



Unit 27: Sports Psychology

Delivery guidance

Approaching the unit

In this unit, learners will look at the individual psychological factors that can influence performance, the psychological aspects of environments that sports are played in and the influences that others can have on performance. There is a range of ways to deliver the content of this unit and there are opportunities to take a practical approach to deliver several theoretical concepts.

Concepts such as performance under pressure, cohesion and creating a psychological skills programme can all be delivered in a practical way. This unit lends itself to a lot of discussion in lessons and you can use current sporting situations to illustrate theoretical concepts.

From this unit, learners will gain knowledge of several different psychological concepts. The aim is that they will be able to use these to understand their own performance in sport and how to improve it.

Independent study should be allocated at the end of each topic, allowing the learner an opportunity to consolidate their learning by making their own notes both for revision purposes and in preparation for the summative assignments. Reinforced learning is crucial and should be embedded throughout the delivery of the unit content.

Delivering the learning aims

Learning aim A requires learners to explore definitions, effects and theories of personality and the influence they might have on sports performance. The trait theory suggests that individuals have certain characteristics that will determine how they behave and perform in non-sport situations and in a sporting situation. The trait theory also suggests that there are two types of people: introverts and extroverts. This should provide many discussion points around the many problems that can be encountered when assessing personality in a sporting context. Learners can then be given access to more recognised tests such as Eysenck's Personality Inventory Test and Friedman and Rosenman's Type A and Type B personality theory test, to establish how personality types can impact on sports performance.

Throughout, you should be using sports-related examples to illustrate the role of personality on behaviour in sport.

It is important in the delivery of this learning aim that learners understand the definition of motivation. For motivational factors in sport, concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be delivered following discussion with learners around what motivates them. Formal presentation on the theoretical concepts of achievement motivation and attributions can be supported with practical tasks that will allow learners to develop their understanding in a practical context. You may wish to invite sports coaches from local sports clubs to talk about how they use motivational techniques with players and participants to develop a motivational climate. Case studies could be used to explore how motivation can impact upon sports performance.



Learning aim B explores the relationship between stress, anxiety, arousal, team dynamics and sports performance. Learners will examine types, causes and symptoms of stress. Learners will also examine the effects on sports performance. A combination of formal presentations, individual learner work, discussions and simple practical tasks can be used to deliver this area. Short video clips are a good way to demonstrate how performers can be affected by pressure. This can then be demonstrated further by setting up a simple practical exercise for learners to compare the effect of performing alone against performing in front of a group. Formal presentation of the theories can be followed by discussion about observations made from the practical exercise to check understanding.

Learners need to understand what types of anxiety there are and be able to understand the causes and symptoms of anxiety. Learners will gain an understanding of the effects of anxiety and arousal on sports performance. Learners can demonstrate their understanding of theoretical concepts by applying them to current sporting situations in paired activities.

The definition of arousal as a form of motivation will be examined. A guest speaker such as a sports performer can be invited into the centre to talk about the Inverted U theory, which explains the relationship between pressure and performance.

Learners will develop an understanding of team processes, group cohesion and leadership. Learners will explore the impact of leadership styles, qualities, and behaviours on motivation.

The learning aim also examines the impact of group dynamics on team performance. This can be delivered through formal presentation, group discussion, paired work and practical tasks. Video clips found online can be used to illustrate the formation of groups, followed by discussion to check understanding. A formal presentation of the main theoretical concepts linked with simple practical tasks relating to cohesion and leadership will allow learners to gain understanding in a practical context.

Visits to sports venues would enable learners to observe match play and motivational techniques. and would give learners the opportunity to speak to players pre- and post-match to discuss team dynamics. These visits and other research sessions will enable learners to develop a deeper understanding and key study skills.

Learning aim C explores psychological skills training programmes designed to improve performance. As a practical exercise, learners could plan and design their own psychological skills programme for improving performance. Learners can be introduced to the theoretical concepts of psychological skills training and assessment through formal presentation. Learners will assess performance profiling.

The learning aim focuses on developing the knowledge and skills to allow learners to be able to explain and understand a wide range of psychological skills that they can apply in a sports context to enhance performance.

Short video clips found online and tutor-directed practical activities can be used to illustrate the various types of psychological skills training. Discussion should be used throughout to check understanding. Learners could then work individually to produce a programme that will illustrate their understanding of the theoretical concepts.



Assessment model

Learning aim	Key content areas	Recommended assessment approach
A Explore the effect of personality and motivation on sports performance	A1 Personality A2 Motivation	A written report focusing on how personality and motivation can impact sports performance.
B Explore the relationship between stress, anxiety, arousal, team dynamics and sports performance	B1 Stress B2 Anxiety B3 Arousal B4 Team dynamics	A presentation focusing on how stress, anxiety and arousal can influence sports performance. A research project to determine how team dynamics can influence sports performance on different teams.
C Plan a psychological skills training programme to enhance sports performance	C1 Assessment C2 Plan C3 Psychological skills	A psychological skills training programme that will improve performance levels of a selected sports performer, supported with observational records.

Assessment guidance

This unit is internally assessed. There is a maximum number of three summative assignments for this unit. Tutors should refer to the assessment guidance in the specification for specific detail, particularly in relation to the requirements for Pass, Merit and Distinction grades.

An assignment is a distinct activity, completed independently by learners, that is separate from teaching, exploration, and other activities that learners complete with direction from tutors. All learners must independently generate individual evidence that can be authenticated. Your learners should be given the opportunity of engaging in assignments which develop and support their knowledge of international business as well as their generic skills.

You should also ensure that learners are familiar with the key terms typically used in assessment for this unit.

Assessment of **learning aim A** requires learners to explore personality and motivation and how they affect sports performance. Learners are required to show an understanding of the theories and how these apply to sports performance. This learning aim will be predominantly research based and could include some of the learner's own personality testing with their peers.

The learner will be expected to use resources such as textbooks and the internet to describe how each of these influences performance. For A.M1, the learner will need to analyse the effects of personality and motivation on sporting performance. For instance, what might the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have on performance?

A.D1 requires the learner to evaluate psychological theories relevant to personality and motivation and be able to justify the effects these have on sports performance and in creating a motivational climate.

Learning aim B requires learners to produce a presentation focused on stress, anxiety and arousal. It is important that learners understand how all these areas are interrelated and how one can affect another to influence sports performance. For instance, why might someone who is high in self-



confidence be less likely to suffer from anxiety? How might this then affect levels of arousal? Assessment of B.P3 requires an explanation of stress and anxiety to include the causes, symptoms and effects stress can have on sports performance. Assessment of B.P4 requires learners to understand and explain the theories of arousal and how arousal affects sports performance in a positive or negative manner.

Learners must analyse the effects of stress, anxiety, and theories of arousal on sports performance for assessment criteria B.M2 and B.M3. Learners should ensure they are able to reflect on both the strengths and weaknesses of psychological theories.

Learners will then undertake research that explores how team dynamics can influence team sports performance and team dynamics. Assessment of B.P5 requires learners to explain the factors that influence team dynamics. B.M3 requires learners to understand the processes of team development. Learners could use Tuckman's model to understand team development and the roles everyone plays in a team. Learners can use case studies and their own experiences to contextualise their learning.

B.D2 will evaluate the impact that stress, anxiety, arousal and team dynamics have on individual performers and sports teams. Learners should include aspects of cohesion, and leadership qualities and behaviours within their research.

Learning aim C requires production of a four-week psychological skills training programme that will improve performance levels of a selected sports performer.

Criteria C.P6 and C.P7 require learners to select a sports performer, which could be themselves or one of their peers, and assess their psychological strengths and areas for improvement. C.P7 requires the design of a specific programme to enhance performance.

The learner can research these using suitable resources such as the internet and textbooks. The internet can be used to find examples of such programmes. The learner should tailor a programme to a specific subject and an area that needs improvement. An example would be the use of imagery to improve the performance of a closed skill. The learner may wish to implement this type of programme practically, using a suitable subject. The learner could measure the performance of the skill before and after the programme and the results could then be used for the explanation and analysis required for C.M4 and C.D3. Learners must identify the strengths and weaknesses within their programme and ensure they make recommendations for future improvements.



Getting started

This gives you a starting place for one way of delivering the unit, based around the recommended assessment approach in the specification.

Introduction

Introduce learners to the unit by outlining the increasingly important role that sports psychology is playing in preparation for competition. The concepts covered will give learners a greater understanding of the role the mind plays in performance and will enable them to apply some of the techniques to improve both their own and peers' performance.

Learning aim, A – Explore the effect of personality and motivation on sports performance

- Introduce the concept of personality by getting learners to discuss ideas about what personality is and what it may consist of. Learners then complete Eysenck's Personality Inventory Test and Friedman and Rosenman's Type A and Type B personality theory test and follow with discussion about the validity of these methods as a way of assessing personality. Discussion to follow on limitations of personality testing.
- Introduce Marten's schematic view psychodynamic theory. In pairs, learners should find examples from sport of behaviour that could be explained by the different theories (e.g., why rugby players do not argue with referees in the way footballers do).
- Introduce learners to the concept of motivation by getting them to list all the things that motivate them. Widen this to cover things that may motivate others. Explain the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and how they work together.
- Learners can take part in a practical session for both achievement motivation and the attribution process.
 - For achievement motivation, learners can complete a simple questionnaire giving an indication of their level of achievement motivation. For the practical task, a simple throwing exercise can be used.
 - For the attribution process, learners can work in small groups to design an activity that requires just one attribution for it to be completed successfully.
- Show learners the theoretical models. A discussion could then take place as to whether the results of the practical tasks match up with the theory and how a coach might use these concepts when trying to motivate an individual or team.
- The effects of a motivational climate can be introduced by looking at clips from video-sharing websites showing top level performers and how they may create a motivational climate, what may go wrong if there are factors present that could change the climate and discussing what learners think creates a motivational climate.

Learning aim B: Explore the relationship between stress, anxiety, arousal, team dynamics and sports performance

- Learners could work in small groups to discuss what they define as stress and both the positive and negative types of stress that can be experienced. Learners could explore some case studies to identify potential causes of stress but also examine what causes them stress in different environments. Learners should be encouraged to identify symptoms of stress and how stress impacts on individual and team performance.



- A guest speaker – a sports psychologist could be invited into the school/college to talk about the impact of stress on performance and ways to identify and alleviate it.
- Introduce learners to the concept of anxiety, how it forms part of the arousal process and also how stress and anxiety differ. In pairs, learners could try to find examples from sport that illustrate how anxiety may have affected performance (e.g. Dustin Johnson three-putting the final hole at the 2015 US Open).
- A practical session can illustrate the arousal–performance relationship. A simple and a complex task can be carried out individually and then in front of the group to illustrate how pressure can affect the performance of these skills. After presentation of the various theories (inverted U, drive theory, catastrophe), you can lead a discussion about how the results of the practical task can be explained and exactly why things may have gone wrong in the video clips viewed.
- Learners could work in pairs to identify factors that may cause loss of confidence and their effect on performance. Learners should also find examples from sport of individuals who currently appear to be lacking confidence and how this is affecting their performance. Discussion should enable learners to make the link between high self-confidence and low anxiety levels.
- Introduce group processes with a presentation on the four stages of group development – several video clips are available online that will allow learners to gain an understanding of how groups develop.
- The Ringelmann effect and social loafing can be demonstrated using simple practical activities. Following presentation of these theories, you could lead a discussion on whether the results of the practical activity support the theory.
- Introduce the concept of cohesion with a presentation followed by learners working in pairs to identify examples of good cohesion in sports teams. Learners could also try to find examples of good cohesion in teams even though individuals do not appear to like each other. Discussion will allow learners to consider strategies a coach might employ to improve team cohesion.
- Present the theories of leadership and allow learners to identify any characteristics that well-known leaders in sport have in common. Learners could then choose five leaders in sport and identify whether they are emergent or prescribed leaders, and whether they appear to act in an autocratic or a democratic manner. A small-group activity will allow learners to find examples of where leadership has had a positive effect on performance and where it has had a negative effect.
- Practical sessions would enable learners to acquire data in order to construct sociograms. A questionnaire or prepared data could be used to identify potential leaders in a group. An unfamiliar game will provide the opportunity to collect data within a practical situation. Discussion about the data collected will enable learners to understand how a coach could use these data to identify potential leaders within a group and how cohesive a group is.

Learning aim C: Plan a psychological skills training programme to enhance sports performance

- Introduce psychological skills with a presentation on self-talk and goal setting. Short video clips of sports people discussing goal setting will allow learners to gain understanding of this concept within a real-life setting.



- A guest speaker or a visit to a sports venue could be used to explore what methods and techniques could be used to identify performers psychological strengths and weaknesses. Learners can then discuss what impact those strengths and weaknesses may have on performance.
- Present the principles of arousal control techniques. Learners can take part in practical activities to demonstrate progressive muscular relaxation and imagery. A pre-prepared script can be used for progressive muscular relaxation and a simple throwing task will demonstrate the principle of imagery. Discussion will enable the learner to gain an understanding of when it is appropriate to use these methods.
- Present the principles of designing a psychological skills programme. An example of a programme that has been used by an athlete will enable the learner to see how the principles are applied in a real situation.
- Learners can then design their own psychological skills training programme. Learners may choose to do this practically, e.g. by designing a simple imagery programme to improve the performance of a closed skill. The design will identify an appropriate subject, appropriate skills to improve and appropriate technique to use with this subject.



Details of links to other BTEC units and qualifications, and to other relevant units/qualifications

This unit links to:

- Unit 1: Health, Wellbeing and Sport
- Unit 16: Applied Coaching Skills
- Unit 25: Sports Injuries Management
- Unit 35: Practical Sports Performance
- Unit 36: Functional Sports Massage.

Resources

In addition to the resources listed below, publishers are likely to produce Pearson-endorsed textbooks that support this unit of the BTEC International L3 Qualifications in Sport. Check the Pearson website at: (<http://qualifications.pearson.com/endorsed-resources>) for more information as titles achieve endorsement.

Textbooks

Gill DL and Williams L, *Psychological Dynamics of Sport and Exercise* (Third Edition), Human Kinetics Publishers, 2008 ISBN 9780736062640

Stafford-Brown J, Rea S and Chance J, *BTEC National Study Guide Sport and Exercise Sciences*, Edexcel Learning, 2005 ISBN 9781844795895

Wesson K et al, *Sport and PE: A Complete Guide to Advanced Level Study* (Third Edition), Hodder & Stoughton, 2005 ISBN 9780340817018

Journals

<http://www.ijsp-online.com/> International Journal of Sports Psychology

https://blog.feedspot.com/sport_psychology_blogs/ 40 top sports psychology blogs and websites 2020

Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8TBavtJu0o-> What makes elite athletes thrive or dive under pressure-The Economist

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hH_Yt0K3tZA – Chris Waddle penalty miss

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eer30sfqgkk> – Don Fox missed goal

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F4OFMiecec> – Goal setting by the Australian Sports Commission

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMbdA_a3bXM – How pre-game anxiety causes athletes to underperform

There are many other examples of how pressure can affect even top-level sports personalities' performances online.



Websites

<https://www.bestmastersinpsychology.com/lists/5-great-websites-for-sports-psychologists/>
websites for sports psychologists

<http://educatedsportsparent.com> – good article on creating a mastery-orientated environment

<http://personality-testing.info> – links to Cattell's 16 Personality Factors Test

<http://similarminds.com> – links to Eysenck's Personality Inventory Test

Pearson is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites. It is essential for tutors to preview each website before using it in class so as to ensure that the URL is still accurate, relevant and appropriate. We suggest that tutors bookmark useful websites and consider enabling learners to access them through the school/college intranet.