

Level 2 Coaching – Task 6: Mental and social influences on participation FACT SHEET



Learning outcomes

About this Task

By studying this Fact Sheet you will gain a knowledge and understanding about the mental and social influences on participants, including:

- How the mental capabilities of rider(s) will influence the content and structure of the session
- The key methods for improving rider(s)' including connection, confidence, concentration, motivation, emotional control and cohesion
- The concepts of:
 - skill coordination
 - motor skill learning
 - skill acquisition
 - skill retention
 - skill transfer
- The different stages of cognitive, emotional and social development
- How to develop riders' mental skills in sport or physical activity
- How to develop riders socially including building relationships and rapport with and between riders
- Developing rider confidence and self esteem

How the mental capabilities of riders will influence the coaching session

When planning individual or linked coaching sessions, the mental capabilities of the riders should be carefully considered. The content of the session may have to be adapted for many reasons including:

- The standard and experience of the riders – mixed ability groups can be challenging but each rider should gain confidence and enhance their skills development during the session.
- Rider confidence – under confident riders may need more time and smaller achievable targets, with plenty of encouragement.
- Rider motivation – the purpose of the session will affect the content. Motivated riders will engage and contribute whereas those lacking in purpose may need guidance and support to identify and achieve their goals.
- Rider concentration – some riders will have the mental stamina to cope with longer and more intense sessions than others.



Key methods for improving riders

Coaches have a range of techniques to help them improve the mental capabilities of riders. These include:

Confidence: Encourage riders to breath correctly, relax, use positive reinforcement, bring in elements of humour and set small, achievable goals. Make much of any improvement, however modest.

Connection: Novice riders may have difficulty in establishing a connection with the horse, which can lead to loss of confidence and motivation. A coach can address this by giving clear instructions, demonstrating what a positive connection looks like, providing exercises on the simulator and supporting the rider in developing their physical fitness, suppleness and balance.

Concentration: Exercises to develop rider concentration may include removing distractions and asking regular open questions which will make the rider think, respond and focus. Setting questions in advance of an exercise can help – such as counting the strides between fences. A rider will have to concentrate to answer the questions.

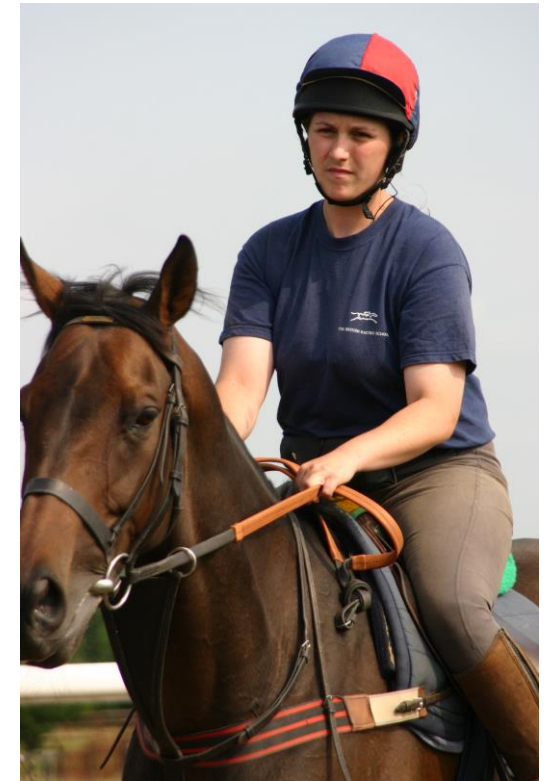


Key methods for improving riders (cont.)

Motivation: Riders lacking motivation can be encouraged to engage by developing short, attainable goals. Praising achievements, however small, and making sure sessions are fun and interactive.

Emotional control: Some riders, particularly those who are under-confident and nervous, need additional reassurance. Progress towards their goals will encourage positivity. Coaches will need to gauge when riders need additional support – or when they need space to reflect.

Cohesion: The cohesion or unity between coaches and participants is an important factor in achieving goals. Groups of riders can be given team building exercises. Two way communication is essential – for both coach and their participants. They should have a common understanding of goals. This will develop trust and success can be celebrated together.



Skills development

Riders will develop their riding skills through the following concepts:

- Skill coordination
- Motor skill learning
- Skill acquisition
- Skill retention
- Skill transfer

These concepts generally developed in a holistic way but it is helpful to look at the principles of each.

Skill Coordination – the coach will help their riders to develop skills which, when used together will improve their riding. For example balance and coordination. Balance is the ability to stay upright or stay in control of body movement and coordination is the ability to move two or more body parts under control, smoothly and efficiently. Balance and coordination can be improved through practice and training both on and off the horse.

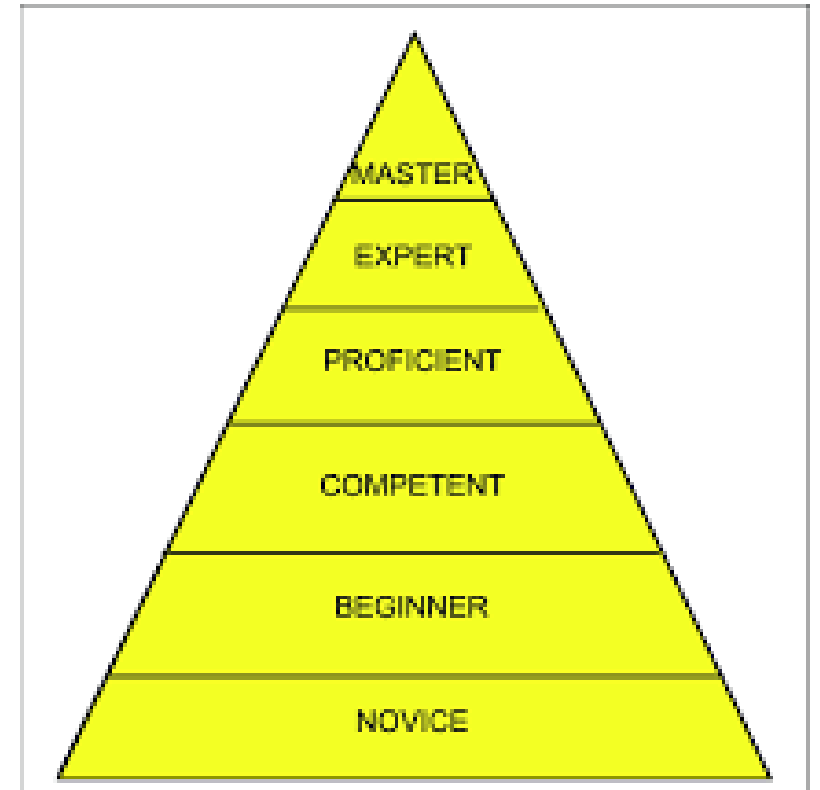


Skills development

Motor skill learning – motor skills are also called physical skills and they form the basis of all successful riding. Simple motor skills require very little intricate body movement and are practised to re enforce muscle memory. Examples include rising to the trot, steering with leg and rein aids and racing canter position.

Skill acquisition – this is the science that underpins movement learning and performance. Also called motor learning and control. Each stage of learning demonstrates unique characteristics relative to the rider's experience. The stages of skills acquisition are commonly accepted to be:

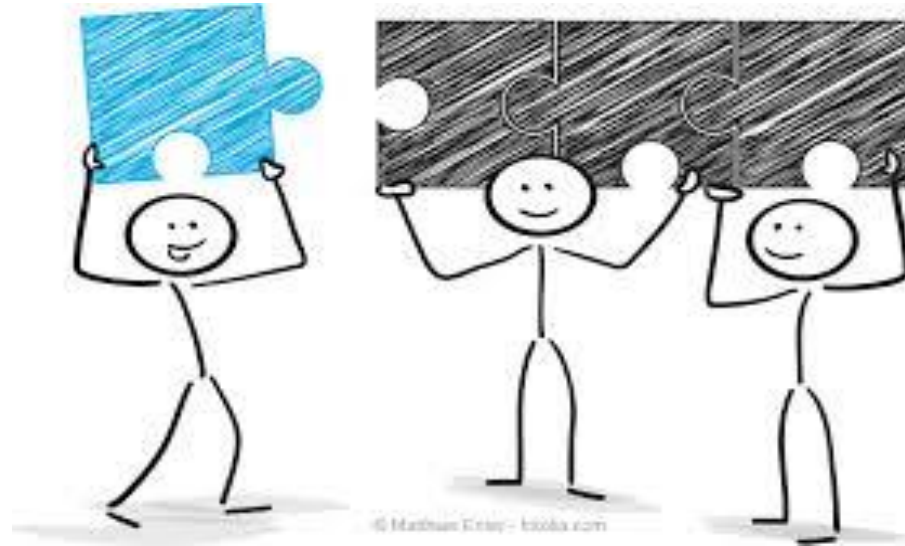
- Novice
- Beginner
- Competent
- Proficient
- Expert
- Master



Skills development

Skill retention – skill retention relates to the level which people are able to remember (or perform) some previously practiced task or skill, after a period of time. Therefore, retention depends on an individual's memory of the task or skill in question.

Skill transfer – skill transfer is the ability to take a learned skill and re produce it in a different situation. Transfer also occurs when an existing skill is added to a new skill. The outcome may have a positive or negative effect depending on the learner's ability to transfer the skill.



Stages of cognitive, social and emotional development

Along with assessing a rider's physical ability, a coach should also be aware of the stages of cognitive, emotional and social development.

Cognitive development relates to how riders think, explore and figure things out. It is the development of knowledge, technical and tactical skills as well as problem solving, which enable them to improve their riding skills.

Social development refers to the process by which a rider learns to interact with others around them, gaining skills to communicate with other. Some riders will interact more with their fellow riders than others. The coach should be sensitive to this and ensure their sessions are inclusive and engaging and accepting that members of the group will be at different stages of social development.

Emotional development involves learning what feelings and emotions are, understanding how and why they occur, recognising your own feelings and those of others, and developing effective ways for managing those feelings. For example, nervous and novice riders will often display different emotions such as anxiety or stress, compared to more experienced or confident riders.

How to develop participant mental skills

There a range of tools or behaviours that coaches can use to have a positive effect on riders' mental skills. These include:

- Agreeing small, achievable goals to develop rider confidence
- Be prepared to go back to basics if riders lack confidence
- Create group activities where riders support each other
- Praise even the smallest achievement
- Use a language that a rider can relate to
- Use positive body language
- Ask open, or even leading, questions to improve rider engagement or feedback
- Set small homework tasks to give the riders something to work between sessions
- Be available if riders seek support outside sessions
- Do not become over-friendly – set appropriate boundaries



How to develop riders' social skills

Riders with a positive outlook are more likely to progress towards their goals, and good social skills will create a positivity within a group. Coaches can support this skill development in a number of ways including:

- Introducing each rider at the start of the session
- Asking riders to find out a little bit about a fellow rider by using ice-breakers
- Injecting fun and humour into the coaching sessions
- Asking each rider to provide positive feedback on another rider's performance
- Creating a group environment and encouraging riders to support each other
- Create exercises that can be completed in pairs or small groups



Spare photos

