

Training Session Plan: Developing Communication Skills

Session:	Developing Communication Skills
Session purpose:	The purpose of this session is to give you tips and techniques on how you can communicate clearly and assertively with others.
Learning outcomes:	<p>By the end of the session you will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the communication styles used by athletes you are officiating • Adapt and apply your communication style, including body language, to establish rapport and improve the understanding between you and players and coaches • Get messages across clearly, concisely and with impact • Apply communication techniques appropriate for different levels of athletes • Actively listen to others and ask effective questions to ensure understanding.
Facilitator:	
Duration:	2.5–3 hours
Preparation required:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write up the headings on the four flipcharts for the communication styles activity. • Prepare the four sets of Post-it notes for the communication styles activity.

Resources:

Flipchart paper

'Post-it' notes

Blu Tack

Whiteboard

Fact sheets:

- Communication styles
- The importance of being assertive
- Communicating with participants and coaches
- Listening skills

Role play activity cards

- Official card (1)
- Coach card (1)
- Observation sheet

Self-check quiz

Evaluation forms

Time	Instructions	Resource
15 mins	INTRODUCTION	
15 mins	<p>Welcome and overview of training session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome participants to the training session. • Do introductions by asking the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Name - Sport - Why did you get involved? - What do you hope to achieve from this training session? • Go through housekeeping, e.g. emergency procedures, location of toilets, expected finish time. • Go through the session purpose and learning outcomes. 	
40 mins	COMMUNICATION STYLES	
1 min	<p>Understanding and responding to the four communication styles</p> <p><i>Understanding the four communication styles</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The four communication styles are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aggressive - Passive - Indirectly Aggressive - Assertive. 	

Time	Instructions	Resource
23 mins	<p>Small group activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide up the session group and then give out the activity instructions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Depending on the number of session participants, give each group one or two of the pre-headed flipcharts, and one set of the pre-prepared Post-it notes. - Ask each group to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List the behaviours they would expect to see and hear from people using the communication style(s) they have been given - Put the Post-it note on each sheet that reflects how each party involved in the communication would be feeling - Estimate what percentage of their players, coaches and spectators would fit into each communication style - Nominate someone to report back to the wider group at the end. • Ask each group to go through their flipchart(s). • Ask other participants to add to the answers. • Check that the group has got the Post-it answer correct for each communication style. • Do a summary at the end of key points that have come out of the flipcharts and discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 sets of pre-prepared Post-it notes (16 in total) • 4 flipchart sheets (each headed up with a communication style)
1 min	<p>The importance of being assertive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the following points about why it is important to be assertive. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As an official, you are likely to be challenged at some time (if you haven't been already!). The game is getting 'hot' or a player is questioning your decisions in a demonstrative manner. - How you respond to the challenge will have a direct outcome on 	

Time	Instructions	Resource
10 mins	<p>your management of the game, and the respect given to you by everyone involved with the game.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using a calm manner and an assertive communication style will get all parties the best outcome. <p>Group discussion: characteristics of an assertive style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the group to give examples of where they or other officials in their sporting code have been assertive (it doesn't necessarily need to be a conflict situation). What was the situation and what behaviours and characteristics did you or the other official display? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write up the key characteristics being covered. - The type of characteristics that should come out of the discussion include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respects self and respects others - 'You're OK, I'm OK' - Avoids put downs and accepts compliments appropriately - Accepts confrontation and deals with it appropriately - Deals openly with others - Feels in control of themselves - Treats the situation and people with parity, equality - Doesn't play favourites and does what is right - Evaluates the situation and acts accordingly. 	Whiteboard
5 mins	<p>Adapting your style to establish rapport and improve mutual understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the group what benefits they can see by them reading the other person's communication style and then adapting their own style so 	

Time	Instructions	Resource
	<p>both parties are feeling OK (You're OK, I'm OK).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Answers could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It could prevent conflict - It will establish and build rapport with the players and coaches - You'll be sending clear messages - The players and coaches will see you as a confident person in control of themselves and the game - The players and coaches will respect you. 	

40 mins	GETTING YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS									
5 mins	<p>How to get your message across effectively</p> <p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You need to get your message across clearly, concisely and with impact. <p>Activity: Did you know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw a pie chart on the whiteboard or flipchart paper with the three headings (body language, tone of voice and words) but no percentages. <div data-bbox="831 724 1151 1046" data-label="Figure"> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Body Language</td> <td>55%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tone of Voice</td> <td>38%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Words</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the group to guess what the percentages are for each way we receive a message. Write in the general consensus for each category. Go through the research results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 55% is via body language 38% is via tone of voice 7% is via the words. 	Category	Percentage	Body Language	55%	Tone of Voice	38%	Words	7%	Whiteboard
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Tone of Voice	38%									
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10 mins	<p>- Was the group surprised by the percentages?</p> <p>Group discussion: assertive body language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• So, we know that we need to be assertive when communicating with others and that our body language makes up 55% of getting our message across.• Ask the group to brainstorm how they can use their body language in an assertive manner.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Typical answers should include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Body posture<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Stand or sit in a relaxed, upright manner- Face the other person with your head erect- Make sure the physical distance between you is appropriate.- Gestures and movement<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Avoid frequent, vague or nervous body movements (they will undermine your message).- Eye contact<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Look directly and steadily at the person (this shows your confidence and sincerity).- Facial expressions<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Facial expressions should match your message (smiling or laughing doesn't convey serious concern).- Voice tone and volume<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use a level, well-modulated voice (to convince rather than intimidate).	
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<p>10 mins</p>	<p>Communicating while officiating</p> <p><i>Ways we can communicate</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a number of ways we communicate in our officiating role. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voice (to communicate decisions and rulings) - Whistle (to communicate to players to do something) - Indications (to communicate a decision non verbally) - Body language (communicate a feeling/emotion). • As a general rule, communication is most effective for everyone when the official uses more than one method of communication to get across their message, e.g. verbalise your decision and use a flag or hand signal. <p><i>Group discussion: getting your message across</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the group to share their experiences on the ways they communicate while officiating, e.g. to communicate a breach/infringement I give the appropriate hand signal and I call out what the infringement is. • If a person only has one way of communicating their message, ask the wider group to give ideas on a second method of communication that could be used. • Officiating examples that the group could cover include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awarding a penalty - Explaining a break of the rules/laws to the players - Announcing the score 	
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5 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relating an account of an incident to a judiciary/tribunal (post game) - To end a period of play - To indicate the ball has gone out of the field of play. <p>Group discussion: written reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the group what situations call for written reports. • Ask the group to share what you would expect of a good written report. Typical answers include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accurate information - Making sure all the key points have been covered - Keeping to the pertinent points unless your general feedback has also been asked for - Having the report finished in the set timeframe - The writing is legible (if written). 	
10 mins	<p>'Selling' your decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players and coaches look for officials who communicate confidently and decisively. This shows the official is in control of themselves and the game. • Ask the group to share experiences of how they successfully 'sell' their refereeing decisions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Typical answers should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a clear voice - Use appropriately chosen words - Use a firm, assertive manner - Maintain direct eye contact - Make sure your voice is loud enough so that the players and 	

	coaches can hear your decision.	
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15 mins	ACTIVE LISTENING	
5 mins	<p>Introduction</p> <p>We tend to take listening for granted! It's a skill like any other and requires attention and practice.</p> <p>The strongest influence on the outcome of all communications is the ability to listen effectively. As an official, if you listen effectively, you can respond appropriately.</p> <p>Active listening activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for a volunteer to take part in a quick listening exercise. • Ask them to talk you through one of the rules relevant to the sport they coach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitator to demonstrate annoying listening habits, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disagreeing or interrupting - Invasion of personal space - Being distracted - Showing off personal knowledge of the rules and laws. • Ask the group what annoying listening habits they saw you displaying. • Ask the volunteer how they felt 	
10 mins	<p>Good listening habits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a group, brainstorm good listening habits. Write up the responses. Points should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be patient - Take notes if incident is serious 	Whiteboard

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Avoid prejudices- Don't jump to conclusions- Paraphrase- Conform and clarify.• Capitalise on the speed of thought<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Did you know what we can speak at 125–150 words a minute but we can hear at 600 words a minute! You can use this time to follow the four key steps for active listening (hearing, interpreting, assessing and responding), e.g.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Anticipate where the player is going- Mentally summarise the message- Formulate a response- Read between the lines (body language)- Use silence. | |
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15 mins	EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING	
5 mins	<p>Open and closed questions</p> <p><i>Closed questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed questions lead to a yes or no answer. • Closed questions are good to clarify and check information and to get agreement from someone. <p><i>Group discussion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the group to give some examples of situations when they have used closed questions while refereeing and how they started the question. 	
5 mins	<p><i>Open questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open questions can't be answered with a yes or no answer. • Open questions are good for getting information from someone. • Write the following quote from Rudyard Kipling on the whiteboard. Open questions usually start with one of six words: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I have six friends who serve me true. Their names are where and when and how and why and what and who". <p><i>Good question openers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here are some good question openers to use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was your reason....? - Tell me about...? - What lead up to this...? - What would happen if...? - What alternative ways are there...? 	Whiteboard

5 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the implications of...? • The word 'why'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be careful with starting a question with the word 'why' (people can perceive that you are questioning their judgement). <p>Group discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the group to give some examples of situations when they have used open questions while refereeing and how they started the question. 	
30 mins	PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER	

<p>25 mins</p>	<p>Practicing your communication skills</p> <p>Activity: role plays</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that although it may feel a bit funny doing a role play, it is a good opportunity to practice some of the techniques we've covered in a 'real' situation and to learn from others in their group. • Explain that each person is going to do the same role play but using a different communication style that the official will have to respond to. • They should try and make each role play last for a couple of minutes so there is time for the official to use a number of the communication techniques. • The observer should use the observation sheet to jot down some quick notes so they can provide some positive feedback and a suggestion once each role play is finished. • Before starting any role plays, everyone should take a couple of minutes to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide who will play each communication style, i.e. aggressive, passive and indirectly aggressive - Read the role play information - Do some preparation on how their dialogue might go and how they will act and talk given their communication style - Look over the observation sheet. • Split the group into groups of three and designate each group an area where they can go (ideally different rooms or as far away from each other as possible). • Hand out the role play cards and sheets • Tell the groups to come back to the main room/area once all role plays have been done and debriefed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official role play cards • Coach role play cards • Role play observation sheets
<p>5 mins</p>	<p>Debrief role plays</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask if most people guessed the communication style the other person was using. • Did people feel that at the end of the role play they and the other person were 'OK'? 	

10 mins	<p>CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING QUIZ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand out a copy of the self-check quiz to each participant. • Ask them to answer the multi choice questions. • Answers can be found on the bottom of the reverse side of the sheet. 	Self-check quiz
15 mins	<p>SUMMARY AND CLOSE</p>	
<p>8 mins</p> <p>5 mins</p> <p>2 mins</p>	<p><i>Key learnings from this session</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go around the room and ask each person to share one or two tips, ideas, or strategies they've picked up from the session that they can see themselves using while officiating. • Review the sessions learning objectives and check to see if anyone has any unanswered questions. <p><i>Training session evaluation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand out a copy of the evaluation to each participant. • Ask them to complete the evaluation. • Let the participants know that we really appreciate their feedback so we can understand what is working well with the session and what could be improved. <p><i>Thank participants</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the participants for their input and for sharing their experiences with others. 	Evaluation form