

Learning Cues: The Critical Elements for Effective Teaching and Assessment

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The purpose of this presentation is to provide characteristics of good learning cues; to describe methods for selecting and organizing learning cues; and to discuss ways in which learning cues can be used to create assessments that align with instruction.

A learning cue is a word or short phrase that identifies the critical elements or features of a motor skill or task (Rink, 2014). Learning cues call the learner's attention to key elements of a skill and project a clear visual image of a skill for the learner. This is important as many young students are visual learners. Learning cues help beginners to sort out what they must do to perform a movement correctly.

Teachers can easily overload learners with too much information. Learners at the cognitive stage are unable to manage lots of information and details of the movement. Learning cues allow learners to attend to one bit of information. Teachers can select and organize learning cues to focus learner attention on the most important information needed to perform a skill correctly. Teachers who provide accurate and sequenced cues for the learner, such as "get set," "shift" and "swing through" help learners to organize their attempts and improve performance.

Rink (2014) identifies six characteristics of good learning cues. Good learning cues are: 1) accurate; 2) brief and critical to the skill being performed; 3) appropriate to the skill level and age of the learner; 4) appropriate for different kinds of content; 5) organized sequentially, and 6) more effective if learners have the opportunity to rehearse them.

Through preparation and practice teachers can design and organize learning cues to convey critical information to learners. There are many advantages to designing and organizing one's own learning cues.

Designing Your Own Cues

1. Go to a quality resource (one designed for use by physical educators) that contains a description (critical elements) of the skill.
2. Divide the skill into phases.
Most motor skills consist of three phases: 1) a preparatory phase (stance); 2) execution (force-producing movements) and; 3) Follow-through (or recovery). A phase is a group of connected movements that when joined together allow the performance of the total skill.
3. What is critical to the performance of the skill or task in each phase of the skill? Identify those critical elements.

4. For the critical elements in each phase, create a single word or short phrase that communicates and provides a visual image of the desired movement for learners.
5. Sequence the learning cues to provide learners with information to take them through the whole skill – preparation, execution and follow through – in one smooth motion.

Creating Assessments Using Learning Cues

Teachers also help students reach a level of skillful performance through assessment. Learning cues can provide descriptors for creating assessments aligned with instruction, such as peer assessment and checklists.

Overhand Throw			
Player's Name _____			
Coach's Name _____			
+ = I see it			
- = I do not see it			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Side to target	_____	_____	_____
Step with opposite foot	_____	_____	_____
Follow across	_____	_____	_____

Underhand Serve	
Check the movements (you observe your partner doing)	
_____ Stride position	
_____ Heel of open hand	
_____ Arm toward top of Net	

References

Rink, J. (2014). *Teaching physical education for learning*. (7th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.