

Adaptive Coaching Guide

This guide will direct your development of adapted physical activity and practice sessions to continue to do the “more” work of a sports-based youth development coach in both life skill development and sport skill development. Above all, we will work under two guiding principles:

1) **Growth Mindset**; and 2) **Coaching for Outcomes**.

Growth mindset will ensure that we are continuing to believe not only in our athletes’ ability to build skills, but also in our own ingenuity as coaches to adapt to whatever challenges athletes, sports, or COVID-19 throw at us. Our second principle, coaching for outcomes, will ensure that we focus on what outcomes we want for our athletes in sport or life skills, and that we tailor our activities to practice those skills.

Below is a guide to help you change your session plans to build skills even with restrictions from COVID-19 in place.

Principles of Distance Coaching

We’ll be coaching in a context that we’re not used to, and it will be new to many of our athletes as well. In order to continue to create safe, positive spaces online as well as good environments for skill growth, we are going to look to educators experienced in these places. Here are some [great ways to connect in online classes](#), and we’ll focus on adaptations of four.

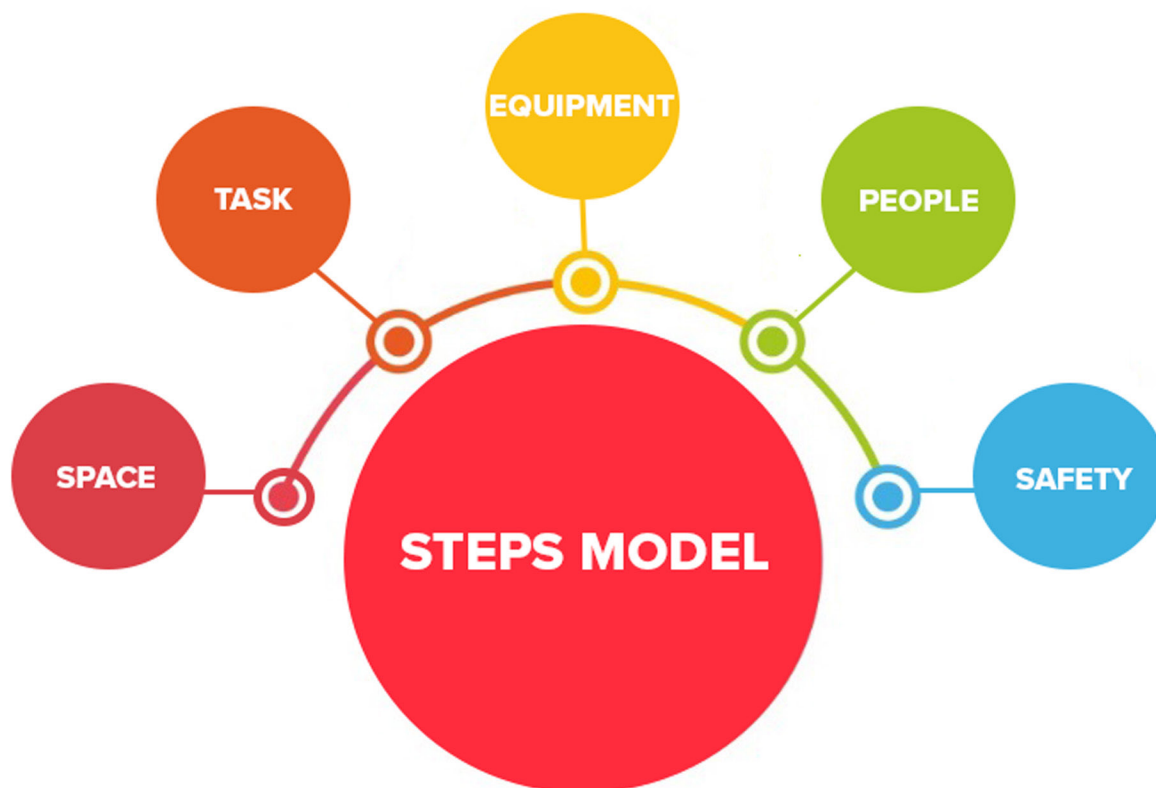
- 1 Connection** - Make sure that we give kids an opportunity to connect with one another. We know that relationships with caring adults are so important to young people, and so creating opportunities to connect is huge. This [Edutopia article](#) has some great ways to think about connection.
- 2 Control** - Giving priority to player voice and choice can give young athletes more ownership over and connection to the team and to your session. Let them choose activities, lead a demonstration, or set a goal.
- 3 Collaboration** - Giving opportunities for authentic contribution draws young people in, and any way that we can create those opportunities online will help athletes feel more bought and protected.
- 4 Challenge** - No one wants to participate in a session that doesn’t encourage them to grow. In education, this is called the “Zone of Proximal Development,” or the space of ability just beyond what we’re capable of. We can think of this as building safety by not pushing athletes out of their comfort zone, but building skills to expand their comfort zone.

Adapting Games

As coaches, we need to be able to cater our sessions to the individual skills of a young person as well as the group as a whole. Competence builds confidence, and research such as Dr. Robert Brooks' work on "**Islands of Competence**" shows that building skills in one area of a young person's life--like sports!--can lead to the ability to develop skills in other areas, like home, work, and the classroom.

One way to ensure great skill building is with the STEPS Principles.

The STEPS framework was developed to support teaching and learning. Using STEPS is an easy to use approach to help coaches adapt their practices/lessons, both when we are restricted in some of these areas, but also to do more targeted coaching for outcomes. This framework helps coaches to tailor their practices on a more personal basis. The basics of the **STEPS** framework, developed by Ken Black and Pamela Stevenson, are:



Adapted from <https://bit.ly/2RwcsJh>

SPACE

Think of a way you can alter the SPACE you use for practice/drills. Given our shelter-in-place restrictions with COVID-19, how would our changed spaces provide opportunity for skill growth? Example: Dribbling a basketball ball in a small space (making sure to remove any opportunities to break something!) can improve your handles, and these [great baseball drills](#) can happen anywhere.

TASK

When you are planning a practice, the TASK is the method you use to teach individual skills. Adjust the TASK to develop your outcome no matter the circumstances. Example: When we're looking to build fitness and can't run or bike, we could try a video from [The Fitness Marshall](#) or some of these exercises from Up2Us Sports Ambassador [Adam Rosante](#).

EQUIPMENT

Utilize different equipment to allow everyone in your sessions the chance to experience some levels of success and learning. Changing the equipment can also be helpful if your players don't have equipment at home. Example: Instead of using a soccer ball in the house, try the [Toilet Paper Roll Challenge](#), or use long-time partner America SCORES's [video to make your own ball!](#)

PEOPLE

We know that social isolation has meant that we can't get our teams together. When we are by ourselves, or just with our families, we can still do great skill development, just with a different number of people. Tennis players can hit balls off a wall, runners can do a [virtual race](#), and football players can use cones or chairs to simulate defenders.

SAFETY

We will add a fifth plank to the model, because we know kids, especially those who have experienced trauma, need a safe space. We as coaches must make sure we are creating a SAFE space to learn and grow. These guidelines from the CDC can help us all stay healthy, and we can let our players know that we still care about them by continuing to reach out in creative ways, like [Zoom](#) calls (free for up to 100 people for 45 minutes!), writing postcards, and more.

Planning For Outcomes

Using this practice plan format will make sure that you're staying intentional about the skills in sport and life that you want kids to develop, and that your activities will actively promote that growth. Try [starting with this site](#) to get some new ideas about activities that will build those skills. The far right column is for you to track adaptations, and it comes on the far right because we want to continue to focus on outcomes and activities, and then adapt them when necessary or beneficial.

	Desired Sport Skill Outcomes	Desired Life Skill Outcomes	Activities	STEPS Adaptations Needed
Informal Time				
Warm Up				
Skill Practice				
Team Time				
After Session				