

Planning a Session

As coaches we are told from day one that the key to our success is planning. Here, coach and author Anne Pankhurst, shares her top tips for planning an effective coaching session:

- Your session plan should be completed in advance and copies given to helpers, so everyone involved knows the objectives for the session and how they will be met.
- Each written session plan should have at least an outline (and as much detail as possible) of what you are trying to achieve with the participants in that session.
- The content of each session should be part of the goals for a longer programme: one-off disjointed sessions are not very helpful to progressing participants long term.
- You should be working towards specific goals; each session should follow on from the previous one and lead into the next so participants can see their progress.
- The type of work planned in a session should change depending on upcoming events/competitions; for example, you should plan to work on refining existing skills close to competition, and coaching new skills and tactics when you have more time.
- The session should be divided up into different segments:
 - the warm-up
 - recap on the previous session
 - one or more new coaching points that help the participants improve a particular skill or tactic
 - some different, progressive practices
 - and finally, a cool-down.

- The session should always be evaluated at the end by the participants and other coaches (if present).
- At least some part of every session should be familiar to the participants to enable them to see their progress and practise activities they enjoy.
- There should, however, be new material or ideas in every session so athletes are challenged and motivated.
- You should be ready to be flexible with each session plan: things can happen that will require you to make quick changes to your basic plan!

About the Author

Anne Pankhurst, until recently, worked as Manager of Coaching Education for the United States Tennis Association. Working with national and high-performance coaches, and young talented players, she provided them with information and resources to help develop future champions.

Prior to working in the US, Anne was the Coach Education Director for the Lawn Tennis Association. Anne is the author of three tennis coaching books and has written many articles on tennis coaching and the development of young athletes. In addition, she works as a technical editor for coach education resources, the two most recent being sports coach UK's *Planning and Periodisation* and *An Introduction to the FUNdamentals of Movement*.

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