



TRAIN LIKE STORM

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH COACHES, TEAMMATES & OFFICIALS

As a developing athlete, learning how to communicate effectively is an important part of your development. Every time you train or compete, you are communicating with the people around you, including your coaches, teammates and officials.

Communication isn't only about what you say. It also includes how well you listen, the questions you ask, when and how you communicate, and what you communicate through your tone and body language.

As you progress through netball pathways, you may experience different coaches, new teammates, unfamiliar training environments and higher levels of competition. Developing your communication skills can help you understand what is expected of you, contribute positively to the people around you, and take greater responsibility for your own development.

What Makes Communication Effective?

Talking more doesn't necessarily mean communicating better. Research into team sport has found that the quality of communication can be more important than simply how often team members communicate.

Quality communication helps the other person understand what you mean and gives them information they can use.

Imagine your teammate has the ball and you can see space opening near the circle. Calling "*Here! Here! Here!*" tells them that you want the ball. Calling "*Circle!*" gives them information about where an option is available.

Both are communication, but one may give your teammate more useful information to help them make their next decision.



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Effective communication also involves listening and choosing an appropriate time to communicate. Sometimes you can act on information straight away. Other times, you may need to ask a question, seek clarification or wait for a better opportunity to have the conversation.

Listening doesn't mean you have to agree with everything you hear. It means giving the other person an opportunity to communicate, taking in the information and making sure you understand it before deciding how to respond.

Your body language communicates too. Your facial expressions, posture, eye contact, gestures and physical reactions can all send a message, even when you haven't said anything.

Communicating With Coaches

In Session 1, we introduced the expectation that you actively seek and apply feedback from your coaches and peers and take greater ownership of your development.

But what does that actually look like?

Seeking feedback doesn't mean constantly asking your coach how you are going. It means learning when you need more information and asking questions that help you understand, learn and improve.

If your coach gives you feedback that you don't completely understand, asking for clarification doesn't mean you weren't listening.

Instead of: *"I don't get it."*

You could ask: *"I understand where you want me to start, but I'm not sure where I should move next. Can you explain that part again?"*



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You can also seek feedback rather than always waiting for your coach to provide it. If you haven't received much feedback, try not to make assumptions about what that means. Find an appropriate opportunity to ask about something specific you are working on.

Instead of: *"How am I going?"*

Try: *"What is one thing I could improve on my next attempt?"*

You may not always agree with feedback straight away either. Before responding, make sure you understand what your coach is asking and why. If you're unsure, you could ask: *"Can you help me understand what you saw in that situation?"*

The goal is to understand the information before deciding how to respond to it.

Asking Better Questions

If asking questions is new to you, you don't need to know the perfect thing to say. Start by working out what information you need.

IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND:

- *"Can you explain what you mean by that?"*
- *"Can you show me what you want that to look like?"*
- *"I understand the first part. What should I do next?"*
- *"What should I be looking for in that situation?"*

IF YOU WANT FEEDBACK:

- *"What is one thing I could improve on my next attempt?"*
- *"What did I do well there, and what could I do differently?"*



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- *"What should I focus on for the next few repetitions?"*
- *"Is there something you would like me to focus on during the next part of training?"*

IF YOU HAVE TRIED TO APPLY FEEDBACK:

- *"Is that closer to what you were looking for?"*
- *"Did I make the change you were asking for?"*
- *"What should I adjust from that attempt?"*

The goal isn't to ask more questions. It is to become more confident asking useful questions when you need them.

Communicating With Teammates

In Session 1, we also talked about supporting and encouraging your teammates and training partners. Effective communication is one way you can put that behaviour into practice.

Research involving elite netballers has shown that effective on-court communication isn't simply about talking more. How information is communicated, and whether teammates can notice and respond to it, also matters.

Before communicating, think:

What does my teammate need from me right now?

Sometimes they need information:

- *"Baseline!"*
- *"You've got time."*
- *"Hold!"*



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Sometimes they need encouragement:

- "Next one."
- "You've got this."

Sometimes they need help:

- "Do you want me to put that pass a little higher?"

Support doesn't always require words. Staying engaged, making eye contact, maintaining supportive body language and being ready to give your teammate another quality repetition can also communicate support.

Different teammates may respond to different types of communication. What helps you after an error might not be what another athlete needs. Part of becoming an effective teammate is learning about the people around you and recognising what helps them perform.

Remember that timing matters here too. Information is most useful when your teammate has an opportunity to use it.

Communicating With Officials

In Session 1, we talked about demonstrating a respectful attitude towards teammates, coaches and officials. Effective communication helps you put that expectation into practice.

There may be times when you don't understand or agree with an umpire's decision. Feeling frustrated doesn't automatically mean you have communicated poorly. What you choose to do next matters.



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Your first step is to listen. The information you need may already have been communicated. If you still don't understand, there may be an appropriate opportunity to seek clarification at a game break through your captain, or after the game. Think about what you actually want to understand.

Instead of focusing on your disagreement with the decision, think about the information that would actually help you learn or adjust.

Your words are only one part of the interaction. Your tone, timing and body language also communicate information. Throwing your arms up, shaking your head, rolling your eyes or turning away while an official is speaking can communicate frustration or disagreement without you saying anything.

During play, effective communication may simply mean listening, managing your response and returning your attention to what happens next.

Building Your Communication Skills

Effective communication is a skill. Like other parts of your game, it can be practised and improved.

As you progress as an athlete, you won't always have the same coaches, teammates or officials around you. Being able to listen, ask useful questions, adapt how you communicate and take responsibility for the information you need are skills you can carry into different training and competition environments.

In your next activity, you will use what you have learnt to work through real netball situations and practise how you can communicate more effectively with coaches, teammates and officials.