



Field Hockey Canada Coach Resource: Styles of Learning

It is important to note that every individual has their own differences, personal background, maturity, experience and ability. Physical literacy, movement and sport skills will develop at a different rate, and as a result the coach must develop strategies to support all athletes' developmental levels within the training session.

We encourage coaches to develop an Athlete Focused approach to coaching. Elements of the athlete-focused coaching style include

- Coaching through games
- Questioning for understanding
- Prioritizing the needs of the learner
- Individualized learning
- Focus on person
- Emphasis on development
- Player makes decisions
- Democratic leadership
- Chaos
- Hands off style
- Ask and listen
- Implicit and informal approach

Understanding different styles of learning and identifying how each player in the coaching environment learns is a critical first step in affecting their development.

There have been a wide variety of studies and many different models presented regarding learning styles. It is generally accepted that most people learn in a combination of ways but often favour one method in a particular environment.

Learning Skills: Knowing about the different phases of skill acquisition helps a coach to plan training activities that match the development of each player. Lack of understanding may lead to unrealistic expectations of beginners.

1. The Beginner (Cognitive Stage)

During this phase learners need develop a clear understanding of the movements:

- a clear mental picture of the movements they need to make.
- They must think carefully about technique.
- They will often make major errors and
- They will need coach guidance to improve



2. The Improver (Associative Stage)

During this phase learners practice and get a feel for the skill:

- Learners have already learned the technique.
- Focus is on applying and practicing the skill
- Performance improves and errors are reduced
- It is possible to start self-analysing and correcting movements.

3. The expert (Autonomous Stage)

During this phase learners are experts and perform the skill automatically:

- Learners can perform the technique almost automatically.
- Focus is on making decisions about strategies and tactics
- Learners are skilled and use the techniques at the right time and in the right place.

Maslow's Stages of Learning:

Abraham Maslow's "Stages of Learning a new skill" Model identifies four stages of learning. It suggests that individuals are initially unaware of how little they know, or unconscious of their incompetence. As they recognize their incompetence, they consciously acquire a skill, then consciously use it. Eventually, the skill can be utilized without it being consciously thought through: the individual is said to have then acquired unconscious competence.

