

Facilitating play



Defining facilitation

When we speak of engaging people with physical activity by playing games and activities, we use the term 'facilitation'. Facilitation differs from other terms such as teaching, instructing or coaching. Facilitation has two components within its definition; *to make easier* and *to help bring about*. When we place this in context of physical activity, we want to make activity and play easy to engage with so that it is accessible and inviting, which helps bring about more movement competence, confidence and motivation to engage. By extension, facilitation means providing people with the opportunity to discover how to move and achieve a goal, and not explicitly instructing them on the way to accomplish any given movement. This in turn builds knowledge and understanding of movement and the context in which it can be used.

What does facilitation look like?

You do not have to be an expert in movement to get others moving, but being intentional around the way you facilitate is important. Facilitation within physical activity can take many different forms and should focus on fun, success and engagement. The ways we can be intentional around facilitation include setting up the environment for engagement in activity, adapting the way you describe the task in order to engage the learners and including various different styles of activity to your sessions.

Environment

When thinking of the environment we are using to engage in play, we can be intentional with the way it is created to encourage movement, and movements that individuals may not normally

engage with. For example, if you have an open gymnasium with no equipment in, people will typically be active for around 20 minutes before activity levels drop. We can use this to our advantage by initially providing an open space with no equipment, and then provide equipment after a certain amount of time to reinvigorate activity levels. When deciding on equipment, be selective to not always offer the same thing. One day you can offer a hoop, the next day a skipping rope, then basketballs and so on. By doing this, those individuals who would always choose a basketball are encouraged to try different movements and activities.

Describing the task

When setting out the task at hand within a physical activity environment, we may be inclined to give a long list of expectations within the activity as to how it can be accomplished. At times this is required or may be implied, but doing this can diminish creative thinking, problem solving skills and decrease movement. Leaving some activities more open ended can increase communication and strategic thinking, while other learners will quickly mimic any strategy that proves effective.

Different styles of facilitation

In relation to all the above information, different activities can be facilitated in different ways. A yoga class may require direct instruction from the front of the space, whereas giving learners a task of creating an activity or obstacle course can be much more learner initiated. Including many different styles of facilitation within a setting builds motivation and engagement in the learners

as well as develops their knowledge and understanding of movement and how it can be used in context. Various 'teaching' styles have been researched and described by Mosston and Ashworth (2008) and placed on a spectrum from the educator making all the decisions through to the learner having full control. These styles are listed below in Table 1. The 'practice' style is the most common form of facilitation, whereas the styles of self-check, inclusion and guided discovery may be more beneficial for fostering physical literacy.

New ideas

If you need new ideas or help thinking of ways as to how to incorporate these facilitation tips in to practice, please contact us and we discuss all this information further.

Table 1. Teaching styles (Mosston & Ashworth, 2008)

	Teaching style	Description
Reproductive styles	Command	The educator makes all decision and pupils act when the educator is told to.
	Practice	The educator describes or demonstrates a task, and the pupils practice at their own pace.
	Reciprocal	The educator describes or demonstrates a task, and the pupils practice in pairs, helping each other.
	Self-check	The educator presents a task. The pupils practice at their own pace, evaluating and being responsible of their task performance.
	Inclusion process	The educator models a task at different levels of difficulty. The pupils have to choose their most comfortable level.
Productive styles	Guided discovery	The educator ask questions or sets physical problems addressed to guide the pupils to discover a successful skill.
	Convergent discovery	The educator asks questions or sets physical problems to which pupils have to find a single solution to perform.
	Divergent discovery	The educator asks questions or sets physical problems to which pupils can find multiple solutions to perform.
	Learner-designed individual program	The educator sets the subject. The pupils have to plan and perform the practice on the given subject.
	Learner-initiated	The educator sets the subject. The pupils have to plan and perform the practice on the given subject. The educator helps when being asked for and evaluating the results.
	Self-teaching	The educator supervises, but the activity is totally managed by the pupils themselves.