

## 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 sliotars 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.

