

Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility for Structuring Golf Lessons

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Abstract

Teaching golf lessons requires a significant amount of preparation and planning. While certain aspects of golf instruction require player evaluation and observing the swing, the structure of a lesson, establishing rapport with the student, and successfully achieving buy-in from a student does not have to be left to chance. The teaching artifact for EXSC 9150 – Evidence Portfolio I - looks at the components that lead to successful lessons. Participants included current students in the Professional Golf Management Program at PennWest University and upper-level students who are serving in leadership roles for the PennWest Professional Golf Management Player Development Leadership Council. This artifact uses the concepts from previous teaching classes from the Doctor of Health Science and Exercise Leadership Program specifically the Gradual Release of Responsibility (Fisher & Frey, 2021; Grant et al., 2012), to illustrate the structure of successful lessons in an in-person activity using the I do, we do, you do approach to learning. A formative assessment tool was utilized to identify and assess the components of a successful lesson. The teaching golf scorecard can be used to develop the skills of well-structured lessons that promote greater learning and student engagement. The teaching activity was done in conjunction with the Player Development Leadership Council outside of normal course requirements and PGM curriculum for the fall semester.

Keywords: teaching, golf lesson, lesson structure, gradual release of responsibility, coaching

Metadata: This teaching artifact examines essential components for successful golf lessons, including lesson structure, instructor rapport, and fostering student buy-in.

Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility for Golf Lesson Evaluation

The gradual release of responsibility framework is centered around the idea of increasing the student's ownership of learning over time (Fisher & Frey, 2021). It is structured around an "I do," "we do," and "you do" approach (Grant et al., 2012) where a student watches a teacher complete a task, the student completes the task with the teacher, and then the student completes the task on their own. It is a commonly used framework in golf-specific classes where learning new skills are easily chunked around logical blocks of information. In this lesson, the students started the first two parts of the process, watching the teacher complete an abbreviated lesson and highlighting the components of a successful golf lesson using a formative assessment tool called the golf lesson scorecard (Appendix I). The scorecard was created as an evaluation tool for an observed lesson, reinforcing the components of a successful golf lesson. Students then practiced portions of the lesson with each other, focusing on the components of a successful lesson identified in the scorecard.

Teaching golf is a major component of a golf professional's duties in nearly every golf industry career path. Lessons allow professionals to introduce new players to the game supporting the Professional Golfers' Association of America's (PGA) mission – to promote enjoyment and involvement in golf among the general public, as well as to contribute to the sport's growth by providing services to golf professionals and the industry (PGA, 2022). The activity highlighted for the first teaching artifact reinforces the components of the PGA's structure for a golf lesson. It provides a way to evaluate lesson structure for improved student experiences and success. The activity highlighted in this artifact was completed with the Player Development Leadership Council (PDLC) outside of the normal curriculum for the fall semester. The goal is to establish foundational skills for the PDLC and introduce the structural components of a lesson for potential future members of the PDLC.

The Scorecard

The golf lesson scorecard is broken into nine holes (nine components of a successful lesson), each containing three to five elements totaling thirty-six points. The goal is to get as many points as possible, identifying areas that could be improved for better outcomes and experiences for the customer (student). The nine components (holes) are the meeting, the necessary questions, previous athletic experience, personality, goals, and objectives, establishing goals, prioritizing goals, keeping it simple, and the closing. Each will be described in detail in the following sections.

The Meeting

The meeting consists of four parts. A handshake, a warm pleasant greeting, eye contact, and the start of asking questions to get to know the student. Asking questions and creating a welcoming environment begin building rapport with the student which aides in creating a conducive learning environment through trust. The questions that are asked can be broad but there are four questions that need to be asked and answered to support the student.

The Four Questions

The four questions you need to get answered as an instructor are: Do you have previous athletic experience? How would you describe your personality? Do you have any health concerns or physical limitations? What are your goals? These questions can be part of a broader set of questions to get to know the client, but these four questions specifically give you insights into the ways you can deliver information that will resonate with your student. Questions about the student's personality will help set up the lesson plans and lesson areas in ways that are more conducive to learning for the individual. Does the student like high energy or a more laid-back environment? Is the student analytical, will they benefit from knowing more data and

information or will it create unwanted distraction and focus? Health and other physical concerns allow the teacher to know if there are past injuries or other concerns that may prevent the student from doing something the instructor asks of them. Physical assessments will add to this understanding since many students will not accurately identify their limitations. The question about the student's goals allows an instructor to motivate and inspire the student by tailoring the lessons toward the hopes and desires of the student.

Previous Athletic Experience

Previous athletic experience has three sub-questions the instructor should seek to get answered. What other sports did you or do you play? Gross motor programs are relatable for students. When they have other sports they played, even at recreational levels, they can be leveraged to relate feels to motor programs. How the student best learned and practiced those other sports provides even more insight into ways to relate swing changes to the student. How did you best learn those sports? How often did you or do you practice? This provides insight into the student's work ethic and aids in managing their expectations. Golf is a challenging game, and if the student has high aspirations, they need to be realistic about the time and effort required to achieve their goals.

Personality

Questions about the student's personality provide insights to make the learning environment better for the individual. Three sub-questions can be teased out to even more to best create a supporting environment for the student. Would you consider yourself analytical? Analytical students like information, but it is up to the teacher to determine what is necessary and what data will detract from the lesson's goal. Do you prefer social or individual environments for learning and working / why? Understanding the environment that is best for a

student adds to the enjoyment of the experience and facilitates greater learning. What environment do you learn or work best in? Digging even deeper into these questions, determining if clean and neat or chaotic, loud or quiet, even with or without music or other background noise, provides insight into the preferences of the student.

Goals and Objectives

The first question for goals and objectives is why. Why are you taking golf lessons? It gives the instructor the insight needed to mold the lesson to the wants and needs of the student. Students can come for lessons for a plethora of reasons. Some may want to spend time with family or friends; others may want to play competitive or elite-level golf. Determining the reason why the student is there allows the instructor to maximize the time and content of a lesson to the desires of the student. The next step for goals and objectives is to evaluate the student's current abilities. This is the first piece of the scorecard when a student even begins to make a swing in the lesson. Evaluation of every piece of the game, from the shortest putts to the longest drives, to identify where to spend time on the student's technical skills.

Establishing Goals for the Lesson

Goal setting for a lesson is a developed skill that aligns the student's desires with the needs defined by the assessment process. In the evaluation (observation of the lesson) the observers determine how well the teacher establishes goals from the questions and the skills assessed. Observers then evaluate if clear goals were established for the lesson and if the goals were kept to three or fewer. Three or fewer goals are critical since it is easy to overwhelm students with too many thoughts to complete the motor program. The PGA (2022) suggests two pre-swing and one in-swing adjustment as the maximum to propose during a lesson. Pre-swing changes are adjustments to stance, posture, grip, alignment, or ball position while in-swing

changes require internal or external focus to change body movements to alter the delivery of the club to impact.

Prioritizing Goals

During the assessment of goal prioritization, the observers determine if the instructor explained the goals to the student. Explanation of the goal establishes the “why” and how it aligns with the goals and desires of the student. Once the goal is rationalized with the student, the instructor must then seek agreement and buy-in from the student. If the instructor fails to establish a clear reason for the drill, activity, or change, the student will not be invested in the change and will be less likely to practice new programs on their own.

KISS

The Keep It Simple Silly (KISS) section of the evaluation provides feedback on the simplicity of the lesson. It evaluates the language the instructor used and how well the instructor avoided over-explanation or the over-introduction of ideas that result in confusion for the student. The observers look for the reintroduction of pre-swing and in-swing goals to reinforce them throughout the lesson.

Closing

The final section wraps the lesson up with a check for understanding. The observers are looking for the student to reiterate the rationale for the drills and activities. The students should be able to demonstrate how to set up drills or practice set-ups to reinforce learning and aid in the learning process. The final step is to get the next lesson on the schedule before they leave the lesson. Once they are gone it gets difficult to get them scheduled. If you agree on the next meeting before they leave, they will be more likely to practice and be accountable for the improvements.

Teaching the Lesson

The golf lesson scorecard is a formative assessment – a low-stakes test that checks for student learning (Leenknecht et al., 2020). This lesson focuses on developing the foundation of successful golf lessons and aims to solidify student’s confidence in their skills, knowledge, and abilities to lead a lesson. The students saw a live partial lesson to evaluate the meeting, and the questions asked. Goals could be established, and the activity ended when the lesson would require swing evaluations, which would be done in later classes after students had formed their teaching philosophies and approaches to swing changes. The goal is to make the meeting and question portion of the lesson a habit that does not require the instructor to think so they can focus on what the student is saying.

Conclusion

Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility framework was easy, and participants enjoyed the class structure. The skills of teaching a golf lesson will be reintroduced and expanded upon in teaching golf classes for PGM students, but this session introduced the concepts that are static to a first student introduction. The interactive style of the class and the ability to have the participants practice the concepts made it more fun and engaging for everyone – since it maximized participation for each participant using the scorecard and practicing as the student or instructor. I will continue to work with the GRR framework and find additional ways to keep participants engaged and actively participating. The participants in this lesson are not currently taking teaching golf classes and participated to help the PDLC practice oversight and leadership activities.

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Appendix 1: Teaching Golf Scorecard

Teaching Golf Scorecard

This scorecard gives you a tool to evaluate yourself, your peers, and other instructors on their teaching performance regarding 9 areas of a lesson. There are 5 par 4s, 2 par 3s, and 2 par 5s. The goal is to get as close to par as possible (unlike real golf, being under par means a needed element of the lesson was missed). First, we need to know what each hole consists of – just like breaking down a hole for a round of golf. This document gives you the layout of each hole to help you get as close to even par (36) as possible.

Hole 1 – Par 4 – The Meeting

1. Handshake
2. Pleasant Confident Greeting
3. Eye Contact
4. Begins Asking Questions

Hole 2 – Par 4 – The Necessary Questions

1. Do you have previous athletic experience?
2. How would you describe your personality?
3. Do you have any health concerns or physical limitations?
4. What are your goals?

Hole 3 – Par 3 – Previous Athletic Experience

1. What other sports did you or do you play?
2. How did you best learn those sports?
3. How often did you or do you practice?

Hole 4 – Par 5 – Personality

1. Would you consider yourself analytical?
2. Do you prefer social or individual environments for learning and working / why?
3. What environment do you learn or work best in?
 - a. Clean and neat / chaotic
 - b. Loud or quiet
 - c. With or without music or other background noise

Hole 5 – Par 5 – Goals and Objectives

1. Why are you taking golf lessons (enjoy it more, hit better shots, spend time with loved ones and friends, for exercise)
2. Analyze current ability:
 - a. Short putts / long putts
 - b. Chips and pitches
 - c. Scoring clubs (middle and short irons)
 - d. Long clubs and driving

Hole 6 – Par 3 – Establishing Goals for the Lesson

1. What was discovered from Q&A and analysis
2. Were clear goals established for the lesson?
3. Were lesson goals kept to 3 or less (2 pre-swing & 1 in-swing)

Hole 7 – Par 4 – Prioritizing Goals

1. Were the goals (what you were going to work on) explained to the student?
2. Were the activities rationalized to the student (how does it help them achieve their goal(s))
3. Was agreement established with the student?
4. Did the instructor get buy-in from the student?

Hole 8 – Par 4 – KISS (Keep It Simple Silly)

1. Stuck to main points of the lesson – established from goals
2. Repeated main points/goals multiple times (more than 2 times)
3. Avoided over talking about swing thoughts and ideas – avoid confusing the student
4. Kept to 2 pre-swing and 1 in-swing idea for the lesson

Hole 9 – Par 4 – Closing

1. Checked for understanding from the student.
2. Can they set up drills and practice stations on their own?
3. Can they reiterate the “Why” for the activity and practice?
4. Was the next meeting scheduled before parting ways?

Hole Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Par	4	4	3	5	5	3	4	4	4
Criteria 1									
Criteria 2									
Criteria 3									
Criteria 4									
Criteria 5									
Total									

Score: _____