

Chapter Preview

Group Fitness Instructor Study Program

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AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE

Group Fitness Instructor Handbook



The Professional's Guide to Creating Memorable Movement Experiences

ACE[®] GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTOR HANDBOOK

The Professional's Guide to Creating
Memorable Movement Experiences

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE[®]

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Moving forward, ACE will use “they” and “their” in place of “he/she” and “his/her.” This change eliminates gender biases associated with these pronouns and is more inclusive of all individuals across the gender spectrum. Note that all ACE content moving forward will reflect this update, and previous content will be updated as needed. It is ACE’s goal to share our mission to Get People Moving with all people, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, physical or intellectual abilities, religious beliefs, ethnic background, or socioeconomic status.

ACE’s Mission Is to Get People Moving.

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CHAPTER 8



CHAPTER 8

LEADING GROUP FITNESS CLASSES

JESSICA MATTHEWS

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TEACHING MULTILEVEL CLASSES SUMMARY

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Describe the three participant learning styles and apply effective cueing techniques for each.
- ▶ List and briefly explain the three stages of learning.
- ▶ Differentiate between styles of teaching.
- ▶ Explain and apply effective teaching strategies.
- ▶ Design appropriate progressions and regressions of movements.

As educators, ACE Certified Group Fitness Instructors (GFIs) effectively impart knowledge to participants using a variety of research-supported teaching strategies rooted in a firm understanding of learning styles and domains. At the heart of group fitness instruction is **cueing**, which involves delivering information to participants to empower them to experience movement success, both inside and outside of the group fitness environment. Effective cueing allows GFIs to lead safe, effective, motivational, and cohesive class experiences for participants of all ability levels.



ACE UNIVERSITY

If your study program includes ACE University, visit www.ACEfitness.org/MyACE and log in to your My ACE Account to learn more about the use of mirroring and matching techniques and three-dimensional cueing in group fitness classes.



PARTICIPANT LEARNING STYLES

The manner in which cues are delivered in a group fitness class is based on the three ways people learn. While most participants can use all three techniques to varying degrees and assimilate a range of different types of cues, most learners tend to favor one particular instructional method as their preferred way to obtain information.

VERBAL LEARNERS

A verbal learner needs to *hear* specific cues. To create the most successful experience possible for this type of learner, GFIs should ensure that verbal cues are specific and succinct. Non-specific cues, such as “go this way,” or “try this now,” do not clearly convey what the participant is being asked to do. Instead, descriptive, yet concise cues should be used to specify immediate movement, such as “four knees on the right.” Verbal cues should also be

anticipatory, meaning they must be heard and understood immediately before movement becomes imminent. When cueing to music, GFIs should provide cues at least four counts before movement is initiated. When not using music, a few moments should be given to allow participants to process instructions before the movement begins. In most group fitness classes, counting down (e.g., “4-3-2”) as opposed to counting up will help participants know how many movements remain before a change ensues.



[APPLY WHAT YOU KNOW]

Voice Care Tips

A GFI must take care to protect their voice to ensure that verbal cues can be delivered safely, properly, and consistently from class to class. Employing the following tips can help minimize the potential for vocal injuries and issues (IDEA, 2001):

- Project from the diaphragm regardless of whether or not a microphone is being used.
- Speak at a normal volume when using a microphone.
- Avoid frequent coughing, which can stress the voice box (larynx).
- Avoid cueing at biomechanically inopportune times (e.g., in positions that constrict the vocal tract, such as when performing push-ups). It is preferable to give cues before the exercise is executed or to walk around during such verbal cueing.
- Keep music at a decibel level that does not require shouting over the music (see Chapter 4).
- Take small, frequent sips of water to keep the larynx lubricated.

VISUAL LEARNERS

A visual learner needs to *see* specific cues. To create the most successful experience for this type of learner, GFIs should focus on incorporating appropriate body language and gestures that allow participants to understand the desired movement. For example, when targeting a specific muscle group, such as the triceps, a GFI may choose to palpate the area (in this case, the back of the upper arm) in addition to providing appropriate technique-related cues to convey to participants what part of the body is being worked during the exercise.

When instructing participants to move, GFIs should point to the direction that matches the cued words. For example, if giving the verbal cue “lunge right,” the instructor should also outstretch their arm and point to the right, giving participants a visual cue regarding in what direction to move. Additionally, to indicate the number of repetitions remaining of an exercise, a GFI should hold up a specific number using their fingers in addition to counting down verbally.

Without words, GFIs can also convey crucial instructions to participants by incorporating Aerobic Q-signs (Webb, 1989), as shown in Figure 8-1.

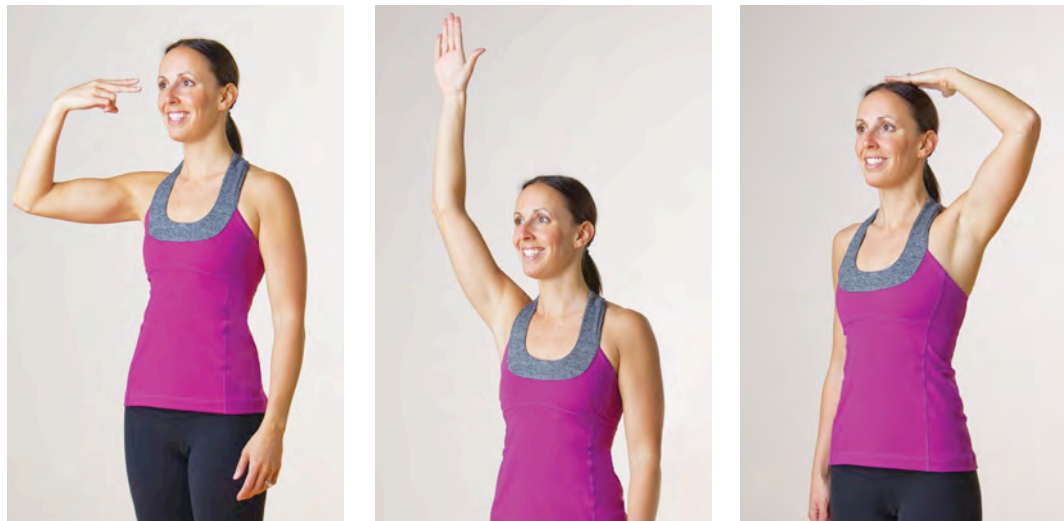
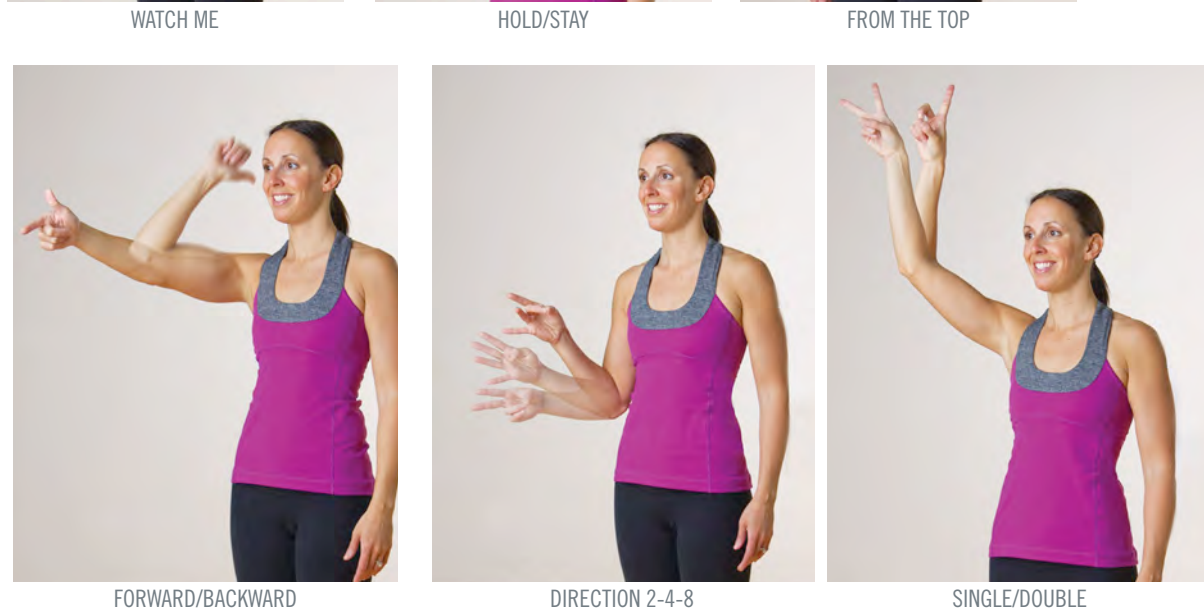


Figure 8-1
Aerobic Q-signs

Source: Webb, T. (1989). Aerobic Q-signs. *IDEA Today*, 10, 30–31.



Visual cueing not only assists visual learners and participants whose primary language may be different from that of the GFI, but it also helps create a successful experience for persons who are hearing impaired. Oliva (1988) promotes visual cues based on the principles of Visual-Gestural Communication and American Sign Language (Figure 8-2). Oliva maintains that visual cues must be “visually logical” and clearly visible to participants. For example, GFIs can indicate lower-body moves such as marching on the right by patting the thigh of the lead leg.

Figure 8-2
Visual cues for
exercise classes

Source: Oliva,
G.A. (1988).
*Visual Cues for
Exercise Classes*.
Washington,
D.C.: Gallaudet
University.



LEAD LEG



STAY IN PLACE



SHIFT TO FACE THIS DIRECTION



MARCH IN PLACE



HOLD THIS POSITION
AND CHANGE NOTHING



OR, WHICH CAN BE USED TO SHOW EITHER
A PROGRESSION OR A REGRESSION



BREATHE EXCLUSIVELY
THROUGH THE NOSE



BREATHE THROUGH THE
MOUTH ON EXHALATION



“ONE THUMB UP” OFFERS POSITIVE
REINFORCEMENT AND PRAISE



[EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE]

Considerations for Delivering Visual Cues

In order to effectively provide visual cues to participants, a GFI must consider the orientation they will use when delivering information and evaluate the pros and cons associated with it. If teaching in a room with a mirror, a GFI may choose to face the mirror when cueing, observing participants' movements in the reflection. An advantage of facing the mirror is that this positioning gives the participants an easy understanding of movement orientations and directions, allowing participants to follow the GFI exactly as they move.

A disadvantage to this approach is that the personal connection with each participant diminishes because instructors can only make indirect eye contact through the reflection in the mirror.

An advantage to standing facing participants with one's

Use a technique known as mirroring

back to the mirror or front wall is that this position allows the GFI to build **rappport** with participants through direct eye contact. It also allows participants to see the front of the instructor's body more clearly with no reflection.

A disadvantage of facing the class, however, is that participants often have difficulty understanding how to follow an instructor cueing "reach the right arm,"

if the GFI is reaching with their right arm (which would be to the participants' left).

One solution to reducing this confusion is to use a technique known as **mirroring**. An example of mirroring is when the GFI, positioned facing

toward participants, moves their left arm while calling out to the participants to move their right arms. This enables the participants to see a mirror image of the move they are being cued to perform. However, mirroring can be difficult to learn. Therefore, the GFI must thoroughly practice this technique before using it in a class.

KINESTHETIC LEARNERS

A kinesthetic learner needs to *feel* specific cues. To create the most successful experience for this type of learner, GFIs should get in the habit of utilizing cues that offer participants an element of sensation. This can be done by using words such as "sense," "imagine," "pretend," and "feel," through which the GFI strives to convey where and how a sensation should be felt and/or when a mental component of visualization may be appropriate. For example, when a GFI is cueing the triangle pose during a yoga class, they might say to participants "imagine your body is pinned between two sheets of glass" to help create an appropriate mental image of proper body positioning in the posture.

Kinesthetic learners may also find value in being provided with a subtle touch by the GFI that helps them better experience the movement or exercise. However, it is imperative that GFIs always ask for and receive permission from participants before offering any type of physical touch or assist. Instead of physically touching a participant to assist with form and alignment, a GFI may opt to instead cue participants to the solution, placing an open hand near the participant and instructing the participant to move their body toward it (Biscontini, 2011).

More details regarding how to provide participants with valuable **feedback** using this technique can be found in Chapter 10.

Utilize cues that offer participants an element of sensation

**[APPLY WHAT YOU KNOW]*****Asking for Permission to Provide Cues and Feedback Through Hands-on Assists***

One way in which a GFI can broach the subject of providing cues and feedback through hands-on assists is to ask for permission from the group as a whole at the beginning of a group fitness class. For example, during a yoga class the subject of physical touch can be addressed at the start of the practice when participants have privacy in an eyes-closed posture, such as extended child's pose. The GFI may offer a blanket statement to the group, such as "Today I will be offering gentle hands-on assists to help further explore alignment and sensation with each pose. If you prefer that I offer feedback in a way that does not involve physical touch, simply flip both palms to the sky to let me know, and I will certainly honor your personal space throughout the class."

It is also important when teaching a discipline such as yoga in a fitness center that the GFI be familiar with the facility's policy regarding hands-on assists, as many gyms do not allow instructors to provide physical touch whatsoever for fear of legal action (McCarthy, 2012).

**[EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE]****Types of Effective Cues**

In group fitness classes, a great deal of information needs to be communicated in a relatively short amount of time. Therefore, GFIs must condense cues and deliver multiple pieces of information simultaneously, all while addressing the three learning styles. The best cuers are both efficient (able to get the job done in a very short amount of time) and efficacious (able to get the job done well). While each of these is possible alone, the goal is for a GFI to accomplish both simultaneously. Bisconti (2011) recommends the following types of **three-dimensional cueing** that can be offered during a group fitness class:

- **Breathing:** Cues that indicate the best breathing technique to match the discipline, exercise, or movement series, and can indicate both *when* (e.g., on which phase of a movement to inhale or exhale) and *how* to breathe (e.g., in through the nose and out through the mouth)
- **Rhythm:** Cues that indicate the pace at which the movements or exercise will occur
- **Anatomical:** Cues that reference the body to enhance **kinesthetic awareness** and inform participants which muscles are active during an exercise or movement pattern
- **Numerical:** Cues that tell participants how many repetitions of an exercise or movement series will be performed in total or how many remain, and allow participants to gauge their intensity accordingly. This may include rhythm cueing.
- **Directional:** Cues that tell participants where a movement will be taking place in relation to the classroom space and their own bodies
- **Safety:** Cues that emphasize proper execution of the movement or exercise to minimize the risk of injury
- **Motivational:** Cues that are directed toward the group or individual exercisers to encourage positive reinforcement
- **Alignment:** Cues that include exercise set-up, general posture, and awareness of body dynamics before and during a movement
- **Spatial:** Cues that reference areas of the body, equipment set-up around the body, and/or the body's orientation to the equipment and/or the group fitness space
- **Humorous:** Cues that are designed to create an enjoyable, entertaining, yet educational experience in which participants feel comfortable

INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS

While Chapter 5 helps GFIs decide *what* to teach (i.e., appropriate exercises and general sequencing of movements), this is only half of the challenge. GFIs must also explore *how* to teach each movement, which is one of the most exciting aspects of group fitness instruction. Mosston (2001) discusses several different teaching styles that have direct application to the group fitness environment.

COMMAND STYLE OF TEACHING

An instructor using the **command style of teaching** makes all decisions about posture, rhythm, and duration, seeking imitation by all participants. The effect created is one of uniformity, but without proper planning this could result in a less than inclusive class experience for participants of varying ability levels.

The command style has traditionally been the most commonly used style of teaching in group fitness classes, as some GFIs find this style particularly well-suited to warming up, cooling down (final phase), and introducing new movements or exercises where the point is for everyone to follow uniformly. Effective leaders using the command style are able to follow the gist of a standardized script (such as those required in **pre-choreographed classes**) while still offering **progressions** and **regressions** to create a successful experience for all.

PRACTICE STYLE OF TEACHING

The **practice style of teaching** provides opportunities for individualization and one-on-one instructor feedback for participants while still effectively leading a group experience. While all participants are working on the same task, such as performing as many push-ups as possible during a one-minute round within a **high-intensity interval training (HIIT)** class, the GFI encourages everyone to choose their own intensity level to guarantee individual success. The effect created is one of nurturing and support by providing participants the freedom to discover what works best for them via practice. An advantage of this style of instruction is that it allows instructors to walk around and interact because they do not need to remain stationary in front of the room, as is often done when using the command style approach.

It is important for GFIs to move around the room in order to effectively instruct all participants. To observe participants from different angles and to offer physical assists and/or specific feedback on form, a GFI should consider demonstrating a movement for several repetitions, then observe and coach form, interacting in a more meaningful way with participants. Instructors should keep in mind that when teaching classes, the focus is on providing the best experience possible for participants, as opposed to personally getting in a good workout.

SELF-CHECK STYLE OF TEACHING

The **self-check style of teaching** relies on participants to provide their own feedback. Participants perform a given task and then view or record the results, comparing their performance against given criteria or past performances. Instructors who emphasize **target heart rate** or **recovery heart rate** to their participants, or who opt to utilize other intensity-gauging measures such as **rating of perceived exertion (RPE)** or the **talk test**, may choose to incorporate this style into their classes. For equipment-based classes that utilize options such as rowers, treadmills, or indoor cycling bikes with electronic consoles, the information displayed can be invaluable for instructors who use the self-check style.



DOMAINS OF LEARNING

During every class, a GFI must be able to quickly ascertain the group's abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. By the end of the warm-up, the instructor must decide which types of cues and what exercise intensity level will prove most appropriate and effective for the participants present. By understanding the learning process and being familiar with strategies that facilitate the teaching of **motor skills**, the GFI will be better able to educate participants.

Magill (2000) defines learning as an “internal change in the individual that is inferred from a relatively permanent improvement in performance of the individual as a result of practice.” It is important that GFIs understand the difference between performing and teaching. When performing, a GFI leads participants through safe movement by having them mimic the movements of the instructor in a follow-the-leader type approach. In true teaching, however, the GFI imparts knowledge on the participants, and they in turn demonstrate the aforementioned “internal change” toward “permanent improvement” as they begin to learn and practice new behaviors and movement patterns. Over time, these new skills become ones that participants can reproduce independently in life. GFIs who truly teach are able to get their participants to learn new things about their bodies and demonstrate movement patterns with less variability

over time, thus indicating that the learning experience is taking place. Learning takes place in three levels of human behavior—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—all of which have direct application to the field of group fitness instruction.

COGNITIVE DOMAIN

The **cognitive domain** describes the brain's ability to gather and retain information and knowledge. This includes skills such as counting out movements as well as remembering patterns of **choreography**. Training the cognitive domain within a fitness program in which participants are challenged to understand and apply knowledge positively affects **motivation** and exercise compliance among participants. Therefore, GFIs should incorporate some elements of education into their classes (Casey, Benson, & MacDonald, 2004).

AFFECTIVE DOMAIN

The **affective domain** describes emotional behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. Overall feelings regarding health and motivational attitudes in general will shape a person's feelings about exercise. GFIs hold the potential to help participants develop positive attitudes about physical activity by enhancing how they receive, respond to, and ultimately value the physical movements produced both in class and in everyday life (Wilson, 2001). GFIs can serve as role models who positively influence the affective domain of their participants. Refer to Chapter 6 for more on creating a compelling movement experience.

PSYCHOMOTOR DOMAIN

Finally, the **psychomotor domain** refers to those activities requiring movement. Learning new motor skills forms the basic foundation of most group fitness classes. While most instructors pay careful attention to the psychomotor domain as they design classes, by considering elements such as physical abilities, fundamental movements, and skilled movements, a well-rounded GFI emphasizes all three domains of learning to provide a more comprehensive approach to instruction.



[APPLY WHAT YOU KNOW]

Heightening Participants' Kinesthetic Awareness

GFIs teach participants in an attempt to bring about an independent change in behavior or thought in each individual. That said, the goal and priority of a GFI as an educator should be to teach in such a way as to empower participants to independently execute moves with proper form. Keeping this in mind will help GFIs become the best communicators they can be in order to encourage individuals to understand how to take responsibility for their own form and body mechanics, and transfer those skills to activities outside of class. To help participants gain kinesthetic awareness and improve how they perform in the group fitness environment, as well as in everyday life when performing **activities of daily living (ADL)**, GFIs can incorporate alignment and movement cues into each segment of a group fitness class.

For example, if a student in class demonstrates good alignment when performing a hip hinge, the participant is not only moving safely, but they will also move more effectively when transitioning into in-class exercises such as squats or lunges. However, if this participant hinges with incorrect form at home, such as with a rounded spine when bending down to pick up their child, then the participant is not reaping the benefits of the quality of movement discussed and demonstrated in class since they have not changed behavior and body mechanics in everyday life. An effective teaching strategy is to educate participants about the purpose of movements not just for class, but for enjoyment and success in ADL.

To assist students in successful movement both inside and outside of the class, the GFI can impart knowledge and skills that make them more aware of how they position their bodies in space, which is known as **spatial awareness**. When instructing new movements, the GFI may opt to reference body parts in relation to other body parts or surroundings in the room. For example, when standing, the GFI may begin by establishing stability in the body using a “ground up” approach, bringing heightened attention to the position of the feet, and then move up the body using the metaphor of building a house with a firm foundation. In other positions, instructors may commence with other body parts. For example, in the quadruped position, an instructor may begin cueing by saying “come down to hands and knees to find a position where the torso is parallel to the floor with wrists below shoulders and knees below hips.”



STAGES OF LEARNING

Understanding the three stages of learning helps GFIs gain an appreciation for their participants in a deeper way. The traditional Fitts and Posner model (1967) explains the three stages of learning for motor skills: cognitive, associative, and autonomous. GFIs must take into consideration the learning stages of participants in order to create the most successful experience possible. The more successful participants feel, the more motivated they become. Refer to Chapter 6 for detailed information on improving both motivation and **adherence**.

COGNITIVE STAGE OF LEARNING

Within the **cognitive stage of learning**, movements are new to the participant, who acts as a novice. Errors and imperfect form may be the norm. An example of this occurs the first time a group does grapevines together at a particular music speed. Many participants struggle with the skill itself, the direction, and the coordination of timing the movement with the music.

ASSOCIATIVE STAGE OF LEARNING

The next stage, the **associative stage of learning**, includes improvements in the basic fundamentals of the skills. In this stage, the majority of participants are able to grapevine back and forth with the music and can concentrate on occasional cues from the instructor to improve performance.

AUTONOMOUS STAGE OF LEARNING

During the **autonomous stage of learning**, the skill becomes automatic or habitual. Learners can perform without following an instructor and can detect their own errors. In a group fitness setting, participants react automatically with music, direction, and movement upon hearing the instructor's cue: "Four grapevines left."



[THINK IT THROUGH]

When performing push-ups, what movement errors might be observed in a participant who is in the cognitive stage of learning?





[APPLY WHAT YOU KNOW]

Mindful Instruction

Instructors must be aware of all participants in a group fitness class at all times. Though there are sometimes exceptions, often the most experienced, intense, and comfortable participants (those in the autonomous stage of learning) tend to congregate toward the front of the room.

Such participants are usually able to do all skills that the GFI cues, often opting for ways in which to increase the intensity of exercises throughout the class experience.

Participants with average skill levels (i.e., those in the associative stage of learning) often congregate toward the center of the room and are able to do most skills the GFI cues, often seeking ways in which to refine their form to enhance movement execution.

Newer and more timid students (i.e., those in the cognitive stage of learning) often will congregate toward the rear of the room. These participants will often benefit from exploring ways in which to make exercises less intense while learning the fundamental skills of the class.

Ultimately, when leading group fitness classes, instructors must teach so that all class participants experience success. To do this, GFIs should consider leading classes with the following saying in mind: *Have an ear for the front row, an eye for the middle row, and a heart for the back row.*

Have an ear for the front row, an eye for the middle row, and a heart for the back row



[EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE]

The Importance of Feedback

GFIs who give individual feedback show that they care for the true progress of their participants. Wlodkowski (2008) defines feedback as information that learners receive about the quality of their performance on a given task. Feedback, while important across all stages of learning, is of the utmost importance during the associative stage of learning, in which participants are working toward skill mastery and are able to process efficient and effective cues offered to help improve performance.

- First, instructors should point out something positive the individual is doing.
- Second, they should mention the needed correction, known as the **performance standard** of the movement or exercise.
- Third, instructors should point out an additional positive feedback point, usually offering positive reinforcement on the immediate correction.

For example, a GFI notices that a participant's shoulders are elevated when performing standing biceps curls. A sample script could be, "Great job keeping your spine extended and chest lifted (positive point). To better challenge the muscles we're working, keep the shoulders down away from the ears (performance standard). With that small change, notice how much less tension you now feel in the shoulders (positive reinforcement)." Refer to Chapter 10 for additional strategies on providing feedback.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

One of the most important aspects of group fitness instruction is taking the appropriate steps to ensure the movements and exercises included in the class are delivered in a safe and effective manner. An instructor must not only acknowledge the limitations of participants within the various stages of learning, but they must also understand how to appropriately break down and build up movement patterns to ensure all participants experience success.

Ensure all participants experience success

SLOW-TO-FAST/HALF-TIME

When using the **slow-to-fast teaching strategy**, instructors introduce movement patterns so that participants are first performing them slower than the desired speed. This often includes a rhythmic variation, as instructors use the **half-time** of the music. When introducing a grapevine to exercisers for the first time, a GFI may move more slowly so that a grapevine that typically uses four counts of music instead uses eight counts. Since this strategy may reduce exercise intensity, GFIs should minimize using this approach for extended periods of time during the peak of the conditioning segment of class.

REPETITION-REDUCTION

The **repetition-reduction teaching strategy** involves reducing the number of repetitions that make up a movement sequence. An instructor may have participants execute four alternating grapevines followed by eight alternating hamstrings curls. This could then be reduced to two alternating grapevines and four alternating hamstrings curls, and eventually again be reduced to one grapevine and two alternating hamstrings curls.

PART-TO-WHOLE/ADD-IN

A GFI using the **part-to-whole teaching strategy**, which is also called the **add-in strategy**, breaks down skills and teaches movement in isolation before integration. Commencing with movements in their simplest form, the

instructor teaches sections of a move, followed by the performance of an isolated movement. For example, an instructor teaching a squat and biceps curl combination may begin with either the arm or leg movements until they observe mastery by the majority of participants. Once participants have mastered each component, the instructor then demonstrates how to combine the movements to become more functional, teaching either the **concentric** or **eccentric** phase of elbow flexion with the downward or upward phase of the squat, as desired.

SIMPLE-TO-COMPLEX/LAYERING

When using the **simple-to-complex teaching strategy**, which is an advanced teaching strategy that is sometimes called **layering**, instead of separating movement patterns into sections, the instructor will reduce all complexity options to the lowest common denominator and engage the class in movement. Next, the GFI adds layers of complexity onto these movements. For example, consider the performance of a grapevine and two alternating step-touches for a total of eight counts. In this method, the instructor engages all participants in this pattern from the start. While engaging everyone in repetition for proficiency, the instructor offers additional options, which could include leaping to the side twice instead of the grapevine and a full 360-degree pivot with hamstrings curls in place of the step-touches. Generally, the available variables for layering additional complexity involve changes in direction, rhythm, and lever length.



[APPLY WHAT YOU KNOW]

Layering Choreography

The freestyle method of delivering choreography, discussed in Chapter 2, most often involves linear progression, in which an instructor lines up movements lacking combinations. Newer instructors often find the linear-progression method easier because they only have to change one aspect of movement at a time, and never need to create repeating sequences or patterns. The method is simple: one skill at a time.

For example:

- *Base movement:* Four alternating knee lifts in place (eight counts of music)
- *Add arms:* Four bilateral elbow flexions (eight counts of music)
- *Add direction:* Travel forward (eight counts of music); travel backward (eight counts of music)

Ready to move on? Change the skills:

- *Change the legs:* Eight alternating hamstrings curls with same arm movements (16 counts of music)
- *Change the arms:* Clapping hands while moving front and back (16 counts of music)

Instructors may also choose to gradually incorporate other changes following the DRILLS acronym (see page 140), such as manipulating the rhythm of how the movements are executed. Half-time may prove an ideal teaching strategy to demonstrate a more complex movement pattern slowly at first, before adding the challenge of **double-time**. **Syncopation** occurs in a grapevine when, instead of the normal four-count grapevine, instructors hold the first lead leg for two counts (“1, 2”) and then rush the rest of the movement with counts (“and 3, 4”), in which case the traveling leg crosses behind the lead leg quickly (on count “and”) and the movement returns to normal (on counts “3, 4”).

Copeland (1991) suggests considering, at the very least, a combination of freestyle and repeating choreography. “There are many advantages to using repeating patterns in your choreography. The human mind instinctively arranges events into patterns, which allow the mind to relax and easily anticipate what will happen next. This repetition allows participants to commit to the movement more fully and to maintain a steady-state workout.”

Ultimately, all methods and teaching strategies are available to instructors when developing choreography, and GFIs should consider instructing movement patterns using a combination of teaching strategies. Observant instructors continuously monitor their participants to see which techniques work best for which groups, and teach using the methods that guarantee the highest rate of success for all.

TEACHING MULTILEVEL CLASSES

While it would be easier to instruct participants who all possess the same fitness aptitude, almost every group fitness class brings an assortment of students at different ability levels. Effective GFIs, therefore, must be able to create progressions and regressions so that all participants can explore any movement within the class and experience success. When increasing the difficulty, complexity, or intensity of a movement (progression) or decreasing the difficulty, complexity, or intensity of a movement (regression), it is the skill that is labeled as opposed to the individual, creating a more supportive and accepting environment for participants to learn and thrive. Among the ways to create progressions and regressions of movements are the following considerations, which form the acronym DRILLS:

Direction

Rhythm, range of motion,
resistance, repetitions

Intensity, impact

Lever **L**ength

Stability

Learning how to manipulate each of these variables will help all participants master the movements that are most appropriate for them. For example, if a participant needs a regression when performing a single-leg squat with hands on hips, the GFI can cue to place both feet on the ground hip-width apart for greater stability through a broader base of support, thereby reducing the intensity of the movement. For a participant in the same class needing a progression, the GFI could provide the option for participants to raise the arms overhead, increasing the lever length, thereby providing more intensity and challenge to the movement.

Improper execution can increase the risk for injury in a group fitness class. Large participant-to-instructor ratios make individual attention difficult and participants can often repeat movements incorrectly numerous times without correction, leading to injury. The best defense against movement error is to offer progressions and regressions, and to explain methods for self-evaluation. Refer to Chapter 12 for the legal and professional responsibilities of a GFI to provide adequate and proper instruction.



ACE UNIVERSITY

If your study program includes ACE University, visit www.ACEfitness.org/MyACE and log in to your My ACE account to access group fitness lessons in the ACE Digital Classroom to further your learning experience and build upon what you've just read in Chapter 8. There, you can watch videos on proper cueing techniques, balance and alignment, strategies to enhance your participants' movement experiences, and how to accommodate different stages of learning. In addition, each chapter features a quiz that will help you identify topics you should consider revisiting as you prepare for the ACE Group Fitness Instructor Certification Exam.

SUMMARY

A successful GFI has a firm understanding of the various ways in which participants learn while also being well-versed in how to adapt instructional methods accordingly to ensure that the needs of participants are safely and effectively met. The knowledge and skills that GFIs impart on participants by delivering high-quality educational experiences enables individuals to experience movement success both inside and outside of the group fitness environment.

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