

*Using your experience from a team game, racket game and individual game, complete this question: Discuss the differences between skill, ability and technique and explain how you would structure practices to enhance these components of fitness.*

“A skill is a co-ordinated act which involves complex movements brought together in a consistent and smooth manner.” For a skill to happen, you need consistency, accuracy, control, fluidity and you must show an intention. It can't be a lucky, one off movement which you have no control over! For example, in archery, a skill would be to consistently hit the bulls-eye whereas hitting it once out of ten shots is not a skill.

There are four types of skill; cognitive, perceptual, motor, and perceptual motor. To be successful at any sport you need to have most, if not all, of these skills. In a game of netball cognitive skills are needed to remember the score and to remember which team has the next centre pass. It may not sound that important but even a referee can be caught up in a match so much that they forget both! Perceptual skills are important because this refers to how you see something (i.e. the ball coming towards you in netball). One person may think the ball is further away, causing them to drop the ball, in comparison to another person. You also need motor skills, which involve movement and muscular control, for example; walking. Both perceptual and motor skills are then combined to come up with the final skills which are known as perceptual motor skills. These involve seeing a stimulus, interpreting it, thinking about what to do next and then doing it. In a game of netball, this would involve seeing the ball, interpreting how far away it is, how fast its travelling etc., thinking about what to do next, and then moving to catch the ball. This is a very important skill because you only have a couple of seconds to react to the stimulus.

Abilities are things we are born with, they are innate. We must have abilities to be able to perform a skill smoothly and effectively. No matter how much you train and try to perfect a skill, it won't be done correctly unless we have the ability to do it correctly. For example, you will never be a great tennis player if you are not born with good hand/eye co-ordination. This is the same for someone wishing to be a gymnast. Without good flexibility, there's not much chance of being an elite gymnast. Other abilities include speed, reaction time and many other components of fitness.

Technique is what we must learn to be able to perform a skill in sport. We combine a number of techniques into a pattern of movement, e.g. triple jump - running, then the hop, skip and jump techniques. However, in order to learn the technique we must have the ability. In order to sum up the three terms skill, ability and technique we can use the following equation.

$$\text{Skill} = \text{Ability} + \text{Technique}$$

The differences between skill, ability and technique can all be defined in a game of football. For example, the goal keeper needs to be born with good hand/eye co-ordination. This is the ability. The keeper learns to catch the football. This is the technique. Finally, the keeper puts his ability and technique together and learns the required skill i.e. saving a goal in a penalty. He has to see the ball, interpret which way it's going, think about what he's going to do and then he moves. This is the skill. With enough practice and the right ability and technique, a good quality skill can be acquired.

During any practice, you need to use the SPORT principles of training. They are specificity, progression, overload, reversibility and tedium. To enhance a backhand swing (skill) in badminton, you must specify training around this. I would first start off with a warm up. For the pulse raiser, I would make the badminton player do a gentle jog around the gym for about 3 minutes. I would then do some stretches from head to foot, concentrating a bit more on the arms. After that, I would set up a mini activity using different shots in badminton. The warm up now complete, I would start up a game of badminton and concentrate on hitting the shuttle cock at the opponent's weakest side, making them use the backhand swing. For any player to be good in badminton, each swing (the forehand and the backhand) needs to be as strong as the other. By concentrating on the weaker side, it builds up the skill. I would start off by alternating between forehand and backhand shots. Slowly, I would progress on to just backhand ones (progression) but I would also force the body to adapt to the situation (overload). Whilst the badminton player isn't training, he should maintain his fitness levels with light exercise so prevent reversibility (the body returning to its normal state). Also, to prevent tedium I would alternate slightly between badminton and another racket sport, like tennis. For example once a month, instead of playing a game of badminton, they play a game of tennis to prevent boredom. After the training session, a cool down is needed. I would do a jog around the gym for a couple of minutes and then some stretching to prevent injury to muscles.

To enhance your strength (ability) for weightlifting I would start with a warm up (pulse raiser, stretching, making sure all muscles are warm, and bicep curls to get the arms in the muscles really warm). After the warm up I would get the weightlifter to lift up and down a weight that he feels is slightly challenging (just past his comfort zone) and do small numbers of repetitions until improvements begin. After he has built up his strength so that that weight seems easy, move onto the next weight that's a little bit heavier. This progressively builds up their strength, overloading slightly every time. To prevent reversibility, they should do bicep curls for 30-60 minutes a day. This will keep the arm muscles working smoothly. To stop boredom from occurring, spend one day a week doing weight training in a gym. For the cool down, I would use the same one as above; a jog and stretching.

To improve a technique in football, i.e. a short pass, I would do a gentle pulse raiser; use static stretching to warm all muscles and then set up an obstacle course so that running can begin to improve. I would pair two people up and begin practising static short passes. Once they've got the hang of this I'd get one of them to run and receive the ball. Then I would get them to both run whilst passing the ball with the inside and outside of their foot. This is also improving perceptual motor skills and I am gently overloading the body as the tasks get harder. Finally I would involve the technique in a full game of football. Reversibility can be avoided by the player's flexibility being worked on outside of training. Many techniques in football involve good flexibility so to become a good player you need fine flexibility. Doing gymnastics in the players spare time is a great way to improve this. Boredom can be avoided by working on other techniques whilst having a break from that one (i.e. one week working on short passes, another week working on dribbling, the next week going back to short passes).