

## PE2 UNIT GUIDE

*Content Title: Types of Practice***Key points**

- Presentation of skills
- Types of practice

- **Presentation** – to optimise learning, teachers and coaches must create the best possible practice conditions. The following factors should be taken into consideration.
  - The amount of information the learner has to process.
  - The previous experience of the performer, this includes level of ability.
  - The performer's personality and motivation levels.
  - The nature of the skills being learned i.e. open/closed, simple/complex etc.
  - The amount of technical knowledge required.
  - The amount of information that the performer has to process.
  - Facilities and time available.
  - Size and structure of group.
- **Fixed And Variable** – the decision of whether to use fixed or variable practice depends on the nature of the activity being practised. When the activity contains a lot of **open skills** and interaction between performers, practice should be **varied** so that performers can come into contact with a range of different experiences that relate directly to performance in the full activity. This is because relevant experiences are stored in the long-term memory and the motor programmes can be drawn on in future situations. The learner practises the same task in a number of different ways. With **closed skills** it is important that practice conditions closely resemble the actual performance situation. Closed skills are predominantly pre-learned. Therefore **fixed practice** is preferable. Fixed practice can also be used to improve open skills.
- **Massed And Distributed** – the structure of a practice session is important when considering the most effective way of teaching skills. In massed practice the skill to be mastered is repeated over an extended period of time e.g. two players in rugby kicking the ball back and forth continuously for 30 minutes. In distributed practice the skill to be mastered is interspersed with other training or rest. The 'rest' intervals could involve activities unrelated to the main practice activity or could involve use of mental rehearsal.
- **Whole And Part** – in the whole method a skill is taught without breaking it down into parts or sub-routines. Generally it is best to learn a skill using this method as the learner experiences the true 'feel' of the movement. The part method is often used when the skill is low in organisation and can be split up into sub-routines. Each part is practised separately and the parts then joined together. It is also useful for learning complex skills as it allows a

learner to achieve initial success before moving on to the more complex movements. There are many combinations of whole and part learning:

**Whole - part- whole** – where first the whole skill is attempted, then if there are errors, those parts of the skill containing errors are practised in isolation before attempting the whole skill again. A swimming teacher might ask a student to demonstrate the whole stroke, they might identify weaknesses in the arm action, which would be practised in isolation, then put it all back together in the whole stroke.

**Progressive part method** – where the parts are progressively built upon until the whole skill is performed i.e. learn part 1, learn part 2, perform parts 1 and 2 together, learn part 3, then perform parts 1, 2 and 3 together etc. This method is often used when learning a dance routine.

- **Mental Practice/Rehearsal (also referred to as Imagery/Visualisation)** – in mental practice the athlete visualises themselves performing a skill. There is no actual physical movement involved. Research has shown that mental practice can result in improved performance; unfortunately it cannot replace physical practice! It is generally believed that a combination of mental and physical practice is most useful to sports performers, but that physical practice is the more important. There are many explanations as to how it works:
  - **Cognitive explanation** – thinking about strategies and tactics can help the learner to make the correct decision.
  - **Neuromuscular explanation** – when performing mental rehearsal the muscular neurones fire as if the muscle is actually active. These contractions are very small.
  - **Confidence explanation** – mental rehearsal can improve the confidence of performers, as when performing mental rehearsal the performer concentrates on successful and correct performance.

## Practical Application/Explanation

### WHEN TO USE

TYPE OF PRACTICE	WHEN TO USE	ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES
FIXED	When learning closed skills.	Promotes over learning.  ✘ It does not always prepare performers for when things go wrong.
VARIABLE	When learning open skills i.e. when there is a lot of interaction and decision making involved in the competitive performance.	Allows learners to practise in situations more realistic to their sporting activity.  ✘ Can be difficult to simulate appropriate competitive situations.
MASSED	When learning simple skills.  When practice is needed to simulate performing in 'fatigued' situation that would be experienced in competition.  When available practice time is short.  When performers are experienced, fit and highly motivated.	Good for 'grooving' skills.  Good for learning discrete skills of short duration.  ✘ Can lead to fatigue and boredom.
DISTRIBUTED	When learning a new or complex skill.  When there is a danger of injury if performer is fatigued.  When performers have short attention spans e.g. in the early stages of learning.  When performers have low motivation.	Good for learning most skills.  Gives time to recover physically and mentally.  Good for potentially dangerous situations.
WHOLE	When the skill is continuous and cannot be broken down into sub-routines.	Performer gets to know the 'feel' and timing of the whole movement.  Learning can be quicker.  ✘ Unsuitable for complex skills.

PART	<p>When the skill is low in organisation.</p> <p>When learning serial and complex skills.</p>	<p>Provides early success.</p> <p>Safer.</p> <p>Allows teacher/coach to focus on particular parts of the skill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Some performers experience difficulty in putting parts back together.</li> <li>✗ Continuity of the skill is lost.</li> <li>✗ Reduces kinaesthetic awareness.</li> </ul>
MENTAL	<p>Can be used in potentially dangerous situations as a safe way of practising.</p> <p>To improve confidence of performers.</p> <p>Can be used during a warm up to aid focus and decrease anxiety.</p>	<p>Improves confidence of performer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Is not as effective as physical practice when used on its own.</li> </ul>

### Top Tips:

Don't forget to make the connection between the different types of practice and the type of skill being developed e.g. closed skills are best developed using fixed practice.



### Exam Style Questions

#### Task Variables

Simple	Complex
Low Organisation	High Organisation

1. Using examples from sport, explain how knowledge of task variables shown in the diagram above can influence the **type of practice** chosen by a coach/teacher. [4]

Answers