2.1. Classification of skills

Learning objectives

To understand the characteristics of skill.

To be able to describe the different types of skill classification.

To be able to categorise skills based on different criteria.
Skill Classification

How are sports skills classified?
Skill Classification

Elite athletes often make performances seem effortless. A skilled performer knows what they are doing and how to execute the necessary actions whereas a novice often looks clumsy and lacking control.

It can be difficult to label skills under one classification and so scales and continuums are a better fit.
Skill Classification

Skills are:

1. Are learned. On the basis of existing abilities, the practising of skills and drills in some form of training will help to produce a skilful movement.

2. Are consistent. A skilled player is able to perform the task to the same high level time after time.

3. Are goal-directed. A player will practise skills with an aim in mind. e.g. Improving shooting skills in order to score more goals.
Skill Classification

Skills are:

4. Are aesthetic. They look good. A top-class dance routine is pleasing to watch.

5. Are controlled. The skilful performer is in charge, controlling the rate and timing of the skill.

6. Are efficient and smooth. The skill is performed without any wasted energy and seem to flow.
Skill Classification

A skilful performance has two elements:
• a cognitive part
• a motor part

The cognitive part of the skill requires thought before action.

The motor part requires control and efficient movement.
Skill Classification

Skills are usually classified on a sliding scale called a continuum. This is a visual guide to indicate where a skill fits into a specific category.
A complex skill involves a high level of decision making and has a large cognitive or thinking element to it.

Simple skills have a limited amount of information to process. The skill has a smaller cognitive element.

Think. Pair. Share - Can you name other skills and where would they fit on the continuum?
Skill Classification – Open/Closed

An **open skill** is one that is affected by the sporting **environment**. The performer has to make **decisions** in response to their surroundings.

A **closed skill** involves less decision making because it has a **predictable environment**. The performer can take their time to execute the skill.

Think. Pair. Share - Can you name other skills and where would they fit on the continuum?
Skill Classification – Pacing

A self-paced skill is at the control of the performer. The rate of execution is decided before execution.

An externally paced skill is controlled by factors out of the control of the performer, who may have to react to external conditions, i.e., games activities.

Think. Pair. Share - Can you name other skills and where would they fit on the continuum?
**Skill Classification – Gross/Fine**

A fine skill has small, delicate muscle movements.

A gross skill uses large muscle group movements.

Think. Pair. Share - Can you name other skills and where would they fit on the continuum?
Skill Classification – Continuity

A discrete skill has a short time span and a clear beginning and end.

A serial skill has several discrete elements which are put together.

A continuous skill has no clear beginning or end.

Think. Pair. Share - Can you name other skills and where would they fit on the continuum?
A low organised skill can be broken down into parts, or subroutines.

A highly organised skill is hard to break down since it is fast in its execution.

Think. Pair. Share - Can you name other skills and where would they fit on the continuum?
Skill Classification

Open/Closed Continuum:
This continuum represents the degree with which a skill is open or closed.

Think. Pair. Share - Where would you place the following sports on the continuum?
Skill Classification

Analyse and justify reasoning for each of your choices below.

Think. Pair. Share – Are the image above open/closed, gross/fine, simple/complex and self or externally paced?
Explain what is meant by the open/closed continuum in skill classification.

Describe the difference between discrete, serial and continuous skills.

What is the difference between basic and complex skills?

Explain the skills found on the organisation continuum.

Apply it! What has stuck with you?
Exam questions

1. Which one of the following classifications accurately describes the skills of a dive at the start of a swimming race? [1 mark]

A. Closed, externally-paced, complex and discrete
B. Closed, externally-paced, simple and discrete
C. Closed, self-paced, complex and discrete
D. Closed, self-paced, simple and discrete
Exam questions
2. Skills can be classified on continua as:
• open – closed
• self-paced – externally paced
• discrete – serial – continuous.

(a) Classify the skill of taking a penalty in football using these three continua. [1 mark]

(b) Explain how shooting at goal during general play may alter these classifications. [2 marks]
Practice it!

Exam questions
3. Using the continuity continuum, classify each of the skills in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triple Jump</th>
<th>Front crawl swimming</th>
<th>Tennis forehand</th>
<th>Cartwheel</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
Practice it!

Marks Scheme:

1. D
2. (a) Closed – self-paced – discrete
   
   (b) A. Closed becomes open – (affected by the environment) need to make decisions due to opponents or team mates or environmental factor
   B. Self-paced becomes externally paced – environment decides when player shoots.

3. Continuity classification
   (triple jump) - serial
   (front crawl) - continuous
   (tennis forehand) - discrete
   (cartwheel) - discrete