

## Example of practice

# Mastery learning

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Examples of practice demonstrate effective practice in different education settings. You can use them to think about how to apply the practice in your own context.

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### Lesson context

This example of practice comes from a Year 9 Physical Education lesson. This lesson falls within a practical unit of work on 'racket sports'. The previous lessons focused on key components and mastery of tennis strokes (including grip, body position, impact point, striking zone and recovery).

This lesson is the first of a series of 3 lessons conducted at the local indoor tennis centre. The aim of this lesson sequence is for students to apply their recently learnt tennis stroke skills to a series of modified games in a more predictable way. After this, students then apply all that they've learnt into real game situations. This unit of work is structured in a way that facilitates a mastery approach – each task within a lesson, and each lesson within the unit of work is sequenced to build upon the last.

### Modelled practice

At the start of the lesson, I asked students a question about what we did last lesson. This is an effective way to gain the class's attention and make a link between the last lesson and the current one.

I ask, "Who can remember the 4 strokes we mastered at school?"

This established the base skills we were building on in this lesson and provided an opportunity to give immediate positive feedback as well as building student engagement and excitement for the lesson.

Then I explained the learning objectives in simple, consistent terms so that the students can understand: our 'what, why and how'. This approach tells students what they are going to be doing, how they are going to be doing it, and makes the skill/task relevant to everyday life. This clearly establishes the learning objectives and offers a consistent 'start and end point' to each lesson (that is, modelling goal setting and reflection in practice).

**What:** You will use the tennis strokes we learnt at school in a series of tennis court games.

**Why:** We are going to play some modified tennis games and have some fun! When you're having fun, you are more likely to learn. If you learn these skills, you can have a lifetime of fun and stay healthy being physically active.

**How:** To achieve this we are firstly going to play a warm-up activity, then play 'king of the court' in pairs, finishing with running 'king of the court'.

Before beginning the warm-up activity, I asked students to form 2 groups: one group for the students who haven't played much tennis before and don't feel confident in their tennis skills, and the other group for those who have played tennis before and do feel confident in their skills. This gave me insight into each student's own perception of their skill level, allowed for differentiated learning and offered the opportunity for some students to develop mastery and others to seek enrichment and extension.

On one court, I was challenging the students who had demonstrated early mastery by hitting balls to them at an unpredictable and fast pace. On the other court, the tennis coach worked with the students who felt less competent by providing feedback and re-teaching basic tennis skills – helping them work towards mastering our focus skills.

Following this period of differentiated practice, the groups were mixed, and 2 main 'king of the court' modified games were played over 2 courts. This allowed the students to put the individual skills they had just mastered into a modified game setting. It also provided further

enrichment for those who demonstrated early mastery and allowed them to make their way up to 'kings', where they were able to practise the higher order skills of serving and maintaining their spot.

The modelled practice approach allowed both the tennis coach and me to observe each student, provide frequent and specific feedback, and coach individual students if required. At the end of the session, I asked for a simple 1-5 finger rating scale from the students as to whether they felt they had successfully achieved the learning goal of using correct tennis strokes in a game-like situation. This quick formative assessment provided invaluable information for me to reflect on and refine my own teaching. After gathering this snapshot from them, I asked myself:

- What is the self-reported level of mastery in my class?
- Which students felt they were not learning?
- How would I be better able to teach these skills to those individual learners?

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## Reflection questions

- What mastery learning practices are happening in this example?
- How is the teacher sequencing activities to build upon the last?
- How is differentiation occurring to help all learners in this example?
- Which of these mastery learning practices would translate into your own teaching area?
- How can you track your students progress towards your learning goals?