

Demonstrating a Skill

Everybody has heard the old saying that a picture paints a thousand words. Demonstrating a new skill is a very important component of the coaching sessions and coaches need to be aware of some important 'rules' when attempting demonstrations.

Position

- Your position is very important. Both you and the group must be able to see each other. Face the group away from distractions such as the sun, traffic or other groups.
- There are several ways you can arrange the demonstration. The most common is the simple semicircle pattern. The group can be standing or, if conditions allow, kneeling or sitting.

What to do

- You don't always have to do the demonstration yourself. If you are worried about the skill, have somebody else who is an expert demonstrate it. Photographs and videos are other possible methods.
- Highlight the main points of the skill. Keep your explanations simple and brief. Try not to give players more than two or three main points at a time.
- Avoid pointing out things 'not to do' as this will only overload the players.
- It is all right to break the skill into separate components for the purpose of the demonstration - but, if this is going to be done, demonstrate the complete skill at normal speed before and at the end. For example, if you are discussing the skill of the hand pass, it may be beneficial to demonstrate separately the placement of the feet, the position of the hands on the ball and finally the movement and follow through of the arms. However, show the pass several times first and again after the separate parts.
- Explain things fully. Don't just teach the players the techniques - make sure you explain why they are doing something and how it will be used in the game. Uncertainty can delay learning.
- Let the players practice what you preach - new information stays with people for only a short period of time unless they are able to try the skill.

Helping individuals

- After the demonstration, players need time to practice the skill. The coach can observe and correct whenever necessary.
- Be positive and supportive when you notice errors. Errors are a natural part of life so it is important for the coach to minimise the players' fear of mistakes. Say things like 'Nice try John. That was a really good pass but you could do better if you followed through more.'
- Verbal instructions are sometimes unclear. Re-demonstrate the skill and if necessary, physically lead the player through the skill.
- Always show the correct skill last. If you are showing a player the difference between what they are doing and what you want them to do - demonstrate the correct skill after you have shown them their current method.
- Let the player have a few more tries before doing any more error-correction.