Performance.

The term OTú - the O as in oxygen, and Tú - Irish for 'you' - has its origins in the fact that the desire/motivation/urge to excel is driven from within.

The model operates on the principle that players will excel when the 3 T's - Technical Proficiency, Tactical Awareness and Team Play - and the 3 P's - Physical Fitness, Performance Analysis, and Psychological Focus - are integrated and developed in a manner which has regard for Best Coaching Practice (the 3 C's - Communication Inputs, Coaching Inputs and Cohesion).



The more that Coaches and players succeed in getting the balance right, the more the players and team will maintain a consistent level of performance excellence. The OTú Coaching Model outlines the knowledge required to achieve this level of excellence.

The 3 T's and the 3 P's

When the 3 T's and the 3 P's are integrated and developed in a manner which involves quality Coaching and Communication inputs from the Coach, players will excel and a Cohesive Team unit will emerge.



T1 - Technical Proficiency (Know How)

The ability to perform the underlying techniques accurately, consistently and at match tempo.



T2 - Tactical Prowess (Know What and When)

The ability to weigh up match situations and decide on what option to take and when to take it, e.g. shoot for a score, carry the ball, pass it on or play it into space when in attack or place the opposition under maximum pressure when defending.



T3 - Team-Play/Tactical Ploys (Know Who and Where)

The ability to anticipate movements and synchronise who should go where during play or set-piece situations, e.g. in order to score or convert possession into scores when in attack or minimise the amount of clean possession and time and space available to opponents to make clear use of the ball, when defending.



P1 - Physical Fitness

The ability to perform the basic techniques, engage in physical contests and respond to signs, sounds and signals experienced during the game with the least possible expenditure of energy.



P2 - Playing Facts

The ability to identify playing strengths and areas where improvements are required and to accept why changes in training, tactics, team line out etc., may be necessary.



P3 - Psychological Focus

The ability to maintain attention on the here and now and switch concentration as the need arises.

When the 3 T's and the 3 P's are integrated and developed in a manner which involves quality Coaching and Communication inputs from the Coach, players will excel and a Cohesive Team unit will emerge.

WHY CHILDREN PLAY SPORT

There are many reasons why you as a Teacher, Parent or Coach should encourage children to participate in sport.



- Increased confidence**
 playing sport will provide each participant with the opportunity to build confidence and allow them to develop a real sense of achievement.
- Becoming part of a team**
 children like to feel as though they are part of a team or group. Participation challenges them to work as part of a group, to think of others and develop interpersonal and team skills.
- Improved physical and motor skills**
 participating in sport helps children develop a range of skills including agility, balance and coordination.
- Children that participate in sports are less likely to be overweight and suffer health problems.**

However, it is not as simple as just providing an opportunity to participate in sport. It is essential to be aware that the quality of the sporting experience is more important for the child player than for any other playing group.

Games and participation opportunities that are inappropriate to the needs and abilities of the child player, or poor quality coaching, can lead to dropout, burnout, injury or simply to unsatisfactory experiences and the failure to achieve ones True Potential.



Here are some important issues which we need to appreciate when we organise and provide sporting experiences for child players:



- Children are not miniature versions of adults
- Positive sporting experiences at an early age are key building blocks to lifelong participation
- The correct balance between competition, training and rest are essential to appropriate development – for children the focus should be on playing and fun
- It is estimated that it takes approximately 10 years (or the equivalent of 10,000 hours) to develop top class players; development of physical literacy, i.e. fundamental movement and basic motor skills, at an early age, and followed quickly by development of the sport specific skills are key goals in the child player's development and ensure the foundation is in place for optimum development later on.

These and many other topics are addressed throughout the Coaching Information section.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN

Children are physically developing from early childhood to late adolescence. This means they have different capabilities for exercise and exercise affects them in different ways. For this reason training programmes for children should not be simply scaled down versions of adult training programmes.

There are many ways in which children differ from adults:

■ Technical

- Children have limited agility, balance and coordination

■ Tactical

- Children have poor positional awareness (e.g. 'beehive' play, or following the ball, is very prominent in underage games)

■ Team Play

- Children play for themselves
- Children have limited communication skills

■ Physical

- Strength - children have limited strength
- Stamina – children have lots of energy but need frequent breaks
- Speed – children have good reactive speed and have a particular 'window of opportunity' to develop speed during the early stages of development
- Children respond poorly to heat and cold

■ Psychological

- Children can lack confidence
- Children can be emotionally immature – moody/lose self control
- Children can be very choosy about friends and who they play with
- Children tend to lose concentration quickly or be easily led by others
- Children's decision making ability is poor and slow
- Children may not know how to react to the different personalities they might face in a group
- Children will try to emulate what they see from sports stars



However, most importantly, all children are individuals and the rate at which each child develops in each of these areas will be different.

When providing sporting experiences for children, emphasis should be put on each child's own progress, and not on comparing their achievements with those of others.

This means that where possible individual instruction and challenges should be provided and a broad range of activities should be planned and presented. Activities should develop to be of an increasingly complex nature and be challenging but 'doable'.

And remember, the key is Fun, Fun, Fun!



3

CREATING A POSITIVE & FUN ENVIRONMENT



INTRODUCTION



The philosophy and approach you bring to coaching has a direct affect on whether or not the environment you create will be positive and fun. This aspect of coaching is dealt with in the section 'Being a Coach'.

The emphasis or focus that you as a Coach put on Play, Learning, Competition or Winning will also have a direct affect.

When coaching children, putting competition and winning into perspective are key elements of achieving the appropriate focus. Competition and winning generally reflect the emphasis of adult sport and adult ambition and when introduced too early can distort children's approach to participation and expose them to undue levels of physical, mental and emotional stress. Competition and winning are a more appropriate focus for players who have achieved competence at performing the underlying techniques and

are in a position to apply them in full sided, competitive games.

However, there are a large number of underage competitions, and participating in them can be a positive experience too. The important thing is to focus on the effort to win, as opposed to winning in itself. Competition will always be enjoyable provided winning is seen in its proper perspective

The needs of the player first!
Winning second!

Focussing on play and learning place the needs of the child player first and will help create an experience where children are having fun, in an environment that assists and challenges them to achieve their True Potential.

REMEMBER!

'Children don't always remember what you tell them...but they always remember the way you make them feel' JOHN MORRISSON

PLAYING TO LEARN

The Play, Learning, Competition and Winning aspects of participation are reflected in the three phases that span the Pathway to Elite Performance (PEP). Again, they are Play to Learn (Kids), Learn to Compete (Youths) and Compete to Win (Adults).

The Recreation (Fun Do) Stage of the Pathway is structured so that young participants can 'Play to Learn', i.e. develop the underlying techniques of Hurling and Gaelic Football through activities that are 'Fun to Do'.

Full Participation, Fair Play and Achievement are key elements of the 'Fun Do' Stage that promote play and learning.

■ Full Participation

Competitive games, by their make up, often result in the 'best' players playing and the rest looking on from the substitutes bench. Full Participation promotes the involvement of all players, whether it be in games, activities or drills in a coaching session.

■ Fair Play

Priority should not be given to the 'best' players to the exclusion of others. Build participation around equal opportunities for all players, whether through rotating positions during games or providing each player with the opportunity to 'have a go'. Fair Play should also be emphasised in terms of promoting sportsmanship, respect for Match Officials and ensuring the Playing Rules are adhered to at all times.

■ Achievement

As new or relatively new participants to a sport children need to develop confidence and a perception of competence in their ability. Essential to this is organising activities that are appropriate - challenging but 'doable'.

PEP

PATHWAY TO ELITE PERFORMANCE

POINTERS FOR POSITIVITY

Here are a number of tips to help you ensure that children enjoy themselves while playing:

- **Vary activities regularly**

make sessions fun by constantly keeping the children active, not spending too long on any one activity to prevent boredom and quickly changing over between activities.

- Activities should be challenging but doable, so that they maintain the children's interest. If a child feels that they cannot perform a task they will not enjoy themselves. However, if a child experiences success they will develop a perception of competence, self-esteem and enjoy participation.

- Sessions should be set up to allow the child to learn and develop their skills. Try to establish a positive environment where children are not afraid to make mistakes.

- Children see participation as an opportunity to socialise with their friends. Organise events within the Club or School that allow the children to get to know each other.

- **Make the session exciting**

Use Fun Games that apply the skills the children are learning but challenge them in a new way, e.g. target games to challenge striking or kicking accuracy.

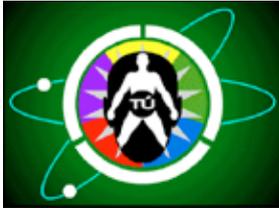
- Children want to play games. Use modified or conditioned games appropriate to the players' abilities. Set the tone by defining winning as playing well, not just beating others. Praise effort, performance of the skills and sportsmanship.

4

DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF GAELIC GAMES



INTRODUCTION



Gaelic Games have a vast range of skills that must be mastered to successfully participate in games.

As such the ability to facilitate the development of the skills of the game is key to successful coaching.

To perform skills competently in game situations players must develop the ability to perform the underlying techniques accurately, consistently and at match tempo (T1 – Technical Proficiency), the ability to select the appropriate skill, and the appropriate time to use it in a game situation (T2 – Tactical Prowess), and the ability to use their skills to play together as part of an effective unit (T3 – Team Play/Tactical Plays).

Technical, Tactical and Team Play skills should be developed in an integrated and balanced manner along with Physical Fitness (P1), a knowledge and acceptance of the Playing Facts (P2), and Psychological Focus (P3).

Young or new players cannot simply learn all of these aspects of play simultaneously. As they are introduced to and practice the skills players will develop at a rate particular to themselves and gradually extend their abilities.

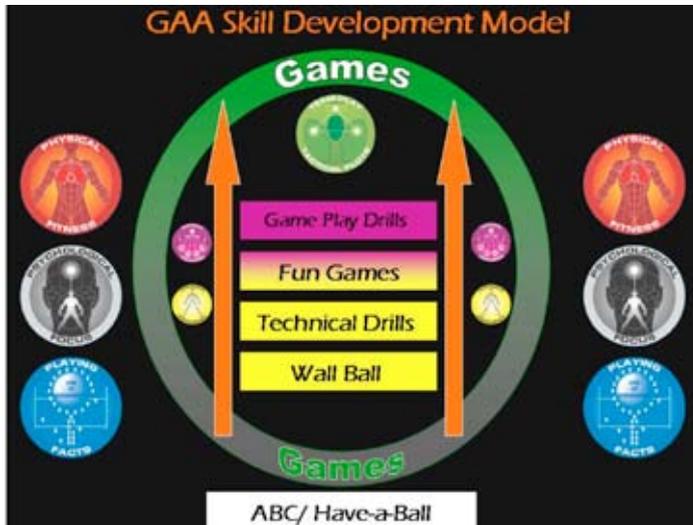
Effective coaching requires the Coach to organise activities appropriate to the abilities of the players in order to help them develop. To do so requires the ability to:

- identify the level at which your players are performing, and
- identify an appropriate activity to gradually challenge that level.

However, these are not simple tasks for even the most experienced Coach.

In this knowledge - and to support Coaches - a Skill Development Model has been designed which outlines a progressive series of exercises, drills and activities to develop Technical Proficiency, Tactical Prowess and Team Play in an ordered and structured manner.

THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT MODEL



The Skill Development Model is a blueprint which outlines a progressive series of exercises, drills and activities to develop Technical Proficiency, Tactical Prowess and Team Play in Gaelic Games.

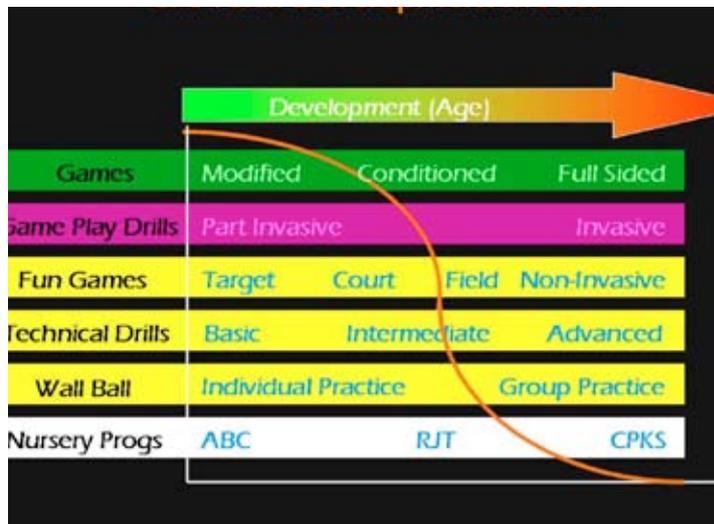
Here the Model is represented in graphic form.

The model outlines six main categories of activity that focus on specific areas of development as follows:

Activity Category	Development Focus
1. ABC/ Have-a-Ball Nursery Programme	Physical Literacy
2. Wall Ball/Individual Practice	Technical Proficiency
3. Technical Drills	Technical Proficiency
4. Fun Games	Technical Proficiency/Tactical Prowess
5. Game Play Drills	Tactical Prowess/Team Play
6. Games	Team Play

Each successive category is a progression on the previous category.

There is also a progression within each category over the range of activities included, as represented in the following graphic.



As a result there are activities in each category that are suitable to all levels of players. However young and developing players should be exposed more readily to the earlier categories of activity while being provided with opportunities to participate and practice the easier activities in the latter categories (as represented by those activities to the left of the orange curved line). Experienced and developed players, having mastered the underlying techniques, should be exposed to a greater degree to the latter categories and to the more complex activities in the earlier categories (as represented by those activities to the left of the orange curved line).

In the following sections we will address each of these categories and the range of activities included.

REMEMBER

Continually assess the specific development of individual players to ensure they are being challenged appropriately for their needs and abilities.

ABC/HAVE-A-BALL NURSERY PROGRAMMES



To develop Technical Proficiency, it is necessary that players master the basic physical skills of movement. These skills incorporate Locomotor, Manipulative and Stability skills, including the ABCs (Agility, Balance, Coordination) and RJTs (Running, Jumping, Throwing) of athleticism, and Basic Motor Skills known as the CPKS (Catching & Passing, Kicking and Striking) of Gaelic Games.

These skills are essential both to an individual's development of effective motor skills and form some of the fundamental components of most skills used in sports and physical activity. The level of competency with which one can perform these skills is referred to as their level of Physical Literacy.

In terms of the Skill Development Model these skills are developed using exercises from the ABC and Have-a-Ball Nursery Programmes.



The ABC Nursery Programme consists of exercises to develop Fundamental Movement Skills for children aged 4 to 8 years old. Fundamental Movement Skills include the Agility, Balance, Coordination, Running and Jumping skills.



Have a Ball

The Have-a-Ball Nursery Programme consists of exercises to develop Basic Motor Skills and as the name suggests focus on the players ability to play with and manipulate a ball. These include the Throwing, Catching & Passing and Striking or Kicking skills which form the fundamental components of many of the sport specific skills in Hurling, Gaelic Football and other sports.

A progressive introduction to these skills will aid the optimum development of more advanced and sport specific skills later on.

Fundamental Movement and Basic Motor Skills should be developed in the early years of physical development to form the basis for all further movement and motor development. However, they should also be practiced throughout the career development of a player, and are typically utilised as elements of warm-up activities for developing and elite players.



WALL BALL/ INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE

A (hurling) wall, handball alley or basic wall can provide for a range of different activities that a player can perform individually or in groups, often outside of structured coaching sessions. These activities develop Technical Proficiency by maximising the amount of Ball Contacts in a training period, and as the only equipment or facilities required are a (hurley), ball and wall they can be practiced in many places and at almost any time.



Wall Ball activities cater for all types of striking and kicking skills, hand/fist passing and all types of catching. Developing ability on the left and right sides is also catered for.



See the Wall Ball/Individual Practice link in the Resources section for specific activities that can be used by Coaches and players to develop technique using just a ball and a wall.

TECHNICAL DRILLS

Technical Drills are the method used to focus learning on performance of the underlying techniques of the game.

There are three types of drill

- Basic Drills
- Intermediate Drills
- Advanced Drills - which require the players to practice the techniques in progressively more challenging situations.

Here is a breakdown of each type of drill:

BASIC DRILLS



Basic Drills should be used to introduce young or new players to a technique or skill.

Key Points

- Players are stationary or performing at a walking or jogging pace.
- Emphasis on the ball doing the work.

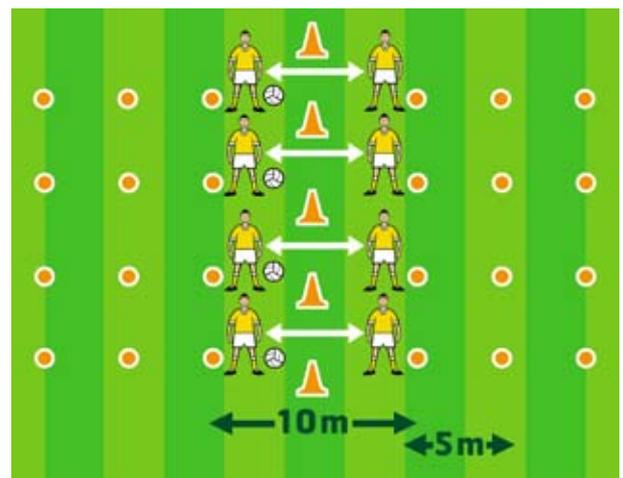
How Basic Drills Work

Basic Drills aim to allow the player to focus solely on the specific technique at hand. To do so all other demands on the players' attention are excluded, where possible. This means that movement is excluded or reduced to the minimum required to perform the technique.

All further demands like speed, pressure, opposition etc are not relevant at this stage. If a player must contend with further demands on their attention, e.g. to run or turn while practicing the new skill, then they will not be able to fully focus on performing the technique to a competent level and performance will suffer. The rationale for Basic Drills is based in the knowledge we have on how new skills are learned.

There are three phases to learning a new skill, as follows:

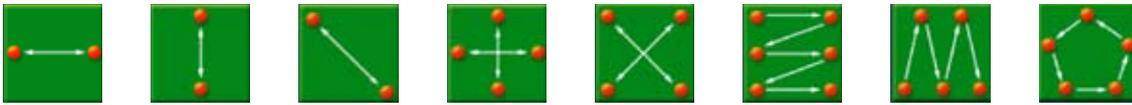
- The Cognitive Phase - Identification and development of the component parts of the skill
- The Associative Phase - Linking the component parts into a smooth action
- The Autonomous Phase - Developing the learned skill so that it becomes automatic



Players should be able to perform the technique to an autonomous level in a stationary position or with limited movement before progressing to performing it in a more challenging situation.

For more information on learning a new skill, see Phases of Learning in the Coaching the Skills section.

Basic drills are usually set out as below, with players forming lines, circles, squares or triangles, and operating in small groups. The ball is played from player to player. This type of organisation can be used to develop a vast range of skills, from striking on the ground in Hurling, to the punt kick in Gaelic Football.



INTERMEDIATE DRILLS



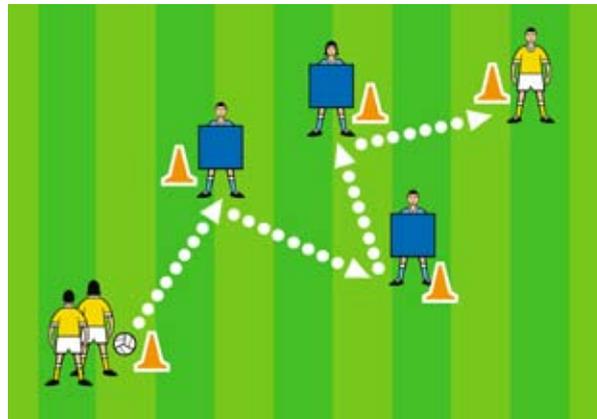
Intermediate Drills introduce movement and require the players to have a significant degree of competency in the underlying technique to complete the drill.

Key Points

- One or other players must move .
- Emphasis on the ball and the players doing the work.

How Intermediate Drills Work

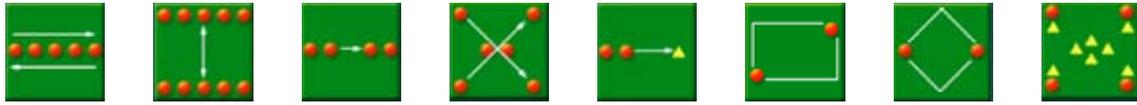
In this type of drill, the player learns to perform the skill with movement involved, with the pace of the movement gradually progressing - from walking, to jogging, to running – as the player's proficiency increases.



Intermediate Drills typically challenge players to perform the skill through the following progression of movement situations.

- Stationary to Moving - Performing the skill from a stationary position, playing the ball to a moving partner.
- Moving to Stationary - Performing the skill while moving, playing the ball to a stationary partner.
- Moving to Moving - Performing the skill while moving, playing the ball to a moving partner.

Intermediate Drills can be set up as below, with players forming lines, circles, squares or triangles. As players develop vary the type of movement and speed of movement required to complete the drill.



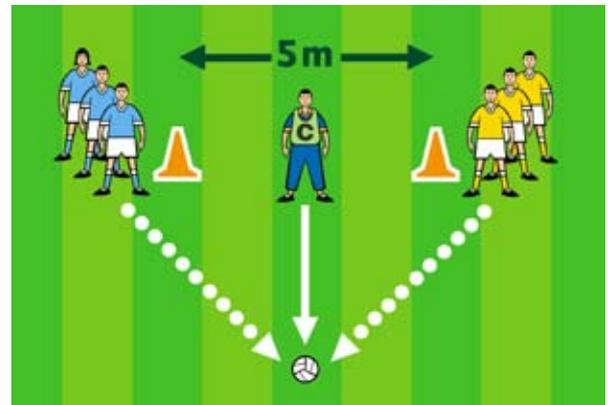
ADVANCED DRILLS



Advanced Drills challenge the players to perform the technique while exposed to a greater number of demands, approaching the intensity required to perform in a game situation.

Key Points

- Pressure is increased by speeding the drill up progressively towards match tempo, and by reducing the space and time the players have to perform the skill
- Reaction responses, multiple techniques or physical contact may be introduced but the drill should remain a defined pattern of movement.



How Advanced Drills Work

As the players' proficiency increases, drills must progress towards game intensity to further challenge the players. By introducing greater pace, reduced space or time, other techniques, decision making or an opponent the drill becomes more and more like a game situation.

Opposed Drills are a the most challenging version of Advanced Drills. Opposition should be introduced gradually, initially as 'token' before progressing to full opposition as the players develop. Opposition will increase the pressure on the player performing the technique, and introduces decision making by requiring them to decide about when to perform the technique. Opposed drills can be very productive with proficient players, but introducing opposition against a player who is not proficient at performing a skill can result in their performance - and consequently the drill - quickly breaking down.

The most important element in developing Technical Proficiency is that players have the ability to perform the skills of the game in game like situations. While drills provide an organised structure for gradually developing technique, fun games and modified games should be organised in tandem with drills.

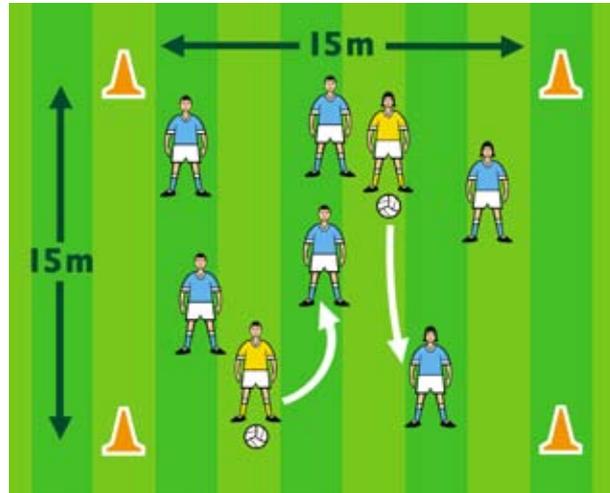
Practice like you Play, and you are more likely to Play like you Practice

FUN GAMES



Fun Games are activities which further help to develop Technical Proficiency while exposing players to limited decision making (Tactical Prowess).

As drills are mostly organised in lines, lanes, circles, squares or triangles, and result in linear movement, players only attend to what is happening in a limited area of their vision. Fun Games and Grid Games generally take place in a defined space but allow random movement within that space, e.g. a grid, court, or a field.



To develop peripheral vision and awareness of team-mates and opponents, Fun Games (for younger players) or Grid Games (for more technically advanced players) are used to introduce non-linear movement and prepare players for the type of movement that takes place during games.

From a Technical Proficiency point of view Fun Games provide an alternative focus for the outcome of the technique or skill being developed, challenging the players to use the skill to participate in a variety of situations.

The 'Family of Games' identifies 4 main types of game, which are progressively more challenging, as follows:

■ **Target Games**

Roll, throw, kick or strike an object at a target

■ **Court Games**

Opponents share the same space or are divided by a net

■ **Field Games**

Opposing teams take turns to bat and field

■ **Invasion Games**

Progressively invading the opposition's territory (from no invasion to full invasion) to attack a goal

TARGET GAMES

Target Games are the simplest form of Fun Games and challenge players to use their technique to hit a target. Starting in 1's or 2's build the numbers to involve unstructured group work. Progress from playing in a cooperative to a competitive manner.

COURT GAMES

require players to pass the ball over an obstacle like a net or zone to a receiver (problem solving). They require only limited decision making skills but do require communication, spatial awareness and match-related running.

FIELD GAMES

Field Games are those games that are based on alternating the player striking/kicking the ball and fielders. They require greater decision making and spatial awareness in relation to where, when and how to move or play the ball.

INVASION GAMES

Invasion Games gradually require players to work as a team to invade opposition territory. Games progress from non-invasion (e.g. where players must complete a task without any direct opposition), to part-invasion (e.g. a possession game between two teams in a grid or a game where certain players are limited to a zone), to full-invasion (e.g. invading opposition territory to attack a goal).

As part of the range of Fun Games, invasive skills are introduced through mainly non-invasive and part-invasive games.

These games allow players to develop positional sense, but limit the type of opposition that players encounter as they continue to develop.

Players must make decisions on where and when to move as in a real 'game' situation, and are encouraged to develop an awareness of time and space. These games also help develop characteristics of Team Play, e.g. support play and communication.

LET THE KIDS DECIDE!

As Coach you should also allow Players to develop their own games on occasion. This gives them the opportunity to interact with the elements of play on a different level, using initiative and problem solving to bring order and enjoyment to their own creation.

GAME PLAY DRILLS

As outlined earlier, the critical element in performance is that players have the ability to perform the skills of the game in game like situations – Practice like you Play, and you are more likely to Play like you Practice.

In order to perform the skills of the game in game situations, however, it requires more than mastery of the underlying techniques. The key stepping stone between mastery of the skills and performing them in a game is Tactical Prowess (T2).

In other words, a player must have the ability to choose:

- What technique to use,
- When to use it, and
- How to use it

The activities used to further develop Tactical Prowess are known as Game Play Drills.

GAME PLAY DRILLS



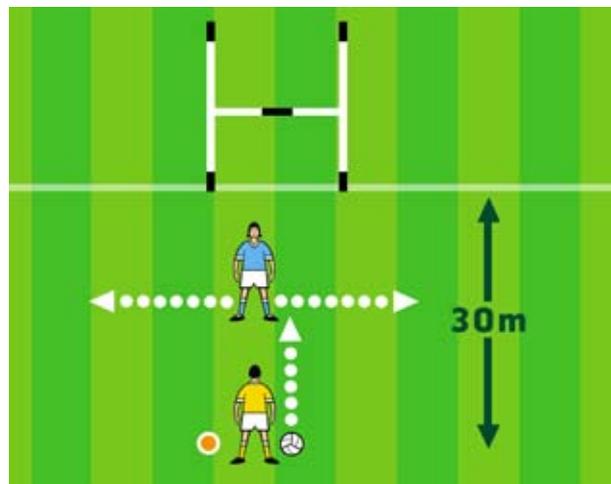
Game Play Drills involve placing players in situations where they are forced to weigh up the choice of which skill to perform, when to perform it, and how to perform it in order to complete the drill. Game Play Drills are sometimes referred to as Match Running Drills or Informal Drills.

Key Points

- Players are not limited to moving in a specific manner between set points or cones; Players must make decisions about where and when to move
- Players must choose which skill to perform or when and how to perform the skill; the technique of the skill may need to be adapted to successfully complete the drill
- Small numbers of players are involved; typically 1 v 1, 2 v 1, 3 v 2

How Game Play Drills Work

From the perspective of increasing the challenge to a player's abilities there is a vast difference between Advanced Drills and Game Play Drills. Game Play Drills train improvements in adapting technical



proficiency to counteract opposition, and improvements in decision-making which are vital elements in the development of competency in a game situation.

The player must adapt to the situation presented by being aware of their options, choosing the correct option, and being technically proficient enough and physically fit enough to execute the option and recover in time for the next situation. An excellent example of a simple Game Play Drill is requiring an attacker to take on a defender in a channel with the objective of reaching the other end with the ball.

Game Play Drills may be Invasive or Part- Invasive. Part-Invasive drills restrict the movement of players to pre-defined channels, areas, or zones. This allows the player to focus attention on information that is relevant to that particular situation or position, before advancing onto Invasive drills, which remove the restrictions and force the player to be aware of all options on the field of play.

Game Play Drills are the essential link between the development of Technical Proficiency and being prepared to play in full game situations.

Assessing the balance between Technical Proficiency and Tactical Prowess

To assess the development of Technical Proficiency and Tactical Prowess, the following questions may be asked in a game situation:

- Did the player choose the correct technique to perform?
- Did the player perform the technique correctly?

If the player chose to perform the correct technique but performed the technique incorrectly there may be a problem with that player's Technical Proficiency. If the player chose to perform an incorrect technique for the specific situation or chose to perform the technique at the wrong time (but performed the technique correctly) the player needs to develop their Tactical Prowess.

GAMES



The last of the 3 T's that players must develop to perform competently in a game situation is Team Play (T3).



Team Play is an extension of Tactical Prowess, with the two sets of skills connected and intertwined. Whereas Tactical Prowess refers to the ability to read a game and decide on which action to take, Team Play is the ability to anticipate the actions of the other players on the field, and mould one's own play with those actions into cohesive team play.



Whereas Tactical Prowess can be developed using Game Play Drills - small numbers of players, and restricted space and options - to develop Team Play, games of varying difficulty are used.

In a game each Player must adapt to the specific situation by anticipating the movement of the ball, team-mates and opponents, communicating effectively with team-mates and providing support to team-mates in possession. It is through the combination of each of these techniques that a team develops cohesive team play.

Games can be classified as Modified, Conditioned or Full-Sided, with a multitude of variations in between.

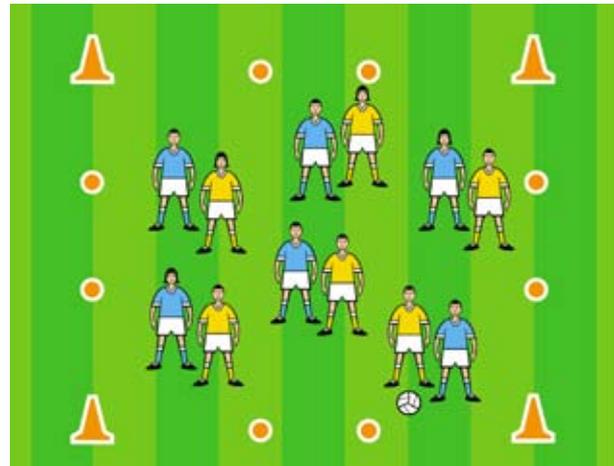
MODIFIED GAMES



Modified Games are versions of Hurling or Gaelic Football devised to suit the particular needs and abilities of specific playing groups, e.g. Go Games (for Under-8's, Under-10's, Under-12's), Super Touch Games (for Post-Primary age Players) etc. These games are modified by a set of conditions to the equipment, playing area, playing rules and/or scoring system.

Modified Games also include games devised to focus on specific aspects of team play, e.g. a possession game of 4 v 3 in a grid. Similarly they can be used to develop the ability to create or reduce space (3 v 2 etc) or to develop contact or reaction skills. Modified scoring systems (e.g. target scores or time limits) and modified playing rules (e.g. no solo, one bounce, fist pass only) can be used to focus on particular techniques or aspects of decision making.

Modified Games apply the learned skills to team situations. Players must make decisions on where and when to move to combine as an effective unit as in a real 'game' situation. Such games encourage awareness



of time and space but also help develop specific characteristics of Team Play, e.g. support play and communication. By not limiting players to particular positions the coach allows each player to develop greater decision making skills and tactical appreciation for different aspects of play.

CONDITIONED GAMES

Conditioned Games are based on the standard version of Hurling/Gaelic Football, but conditioned by a limitation to the playing area, playing rules or scoring system. Conditioned Games include Modified Games but more specifically refer to games that are smaller or limited versions of full-sided games. As such, small-sided games, backs and forwards, or limited rules games are typical examples of Conditioned Games.

Small-Sided games use reduced numbers of players to ensure plenty of ball contact for all involved. Positions may be used but it is advisable to allow individual players to play in as many different positions as possible over time, developing the players' ability to adapt to different positions. Tactical Prowess and Team Play are further developed but with more specific relevance to full-sided games as the movement and open play mimic aspects of full Hurling and Gaelic Football. Games such as 7/9/11/13-a-side games provide players with the opportunity to encounter challenges similar to those found in full-sided games, but due to the smaller numbers and/or restricted playing area, the number of times a player can be in possession, or contesting possession with an opponent is increased.

Games such as Backs and Forwards provide players with experience of playing in position, with the ball being played into these positions regularly and frequently (and from positions further out the field where the ball would usually come from) in order that the players can develop their position specific awareness and skill.

FULL-SIDED GAMES

As players progress and develop through the Play to Learn phase and into the Learn to Compete phase of the Pathway to Elite Performance they should be gradually introduced to playing full-sided games.

VARYING ACTIVITIES – STEP

The progressions outlined in the Skill Development Model are relevant to players of all ages and stages of development.

In order to maximise the effectiveness of training sessions for any player group, a combination of drills and games should be used. For example, young players who are only in the process of learning the underlying techniques of the game should be given the opportunity to play fun games and modified games. Similarly older or developed players should continue to revert to simpler drills to focus on technique, and use fun games to vary warm-ups and more rigid training sessions.

The over-riding principal is that players are set achievable but challenging tasks in order that they remain interested, excited and motivated to play.

THE STEP METHOD

The STEP method is a simple way to vary an exercise, drill, activity or game.

This is how it works:

- **Space** Changing the amount of space available may reduce or increase the difficulty. More space means less pressure, but more running! Use zones, or restricted areas, to prevent all the players chasing the ball (beehive play) or to encourage width or to aid the defensive or attacking players.
- **Task** Change the task that the players are required to perform, e.g. choosing a more difficult technique to perform, or increasing the pace from a walk to a jog, or changing the target from a fixed to a moving target, or varying the playing or scoring rules for all or selected players.
- **Equipment** Change the equipment used, e.g. from using a big ball to a smaller ball, or from using a wall to a partner, or a bat to a hurley. Note: Small balls are easier to throw but harder to catch, whereas big balls are easier to catch and harder to throw. Similarly longer implements or implements with smaller heads are harder to use than shorter implements with larger heads.
- **Players** Introduce opposition, firstly in token form, before progressing gradually to full opposition (where the possession is contested in a game like manner). Change the number of players to give an advantage to the attacking or defending players.

IDEA

When coaching a technique or skill to players there are 4 essential steps:

- Introduce the skill
- Demonstrate and Explain the skill
- Practice the skill
- Provide feedback/correct errors

These steps are often identified by the acronym I.D.E.A.. Each step is best carried out using either Verbal Instruction or Visual Instruction or a combination of both.



The following table provides a synopsis of each step.

Step	How to Communicate
Introduce the Skill	Verbally introduce the skill, providing a brief description. Outline the Key Teaching Points.
Demonstrate	Demonstrate the skill; perform it in full a number of times. Then break the skill down, making a point of noting the position of the Head, Hands, (Hurley) and Feet for each distinct component. Repeat the skill in full again.
Explain	Verbally and Visually explain how you want the skill practiced, i.e. the organisation of the drill or activity.
Attend	Observe the players performing the skill a number of times. Provide feedback on how to correct any errors.

Here we look at each step in more detail:

INTRODUCE THE SKILL

When introducing a skill to a player or group of players, it is important that you explain the importance of the skill, how it is used during the game and how the skill relates to other skills that are used in the game, in words that the players can understand – the younger the player, the simpler the language used should be.

If you are coaching a group of players it is crucial that you have their full attention and that they can all see and hear you - gaining control of the group is very important. Cutting down distractions (loose slotars or footballs for example), facing the players away from the sun, arranging them in a semi-circle, and separating disruptive players etc. can all help in securing their attention.

DEMONSTRATE THE SKILL

A good demonstration and clear explanation of how to perform a skill is central to the ability of a player to learn a technique. Using the Whole-Part-Whole method of teaching, begin by demonstrating the skill in full a number of times, at normal speed and in slow motion. (Remember, to be a successful Coach it is not always necessary that you be able to demonstrate all the skills that you teach.

You can have another person, or a player who is proficient at the skill perform the technique. Remember also, it might be necessary to demonstrate the technique for players who are left sided or who are left footed.) Having demonstrated the skill in full, break the skill down into each of its distinct component parts emphasising the Key Teaching Points for each.

Finally demonstrate the entire skill again, emphasising the flow from one component of the technique to the next. In this way the player builds a cognitive picture of the technique that reflects both the technique as a whole and the various components that must be learned to perform it.

EXPLAIN THE PRACTICE

Verbally and visually explain the organisation of the drill, activity or game set up to practice the skill. (Again the coach does not have to demonstrate the practice – a player or players who are proficient at the skill and know the practice can be used.) Before letting players practice the skill, it is important that you check that they understand what they are being asked to do by inviting or asking questions.

ATTEND

Practice alone will not lead to players learning the correct techniques. For practice to be productive, players require feedback about how their performance compares with the desired performance and information on how to correct the errors that they make. To achieve this, the Coach must be able to observe and evaluate the performance to determine the cause of their errors.

This is perhaps the biggest challenge in coaching – identifying the cause of poor performance. It is important that you do not rush into providing feedback – if you are uncertain about either the cause of the problem or how to correct it, continue to observe or ask another Coach for their feedback. Any player can perform a technique incorrectly when they know that they are being watched by the Coach; instead wait until you have observed the error a number of times before trying to correct it.



When providing feedback it is key to use a positive approach, especially when dealing with younger players. If one player is having difficulty with a skill, you can provide correction on a one-to-one basis as the player will be more receptive if they are not being corrected in front of a crowd. If you notice the same error in a number of players, it may be wise to re-demonstrate the skill, as they may not have picked up on the key points that you outlined.

While players will largely adhere to the principles which underpin proper technique, they will almost inevitably modify their style to suit their biomechanical make-up. This explains why there are an almost infinite number of possible variations of each technique.

For this reason, it is important for Coaches to determine whether any particular variation is basically sound or inherently weak as distinct from labelling anything as right or wrong or attempting to get every player to adhere to the “perfect” technique, when their particular variation may be working effectively.

VARYING ACTIVITIES – STEP

Three distinct phases of learning a new skill have been identified, and these are:

1. The Cognitive Phase:

Identification and development of the component parts of the skill - involves formation of a mental picture of the skill

2. The Associative Phase:

Combining each of the component parts into a smooth action - involves practicing the skill and using feedback to perfect the skill

3. The Autonomous Phase:

Developing the learned skill so that it becomes automatic - involves little or no conscious thought or attention whilst performing the skill

Here we look at each phase individually and how this knowledge is reflected in the Skill Development Model.

THE COGNITIVE PHASE

The Cognitive Phase is vital to the development of good technique. The task for the player is to understand what is required to perform the technique. The player can accomplish this by watching the technique being demonstrated, and having a number of attempts at performing the skill. It is vital that the player pays attention to each part of the skill.

The rate of development during this phase is directly related to the quality with which the skill is taught. The coach should use as many methods of teaching the skill as necessary (Verbal, Demonstration, Video, Diagrams etc) - ensuring that the visual demonstration is of a very high standard is of utmost importance. Once the component parts of the skill have been clearly identified further practice helps assemble them, bit by bit, into the overall skill.



THE ASSOCIATIVE PHASE

Players in the Associative Phase of skill acquisition use feedback, from themselves (i.e. how the skill feels and if the outcome is successful), and from the Coach (identifying where the player is making an error and providing positive corrective feedback) to shape and polish the individual component parts into a smooth action. Rehearsal of the skill must be done regularly and correctly.

REMEMBER

Practice makes Permanent, but only Perfect Practice makes Perfect!

THE AUTONOMOUS PHASE

With further practice the skill may become automatic, i.e. the player can perform the skill without consciously focusing on the whole skill or how it is made up of its component parts. This phase is identified by automatic and consistently correct performance of the skill.

Players should be able to perform the skill to an autonomous level in a stationary position or with limited movement - i.e. in a Basic Drill situation - before progressing to performing it in a more challenging situation, e.g. while moving - as in an Intermediate Drill - or with further external demands - as in an Advanced Drill.

For more information on Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Drills see Technical Drills in the Developing the Skills of Gaelic Games section.

SETTING THE APPROPRIATE CHALLENGE

Coaches should attempt to identify the level of ability of the group and individual players before deciding what tasks are generally appropriate. To do this organise a number of tasks of varying difficulty and observe the players' responses to assess if they find the task too easy or too difficult. Once the general level of ability of the group has been identified, tasks that provide the appropriate challenge can be organised.

However, there may be a wide range of ability within the group, and as such, emphasis should be put on each child's own progress, and not on comparing their achievements with those of others. This means that where possible individual instruction and challenges should be provided and a broad range of activities should be planned and presented. Activities should develop to be of an increasingly complex nature and be challenging but 'doable'.

Where possible children of approximately the same skill levels should be grouped together for coaching. Also take care to note which children work well together, as disruptive children can make organising a coaching session very difficult.

REMEMBER!

A good coach can take players out of their comfort zone without taking them out of their depth!

ENSURING FOCUS IN TRAINING

MOTIVATION

The ability to concentrate, or maintain focus on the task in hand, is vital if training is to achieve the best outcome for each individual player and the group as a whole. Players who aren't focussed cause disruption, and can affect the training session to the detriment of all.

When players are focused it is generally because they are engaged by what they are doing and the challenge of the task at hand has been set at the appropriate level. When players lose focus it may be because they find the task too easy or too difficult.



Equally players may have a perception that they have or do not have the competency to participate or successfully perform the task. If they have low levels of perceived competence they will also lose focus. Motivation may also be a major factor affecting the player's focus. Motivating factors may be intrinsic or extrinsic.

Intrinsic Motivation is evident when the players engage in an activity for its own sake, without some obvious external incentive present.

Extrinsic Motivation is evident when the desire/drive to perform is based on the achievement of external gratification and reward, e.g., be picked on the team, win, rise in the estimation of significant others, exert control or power, or receive acclaim or financial gain etc. Extrinsic motivation may have an adverse affect on the level of enjoyment achieved from participation.

Motivation that stimulates and instills in the player the desire to perform to their True Potential is typically intrinsic, where players play for the thrill of participation, or the feeling that they get from performing. Players who are intrinsically motivated will be focused, whereas those that are extrinsically motivated are more susceptible to distraction.

GOAL SETTING

The Coach can help ensure players are focused during training by using a technique called goal setting. Goal setting may also, if effectively used, help develop a more intrinsically motivated group of players over time, and is a good method of helping to develop their self-esteem.

Goal setting is the process of outlining targets or objectives. It can be a particularly powerful motivating tool for children as goals:

- Focus attention on a target
- Increase the effort and intensity
- Encourage persistence and practice over time
- Promote the development of problem solving skills

The Coach can play an important role in setting goals for an individual player or a team. By helping the player or team set goals there is a commitment from both sides towards realising the goal. By writing down the goals and placing them in a prominent place (e.g. posting them on the dressing room wall), the Coach can help reinforce the commitment entered into when the goals are set down.

The Coach should recognise that the targets should be challenging and achievable but also flexible, as the aim is to challenge the player to achieve the goal, not provide an impossible task. By providing regular feedback, the Coach can further challenge the players to achieve their goals. Shorter-term goals are better for children as often they will not be able to appreciate how they are progressing towards a long-term goal. This can result in a loss of focus and reduced motivation.

When outlining goals, coaches should remember the SMARTER principle - Goals should be:

- **Specific** - clearly define what you want to achieve
- **Measurable** - choose a goal with measurable progress so that you can see the changes that occur
- **Agreed** - the goal must be agreed upon by the player and the Coach
- **Realistic** - goals should be challenging, but 'doable'
- **Time Limited** - putting an end point on the goal ensures that the player has a clear target to achieve for
- **Exciting** - players should be enthusiastic about achieving the goal
- **Recorded** - keep a record of all of the goals. This also serves to allow the Coach and player review any goals - whether they be achieved or not.

THE ROLE OF THE COACH

The roles that a Coach undertakes are many and varied. In many ways it is much more than just teaching the techniques and tactics associated with Gaelic games. Throughout the sporting year a Coach may be called upon to be an advisor, assessor, chauffeur, demonstrator, friend, fact finder, fountain of knowledge, mentor, motivator, organiser, planner and supporter.

Here is a brief summary of some of the roles a Coach may undertake:

- **Analyser and Advisor** - Analysing a player's performance in training and games and advising on the needs to improve an area of their game, providing appropriate drills and games.
- **Chauffeur** - Transporting them to training or games if parents or family are unavailable
- **Demonstrator** – The ability to demonstrate the skill that you want the players to perform is not always necessary. You do not need to have played Gaelic games to become a Coach. Good Coaches have the ability to communicate to players how to perform the skill
- **Friend** - Over the years of working with a team and individual players a personal relationship is built up where as well as providing coaching advice you also become someone who they can discuss their problems or share their success with. The Coach must keep personal information confidential otherwise the respect the player had for you as a friend and Coach will be lost.
- **Fact finder** - Gathering information on your own players and opponents and to keep up to date with current training techniques.
- **Fountain of Knowledge** – A Coach will often be asked questions on diet, different types of training, sports injuries and topics often unrelated to Gaelic games.
- **Leader** – Have a vision of what needs to be done, in each session, and throughout the year. The good Coach is firm, fair and flexible, and prepared to learn as well as coach.
- **Mentor** – Any players attending training sessions are under your care, with responsibility to their parents and family for ensuring that they are safe and secure. It is important to get prior information on any health issues they may have, and ensure that the training/playing area is as safe as possible. A good Coach should also support players should they have any problems or sustain any injuries.
- **Motivator** - Maintain the motivation of individuals and of the team during the year.
- **Organiser and planner** - Preparation of training plans for each player, developing team play and outlining tactics. This role incorporates the ability to organise training and games to suit players, other Coaches and the Club/School as a whole.
- **Supporter** - Competition can be a nerve-racking experience for some players, especially the young player. Often they like the Coach to be around to help support them through the pressures.

THE 3 MAIN PRIORITIES WHEN COACHING CHILDREN ARE:

- **Ensure all the participants have Fun**
- **Develop the basic skills**
- **Safety**

DEVELOPING A COACHING STYLE**SUCCESS AS A COACH**

Winning is part and parcel of being a successful Coach, but successful coaching is more than simply beating opponents. Successful Coaches help players to master new skills, enjoy competing with others and develop self-esteem.

Your success as a Coach will be impacted by your coaching philosophy more than any other factor. Your coaching philosophy is the set of beliefs or principles that you bring to coaching that guide you in the decisions that you need to make.



In developing your coaching philosophy it is necessary to decide what you want to accomplish as a Coach and how you will deal with the diverse range of people – players, match officials, administrators and parents - that you will encounter. Your philosophy will be developed through asking questions of yourself and considering issues that may occur during your coaching career.

Your coaching philosophy will be greatly determined by your belief of what defines success as a Coach, and the goals that you set for yourself and your team, e.g.:

- To have a winning team
- To help young players to have fun
- To help young players to develop technically, tactically, physically, psychologically and socially

Often the definition of success will be influenced by whether the goals are short-term (winning the next

game), or long-term (developing a players competency). Winning the next game is the objective of every team - winning within the rules of the game should be the main objective of every player and Coach. These two objectives are actually intertwined – by helping to develop a players’ technical ability, tactical prowess, physical fitness, psychological focus and social skills, any team can strive to win an upcoming game.

A Coach’s philosophy is not necessarily a rigid set of rules. Just as a player develops throughout the sporting year, a successful Coach also develops based on events during the year. A Coach will deal with each event based on their individual philosophy. The consequences of how the Coach handles each situation will either cause them to adjust or solidify their beliefs and principles.

As a Coach you should provide your players with clear guidelines for trust and cooperation, and an understanding of what you expect of them with regard to discipline, teamwork and communication between each other and their Coaches.

COACHING STYLE

Your coaching style will determine how you prepare for coaching sessions, how you decide what skills and strategies to teach, what methods you choose to discipline players and what role you allow players in any decision making.

There are essentially three coaching styles that a Coach will lean towards:

■ **The Command Style (The Dictator):**

The Coach makes all the decisions. Players listen and comply with the Coach’s instructions. The Coach feels it is their role to tell the player what to do. This style is effective if winning is the main goal of the Coach. Unfortunately this style can lead to players being motivated to play through fear of the Coach.

■ **The Submissive Style (The Baby-Sitter):**

The Coach makes as few decisions as possible, gives little instruction and provides minimal guidance in organising activities. Many of these Coaches adopt a “throw out the ball and have a good time” approach.

■ **The Cooperative Style (The Teacher):**

The Coach shares the decision making with the players. The cooperative Coach provides the structure and environment for players to set their own goals and assume responsibility for their actions. Players recognise the Coach as the leader who guides them towards achieving their own goals.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD COACH

As well as adopting a cooperative style of coaching, the good Coach will demonstrate a set of qualities and characteristics that directly relate to their effectiveness.

Here is a list of some of these qualities and characteristics:

- Able to Co-ordinate, Organise
- Creates New Perspectives
- Dependable
- Enthusiastic
- Empathy
- Fair
- Firm
- Good Communicator (Listener)
- Helpful
- Honourable
- Improves Players Abilities
- Knowledgeable
- Leadership
- Made Training Enjoyable/Varied
- Motivated
- Organised
- Problem Solver
- Professional
- Respected
- Responsible
- Sound
- Supportive



A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COACHES

Team Coaches and Mentors can ensure that sport has a beneficial impact when they adhere to the following guidelines:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat each one equally regardless of age, gender or ability.
- Ensure that nobody involved with the team acts towards or speaks to another person in a manner or engages in any other conduct which threatens, disparages, vilifies or insults another person on the basis of that person's race, religion, colour, descent, national, ethnic or socio-economic background.
- Ensure that each player observes a high standard of personal hygiene.
- Make adequate provision for First Aid and do not encourage or allow players to play while injured. (Keep an adequate record of each injury and ensure
- Ensure that another official – referee/team mentor – is present when a player is being attended to and can corroborate the relevant details.
- Ensure players are safely attired and that proper insurance arrangements are in place.
- Ensure that unrestricted access to the internet is not provided on the club premises.
- Be positive during coaching sessions so that participants always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem.
- Plan and prepare appropriately for each session and ensure proper levels of supervision.
- Be punctual, properly attired, and lead by example; avoid smoking or the consumption of alcohol in the presence of young people.
- Don't shout at or lecture players or reprimand /ridicule them when they make a mistake. (Children learn best through trial and error. They should not be afraid to risk error to learn)
- Set realistic – challenging but achievable – performance goals.
- Praise and reinforce effort/commitment and provide positive feedback.
- Recognise the developmental needs of young players (avoid excessive training or competition) and ensure that they are matched on an individual or team basis.
- Rotate the team captain and the method used for selecting teams so that the same children are not always last to be selected.
- Develop an understanding of the OTú Coaching Model and ensure that you have the appropriate level of coaching accreditation.

- Ensure games, activities and playing equipment are customised to suit the needs of those involved in terms of age, ability, experience and maturity.
- Avoid overcoaching i.e., insisting upon set (stereotyped) playing patterns where individual decision-making and creativity are stifled or where young people are confined to playing in set positions on a continuous basis.
- Don't equate losing with failure and do not develop a preoccupation with medals and trophies. (The level of improvement made by young players is the best indicator of Coaching Effectiveness).
- Encourage parents/guardians to play an active role in organising activities and to draft a Code of Discipline for everyone involved.
- Never use any form of corporal punishment or physical force.
- Never use foul language or provocative language/gestures to a player, opponent or match official. (The Coach should only enter the field with the referee's permission and should not question their decisions or integrity).
- Avoid sending messages – voice/text/e-mail – to players. (All messages /circulars etc. should be in writing and directed to the young person's parents /guardians)
- On occasions when the team travels away, separate sleeping facilities must be provided for all adults. If both genders are in the group, male and female Coaches must be present.
- It's important to recognise that certain situations e.g. staying over at the Coach's residence or friendly actions – e.g. 'horse play'/role play/telling jokes etc – could be misinterpreted and lead to allegations of serious misconduct or impropriety.
- Avoid any inappropriate touching when assisting players to perform a technique or when First Aid is being administered.
- Ensure that all dressing rooms and areas occupied by the Team, prior to, during or immediately following the completion of any match are kept clean and are not damaged in any way.
- Do not take coaching sessions on your own.
- Do not have a situation where you are alone in a car or dressing-room with a player.

7

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUNG PLAYERS



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

As a Coach, it will be necessary to communicate with your players as one group, in smaller groups of players (e.g., the forwards that play together) and as individuals. Regardless of the number of players you are communicating with at any one time, the same principles apply to communicate effectively.

■ **Be an Enthusiastic Coach:**

Establish your role as an enthusiastic leader of your team. Your enthusiasm will affect how your players enjoy playing and training.

■ **Be a Positive Coach:**

Interact with your players in a positive manner. Set a good example of desired behaviour. Constant criticism and yelling at your players will decrease their motivation to participate, so give praise and encouragement to your players frequently.

■ **Be Demanding but Considerate:**

Clearly establish what is expected of the players. Your expectations should be based on their abilities and experiences. Don't expect more than is reasonable and realistic.

■ **Be Consistent:**

Communicate in a consistent manner from one situation to another (e.g, from training session to session, game to game, or from training to a game) and with all of your players. If you are inconsistent you will leave your players confused as to what it is you mean and what is expected of them and they may lose their respect for you.



Be a Good Listener:

Good listening is an important component of effective communication. Demonstrate a willingness to listen and your players will express their feelings, concerns, and suggestions to you.

Provide Effective Feedback when Identifying and Correcting Skill Errors:

Give feedback in a positive, informative manner. Be clear and concise in the feedback you provide. When correcting an error, first tell the player what is being done well.

The player then knows which parts of the skill are being performed correctly. Then tell the player what needs to be done to correct the error. Always end on a positive note by encouraging the player to spend more time on the skill.

It is important that a player's feelings of self-worth should not be affected because the player demonstrates an improper technique.

Explain the Contribution of Each Player to the Team:

All players are part of the team and the Coach should demonstrate confidence in each player's ability to contribute to the team. You should value the contribution of each player to the team. Players should be encouraged by the Coach to be supportive of each other's contribution to the team.

Treat All Players as Individuals:

It is important to be sensitive to individual needs and to show all players that you care about them as individuals. Make an effort to talk with them all individually at every coaching session and game. Greet players by their first names.

Communicate in the Same Manner with your Child as with other Players:

Parents who coach their own children often put unrealistic expectations on them. If you coach your child, remember to treat them as you do the other players on the team and don't demand more of them than you do of the others. As well, if you coach your children, avoid showing favoritism toward them. It is important for you to treat your children as individuals, the same as you would do for all the other players, by not showing any particular favoritism toward them.



VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Communication can be both verbal and non-verbal. Effective verbal and non-verbal communication with your players is affected by how well you use your voice and body.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The following are suggestions for using your voice effectively:

- Speak clearly and make eye contact with the players as you speak.
- From time to time, look carefully at the players who are farthest away from you. Can you see clear indications that they can hear? If there is any doubt, ask them.
- Use a voice that is only slightly louder than a normal speaking voice, except for the few times it is necessary to project your voice over a long distance.
- Speaking unnecessarily loud encourages players to make noise themselves. Many Coaches are able to settle players down by lowering their voices so that close attention is required to hear.
- Change the tone of your voice to communicate varying moods (e.g., energetic, patient, serious, concerned).
- When explaining a skill or an activity, use language that is easily understood by the age and level of the players you are coaching. Watch for reactions from the players that they understand or do not understand your explanation.

NON - VERBAL COMMUNICATION

You will often hear players say, "The Coach is in a good mood today." or "The Coach is angry because we lost." How do your players know that? How did you communicate that? Coaches communicate many messages to players by their actions, facial expressions, use of arms and hands, body position, overall posture, and voice characteristics.

How do you behave before a game? What do you do during a game? How do you behave when your team wins/loses? What do you do when a player makes a mistake in a game? The Coach's non-verbal behaviour should reflect what is verbally communicated to the players. Act in a way which shows that you are consistent with what you say. For example, if you ask players to respect the referee and his officials, it is inappropriate for you to challenge a referees decision.

What you communicate non-verbally to your players can be as important as what you verbally communicate. For example, a player fouls an opposing player but is not penalised. The Coach, by not verbally expressing disapproval of this infraction, is giving approval for such unsportsmanlike conduct.

The following are suggestions for using your body effectively:

- Move amongst the players so that they feel you are spending some time with each of them.
- Make regular eye contact with all players. This not only reassures them, but can provide you with valuable feedback as to who is listening and understanding.
- A hand or pat on the back or shoulder, a firm grip on an arm, or an arm around the shoulder are powerful ways of conveying concern and support. Remember though, that a pat on the head can be interpreted as being demeaning or belittling!
- Face all of the players whenever possible. Turning your back may be a sign of disrespect. Also, by turning your back, you lose the impact of facial expression, which is a valuable non-verbal communication tool.

GAINING ATTENTION

Using both your voice and body in combination is a most effective way to help gain the attention of your players.

Here is a typical routine to gain attention.

- Designate a specific area to gather at the beginning of each practice.
- Use a signal (e.g., whistle) to indicate attention is desired. If a whistle is used, blow just loud enough and long enough to gain initial attention.
- Gather the players in a group and make an effort to make eye contact.
- If one or two players are not paying attention, look directly at them and ask for their attention by using their name(s). If a player is constantly disruptive, it may be best to remove them from the rest of group, continue with the session, and talk later with the specific player.

REINFORCEMENT

For any young player, the degree to which they believe they have the ability to perform a task is directly related to how they approach the task and ultimately whether they succeed or not. Developing the self-confidence of the young player is therefore one of the most important challenges that faces every Coach. The Coach can help the player to develop self-confidence through his or her own actions, and through helping the player to realise their own abilities. How the Coach reinforces behaviour will have a major impact on the players' self-confidence.



Behaviour may be either reduced or increased in likelihood using reinforcement (or its opposite punishment). Sport psychology research evidence overwhelmingly supports the use of a predominantly positive approach to communicating with players. Research indicates that positive reinforcement motivates and has a greater effect on learning than criticism. Positive reinforcement should be provided regardless of the outcome. In coaching positive reinforcement is generally provided in the form of praise.

Here are some instances where positive reinforcement has a major impact:

■ Providing Feedback

Creating a positive environment for young players to learn new skills is a vital part of coaching. Positive Feedback is used to encourage children and increase confidence. Negative feedback can be detrimental to a child's skill development and result in a decrease in their confidence in their ability. If a child makes a mistake in their performance, they should receive praise for the effort or what they did correctly and then they should receive corrective feedback on what they need to do to correct the error.

■ Motivating Participation

Corrective feedback can have a large effect on a child's motivation to play. Intrinsic motivation involves internal feelings of having fun and feeling competent and successful. It is difficult for the coach to provide intrinsic motivation for any child, but by creating the right environment, players can achieve their own intrinsic rewards. Extrinsic motivators, such as trophies, medals, or praise, can also be powerful motivators for children, and can in fact help to create intrinsic motivation. For example, if a child performs a skill correctly and the Coach praises them (extrinsic reward), their confidence will be boosted (intrinsic motivation).

■ Pep Talks

Pep talks are often used as a last minute way of motivating a player before an activity or game. Coaches often give pep talks to remind players of the importance of the activity or game or to reduce any feelings of anxiety or nerves that a player may be feeling. However, pep talks may not always be a good way of communicating with young players. Many players will already feel nervous, or anxious about a game, and may already be aware of the importance of an occasion through speaking to other players or parents. In this case motivation and confidence should be built by emphasising the qualities and skills that the players have.



LISTENING

Communication is a two way process - involving the coach and the players, parents, club or match officials. It involves listening as well as communicating.

How good a listener are you? How much of what your players, other Coaches or parents say to you do you actually hear? Listening to players tells them that you are genuinely interested in their feelings, thoughts, and suggestions.

Good listening is a difficult communication skill to learn well. Like all skills, it takes practice to be a good listener.

LISTENING TECHNIQUES

The following techniques can be used to improve your listening skills:

■ **Attentive Listening**

Listening starts with the Coach being attentive to the player, as demonstrated by your facial expressions and gestures, and by remaining quiet while the player is speaking. Eye-to-eye contact with the player at the same level is important. These actions all indicate to the player that you are ready to listen.

■ **Paraphrasing**

Repeat in your own words what it is you think a player said to see if that is actually what they meant. Paraphrasing allows you to see if you have a complete understanding of what was said and provides feedback on whether you interpreted the information correctly. Any areas of misunderstanding can then be explained by the player.

■ **Bridging**

Verbally indicate that you are following and understanding what the player is saying by the use of bridging words such as, "I see" and "yes".

■ **Restating**

Repeating the last phrase or few words of what the player said without changing anything reinforces your attention.

■ **Inviting Clarification**

Request that the player clarifies or expands on something that they have said. In seeking clarification, question a specific comment made by the player that you did not understand. Inviting clarification shows interest.

SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPROVE LISTENING

There are 4 simple steps to improve listening skills in any situation:

1. STOP

Stop what you are doing and pay attention to what is being said. This may be difficult in a coaching session as there may be other things going on. Paying attention lets the player know that they are important. Try not to interrupt.

2. LOOK

Make eye contact with the player by being at the same level and facing the player. Show interest and look for non-verbal cues that the player may be giving out.



3. FOCUS

Focus your attention on what the player is saying by listening to their words and the emotion in what is being said. Use non-verbal cues such as nodding or smiling when appropriate. Support the player with encouraging words to show that you are focused on what the player is saying.

4. RESPOND

Re-state what the player has said to you, in your own words. This shows that you have been listening and establishes that you have understood what was talked about. Use open questions to prompt the player for more information if needed.

Depending on what type of communication you adopt as a Coach, it is important that the communication is clear, concise and, where appropriate, reinforcing.

MANAGING TYPICAL DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

The following list of possible solutions is by no means an answer to every problem encountered by a Coach when dealing with under-age players. It does, however, cover a range of the most successful, tried and tested means used by experienced Coaches to reduce and eliminate discipline problems.

The suggested solutions are not in any particular order.

■ Variation

To maintain interest among young players the Coach(es) must vary the training routine and the environment, e.g. after warm-ups etc. begin with games first rather than drills or invite another Coach to take a session now and again.

■ Praise

Recognise and praise players for their achievements. e.g. no matter how insignificant you may think the achievement is, it may be a big deal to the player. Everybody, Coach included, works better when praised.

■ Goal Set

Set targets for players (short term performance goals) e.g. pointing 6 out of 10 'frees' or making 5 'clean' overhead catches in a practice game.

■ Delegate Responsibility

Give some players more responsibility during training, e.g. put them in charge of groups/individuals or ask them to help younger players learn skills.

■ Seek Assistance

Insist on more input from club members; making sure they know that their help will be useful but not too taxing or time consuming, e.g. a person is more likely to agree if you say you need them to referee small-sided games for an hour on a Sunday morning rather than ask them to help Coach a team. (Many people do not think they have the necessary skills or time to get involved).

■ Play Games

Young players get bored when a session has too many drills. Although drills are necessary, many players see them as a chance to mess about when a Coach attends to other groups. The same is true of games which involve big numbers and few touches of the ball. Why not build your sessions around modified and conditioned games.

■ Don't Let Them Play!

A disruptive player may still cause problems, no matter what is tried. Very often he is one of the better players, if not he best you have. If the behaviour is affecting others and undermining your position, the answer is simple...get rid of the player until he or she changes their ways.

■ Keep Your Distance

Never be drawn into trying to be 'one of the lads', as young players will take advantage and you may lose the authority you once had.

■ Set an Appropriate Challenge

Make sure your sessions are interesting and varied and pitched at the right level for the players you are dealing with. Good players need to be challenged and given the opportunity to improve, just as weaker ones need to feel part of the squad and should get the chance to work in small groups of players of similar ability.

■ Make a Stand

If parents complain about or try to influence the picking of a team, nip it in the bud as soon as possible or it will over shadow everything you do from then on. Pass the problem to officials in the club and look for a quick resolution. At the start of the season 'set your stall out' at a meeting of players and parents. e.g. agree a code of conduct so that everyone involved knows what is expected of them.

■ Use a Reward System

Think about some sort of reward system to be built into your sessions now and again. e.g. use the U-Can Awards to challenge and reward players.

■ Make the Tough Decisions

Do not be afraid to make tough decisions if the need arises. Never ignore problems or allow them to fester.

■ Address the situation appropriately

When an individual player is causing discipline problems, the problem should be addressed directly to the player, on a one-to-one basis. When the problem is more widespread and is a common group behaviour, the problem should be discussed openly among the group as a whole. Encourage/guide the group to establish their own code of behaviour/conduct, to which each will feel responsibility towards, and as a result towards the group as a whole.

■ Educate the Players

Many issues of discipline centre on breaches of the Rules of Play. At each training session, choose one Rule of Play and discuss it with the players. This makes the players more aware of the lesser-known rules that often lead to disputes over refereeing decisions.

8

PLANNING



Planning a coaching session, and indeed the entire coaching year is essential for a number of reasons.

On a session by session basis it allows for proper, well-delivered coaching sessions which show that the Coach is competent, in charge, and knows what they are doing.

On a seasonal basis it allows the Coach to outline goals, monitor performance and adapt as the season progresses.



Here are a few questions to help you focus on the topics addressed in this section.

- Do we plan each session before we get to the pitch?
- Do we consult our assistants or fellow coaches to ensure they know what's going to happen at the next session?
- Or do we arrive at the pitch and then decide?

PLANNING A COACHING SESSION

One of your main duties as a Coach is to ensure that Players keep returning to training. A decrease in the numbers attending says something about how you prepare, plan and/or how you conduct your coaching programme. At the same time, maintaining and increasing the numbers at your sessions indicates that you are doing something right! Preparation and planning are key to an effective session. The plan involves everything from the time you arrive at a training ground, to when you leave, after every player has left. If you have taken the time to write down the plan, it is possible to refer to it at all times during the session without the session breaking down.

Having the equipment and activities laid out is important so that as soon as one activity ends, you can move straight onto the next. If you have to spend a number of minutes setting out a new activity you can lose the attention of the group which can lead to discipline problems.

Starting on time shows a good example to the players (and their parents). The Coach must be seen to be in charge of the session without becoming a dictator. Fun should be the most important aspect, but skill improvement must not be neglected.

The following should be addressed when planning for a coaching session:

- Identify a theme for the session
- Identify the skills to be developed
- Decide on the duration of the session - Remember that children learn quicker if they undertake short intensive progressive sessions rather than one long session per week
- Map out the training area to suit your chosen activities
- Ensure that you have all the necessary equipment available to you
- Safety is always the priority - Before the session, ensure that the training area is up to standard. Also ensure that you are not alone when taking any session.

The following general points should be considered when planning the content of a session.

- **Appropriate activities** The activities chosen must be appropriate for the players' ability and age. It is important that children are not pushed too hard too soon. Equally for children to maintain their interest and continue to develop as players it is important that they are challenged to achieve the best results possible.
- **Progression:** The activities should be broken into teachable elements which progress from simple to more complex movements.
- **Demonstration:** Demonstrations by the coach or good players can be supplemented by videos of players performing the skill.
- **Variety:** The session must have a variety of activities to ensure the players stay active and enthusiastic.
- **Practice:** Ensure the children have enough time to practice and experiment with activities. Show them how they can practice the skills outside of formal coaching sessions. Playing against a wall or with one or more friends is a very effective way of developing skill.
- **Provide Positive Feedback:** Contribute to the development of the child's abilities by encouraging the child, reinforcing good behaviour and practice and providing feedback when appropriate. Be positive in your feedback; do not try to be too technical as the child may not understand what you want them to do. Try using key words or phrases to reinforce key points of a skill.
- **Play:** Give them time to play. At practically every session, the Coach will be asked - 'Are we playing a game?' Provide activities that develop skill in a fun filled manner - fun games and modified games, such as the Go Games, are best.

THE STRUCTURE OF A COACHING SESSION

The ideal coaching session for young people will last between 45 to 75 minutes, depending on the age of the players. The plan below is based on a 60-minute session but can be modified according to the time available.

1. GROUP ORGANISATION (5 MINS)

Use this time to bring the players together. Talk to them about the session. It allows for latecomers to settle before beginning the planned activities.

2. WARM-UP (5 MINS)

Warm Up activities incorporate brief, mild exercise which is performed in preparation for more vigorous activity. Warming-up typically involves:

- **Pulse Raising** – e.g. Walking, Jogging, Hopping, Skipping, Jumping
- **Mobilisation** – Bringing the joints through their Range of Movement e.g. Arm Rotations, Hip Rotations, etc.
- **Stretching** – Light, short stretches of the Major Muscle groups

It is good practice to warm up dynamically, i.e. to incorporate the mobilisation and stretching activities into the overall pulse raising activity. Remember; incorporate the ball into warm-up activities where possible. ABC/ Have-a-Ball exercises and Fun Games are ideal warm up activities for children. Structured jogging or running in lines etc. is not recommended as a warm up for children.

3. PLAY A GAME (10 MINS)

At the beginning of a coaching session, children will want to play a game. Use a Fun Game or Modified Game. Playing a game at this time will allow you to observe the players. Take note of any deficiencies in proficiency that may exist. If you have not planned on coaching these skills in this session, try to incorporate them into the following sessions.

4. INTRODUCE/REVISE A SKILL (5 MINS)

Introduce a new skill or revise a skill taught in an earlier session. Demonstrate (or have someone else demonstrate) the skill as a whole and at normal speed. Break the skill into parts if necessary before demonstrating the whole skill again. Make sure everyone can see the demonstration and repeat it several times, highlighting the key points.

5. PRACTICE THE TECHNIQUE (10 MINS)

Organise a drill for the players to practice the technique. Progress from Basic to Intermediate drills to Advanced Drills gradually. Observe all players so that you can praise good technique and spot basic errors. It is better to walk around the area rather than stand in the same position so that the players feel that you are paying attention to the whole group.

Coach the players who need correction. If you find a number of players making the same errors, re-demonstrate the skill. Be sure to be positive and supportive. Emphasise what to do rather than what not to do. Shouting and criticising won't achieve anything.

6. DEVELOP THE SKILL (10 MINS)

Progress development of the technique using a Fun Game, Game Play Drill or Modified Game. This will challenge the players to use the technique as a skill, incorporating Tactical Prowess and possibly Team Play.

7. PLAY A GAME (15 MINS)

Set aside the end of the session to play a game again. Use a Modified Game that allows the players to apply what they have learned during the session. Ensure that there is full participation, fair play and above all fun!

8. CONCLUDING ACTIVITY/COOL DOWN (5 MINS)

Use this time to emphasise the key points from the skill introduced in this session. This revision can be done whilst the players are cooling down. Praise all the players and also use the time to talk about the next session or game and other organisational matters.

KEY POINTS

- Select activities that provide variety and an appropriate challenge
- Grade activities - make early activities easy and later ones more difficult
- Give lots of praise for improvement and effort
- Allow children to be with their friends
- Allow children to learn; children learn best through activity and fun
- Be flexible to deal with the available facilities and environmental conditions



PLANNING A SEASONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

Planning a seasonal training programme is not a complex matter when coaching players in the Fun Do Stage of the Pathway to Elite Performance. However there are a number of factors that need to be considered to ensure that there is progression from session to session and throughout a season, and that this progression is appropriate to the needs and abilities of the players. A seasonal plan also helps achieve participation and educational goals.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

In terms of Technical Proficiency the skills of Hurling have a broad range of complexity. It is important that young players are introduced to the skills in a progressive manner and that fundamental movement skills and basic motor skills are mastered before moving on to the sport specific skills.

Here is the suggested progression for introducing the sport specific skills of Gaelic Football:

	Under-8	Under-10	Under 12
1	Body Catch	Reach Catch	Punt Kick II
2	Low Catch	Block Down	High Catch
3	Punt Kick	Hook Kick	Roll
4	Bounce	Solo	Near Hand Tackle
5	Hand Pass	Crouch Lift	Feint
6	Side Step	Checking	
7	Fist Pass		
8		Side-to-Side Charge	

PARTICIPATION

The Coach must ensure that every player is treated equally, which will lead to an environment where children want to attend coaching sessions. If the child enjoys coaching, they will continue to return and may also encourage other children to attend, resulting in increased participation.

EDUCATION

From an early age, children are involved in education through school. The coach has a further role and responsibility to educate children on good habits associated with physical activity and health, sportsmanship, preparation and care of equipment.

SAFETY

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

A common method of identifying risks emanating from facilities and equipment is via physical inspection, aided by checklists. These checklists are not intended to identify risks for all situations – they are only a guide. Coaches should undertake an extensive risk identification programme on their own facilities and design appropriate checklists. There must be a planned approach and facility and equipment inspections must be carried out regularly. It goes without saying that the value of these inspections depends on identified risks being addressed.

- Are all buildings and structures secure, safe and in good condition?
- Is spectator seating safe and in good condition?
- Do facility structures and equipment comply with laws, regulations, rules and standards?
- Is the playing arena generally safe and in good condition?
- Is the perimeter fencing safe and in good condition?
- Are the goalposts firmly in place and in good condition?
- Is ambulance access provided?
- Are the public areas and general grounds safe and in good condition?
- Are exits provided and appropriately signed?
- Is general lighting, adequate for security and safety, provided?
- Do facilities meet fire safety requirements, e.g. hoses, extinguishers, signs?
- Is an evacuation plan in place and staff appropriately trained?
- Is an appropriate medical facility available?
- Is disabled access provided for?
- Are changing room floor surfaces safe e.g. studded boots on concrete floors?
- Are changing room lights adequately protected from impact by balls?
- Are windows and other glass protected from breakage by balls?
- Is car park area free of risk of impact by balls?
- Can players' property be safely secured while they are participating?
- Are separate male and female toilets provided and appropriately signed?
- Is toilet security appropriate, with door locks working etc?
- Is all sporting equipment in good condition and safe?

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Coaches and officials have always had a huge impact on a player's health and well-being. It is a good idea for your club or school to develop a policy on Coaches. Some considerations that need to be taken into account are:

- Does your club use only accredited Coaches and officials?
- Do they attend regular education updates and undergo re-accreditation?
- Are all programmes and activities planned and conducted according to recognised safety guidelines?
- Are all activities properly supervised by qualified personnel who inform participants of safety issues?
- Are Coaches and officials regularly updated regarding new activity hazards and safety measures?
- Do Coaches and officials have adequate first-aid training?
- Do Coaches and officials act as positive role models, e.g., non-smoking?
- Does your Club incorporate codes of behaviour and sports safety principles into Coaches' and officials' role descriptions?

PLAYING ARENA/EQUIPMENT

When playing contact sports such as Gaelic games, some injuries are inevitable. However it must be the priority of every coach to ensure that when taking any coaching session or game they take a number of considerations into account which will help to reduce the risk of an accident or injury. Some of these considerations include:

- Is the surface free of debris?
- Have weather conditions or water made the surface unsafe?
- Is the surface in good condition, i.e. grass appropriate length, free of holes, etc.?
- Are sprinkler covers correctly in place?
- Are lighting conditions adequate?
- Are ground markings safe and a sufficient distance from fencing and other structures?
- Is water available near playing area for filling of water bottles?
- Is sports equipment safe and in good condition, e.g. footballs correctly inflated?

FIRST AID

- Is a stretcher provided on site and its location known to staff involved?
- Is a telephone available for emergency use, together with emergency numbers?
- Have first - aid kit stocks been checked against an appropriate checklist?
- Is there ice available?
- Is there clear access for an ambulance?
- Check sterile medical area is provided for club medical staff.



WARMING UP AND COOLING DOWN

Warm Up activities incorporate brief, mild exercise which is performed in preparation for more vigorous activity.

Warming-up typically involves:

- **Pulse Raising** – e.g. Walking, Jogging, Hopping, Skipping, Jumping
- **Mobilisation** – Bring the joints through their Range of Movement e.g. Arm Rotations, Hip Rotations etc
- **Stretching** – Light, short stretches of the Major Muscle groups

It is good practice to warm up dynamically, that is to incorporate the mobilisation and stretching activities into the overall pulse raising activity. Remember, incorporate the ball into warm-up activities where possible.

Note, when incorporating stretching exercises into the pulse raising activities it is not necessary to hold each individual stretch for more than 3-5 seconds.

EXAMPLES OF WARM UP GAMES

1. PHYSICAL FITNESS FOR KIDS

- Choose a Tagger
- The other players find a free space
- On the whistle the Tagger attempts to tag the other players
- Once tagged, hold the Tagger's hand and work together to tag the other free players
- When caught, players must join the line but only the players at the ends of the line may tag the remaining free players



2. COPY CAT

- The coach or a chosen player demonstrates an exercise (e.g, jumping, skipping, hopping, animal shapes)
- The other players must copy the exercise



3. GET INTO SHAPE

- Divide the players into 2 teams
- Each team chooses a leader to follow around the space or grid
- On the whistle a leader calls a specific shape, e.g, circle, square, triangle.
- The first team to get into the formation earns a point



4. SIMON SAYS

- The Coach acts as 'Simon'
- Play the normal game of Simon Says but include Pulse Raising, Mobilisation and Stretching exercises



5. BACK TO BACK

- The players run about in the space or grid
- On the whistle each player must attempt to find a partner and stand back to back
- On each successive whistle the players must find a different partner
- Require the players to move about the space using different movements between each whistle



EXAMPLES OF STRETCHING EXERCISES

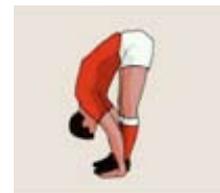
6. ARMS SHOULDERS CHEST

- Slowly turn the elbows inwards while straightening the arms behind your back
- Keeping the chest out and the chin in, lift the arms up until you feel the stretch



7. LOWER BACK

- Assume a squat position with arms resting on the floor
- Slowly straighten the legs without locking the knees
- Hold the stretch and relax



8. QUADRICEPS (THIGH)

- Hold the top of the right foot with the left hand and gently pull the heel towards the buttock
- Alternatively hold the top of the left foot with the right hand



9. HAMSTRING

- On one knee extend the other leg out in front
- Place the hands on the thigh of the extended leg and slowly stretch the lower leg until a comfortable tension is felt behind the thigh
- Keeping the back straight, lean forward while pointing the toes back towards the upper body to increase the stretch



10. CALF

- Place the right foot forward with hands on hips
- With back straight, lean forward and bend the forward knee while keeping the heel on the ground
- Alternate with left foot forward



COOLING DOWN

Cooling Down is not very important for young children but it may be used to get players used to the discipline of cooling down, which becomes more important in later years.

Cooling down should incorporate a gradual reduction in activity from intense (i.e. running etc) to moderate (i.e. jogging and walking) activity.

Stretching exercises should be conducted in a more static manner during the cool down, and on the ground where possible. Stretches should be held for 10-15 seconds.

PRINCIPLES OF TRAINING

Principles of Training are general guidelines which can be used to set out balanced Training Programmes. Balanced Training Programme provide players with a varied mix of practice routines to cater for the development of the range of technical, tactical, team play, physical and psychological skills required to participate effectively in Gaelic games. Coaches must remember to incorporate each of the principles, acknowledging that they are often interrelated.



THE F.I.T.T. PRINCIPLE

The basic principles of fitness training are summed up in the acronym F.I.T.T.. **F.I.T.T.** stands for Frequency, Intensity, Type, and Time.

Frequency refers to how often a person trains – the balance between providing enough stress for the body to adapt to and allowing enough time for healing and adaptation to occur is the key consideration. In terms of child players in Gaelic Games, training (mainly in the form of play and games) may take place a number of times per week.

Intensity refers to the difficulty of a training programme or any particular training session – training must be difficult enough to overload the body but not so difficult as to cause overtraining. Children in many cases will regulate their own intensity levels. Typically children operate in bursts of high intensity periods interspersed with short periods of rest.

Type refers to the form or kind of training – training must be appropriate to achieve the training response or goals aimed for. It is recommended that 80 to 90% of all training is with the ball.

Time refers to the length of time that should be spent training during any one session – a general rule with child players is that training should not exceed 1hr.

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF TRAINING PRINCIPLES FOLLOWS:

- **The Principle of Adaptation (or Long Term Training)**

Changes take place in the body as it adjusts to the increased demands imposed by training.

- **The Principle of Individuality**

Training Programmes are most effective when they are designed to meet the specific needs and abilities of individual players.

- **The Principle of Interference**

When young players are exposed to a wide range of stimuli or factors which must be attended to, e.g., speed, other players, etc., their ability to learn and perform a skill may be interfered with.

- **The Principle of Progressive Overload**

Improvements can be brought about in fitness level when the normal training load is exceeded. The load should be increased at regular intervals and at a regular pace to stimulate further improvements.

- **The Principle of Recovery**

Adequate rest should be provided for the body to recover from strenuous training sessions or games. Inadequate recovery time can lead to overtraining resulting in injury, illness or both.

- **The Principle of Regularity**

For exercise to be effective it must be done with sufficient frequency and intensity over a sufficient period of time.

- **The Principle of Reversibility**

Fitness levels achieved through training can only be maintained with regular training. Fitness levels may drop dramatically due to periods of inactivity.

- **The Principle of Specificity**

Training will be most beneficial when the Training Programme is specific to (a) the game involved, e.g. gymnastic training will be of little benefit to Gaelic games players, (b) the element of fitness required, e.g. building strength will do little for stamina, (c) the body part concerned e.g. exercising the legs will not benefit the upper body.

■ The Principle of Variety

Maximum benefits will be obtained when training sessions are varied. As a general rule, players should not be able to anticipate what's coming next. It is also important that training locations are varied, when possible.

To establish how best to use principles of training to improve the conditioning of players, the Coach needs to identify the requirements of playing Hurling and Gaelic football. Long-term performance development is best achieved through a year round training programme.

With correct planning, players will be able to improve all physical attributes and skill performance while following the principles of progression, overload, specificity, reversibility, variation and individual differences.



NUTRITION FOR KIDS

Obesity among Irish children is increasing and is largely due to a number of lifestyle factors. Children who develop healthy eating habits in childhood are more likely to maintain these habits in later life. Coaches can encourage children to adopt healthy eating practices for sporting performance. When developed at an early age, healthy eating habits can optimise growth, aid recovery and help prevent injury.

ENERGY

For many people the word “diet” automatically refers to losing weight - in fact a diet is something that you have; not something that you do. Your diet is the foods that you consume; combined with your eating practices, your diet can have a significant impact on your ability to work, play and train.

We need to eat to provide us with the energy so that we can do all the things that we do everyday - whether that be working or playing. The most important element of your diet is that you consume sufficient food to provide energy to perform these tasks.

ENERGY BALANCE

The most important concept in nutrition is balance - that the amount of energy taken in the form of food is matched by the amount of energy expended in the form of work, sport and the basic requirements to keep the various organs of the body functioning properly.

This is a persons energy requirement, and will vary depending on the persons age, body weight and body composition as well as the amount and type of work and sport undertaken. At the most basic level, if the amount of energy taken in as food is greater than the expenditure, you will gain weight. If the amount of energy taken in as food is less than that expended, you will lose weight.

GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING

Food provides all the essential nutrients that we require for healthy living and to fuel physical activity. Unfortunately no single food provides all of the nutrients required, so a mixture and range of different foods must be consumed in the diet. The food pyramid provides a representation of the different types of foods and the suggested number of servings to be taken.

THE FOOD PYRAMID

The Food Pyramid outlines the types and amounts of foods needed to make sure that you get all the energy and vitality that you need. Foods that contain similar nourishment are grouped together and can be interchanged. This allows flexibility of choice, and provides the variety needed for good health. It is possible to see at a glance that the majority of food should come from the breads, cereals and potatoes shelf and from the fruit and vegetables shelf. Fats, biscuits, cakes, confectionary and high fat food snacks can be enjoyed as part of a healthy eating plan, but in limited amounts.

Choosing foods from each shelf in the food pyramid in the correct amounts will provide the balance of energy, protein vitamins and minerals needed each day. The more active you are, the higher your energy needs will be. Energy should come from the breads, cereals and potatoes shelf, and from the fruit and vegetable shelf. If children are not great vegetable eaters, don't worry - try raw vegetables, and offer them more fruit instead. Variety is the key to getting the balance right.

A PLAN FOR NUTRITION

One of the most important factors in a good nutrition programme, is not to allow yourself to get too hungry (hunger pangs effect peoples food choices) and as a result go for what is convenient or near by rather than what you require. When you fuel your body appropriately, you provide the mental energy to maintain a proper diet – one that will maintain your activity level. When choosing your meals, there are a number of different factors to keep in mind, which can be the key to maintaining your nutrition plans:

■ Variety

The more different types of foods that you consume, the more nutrients that you will consume. Many Irish people consume the same 10 – 15 foods each week – this can result in low stores of certain vitamins or minerals, and boredom with the dietary plan. If you find yourself with a repetitive diet, try to eat a different breakfast cereal, choose a different sandwich filling or try different coloured vegetables.

■ Wholesomeness

Choose fresh, wholegrain or whole wheat and lightly processed foods rather than packaged and refined foods. Foods in their natural state often have a higher nutritional value than processed foods.

■ Moderation

Rather than labeling foods as good or bad for you, remember that all foods can be consumed as part of a balanced diet, once you realise what your body needs at any particular time. Allowing a rest day, or a meal where you can choose something that you wouldn't normally choose, will help to maintain your commitment to a nutrition programme.

HYDRATION FOR KIDS

Drinking lots of fluids - such as water, sports drinks and fruit juices - before, during and after exercise can help children stay hydrated. Playing sport increases the sweat rate of the body. This is the body's way of keeping cool, and fluids are needed to allow this to happen. Dehydration occurs when not enough fluid is in the body. When the weather is warmer, or when children are playing at a high intensity, dehydration can happen sooner.



Children use up more energy than both adolescents and adults while doing the same activity. In fact children produce twice as much heat for the same level of exertion as adults. This means they can heat up quickly and they can over heat quickly too. To complicate matters they tend to sweat very little and so cannot dissipate heat like adults can. For all of these reasons fluid intake is vitally important as a cooling mechanism for children.

Children, like adults, do not voluntarily drink enough during sport. They often forget to take drinks, so they need to be reminded by the Coach to take regular fluid breaks. They should be advised to drink even though they may not be thirsty. Thirst is not a good indicator of dehydration, as a thirsty child will already be slightly dehydrated. The Coach should be aware of the symptoms of dehydration to make sure that the players are well hydrated and never feel thirsty:

Rather than labeling foods as good or bad for you, remember that all foods can be consumed as part of a balanced diet, once you realise what your body needs at any particular time. Allowing a rest day, or a meal where you can choose something that you wouldn't normally choose, will help to maintain your commitment to a nutrition programme.

- Thirst
- Dizziness/confusion
- Anxiousness/worry
- Dry lips/mouth
- Headache
- Poor coordination
- Symptoms of Dehydration

Children are more likely to take drinks if they like the flavour. Therefore, flavoured drinks - such as water flavoured with a squash - are an option to enhance hydration. When it is very sunny, frozen juice drinks or ice pops can help cool children.

SUITABLE DRINKS FOR KIDS

Coaches planning for a coaching session or a game should plan to have plenty of fluids available. Some good choices are water or a mixture of water with squash or fruit juice. It is not necessary to buy sports drinks; Coaches can make their own home made versions.

Try some of these recipes:

- 700ml warm water + 35g sugar (7 teaspoons) + pinch salt + 50ml low calorie squash. Mix and chill.
- 150ml regular squash + 600ml water + pinch salt. Mix and chill.
- 350ml fruit juice + 400ml water + pinch salt. Mix and chill.

What can the coach do to encourage good hydration habits?

- The Coach should recognise the importance of fluid for children and work with parents and teachers to create an environment where the importance of keeping kids cool when they play is recognised.
- Ask each child to bring their own drinks bottle. Ensure the children's names are marked on their bottles.
- Make time for regular fluid breaks during a coaching session or a game.
- Remind children every day to bring their fluid bottles.
- Fluid bottles must be washed out after each use and made up from scratch every day for food safety purposes.
- Encourage children to drink (any type of fluid) when they go home.
- Have a supply of extra fluid bottles in a cooler in case someone forgets their bottle, or runs out of their drink.

Bread, Potatoes and Cereals

Fruits and Vegetables

Milk and Dairy Products

Meats, Fish and Alternatives

Participation in sport carries with it a risk of injury. Hurling, Gaelic football, and Camogie, being contact sports, have an inherent risk of injury attached. The aim must be for all involved to take all reasonable action to make our sports as safe as possible, not only for players, but also for referees, other officials, coaches, voluntary workers and spectators.

Preventing injuries in Gaelic games is the ultimate goal, but as injuries will continue to occur despite the most thorough of prevention strategies, attention must also be given to the response to and the treatment of injuries. This guide will assist you to deal with many common sports injuries, however it is not intended to be a substitute for First-Aid training. In all cases if you are unsure as to what has happened or how to treat an injury call a medical professional.



COMPONENTS OF A FIRST AID KIT

There are many commercially available First Aid kits that can be purchased. It is important to regularly check the contents of a First Aid kit, as even kits that are purchased whole - with a collection of items bundled together in a convenient package - change over time through use. Always ensure that any items taken from a First Aid kit are replaced as soon as possible. Items should not be used after the expiry date shown on packets.

The following are recommended as being the minimum requirement which should be in place at every sports occasion i.e. training sessions or a match. It is advisable to contact a medical professional to ensure that your First Aid kit contains relevant equipment and information.

- Card giving the general first-aid guidance
- Individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressing
- Individually wrapped moist cleansing wipes
- Adhesive and Butterfly bandages
- Self-adhesive elastic bandages
- Safety pins
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Liquid antiseptic to clean wounds
- Latex gloves
- Large plastic bag

Do not keep any form of heat agent or any similar product in the first aid kit as there is no incidence in the first aid treatment of sports injury where heat agents should be used. In the vast majority of cases heat treatment will cause more damage and pain to the player.

Smelling salts should also be removed from all first aid kits. If a player has received a head injury/concussion and is either unconscious or drowsy, placing smelling salts under their nose will cause them to pull their head away from the salts and risks damaging their neck.

RICER

The majority of injuries that occur in Gaelic games are soft tissue injuries such as muscle sprains, joint strains or muscle bruises. Quick treatment of injuries will assist in reducing recovery time. When dealing with this type of injury apply the RICER treatment process.

R - Rest I - Ice C - Compression E - Elevation R - Referral

	HOW	WHY
REST	Remove the athlete from the field Rest from activity	Continuing the activity will increase the blood flow and bleeding to the injury site, or may cause the blood clot to dislodge, and begin bleeding again, and may cause more tissue damage.
ICE	Place the ice in a wet towel or plastic bag, or use a frozen cup of water continuously moved over the area, or use a commercial ice pack from the First Aid kit. Apply directly over the injury and surrounding tissue for 10 to 20 minutes every 2 hours.	Ice decreases both swelling and pain. Never apply ice directly to the skin, always wrap in a wet towel or wet cloth to avoid ice burns.
COMPRESSION	Apply a firm, elastic, non-adhesive bandage. If using an ice pack, the compression bandage is applied over the ice pack and above and below the injury site to hold it in place and provide compression. Even when you are not icing, the compression bandage should remain directly over the injury site, above and below. Release the compression prior to sleep.	Compression reduces swelling and bleeding at the injury site
ELEVATION	Raise the injured area above the level of the heart whenever possible. Elevation decreases bleeding, swelling and pain.	Elevation decreases bleeding, swelling and pain.
REFERRAL	Refer to an appropriate medical professional for definitive diagnosis and continuing management.	

The R.I.C.E.R. Regime should be repeated for the first 48 to 72 hours.

For more information on any area of Games Development, write to

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Fax + 353-(0)1-8366420
E-mail: gamesdevelopment@gaa.ie

COACH, ADMINISTRATOR AND REFEREE EDUCATION (CARE)

The PEP and STEP Programmes have most impact when they are supported by a programme of Coach, Administrator and Referee Education (CARE). Making adequate provision for Applied Lifelong Learning (ALL) will ensure that Coach, Administrator and Referee Education programmes are even more effective.

Coach, Administrator and Referee Education (CARE) are delivered through specifically designed courses, workshops, and conferences incorporating recognised principles of best practice. Each progressive course across each of the Coaching, Administration and Refereeing areas caters for a greater level of specialisation and expertise.

Each course is also aligned to a level of participation at which specific playing groups are operating. Courses include a combination of theoretical and practical inputs, and allow for (and encourage) the use of digital and e-learning modalities.

CARE programmes are designed to:

- Educate Coaches, Administrators and Referees in a progressive manner from Club through to National Level.
- Continually improve the quality of Coaches, Administrators and Referees through the incorporation of recognised principles of best practice.
- Ensure an appropriate and high standard of support is available to Players as they progress through PEP and STEP.

APPLIED LIFELONG LEARNING (ALL)

The Programme of Applied Lifelong Learning (ALL) is a series of Workshops, Clinics, Ancillary Courses, and Conferences on various topics and disciplines related to the role and performance of Coaches, Administrators and Referees. Applied Lifelong Learning also creates a link to Diploma and Degree courses in Third Level Institutions which serve to further the knowledge of the participants and which may provide credits towards progression as Coaches, Administrators and Referees within the Association.

The Programme of Applied Lifelong Learning (ALL) makes provision for Coaches, Administrators and Referees to:

- Continually develop their vocational skills
- Progress at a rate suited to their own development, and
- Ensure that as players progress through PEP and STEP, they are provided with the proper CARE for ALL.

This explains why the following maxim - “align and combine PEP and STEP with CARE for ALL” is the key challenge facing the GAA, and why it is so central to the successful implementation of the OTú Games Development Model.

WEBLINKS

www.gamesdevelopment.gaa.ie



The GAA have developed a dedicated website for Games Development – www.gamesdevelopment.gaa.ie. This site is dedicated to the area of Games Development and provides information for Coaches, Players, Referees and the Club.

You can find out details of upcoming courses and events in your area, as well as features on how Counties, Clubs and individuals are using best practice in the area of Games Development to develop their facilities and club structures.

The 'resources' and 'downloads' sections provide details of each of the initiatives that the GAA are undertaking in Games Development and allows you access to the latest support resources produced, including the Games Development e-Newsletter and Céim ar Aghaidh/Step Ahead resource pack for Primary Schools.

www.cul4kidz.com



The Cúl4kidz website is the official GAA site for boys and girls. The site provides an interactive experience for children and is updated with news, interviews and history as well as featuring a number of downloads – colouring-in printouts and desktop screensavers and wallpapers.

Cúl4kidz also appears as a magazine published twice annually in association with The Irish Times and as a pull out in each of the match day programmes for the All-Ireland Semi Finals and Finals in Hurling and Gaelic football each year.

OTHER Fun Do INITIATIVES

GAA Fun Do HURLING RESOURCE

The GAA Fun Do Learning Resource Pack for Hurling incorporates a number of elements which enable Coaches to assist and challenge players to develop their full playing potential in a fun-filled environment. These elements are as follows:

- Lift and Strike Coaching Classes
- Wall Ball
- Sample Sessions
- U Can Awards
- Skills Star Challenge



GAA Fun Do FOOTBALL RESOURCE

The GAA Fun Do Learning Resource Pack for Gaelic Football incorporates a number of elements which enable Coaches to assist and challenge players to develop their full playing potential in a fun-filled environment. These elements are as follows:

- Catch and Kick Coaching Classes
- Sample Sessions
- U Can Awards
- Skills Star Challenge



ABC/HAVE-A-BALL BOOKLET

The ABC/Have-a-ball Nursery Programmes are a series of fun-based exercises to develop basic movement (motor) skills for children aged 4-8 years. They include exercises for the development of Agility, Balance, Coordination, Running and Jumping. The Have-a-ball Nursery Programme complements the ABC programme and consists of exercises to develop Basic Movement Skills e.g. Throwing, Catching & Passing, Striking or Kicking.



The GAA Code of Best Practice for Youth Sport

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael believes that a youth-centred approach should be adopted by everyone involved in the promotion and development of Gaelic games at underage level. The Grassroots to National Programme (GNP) and the associated Fun Do initiatives are firmly rooted in this philosophy, a philosophy that may be best summed up in the statement: "the greater the sense of achievement, fun and fair play that young people experience when participating in Gaelic games, the more they will enjoy their involvement and strive to develop their true potential".

CODE OF BEST
PRACTICE FOR



The Vhi Cúl Camps are the coolest Summer Camps.

Learn the skills of hurling and football and make loads of new friends.

Vhi
HEALTHCARE

GAA

CÚL CAMP

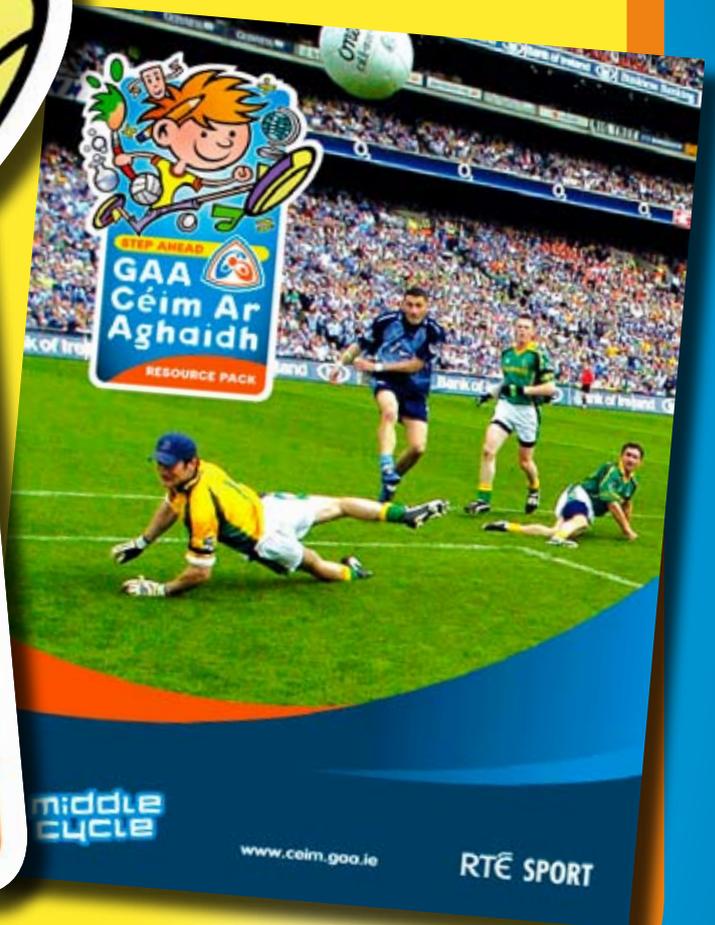


Check out
www.gaa.ie
for more info
and details.

Bí Cúl agus Bí Ann

The cool Educational resource from the GAA

Céim Ar Aghaidh uses the fun of Gaelic Games to deliver an exciting range of learning activities to support the Primary School Curriculum for Irish, English, Maths, History, Geography, Science, Art and more.



The Céim Ar Aghaidh Resource Pack can be used to support teaching in a variety of subject areas and the exercises can be adapted to suit children of varying abilities through differentiated tasks. It provides an extremely comprehensive spread of opportunities for children.



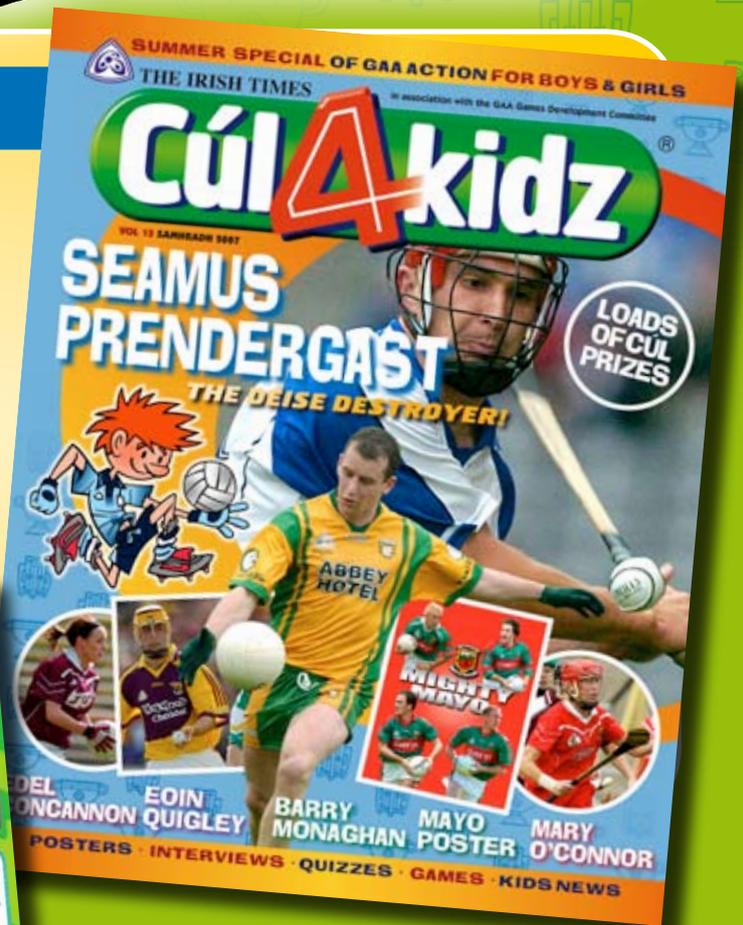
Find out more on the Céim Ar Aghaidh website www.ceim.gaa.ie

Cúl4kidz

THE MAGAZINE

The Official GAA magazine for kids is free 4 times a year with The Irish Times.

Check out www.gaa.ie & www.cul4kidz.com for dates and further information.

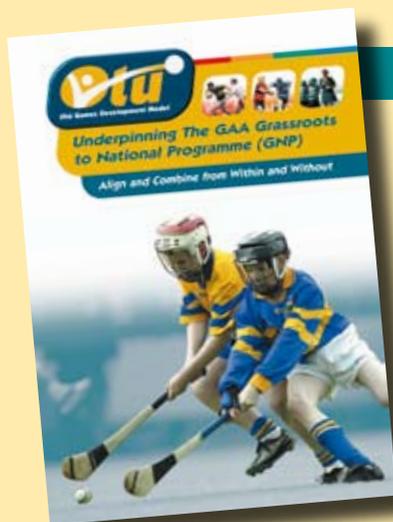


THE WEBSITE

Also check out Cúl4kidz on the web @ www.cul4kidz.com for news, skills, interviews and lots more.



LATEST GAA DEVELOPMENTS



LOG ON TO OUR WEBSITE

To keep up to date with the latest in Games Development, log on to the Official GAA Games Development website at <http://gamesdevelopment.gaa.ie>

On <http://gamesdevelopment.gaa.ie> you can download the Otú Games Development Model document in pdf format; stay up to date with the latest in Coach, Administrator and Referee Education (CARE); review the latest in player development initiatives and subscribe to the GAA Games Development electronic newsletter.



FunDo

is an initiative of the GAA Games Development Department to create a sense of fun and excitement in the learning of GAA Games.

To promote this, a DVD and a series of booklets have been produced to enable coaches to prepare sessions in a fun and exciting way.

