

Discuss the differences between skill, ability and technique and explain how you would structure practices to enhance their components of fitness.

There are many different classifications of skill; it can't really be defined as a single thing. It has been said that a skill is "The ability to perform a technique with consistency and control, with minimum effort" (Quoted from Advanced P.E for Edexcel by Frank Galligan) but as there are many different types this cannot really be said. Other types of skill include Cognitive Skill, Perceptual Skills, Motor Skills and Perceptual Motor Skills. Each different skill will use different muscles and movements to carry out a certain task. Skills can also be affected by the weather and surrounding environment, so these can be classified as either open or closed skills. An open skill is one that is affected by the environment and a closed skill is one that is not affected by the environment it is appropriate to classify gymnastics as a closed skill because it is usually performed inside.

Cognitive Skills are also known as intellectual skills because they involve thought and processes. An example of this is adding up runs scored by a player in cricket. Perceptual Skills involve interpreting a picture or piece of writing. We may see the same information as someone else, but our brains may interpret it differently from them. Motor Skills use the muscles in the body and involve movement and control. Walking and running are examples of a motor skill, because they involve movement of muscles and control of them. The last type of skill is Perceptual Motor Skills. Most skills are referred to as perceptual motor skills as they involve thought, interpretation and movement: cognitive skills perceptual skills and motor skills.

See Interpret Think Move

Below is a picture that will show how your perceptual skills work.

Ability is closely linked with skill. In order to learn any skill in sport, we must have the abilities required. Ability is usually seen as innate, that means that you are born with them. Without this ability you would never really be able to develop skill fully. Abilities required to play sport would be hand / eye co-ordination, flexibility and speed. Without these abilities we would not be able to learn the skills appropriate to the game or sport we want to pursue.

Technique is also associated with skill and ability. Technique can sometimes be confused with skill. In order to perform a particular skill in sport, we must learn the correct technique. In order to learn the technique fully, you must have the necessary abilities. This can be written in an equation, which is shown below.

$$\text{SKILL} = \text{ABILITY} + \text{TECHNIQUE}$$

(Quoted from Advanced P.E for Edexcel by Colin Maskery)

So in gymnastics a person would have to have the natural ability i.e. be quite flexible and would have to learn the correct techniques before they can actually perform a certain skill. A skill would be doing a front flip.

Amongst all the skills and techniques, the performers have to be fit to endure the sports they are participating in. Rugby players have to have quite a high level of cardio-vascular fitness and muscular fitness to be able to perform to a high standard in the game.

The components of fitness are as follows: flexibility, strength, which has four different components to it. These include Maximal Strength, which is the maximum amount of force that an individual can produce in a given moment of unlimited time. e.g. powerlifting. Reactive Strength allows the individual to absorb heavy impacts and explode out of an impact or landing with great force e.g. long jump take off. Sustained Strength is a maintained force of maximal strength over repeated contractions e.g. rugby player at a maul. Strength endurance is similar to above. However strength maintained over longer periods of time e.g. marathon. The rest of the components of fitness are: power, speed, muscular endurance, mobility, cardio-vascular endurance, co-ordination, local muscular endurance anaerobic endurance, and reaction time and body composition. Each different sport will require all these different components of fitness to be able to perform in their sport. Some sports will require different or more than others.

Components of fitness are important because without them a performer would not be able to perform their chosen sport or activity. High levels of fitness will hopefully improve the way they undertake their sport, giving a higher performance level.

Practices can be used to improve levels of fitness and also technique and skill. Practice can be defined as: the repetition of technique and skill, often taken out of the context of a whole game, so that it can be improved. There are many types of practice. They are as follows:

Variable Practice- involves a variety of activities. The learner applies the skill to a number of different environments in practice. This will allow the skill and ability to be developed further. i.e. starting with a football and moving it from side to side whilst stationary, then at walking pace, then running and finally adding defenders in which to beat.

Distributed Practice- involves dividing the practice into sections, with breaks in which feedback can be given. This is normally associated with variable practice.

Massed Practice sessions- involves a continuous session with no break. It is normally used for experienced performers who have a higher level of fitness and is most suited to fixed practice i.e. a circuit where performers move from one activity to another with no break. This could be shooting at a rugby post for the whole time.

Fixed Practice- involves repetition of an activity; this allows the skill to be over learned. i.e. a golfer practising putting will place several balls on a green and keep on putting them and trying to get them in the hole.

Although these practices can be used to help improve your game and skill, they will not make you perfect. No one can be perfect, it doesn't exist. People may claim they are perfect, for example if a player scores a try the build up to the try may be correct for that situation. So the player may argue that their actions for the try were perfect.

So, practices can't make you perfect but they can make the skills you have learnt permanent. This will make them become second nature to the performer. This will only happen if you are taught the correct technique and the practice that you are doing is correct for the sport being undertaken. If the correct technique is not taught, then the performer will pick up bad habits and that

may affect the outcome of how they perform in the next game or match.

In conclusion, it is clear that there are differences between skill and ability and that people will use the word skill but they really mean technique. It is also clear that technique is how you carry out your actions in a sport. If you have been taught the wrong technique, then that is what will be used in the sport. Skills and abilities are needed in different forms in different sports, although skills and abilities are needed in most sports for example quick reflexes. Practices can help to show you how the correct technique is performed but you have to be born with some ability otherwise learning the technique will be pointless.

We have already seen that there isn't a perfect sportsman. For sports, which you get an end result like scoring a goal in football, your actions leading up to, the goal could be perfect, and if you had done something differently you may not have got the same result.