

Examine the various methods for teaching physical education lessons. Explore direct versus indirect teaching, see movement exploration, look at cooperative activities, discover teaching styles, see new skill teaching methods, and the role of practice. *Updated: 11/11/2021*

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Direct Versus Indirect Teaching

How do you teach P.E.? Do you like to introduce a skill all at once or let the students explore it as they go? Let's go over some of the many ways to teach physical education classes.

Direct teaching is the common method in which the instructor stands in front of the class or group and lectures or advises, so as to teach a piece of information. This is also called teacher-centered teaching. **Indirect teaching** is a method in which the instructor assumes a more passive role and guides the student interactions. This is also called student-centered teaching.

Which method is the best? It's a debate! The advantages of direct teaching include the ability to allow for the introduction of new skills, plenty of practice time, and time efficiency. However, disadvantages include a lack of feedback and a lack of variety.

The advantages of indirect teaching include cooperation, improvement, and social skills, as well as the fact that students learn valuable teaching skills. The disadvantages include too little focus on the process, shyer students may be left out, and students may not handle responsibility well.

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Movement Exploration

One way to teach P.E. is through movement exploration. **Movement exploration** is a method of teaching that involves the use of aids. The aids may include:

- Bean bags: Have the students balance the bean bags on their heads, hands, and feet. Later they can hit the beanbag into the air.
- Benches: Have the students crawl and then walk forward across the bench, and then sideways and backwards when they are comfortable. Later they can jump on and off the bench.
- Hoops: Have the students circle the hoops around their arms, legs, and bodies.
- Ropes: Have the students practice jumping rope. They can also practice making different shapes with the rope.

Cooperative Activities

Another way of teaching P.E. is through cooperative activities. There are three main goals to be achieved when using **cooperative activities**, or activities students work together to perform. The goals include:

1. Students work together to reach a consensus as a group.
2. Students can structure the learning experience.
3. Students can learn problem-solving skills.

One of the favorite methods of cooperative teaching involves the use of a tarp. For example, the students can figure out how to work in conjunction to fold the tarp in half without the aid of the teacher. Increase complexity by folding the tarp into a geometric shapes such as a triangle.

Teaching Styles

We'll now explore some of the teaching styles. Remember that stereotype of the gym teacher with a ball cap and whistle, yelling at the students to run another lap? That old-school method is known as the **command style**. The teacher might show the student how to catch a football or kick a soccer ball. The teacher makes the decisions and the student complies. But there are alternatives as well.

On the opposite end of the teaching spectrum is the **exploration style**. Here, the instructor sets up the equipment and then allows the students to move freely on their own. The instructor still has to monitor for safety, and should also ask good questions pertinent to the movements and skills of the students. The instructor also has to watch for differences among the talents and abilities of each student.

The **reciprocal style** is somewhat in between the two extremes. The students get to have a say in the process and observe each other, while the coach roams about and monitors the situation.

New Skill Teaching Methods

Now let's look at how to teach a new skill. When it comes to teaching students a new physical education skill, the instructor can break the teaching process up into four parts: