Your notes

GCSE PE: revision notes

Skill, ability and classifying skills

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Skill and ability

- A **skill** is a learned action or behaviour with the intention of bringing about pre-determined results, with maximum certainty and minimum outlay of time and energy.
- **Ability** is an inherited, stable trait that determines a person's potential to learn a **skill**, such as good balance or coordination.
- **Skills** are learned; abilities are mostly inborn. A skilled performer is consistent, efficient, controlled and makes it look easy.

Classifying skills on continua

- Basic (simple) to complex: a basic **skill** needs few decisions, such as running; a complex **skill** needs lots of decisions and attention, such as a tennis serve with spin.
- Open to closed: an **open skill** is affected by the environment, such as passing in football; a **closed skill** isn't, such as a free throw in basketball.
- Self-paced to externally paced: a **self-paced skill** is started by the performer, such as a golf swing; an **externally paced skill** is controlled by others, such as returning a serve.
- Low organisation to high organisation: a low-organisation **skill** can easily be broken into parts, such as swimming strokes; a high-organisation **skill** can't, such as a cartwheel.

Using classification

- **Skills** are placed on a **continuum** rather than in a box, and you should justify where you place them.
- Classification helps coaches choose how to practise: **closed skills** suit repeated drills; **open skills** suit game-like practices.

Key terms

Skill	A learned action to bring about pre-determined results with maximum certainty and minimum time and energy.
Ability	An inherited, stable trait that determines potential to learn a skill.
Open skill	A skill affected by the environment.
Closed skill	A skill not affected by the environment.
Self-paced skill	A skill where the performer controls when it starts.
Externally paced skill	A skill where the timing is controlled by others or the environment.
Continuum	A line between two extremes on which skills are placed.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is the difference between a skill and an ability?
2. Where would a free throw in basketball go on the open–closed continuum?
3. Where would a pass in football go on the open–closed continuum?
4. Which skill is self-paced?
5. Which skill is externally paced?
6. What is a complex skill?
7. What is a high-organisation skill?
8. Which is an example of an ability?

Answers

1. A skill is learned; an ability is inherited
2. Towards closed
3. Towards open
4. A golf swing
5. Returning a serve in tennis
6. A skill needing lots of decisions and attention
7. One that can't easily be broken into parts
8. Good coordination

What to do next

Practise 11 questions on this topic

Try 5 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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