



## Planning and Preparation

Planning is the process of deciding in detail how to do something or what to do before you commence doing it. Planning is an essential part of coaching as it allows you to adequately prepare for the coming season, competition, or training session.

### Three reasons we plan:

1. Identify key learning objectives for players
2. Keeps you responsible for the plans you have set
3. Improves player and coach confidence knowing there is a plan in place

### Components of Planning:

- Assess athlete ability – facilitate their needs and goals
- Be adjustable – do not stick to a plan if it is not working – adjust the plan to help your athletes reach their set goals
- Reflect – at multiple stages throughout the season – consider if changes need to be made – if so, what changes?

### Planning a Training Session:

Planning your training sessions is considered essential in all sports. Not only does it outline the information to be delivered in a session, it promotes good time management skills, presentation skills, and allows for comprehensive evaluation and reflection post-practice.

All training sessions should include a comprehensive warm-up to prepare players for the coming activities and a cool-down to assist their bodies in returning to a normal state. Below is a list of activities that can be included in a training session plan. Different regions, countries, clubs, and coaches have different ways of structuring training sessions and the content that goes into them. It will take time and trying new methods but eventually you will find what works best for you as a coach and for your players.



Table 2: Components of a training session

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Warm-Up</b>                     | Physically and mentally preparing the players to perform.                                    |
| <b>Technical Work</b>              | Refining technique through repeated activities, skills, and challenges.                      |
| <b>Game Related Activity (GRA)</b> | Activity that looks like a game with a specific limitation e.g. directional possession game. |
| <b>Free-Play/ Match</b>            | Game/Match/Scrimmage (possibly with a limitations/challenge).                                |
| <b>Cool-Down</b>                   | Low intensity movement and stretching to return the body to normal state.                    |
| <b>Debrief</b>                     | Discussion/Feedback with the players about the session.                                      |

### Logical Sequence:

When planning a delivering a training session, you should ensure that the session content follows a logical sequence in its delivery. *By logical sequence of instructions, we mean a sequence of instructions that have been designed to be executed one after the other one. For example, when explaining how to pass a ball, you would start with the approach, the part of the foot to use, the section of the ball to kick and the follow through.*

When planning a football training session the logical sequence would be:

1. Warm-Up
2. Technical Work – passing and receiving
3. Game Related Activity
4. Free Play
5. Cool Down



**Content Selection:**

The components/sections of your training session should align with your team’s learning objectives. *Learning objectives are the goals or intended learning outcomes for the period of time you are planning for.* Each player may have different learning objectives for the season, stage of the season, or each individual training session, but it is good-practice to set learning objectives for the team as a whole to have combined goals for all team members to achieve.

Table 3: Sample of Individual and Team Learning Objectives for a football season

| Individual Learning Objectives   | Team Learning Objectives  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the role and responsibilities of a right-back.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and understand the team’s own system of play (formation, style of football, attacking/defending style).</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand how different techniques when striking the ball will impact how it moves along the ground/in the air.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify best methods of communication between teammates.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize and explain where technical work in training will apply to a match setting.</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an open system of player-led reflection on performance.</li> </ul>   |

Learning objectives are like the goals you set for your players and team at the start of the season (see [Psychology section](#)). In addition to these goals, you will have objectives for different stages of the season and for each training session depending on the performance of your team. Your training sessions should be based around the objective you set (*Session Objective*), this can be based around your team’s learning objectives or may be more refined to work on an aspect of football that you noticed needs some work.

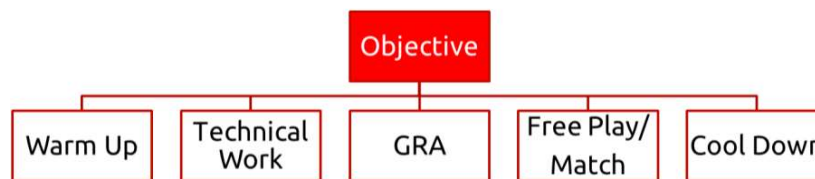


Figure 25: Components of a training session based off of a Session Objective

**Coaching Tip**

When selecting what you are going to include in your training session you should consider if it is RIP:

- Relevant to the players on your team and their needs
- In-line with the session objective
- Progressive in nature – can be progressed/regressed if needed

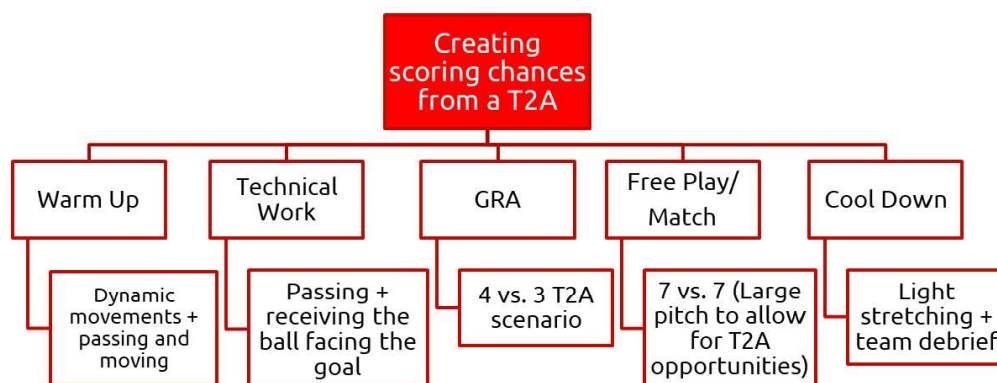


Figure 26: Training session components based off of a Session Objective

Try to stay consistent with the activities you are prescribing for your players. It can be difficult to understand all the key principles you are trying to get across if you change from attacking to defending each week. Block off some time to work on defensive work, this allows your athletes to gain an understanding of what you want from them. Once they have this understanding you can move on to working on attacking functions. Once the core principles are understood by the players, then it will be easier to change up the focus of your training sessions more regularly.

### Time Management:

Time management is a life-skill but for coaches it is one of the most essential skills to have and develop. You are often restricted to a specific amount of time with your players so every minute counts!

Planning the time designated to activities in a training session can really help the flow and reduce the panic of having to shorten certain activities or abandon them completely. Of course exceptions can be made when unforeseen events occur such as injuries, player/coach delays, discussions with players, etc.

Certain sections of a training session may require more/less time than designated in your session plan, however, it is essential that coaches are flexible with their time management of training sessions. Often it is the case that sections of a training session can go on longer than intended, or specific skills require further attention from the coach. If a coach is required to shorten or remove a section of training to accommodate other sections, this is no problem, simply progress to them at another point in time. However, coaches should always try to include some form of match/game at the end of a training session to resemble a competitive match.



Table 4: Time designated to sections of a 60 minute training session

|    |  |        |
|----|--|--------|
| 1. | Warm-Up                                | 10mins |
| 2. | Technical Work – passing and receiving | 15mins |
| 3. | Game Related Activity                  | 15mins |
| 4. | Free Play                              | 15mins |
| 5. | Cool Down                              | 5mins  |

