

# Cooperative learning through sport

SCOUT TRAINING PROGRAM

**Seminar: 4**

**Title: Cooperative learning through sport**

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## PART A. THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOPIC

### INTRODUCTION

The objective of the sport, beyond competing in the search for winners and losers in a competitive society, and acquiring valid motor skills, must be to value human relations and educate citizens in a sporting context in which everyone feels they can learn, enjoy and train as people, regardless of their competitive level, their origin or their socioeconomic situation.

For this reason, including cooperative learning as a pedagogical model in the planning of volleyball sessions must enable the achievement of the performance objectives and the social and relational skills that are necessary for the idiosyncrasy of a sports team and club that could be transferred to daily life.

In this training course, we will be entering into the main characteristics of cooperative learning which make it possible to understand how this learning tool is more important and complex than working as a team work. At the same time, some strategies will be put forward to be implemented within the team to improve the social and relational skills of athletes.

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## OBJECTIVES AND CONTENTS

- Identify the potential of cooperative learning
  - Acquire strategies to apply cooperative learning within a volleyball team
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## DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTENT

### 1. Cooperative learning

#### 1.1. WHAT'S COOPERATIVE LEARNING?

Cooperative learning is the didactic use of small teams of people, usually heterogeneous, using activity structures that ensure maximum equitable participation and enhance simultaneous interaction between them with the aim of all group members learning the proposed contents, to the best of their ability, and acquiring skills to work in a team (Johnson et al., 1999).

From the previous definition, some aspects must be kept in mind:

- The subjects of a cooperative learning team have a double responsibility: to learn themselves and to help the rest of their teammates learn.
  - Double learning objectives and contents: sports content (cooperate to learn) and teamwork (learn to cooperate).
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Cooperative learning can also be defined as a pedagogical model in which students learn *with, from* and *for* other teammates through a teaching-learning process that facilitates and enhances interaction and positive interdependence and in which coaches and athletes act as co-learners (Fernandez-Rio, 2017):

- Learning *with, from* and *for* other teammates, emphasizing that learning is enhanced when you are part of a group (with) when athletes teach others (from) and when each one strives to learn to help better (for).
- Group members learn from each other, the trainer from them and the team from the trainer (co-learners).

## 1.2. BASIC CONDITIONS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

To define a teaching-learning process as cooperative learning, the following essential requirements must be met (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 1999; Pujolás, 2008):

- a) *Positive interdependence*: group members need each other to achieve common goals, benefiting without harming anyone. To be able to carry it out, the proposed tasks must imply that there is interdependence between the group's components in order to achieve the objectives, which can be both individual and group. At a methodological level, in order to fulfill this condition, it is necessary to design tasks that ensure that everyone has understood the objective and that everyone must contribute their part to achieve it, defining objectives that can only be achieved with the participation of all group members.
  - b) *Individual and group responsibility*: each one must be responsible for some part or some task within the group and each one must be responsible for their own learning. Each member is responsible for learning and improving himself but also of his colleagues, demanding the involvement of each one to achieve the different individual and group goals. It is necessary to become aware of the people who require more help within the group at the same time that no one can take advantage of the work of the rest. Certain proposals can favor this responsibility: a) small groups of students, b) carry out periodic individual evaluations to analyze the degree of achievement of the objectives, c) assign roles with specific tasks to each component of the group (positive interdependence of roles), d) create spaces for reflection between group members and e) observation of the process and equitable participation of all components.
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- c) *Promoting interaction simultaneous* ("face to face"): in order to achieve the common goal, the members of the group need to help each other. Situations must be promoted in which students can interact with the rest of the group, so that members work together, encourage each other, help and support each other when difficulties arise in an activity. It is necessary to promote situations that force group members to interact with each other, work together, support each other, and encourage each other... because it is the only way to generate an exchange of opinions between the students, to be able to make observations between them to improve performance and learning. This interaction involves the learning and mastery of social skills necessary to carry out this action and requires involvement at the same time.
- d) *Group processing or group assessment*: the functioning of the group must be evaluated periodically in order to improve it, and everyone in the group must use this evaluation to improve learning. Reflection is required on the functioning of the group and everyone must identify strong points and aspects to improve.
- e) *Interpersonal skills*: in the course of the process, the group members learn skills that facilitate the relationship: support, respect, sharing, listening, encouraging... since these skills are required to cooperate.

In addition to those presented and explained above, cooperative learning must guarantee two more essential elements: equitable participation and equality of opportunities for success (Fernández-Río, 2018, Pujolas, 2015).

- f) *Equitable participation*: all the people in the group have the same possibility to participate in a similar percentage within their possibilities, being that no one is dispensable and that everyone can make their contribution.
  - g) *Equal opportunities for success*: the tasks proposed by the teacher/coach must have a variety of solutions with the aim that they can be solved depending on the different characteristics of the group and people. It is necessary to give the same opportunities to each of the components of the group so that they can
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contribute to this group's success. This requires a personalization of the teaching process in which each member is asked according to their possibilities. Only in this way will all its members be able to continue to progress in their learning and be able to help the team.

1.3. COLLABORATE OR COOPERATE? GROUP WORK OR COOPERATIVE WORK?

Cooperation adds to collaboration the concept of working together, a plus of solidarity, generosity and mutual help, achieving that the relationship between the members of the team that cooperates is deeper to an affective level.

Velázquez (2013) proposes that the main difference that distinguishes cooperative learning teams from traditional group work is the interdependence that is generated between the different members of the group, so that each member not only cares about himself and takes responsibility for his learning but he does it for each of his group mates.

Another way to understand this difference lies in the fact that cooperation has a group goal to achieve while collaboration can be helpful but the goals can be individual and different between the group's components. In the sports field, cooperation cannot exist if any participant loses or is eliminated, failing to fulfill one of the basic requirements of cooperation, so we would talk about collaboration.

Two other concepts that are often used as synonyms are those of group or team work (traditional) and cooperative work. Being clear about what cooperative work involves and what characteristics it entails, this differs from group work due to the fact that certain requirements of cooperation may not be present in this group work, such as for example that groups may be homogeneous, leadership may always be led by the same person, support between members of the group is not required, there is no positive interdependence and there is no need to strengthen social skills. In short, the members of the group come together to perform a task.

<b>GROUP WORK</b>	<b>COOPERATIVE LEARNING</b>
Homogeneous group	Heterogeneous group
One leader	Shared leadership
The success of the team depends only on the contribution of one or a few team members.	All team members contribute to its success.

Interpersonal and social skills are taken for granted.	Social skills are taught and learned
Communication between members is usually quite poor. In few cases they reach agreements and solve the problems	Interaction between peers is encouraged in order to promote the processes of socialization, cooperation and performance.
Group assessment	The assessment must be group and individual and is carried out in a shared manner.

Table 1. Differences between group work and cooperative learning (Pujolàs, 2008; Velazquez, 2013)

## 2. Implementation of cooperative learning

### 2.1. PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Cooperative learning is a process that requires time, involvement and the monitoring of a process that involves the fulfillment of different phases. It is especially complex to transfer this learning in a sports context where competition is an idiosyncratic feature of sport that requires winners and losers. As basic ideas that should make it easier to incorporate the benefits of cooperative learning within the group, it should be noted that these cannot be based on specific actions and/or activities, but must have continuity and the whole group project must be imbued with the will to change. How will we manage to acquire the benefits of cooperative learning if the result of the sport is above any other goal and all decisions in the teaching-learning process are subordinated to the will to achieve victory? It is clear that this is one of the difficulties of including cooperative learning in sports teams whose objective is to achieve victory and that the entire training approach is concerned and obsessed with achieving victory and these objectives take precedence over others.

Immersed in this debate, it is necessary to emphasize the function of the teacher/coach as it has a fundamental role. Firstly, by designing and proposing a context that complies with the principles of cooperative learning, and then, in what should be a model, believe in this model and preach by example, as would be the case of the use of a language that does not promote competition.

### The session (Fernández-Río, 2017):

There is no defined session structure on which to design cooperative learning proposals. Despite everything, it is recommended that any session that wants to be contextualized in cooperative learning needs to make changes at an organizational level:

As a way to start, it is recommended that the whole group is positioned in a circle, teacher/coach included, and that they can sit on the floor. This organization indicates that everyone, including the teacher/coach, is another component of the group, that everyone is equal without differences in hierarchy, and that communication between everyone is facilitated. A proposed session structure is as follows:

1. Present the objectives at the beginning of the session to gain awareness of what needs to be worked on.
2. Check during the session the achievement of the tasks, valuing the positive actions and reflecting on the negative ones.
3. Final joint reflection assessing the objectives set.

### 2.2. THE CYCLE OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING (FERNÁNDEZ-RÍO, 2017)

To implement this pedagogical model in a group, various strategies and intentions are differentiated which are articulated in three phases:

#### Phase 1: Create group

Group cohesion is essential to improve the working climate, a necessary condition to be able to carry out cooperative learning. The groupings in this phase are flexible and with the possibility of a large group or smaller groups or pairs. Everyone must have worked with everyone.

This phase 1 is divided into four phases:

- 1.1. Presentation: you need to know the people in the group, know their names, their interests (e.g.: say the name).
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1.2. Break the ice: you need to lose the shame of working with each other and the tasks require you to have direct contact between the members and to work with people you don't usually work with (e.g.: presentation bingo).

1.3. Trust: The aim is to build trust so that everyone can end up working with everyone and not just friends. These activities are designed including a certain risk that is overcome with the support of colleagues through the demonstration of trust (e.g.: letting yourself fall and a colleague avoids the fall by catching him)

1.4. Self-knowledge: colleagues help to know oneself, to grow individually with the collaboration of the group.

### Phase 2: Cooperative learning as content for teaching and learning

The aim is to understand that through physical education and sport there is not only the possibility of competing but also of cooperating to learn and teach. This phase is based on the use of "simple techniques" and flexible groupings are still used and it is recommended to use pairs, groups of four or even larger groups that must already be heterogeneous

### Phase 3: Cooperative learning as a resource for teaching and learning

Cooperative learning is used as a resource to teach and learn specific content since group members are already prepared to cooperate for a longer period of time, forming at this point where stable teams or also called teams of base that remain fixed over several weeks and are heterogeneous. More complex techniques or cooperative structures can be carried out.

This process takes time and requires planning which is not easy:

*"Cooperation cannot be achieved overnight, but it is useful enough to make it really worthwhile" (Ovejero, 1990; p. 164).*

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## PART B. MONITORING PROPOSAL

The different proposals for the transformation of clubs associated with cooperative learning are presented as strategies to promote this learning. These different strategies are presented taking into account phase 2 (action 1, 2 and 3) and phase 3 (action 4 and 5) of the cycle of cooperative learning (Fernández-Río, 2017) and asses of the implementation of de cooperative learning (action 6).

- Action 1. Collective score
  - Action 2. Pairs-Check-Execute
  - Action 3. PACER (Performer and Coach Earn Rewards)
  - Action 4. Cooperatives challengers
  - Action 5. Puzzle (Aronson et al., 1978)
  - Action 6. Self-assessment
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## ACTIONS OR DYNAMICS

### ACTION 1

**Name** Collective score (Orlick, 2002)

**Target group** Coaches

#### **Description/Deployment/Timing**

The aim is to achieve a "group-class" result instead of an individual result. Only this change causes students to learn to cooperate instead of competing. This strategy introduces individual responsibility in cooperative work.

#### Implementation process:

1. The trainer proposes a task that can be done individually, in pairs or in learning groups. This task includes monitoring the result obtained in terms of score, number of repetitions, time achieved... (for example, the total amount of passes made in one minute).
2. The activity is carried out and the result is checked.
3. Once the activity is finished, the individual or pair contributions are added to a collective marker of the whole group and which will be the final result of everyone's participation.

#### **Achievements**

Introduce individual responsibility in cooperative work

## ACTIONS OR DYNAMICS

### ACTION 2

**Name** Pairs-Check-Execute

**Target group** Coaches

Groups of 4 athletes help each other learn.

Implementation process:

1. Groups of 4 people are organized. Two pairs are formed within each group.
2. The coach proposes a task (ex.: hand passing) and the pairs must practice and learn.
3. Within point 2, work in pairs, first practice one of the components of the pair while the other observes and provides feedback to correct and encourage it. Then the pairs switch roles.
4. When the two perform the action correctly, they get together with the other partner in the group and together they check that they are able to perform the action correctly.

### Achievements

Become aware of the learning possibilities with collaboration with team mates

## ACTIONS OR DYNAMICS

### ACTION 3

**Name** PACER (Performer and Coach Earn Rewards)

**Target group** Coaches

Implementation process:

1. Organization in heterogeneous groups of 4 components.
2. The coach presents the objectives and contents of the session. Among the materials to be distributed are the *task cards* (cards with a description of the activities to be carried out, the keys to learning and explanation of the development of the activity).
3. The athletes start the group work using the *task cards* and make an individual and group record of the practice (individual and group responsibility).
4. Evaluation: the coach evaluates the learning of the athletes and can define a score and if a predetermined result is achieved, the coach can reward with a fun activity to the taste of the athletes (e.g.: play a match).

### **Achievements**

Learning through individual and group responsibility

## ACTIONS OR DYNAMICS

### ACTION 4

**Name** Cooperative challenges

**Target group** Coaches

Cooperative physical activities proposed in the form of a collective challenge in which a team must solve a certain problem that has multiple solutions by carrying out specific actions that must be adapted to the individual characteristics of each participant. A challenge can only be overcome with the active participation of all group members, if only part of the group can achieve it, it is no longer cooperative. There must be a clear goal to achieve and a motivating element (time, distance, points, space limitations, rules...) and it must be age appropriate. These challenges are made up of three elements:

1. Conceptual: the problem that the group has to solve and the different options or answers to achieve it.
2. Motor: it is necessary that there is a motor action to be able to solve the problem, that is, motor skills and abilities.
3. Affective-relational: interpersonal and intrapersonal factors that have an impact on success or failure when achieving a task: fears, dialogue and communication between group members, social skills, etc.

### Achievements

Work together to achieve goals

### Other considerations

Example of cooperatives challenges: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdeOFKYthEY>

## ACTIONS OR DYNAMICS

### ACTION 5

**Name** Puzzle (Aronson et al., 1978)

**Target group** Coaches

Implementation process:

Each member of the team is responsible for a part of the information or material that is essential so that the rest of the colleagues can complete the knowledge. The steps to follow to carry out this technique are as follows (Pujolàs et al. 2011):

1. The coach divides the class into heterogeneous groups (4-6 people).
2. The content to be learned is divided into as many parts as there are people on the team. Thus, each person on the team is responsible for one of those parts. For example, each person in the group becomes responsible for a training task or a strategic, for example.
3. Each team decides which person will be in charge of preparing each of the parts based on the information or material provided by the coach and, therefore, will become an expert in that part of the subject.
4. Once the team members have prepared their topic, they meet with the members of the other teams who have worked on the same material and form a group of experts. In this group, they share their work, deepen concepts, exchange information, clarify doubts, etc.
5. Next, the experts in each topic return to their initial team and explain to each group the part they have prepared.

In this way, athletes are responsible for their own learning and that of others, and cooperation between them is essential to obtain the different pieces of the puzzle.

A basic and initial example of this process would be for different athletes on the team to prepare a training task, which together form the complete training.

### Achievements

Create positive interdependence of resources between the different members of the team.

## ACTIONS OR DYNAMICS

### ACTION 6

**Name** Self-assessment

**Target group** Coaches

#### Implementation process:

Each athlete uses this self-assessment instrument to reflect his involvement with the cooperative group. Self-evaluation can be done individually or by consensus with the group.

This self-evaluation must be carried out continuously and not only in the final stage.

The coach must use this information to be able to make relevant modifications in the design of the sessions and in the establishment of objectives.

	NO	A LITTLE	YES
I have contributed ideas to the group			
I put effort into the task			
I have fulfilled my role in the task			
I respected my teammates			

#### **Achievements**

Reflect on individual involvement in cooperative work



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## ANNEXES

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The annexes (could) contain three types of materials:

- Cooperative challenges: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pde0FKYthEY>

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