

HOW TO CORRECT ERRORS

One of the most important and difficult jobs of a coach is correcting technical errors. Here is the process recommended by Coach Jack Donohue:

1. Create for yourself a mental picture of what adequate performance of the skill is, for the age and experience of the athletes.
2. Watch the athlete perform the skill several times, from different angles, without saying anything, and compare each performance with your mental picture.
3. Identify the part or parts of the skill which, every time, the athlete does correctly. Tell the athlete these points first.
4. Identify the part or parts of the skill which, every time, does not correspond to your mental picture of adequate performance.
5. If there is more than one consistently incorrect part, decide which is the most important to correct at this stage. A good knowledge of biomechanics, the study of human movement, will help here.
6. Decide what causes this error: *physical* – athlete lack of strength, endurance, flexibility etc; *mental* – athlete didn't hear or understand the instructions, chose the wrong cue, etc; *psychological* – athlete is afraid, bored, unmotivated, etc.
7. Give the athlete specific but simple instructions on how to correct that *one* error only.
8. Make sure the athlete understands the instructions – ask! Then watch while the athlete tries the correction several times.
9. Comment on this correction only, always telling the athlete first what is right.
10. Repeat to above steps for other inadequate parts of the skill when appropriate.
11. When performance of the skill is adequate, praise and set a new standard.

Jack Donohue was coach of Canada's National Basketball Team from 1972 – 1988, and was a nationally recognized coaching expert.