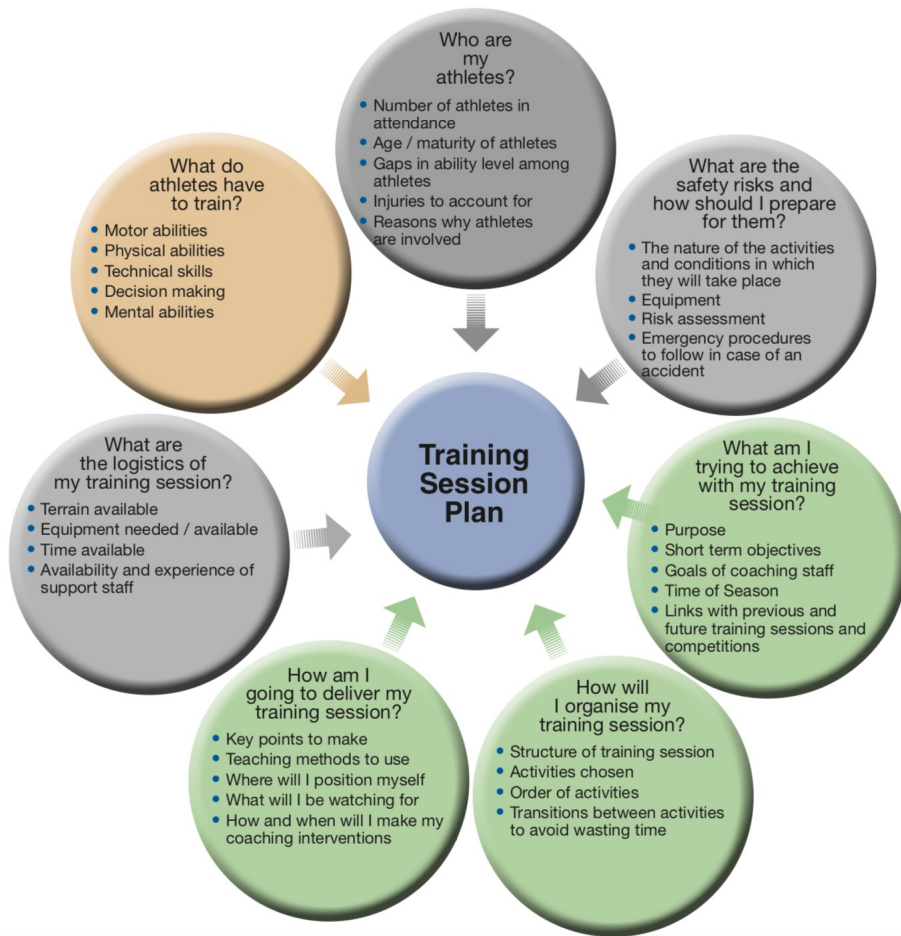


IRISH ASSOCIATION  
OF SNOWSPORT INSTRUCTORS



IASI Freestyle Ski Pre Course Reading



## STRUCTURE OF YOUR TRAINING SESSION

*'Everybody's got plans until they get hit.'* Mike Tyson Well-structured training sessions should always have five elements:

### The Warm-up

The warm-up should always consist of two parts:

1. General warm up followed by
2. Specific warm up. a. Balance b. Central Nervous System

### Introduction

Where possible the Coach should aim to arrive before their athletes and spend a little time inspecting the area where they plan to deliver their session.

When their athletes arrive, the Coach should welcome them. This is an opportunity to set the tone for the whole training session. A discussion is also a good time to assess the general status of the athletes.

1. General Warm Up, as in all sports, is designed to increase blood flow, allowing the body to prepare for exercise and prevent injury to muscles or joints. There is also a psychological aspect to the process as the body becomes alert. Increasing blood flow is achieved by raising the heart rate, which with children is best done through area-controlled games. Coaches can start with a small area and expand the playing arena as the athletes warm up. Heart rate raising activities should be followed by progressive stretching (dynamic movements) to allow the muscles that will be used to travel through their full range of motion. With children this can be achieved through story-telling and actions or by mimicking how other objects or animals move.

2. The Specific Warm Up is where we put our skis or board on. This section is the sport specific part of any warm up. This is a crucial part of the training session as it allows the athlete to focus and prepare themselves appropriately for the tasks ahead. Warm up for skiing / riding is divided into two parts:

Balance (also referred to as Feeling Stage / Tuning in)

This allows the athlete to tune in to their environment, equipment and their body. Activities should present the opportunity to allow the athlete to become more aware of

what they are doing. Speed should be slow (this increases feeling and encourages improved balance) and activities should be self-checking and individual. Exercises could include one-footed movements at slow speed and can be progressed in challenges and use of ski poles in various positions. Coaches should demand that athletes aim for perfect execution.

Central Nervous System (also referred to as Firing it Up / Pump it up)

This is when the intensity of the warm up is geared towards the planned training activity. The biggest difference now is the increased amount of movement. Activities can include jumping and stepping movements (short swings in short set bursts – 10 sets of 6 jumps), stepping turns, funnel turns increasing the intensity amongst others. Warm up should be tailored towards the Main Part at this point.

The Main (Skill Development) Part

The Coach plans a range of activities that will progressively challenge the athletes around a theme relevant to their development needs. Activities should be appropriate for the specific skill the coach / athlete has decided to work on and should also be chosen with consideration for each athlete's age, fitness and ability levels.

The Warm-Down

The warm-down is an extremely important time in snowsports training, more so than many other sports. This is often when the "magic happens". The Coach should try to remove themselves from the practice process and allow the athletes pressure free time to enjoy their skiing or riding. The intensity should be dropped but this can often be at the athletes' own

choice. This process gives the athlete space and time, an opportunity for cognitive breakthroughs and ensures they leave the slope happy. The warm down is the start of the recovery period for the athletes. Stretching, particularly with growing athletes, is an important routine to integrate at the end of any sport.

## Conclusion

The Coach recaps key outcomes from the training session whilst also providing the opportunity for feedback from athletes. The Coach ensures the training session ends on a positive and friendly note. Necessary information about future training sessions or competitions can be shared at this point.

## WHAT IS AN EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN?

The first thing to understand about an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is that it is not about treating injuries from a '1st Aid Kit' nor is it a substitute for holding a First Aid qualification.

You or your Club should have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for all venues you regularly train on.

An important distinction to make is that an Emergency Action Plan IS NOT about giving First Aid, rather it is the steps you will take to both make sure you can efficiently assist any injured athlete whilst making sure you can still ensure the safety of your other athletes.

For Licensed status you will be expected to attend a separate 2-day First Aid course in addition to this course.

An EAP is a plan designed by Coaches in order to assist them in responding to emergency situations often under stressful

conditions.

Having such a plan prepared in advance will help the Coach respond in a logical and efficient manner when the situation on the ground may make it difficult to think clearly.

The EAP should designate in advance who is in charge in the event of an emergency.

The person in charge may find that they are on a different run or different part of the mountain when the situation starts so having the means to communicate with other Coaches is important.

Have a radio or mobile phone with you so you can notify your other Coach colleagues of any situation that may have arisen in case you need them to assist with managing the situation.

Have a mobile phone with you, with the Ski Patrol's number pre-dialled into the phone. If this is not possible you will need to send someone to a ski lift to call the Ski Patrol.

Make sure the batteries of both are fully charged. Have contact numbers for the parents or guardians of the athlete.

It is considered best practice to have a medical profile for each athlete available, so that this information can be provided to emergency medical personnel.

Ideally include in this profile a signed consent from the parent / guardian to authorise medical treatment in an emergency.

## HEAD INJURIES

It has long been known that ski racers in particular are prone to knee injuries, however recent data gathered on competitive

snowsports injuries by the FIS, shows head injuries to be almost as numerous as knee injuries in gravity snowsports disciplines (Alpine, Snowboard, Freestyle). In the case of Alpine, both knee and head injuries account for around 40% each of injuries sustained in competition, combined they account for 80% of all World Cup injuries.

Head injuries and concussion can happen from the most innocuous incidents. The casualty may need nothing more than a few minutes to gather themselves after the tumble and they may well then wish to continue participating in the training session. The fact that an athlete states that they are OK after a tumble does NOT mean that they are. They might have suffered concussion.

Knowing how to recognise concussion, knowing its symptoms and potential ramifications, is extremely important in snowsports, as we know that hard knocks to the head can be just as life threatening as major trauma injuries.

Importantly however, the life threatening part of concussions may only become apparent some 12 to 24 hours after the incident.

What is a concussion?

A concussion is an injury to the brain that results from a hit to the head, or to another part of the body that allows the transmission of impact forces (jarring) to the head. It shows itself through a temporary alteration in the mental status of the individual, and may also be accompanied by some physical symptoms.

Symptoms of a concussion

Symptoms you may see in a casualty who has suffered concussion may be physical such as: dizziness, headaches, loss of consciousness, nausea, lethargy, ringing in the ears, seeing stars or flashing lights, problems with sight or lack of balance.

Casualties may also be suffering from the following cognitive symptoms: memory loss, disorientation, vacant stare, lack of focus, slurring of words and general lack of awareness of time and place.

The Coach may also observe a decrease in the athlete's performance, disengagement in conversation and a difficulty in following instructions or displaying inappropriate, unusual or illogical behaviors and reactions.

A person can suffer from concussion without losing consciousness.

## MANAGING SOMEONE WITH CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS

The following short-term measures should be implemented in the event that a participant suffers a concussion:

- With an unconscious casualty or in cases of severe concussion where someone is displaying significant changes in their mental and physical conduct following a head knock, they should be taken to the nearest medical practice immediately (hospital or surgery):
- This situation is serious and the casualty must be seen by a Doctor
- In a situation like this, the Emergency Action Plan must be implemented
- Any person, (athlete or coach) showing any of the symptoms of a concussion mentioned above must not be allowed to return to the current training or competition



### session

- Any cases where the person (athlete or coach) is showing milder symptoms of a concussion mentioned above and may be able to self evacuate from the training arena:
- They must never be left alone and should always be with someone who can monitor them for any deterioration in their condition
- The casualty must still be seen by a Doctor
- Though you may not activate the Emergency Action Plan to evacuate the casualty off the training arena, an Accident Report should be completed
- Any person, (athlete or coach) showing any of the symptoms of a concussion mentioned above must not be allowed to return to the current training or competition session

If, after visiting a Doctor and being discharged but still within 48 hours of the head knock incident, any of the symptoms of concussion return, the casualty must be transported to the nearest hospital with the utmost urgency; this situation is extremely dangerous.

## SKILL ANALYSIS

*'Asking the right questions takes as much skill as giving the right answers'* Robert Half

3. Observe
4. Assess
5. Diagnose Use of TTPPEE  
}

6. Prescribe When we ask the athlete to execute a certain skill the Coach has to analyse that skill. The first step involves OBSERVING. You can observe the athlete from a number of different angles:
- From below, above, behind, side on, stationary, following, skiing backwards, from the lift
  - What are you looking at? The task? Overall picture? The skis / board? Upper body? In the second step we ASSESS At this point you are determining the difference between the actual and desired performance. In the third step of our analysis we DIAGNOSE. We use the acronym TTPPEE as our Skill Development tool. Below are some examples of TTPPEE that we might use to diagnose why a skill-execution is not as we had asked.

### Technical

Eg. Too much edge angle? Applying force too late?  
Skidding too much?

### Tactical

Eg. Too fast? Too straight down the hill? Have they gone the wrong way? Turn shape too big or small?

### Physical

Eg. Are they strong enough? Are they healthy? Are they tired? Are they carrying an injury?

## Psychological

Eg. Lazy? Scared? Bored? Pumped up? Uninterested?

## Equipment

Eg. Boots too tight / stiff / unbuckled? Skis / board not prepared properly? Goggles steamed up? Clothing not appropriate?

## Environment

Eg. Too cold? Too steep or bumpy? Too many people? Intimidating? Mum and Dad watching? Too easy?

Once we have diagnosed we have to PRESCRIBE our analysis to the athlete. Again we can use our Skill Development tool to prescribe. The most creative Coaches are able to use the widest range of communication methods to get the message across.

Below are examples of how you could use the Skill Development tool to communicate a change in execution for a desired task.

## Technical

Eg Increase your edge angle at the start of the turn. Keep your arms out in front of you. Keep your weight forward.

## Tactical

Try slowing it all down. Bigger turns will give you more time. Speed it up! Follow Johnny's tracks.

## Physical

Pump it up! Move more! Try harder – let's see you get out of breath! More up and down movements!

### Psychological

Calm everything down. Go to a happy place. Let's get going!  
Get aggressive! Rip it up! Come on!

### Equipment

Try it holding your poles like this. Undo your boots. Switch edges around. Have my goggles. Tighten your helmet up so it doesn't shake around! Sharpen your edges.

### Environment

Let's have a go on the flat over here. See if you can do it down the bumpier section. Stay well away from other people. Try it down over this ridge.

Even at National Team level, the language used to describe skiing is often fairly simple. Pictures are painted or feelings are asked for. (For example, "Really stand on it coming into the pitch" or "Give it welly" or "Attack the combination exit, make sure you're aggressive" or "Smash it")

TTPPEE is an excellent addition to a Coach's armory. If something is not working, using

TTPPEE to find another way to express yourself is a very useful method.

Be aware that technical information does not work well with younger athletes – they are often unaware of nuances of technique and the information tends to have little impact.

### **Useful coaching points and info:**

Here are some useful points when coaching for you to use as a reference if you need to.

**Maximum class activity:**

When coaching we need to ensure all learners are motivated and engaged. Often your viewing position is the key to this. Choose a place where you can observe and give feedback without too much waiting around for the learners. This is often very different to “ski instruction”.

**Feedback:**

There are lots of different types of feedback we can give as coaches. This doesn't necessarily mean “the more feedback given the better”. Quite often keeping the feedback incredibly simple can have some of the best results. As ski instructors it is very easy to observe, assess, diagnose and then prescribe with technical feedback. Coaches however tend to steer away from technical feedback a little more and use other methods like tactical for example. So instead of saying “push here, press there” they might say, “go faster, pop earlier”. Generally the higher the level of skier the less technical the feedback will be. This is usually because the skier knows what movements they need to make and simply need to be guided to implement them to achieve maximum performance. See below for a simple way of thinking about feedback.

Technical example – “press here and extend legs through transition”

Tactical example – “Go faster and pop earlier”

Physical example - “Move faster, be more explosive”

Psychological example - “Be aggressive with it”

Equipment example – Tighten pole straps, change goggle lens”

Environment example – “Use the transition to carry speed into the jump”

**Specific equipment:**

Freestyle skis vary in shape, size and stiffness and some are better for certain aspects of freestyle skiing than others. If you are unsure on any of the below ask your educator to elaborate.

Half-pipe skiers tend to use stiffer, narrower skis. This is because they need to carve and carry speed through the transition and up the wall. Narrower is quicker from edge to edge. Stiff holds a better edge and helps prevent “washing out” through the transition into the flat bottom or up onto the vert.

Wider, softer twin tip skis are generally better for “jibbing”. Having a soft nose or tail can help with butters and presses and also allow the skier to pop off the nose or tail rather than the middle of the ski easier. Quite often a “mid-fat” twin tip is the choice for backcountry freestylers.

The ski edges on twin tips tend to be thicker and stronger than those of standard alpine skis. This is generally to help combat the abuse they receive from rails. The ski base tends to be tougher too for the same reasons but as a result is usually slower than a standard alpine ski base. (Note some top-level half-pipe skiers have a race base put onto a twin tip ski for extra speed).

Freestyle boots vary in stiffness and shape. Often the torsional stiffness and flex of the boot is less but this is generally down to personal preference. Some boots have a soft part in the toe area to help prevent “toe bang”. Some have a different liner that wraps fully around the leg and many people believe this helps to reduce “shin bang”.

Ski poles are usually shorter. This is because they generally aren't used to plant for a turn but instead are just used more for balance. If the poles are too long they can get in the way when performing tricks and can even make a trick look ugly and less stylish. Some freestyle skiers don't use poles at all and this is simply personal preference.

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