

General principles for running practical sessions

- All sessions should start with a Brief and finish with a Debrief.
- For details on effective briefing and debriefing please see below or read G101 and G14.
- For ideas on practical exercise please see G100 and G14.
- Always have an Aim or Focus.
- Use a variety of delivery styles, e.g. diagrams, pictures, discussions, demonstrations (if possible).
- Make sure your sailors are involved and use their knowledge.
- Use open questions, e.g. How, What, Why?
- Safety should be of prime importance.
- Have a structure and keep it simple.

Briefing (Plan)

- Briefings can be very varied in both length and how much information they contain which depends on what you are trying to achieve from the session. An important aspect of the Brief is to be structured, this enables your sailors to follow the information and understand the aims. They should contain the following:
 - Aims
 - Timings
 - Safety
 - Sailor involvement
 - The list above gives the minimum headings that a briefing should cover. Each of these areas can and should be broken down into specifics but remember the title is a "briefing" so should be brief and stick to the aims of the session.
 - If we expand on the headings above we will end up with a structured informative Brief which contains all the relevant information for the session. This could include some (but rarely all) of the following:
 - Aim – be specific, break down the skill, focus just on the session aim and involve the sailors in deciding on this.
 - Timings – set realistic timings but be flexible, include the exercise and how to achieve the exercise.
 - Safety – cover any safety issues that may be relevant, signals, sailing area, other activities or shipping, tides and weather, local hazards.
 - Sailor involvement - this is imperative as it keeps the sailors involved and focussed. No one likes being talked at, but everyone likes being involved.
 - VARK – there are a number of ways of communicating with our sailors:
 - Visual
 - Aural
 - Reading
 - Kinaesthetic
- We will look at this in more detail later under 'Styles of Coaching'.

Session Afloat (Do)

- There are a few basic principles on the session afloat, these are:
 - Work towards the aims of the session
 - Follow the Brief
 - Keep it safe – always be thinking "what if..."
 - Keep it moving, but allow sailors time to practise new skills
 - Be flexible
 - Make notes for your debrief
 - Position the coach boat in the most effective position for coaching and/or videoing
 - Select the exercises that will have most learning opportunities for the sailor bearing in mind the aims of the session
 - Feedback afloat – you must be close to (preferably alongside) and have eye contact with the sailor for this to be effective.
 - Don't shout across an expanse of water
- All 'seamanship' type exercises/manoeuvres should follow: planning, approach, manoeuvre and escape.....

De-briefing (Review)

- When should you debrief? If it is a cold day then get the sailors somewhere warm and dry. When it is hot get in the shade and make sure everyone is hydrated. The sailors need to be comfortable to be fully involved with the debrief.
 - Refer back to the Aims of the session
 - Ask
 - Open questions – why, what, how, when, who, where?
 - Don't give all the answers, ask the sailors as they will have some ideas, thoughts and observations of their own
 - Use a whiteboard and note their observations down
 - A great way of getting your sailors to be involved is to use "Think, Pair, Share"
 - Think - about the question that you have just set them
 - Pair - discuss it with their crew/helm or another partner
 - Share - their answer with the rest of the group
 - Discuss
- Discussion should be between you (the coach) and the sailors. If the sailors are fully involved with debriefing then you should just be facilitating it.
- The Talk Ratio between coach and sailor should be 40:60 as a minimum. This is achieved by the coach using a skilled questioning technique which should be able to lead the sailors down the desired route.
- If a sailor learns something for themselves they are far more likely to remember it, than if they were just given the information.
 - Re-focus
- Agree the aims for the next session from what has been learnt from this session. Identify the focus for each sailor; the sailor should be fully involved with this decision.
 - VARK
- Again feedback doesn't just have to be verbal, think of other ways of facilitating the information, e.g. diagrams, walk throughs, using a boat, dinghy park shuffle, video and stills.

Wet Notebooks

Use a notebook and take notes on the exercises. The essential part of a coach's job is to give specific and quality feedback. Most of our Olympic coaches use notebooks so that they can deliver specific quality feedback.

Tips for delivering a good session:- "Accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative"

I hear and I forget.

I see and I understand.

I do and I remember.

The mere statement of a fact is no guarantee that listeners have received that fact as you understand it, or will necessarily remember it for any length of time. It is far better to teach a practical subject in a practical way whenever possible.

Bear the following points in mind when teaching in the classroom

Always be positive and enthusiastic. It will rub off!

Consider the room layout. Anything you say or do will be pointless unless your students can see and hear you. Remember that you are in charge; move furniture if necessary. Encourage students to fill brief/lecture rooms from the front. Make sure your room is comfortable, cool and well ventilated.

Keep it short and simple (KISS). 10 minutes is about the maximum length of time to maintain students' attention without testing or a break. Don't over-run.

Give your brief a structure. Introduction, Development, Summary, and Test.

A hand-out stating the important facts is useful but should not be given out until the end of the brief. However, if you can use hand-outs that allow students to take notes then the act of taking note helps them remember what has been said. Always conclude with the 'golden nuggets' of the lesson, try to minimise these to approximately 3 points.

Always use first names. Use duct tape to either write your students' names on their buoyancy aids or on the transom on the boat.

Tailor your presentation to suit your audience.

Choose your language. Avoid using jargon, even simple terms such as tack and gybe should be checked that everyone understands (see use of questions).

Choose your position. Where and how you stand is important. Standing behind a desk or lectern is more formal and puts a barrier between you and your audience but sitting on a table at the front of the class may be too relaxed for some talks. Watch experienced speakers and assess their use of body language. Don't hide behind your visual aids.

Involve your sailors. Speak to your audience – all of them. Don't talk to the ceiling, the floor or the wall at the back of the classroom. Try to make eye contact with every member of the audience at some stage. As alternatives to a monologue, use question and answer techniques, discussions, games etc. Learn and use students' names.

Avoid distractions. Like mannerisms, any distractions which take your students' attention away from what you are saying will damage your brief/lecture. If you are lecturing outside because of good weather, arrange the group so they are facing away from any distractions. For instance make sure the sun isn't in their eyes or that they are not watching the club race.

Practise writing on a whiteboard. Never talk to your whiteboard, always to your students. If you are not using or have finished with a whiteboard, rub it clean to avoid distraction. Try and keep the information and diagrams neat and tidy.

Always try to describe the course with a diagram. Actually verbally describing a race course is quite complex but a diagram on a board means that there will be less ambiguity and the sailors are more likely to remember.

Brain storming. This is a great technique to involve the sailors in the lesson/brief and can be used in conjunction with effective questions to reinforce the key teaching points. The secret is that every suggestion has a place on the flip chart or board, if only because it provokes the students to think.

Don't bluff. If you don't know the answer to a question – say so. Your students would far rather have an honest "I don't know, but I'll find out." than a bluffed answer. Having said that, you should always ensure that you have a wider knowledge of your subject than the basic facts contained in your brief.

Avoid sarcasm, humiliation or rudeness. Try not to let any of your prejudices alienate members of the class.

Don't try to be funny unless you are naturally witty.

Avoid the brief/lecture entirely if the subject can be better taught another way. For example aspects of meteorology may be best taught during the course of the weekend rather than a specific lecture. Finally, remember that your brief/lecture will have succeeded only if your students leave it having learnt all the important facts which you intended to communicate and are eager to learn more.

Don't be afraid to test. Ten questions, which are immediately marked by the students themselves, will help to reinforce your teaching.

Questions, Questions, Questions. The concept of using questions in your teaching has been outlined above. Questions to the class can be used to fulfil three main purposes – to Teach, Test or Trigger more learning. Teaching by question and answer is a technique which relies on the Coach being able to pose the right questions in order to elicit the required response. Well used, it will enable students to maintain their attention span for far longer than in a formal brief/lecture, because they are involved.

Questions fall into two categories – **closed (or direct)** which require a simple answer and **open (or indirect)** which lead onto more thoughts. In general terms, closed questions are used for simple testing whilst open questions are more effective for teaching and triggering further thought.

Pose, Pause, Pounce. Using questions for testing is most effective if you follow the pattern of Pose – Pause – Pounce. Pose the question to the group then pause to allow students time to think of the answer. During this time your gaze will rove around the group until you pounce on someone for an answer. If you identify one of the group before asking the question, the others will lose attention, knowing that they are not going to be asked.

If a student doesn't know the answer, don't chastise him for it but move on to someone who does. If none of the group know the answer to something which has been covered, it is because you did not explain it properly – **thus questions serve to confirm whether your teaching has been effective.**

Think, Pair, Share. Ask a question and then get the students to think about the answer for 30 seconds, they can then pair up and discuss their ideas with a partner. Finally the pairs share their ideas with the group.

Visual Aids - Basic Principles.

Relevance – Visual aids should not be produced for their own sake. They must be relevant or they become a distraction.

Clarity – Diagrams must be easily understood and not contain irrelevant detail. They must be readable by the most distant of your audience. Any visual aid which cannot be clearly seen by everyone is neither visual nor an aid.

Timing – Don't produce visual aids until they are needed; they will only distract your audience if displayed too soon. Dispose of them after use.

Display – Try to display a visual aid in a dramatic manner. Students will remember something far longer if it is linked to a highlight.

Use the other senses. An aid which does something and which can be passed around is more valuable than something which is merely displayed. Beware of moving on to another topic while one aid is still circulating. Nobody will listen to you if they have a toy with which to play. Equally, use the mechanism of some visual aids to 'punctuate' your brief/lecture and put in 'paragraphs' e.g. switching off the OHP between acetates, lights on/off between slides.

You are a walking visual aid with optional sound. Think about your mannerisms, delivery, position etc and their effect on the class. Never hide behind another visual aid so that your audience cannot see you properly. Finally, dress for the occasion. Although sailing is a practical sport, don't let your appearance serve as a distraction to your audience. A good general rule is to dress about as well as the best dressed of your audience – that way, nobody will be offended.

Illustrations by Pete Galvin

Planning Your Exercise Brief



The aims

The teaching points

Diagrams used

Diagram of the course to be used

(include position of the coach boat)

Order of events

Safety brief

Key questions for you:

- Have you planned this session with the needs of your group and their current abilities in mind?
- Have you chosen the best visual aid to demonstrate the lesson?
- How will they remember the exercises?
- Have you checked they know what you have briefed? - Questions not only assess the knowledge of the sailors but also check that they have understood.
- Young sailors very rarely ask questions so don't assume that they have absorbed your entire brief!

