

## Lesson 7: Team Dynamics and Communication

EBCS Level 2 CPD – Advanced Tactical Coaching

### Learning Objectives (for the coach)

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Explain and reinforce the specific roles of players in pairs, triples, and fours.
- Coach players to communicate clearly and effectively within teams.
- Use drills to develop trust, leadership, and supportive behaviours.
- Manage disagreements constructively to maintain team harmony.
- Promote inclusivity and shared responsibility across all roles.

### Background (why this matters)

Team bowls requires not only technical skill but also effective communication and role clarity. A well-functioning team can outperform technically stronger opponents through better dynamics. Coaches must help players understand:

- Roles: Leads set the foundation, seconds consolidate, thirds analyse, skips decide.
- Communication: Effective teams use clear, concise, and positive communication.
- Leadership: Skips guide, but all players contribute to the team strategy.
- Trust: Confidence in teammates' abilities reduces pressure on individuals.
- Inclusivity: Every role is valued, and all players have a voice in team culture.

### Practical Activities

Session Options:

Option 1 — 90-minute CPD Workshop:

- 1) Role clarification exercise (15 min)
- 2) Communication drills (30 min)
- 3) Team scenario games (25 min)
- 4) Reflection and feedback session (20 min)

Option 2 — 70-minute On-Rink Player Session:

- 1) Team warm-up (assign roles, set expectations) (10 min)
- 2) Silent End Drill (15 min)
- 3) Role-Swap Drill (15 min)
- 4) Match-play with communication focus (20 min)
- 5) Review and homework (10 min)

Example Communication Drills:

- Silent End: Teams play one end without speaking, using only pre-agreed signals to encourage non-verbal clarity.
- Role-Swap: Players switch positions (e.g., lead to skip) to understand the challenges and responsibilities of different roles.

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- Positive Call Challenge: Players are only allowed to use constructive, supportive phrases during ends.
- Pressure Communication Drill: Teams play timed ends where communication must remain calm and efficient.
- Debrief Circle: After each end, teams reflect quickly on communication strengths and areas to improve.

## Questioning Prompts

- 'What did you notice about your role in shaping the end?'
- 'How did communication help or hinder the outcome?'
- 'What signals worked best under pressure?'
- 'How did it feel to swap roles—what did you learn?'
- 'What behaviours built trust within the team today?'

## Coach Notes (ethics, inclusivity, safety)

- Emphasise respect and constructive communication—never tolerate negativity or blame.
- Rotate leadership opportunities to develop confidence in all players.
- Adapt drills for mixed ability or experience levels.
- Reinforce the equal value of every role in the team.
- Monitor group dynamics carefully to ensure inclusivity and psychological safety.

## Reflection (self + peer)

Coach self-reflection:

- Did I ensure all players understood their role clearly?
- How well did players use both verbal and non-verbal communication?
- Did I manage disagreements constructively?
- Which drills improved trust and team spirit the most?

Peer feedback:

- 'I noticed you encouraged communication by... (specific). This worked when... (evidence). You could also try... (suggestion).'

Player homework:

- Practise pre-agreed communication signals with teammates.
- Write down one phrase or behaviour that supports positive team culture.
- Reflect on how your role contributes to team success.

## Outcomes (what you should achieve)

- Ability to coach role clarity in pairs, triples, and fours.
- Skill in running drills that develop communication and trust.
- Confidence in managing team disagreements constructively.

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## Berkshire Bowls Coaching Scheme



- Encourage inclusivity and shared responsibility across teams.
- Strengthen overall team performance through better dynamics.



## Appendix A

### Communication Drill: Silent End (Non-Verbal Signals for Shot Calling)

#### Objective:

To improve non-verbal communication between teammates by requiring them to play a full end without speaking, relying only on pre-agreed signals.

#### Setup:

1. Form two teams (pairs or triples work best).
2. Play one end of bowls as normal, but **no verbal communication is allowed**.
3. Before starting, teams agree on a set of **simple hand or body signals**, such as:
  - Pointing left/right = hand to play.
  - Palm down = short weight; palm up = longer weight.
  - Raised finger = draw shot; fist = weighted/drive.
  - Tap chest = positional/cover bowl.
4. Ensure all team members understand the signals clearly.

#### Method:

1. Play a full end in silence, with the skip only using hand signals and body language to indicate tactics.
2. Leads and thirds respond by acknowledging (nod, hand signal back).
3. After each bowl, the skip continues using signals for adjustments — no words allowed.
4. Once the end is complete, review as a group:
  - Were the signals clear?
  - Was intent understood?
  - Did silence make players more focused?

#### Coaching Points:

- Highlight the importance of **clarity and simplicity** in communication.
- Stress the need for consistent signals — confusion creates poor execution.
- Ask reflective questions:
  - *“What signal worked best?”*



- “What signal was unclear?”
- Encourage players to think about how body language (confidence, pointing, calmness) influences team confidence.

## Progression:

- Introduce time pressure — skip has 5 seconds to give a signal.
- Run multiple silent ends, changing skips each time.
- Mix verbal + non-verbal communication: allow only one spoken word per bowl.
- Create competition: award points for teams where all signals are correctly interpreted.

## Outcome:

- Strengthens **non-verbal clarity** between teammates.
- Builds trust and understanding, especially between skip and lead.
- Reinforces that effective communication is about *clarity and intent*, not volume.
- Prepares teams for noisy, high-pressure match environments where clear signalling is essential.

## Communication Drill: Role-Swap (Experiencing Different Team Roles)

### Objective:

To improve understanding, respect, and communication by having players switch positions (lead, second, third, skip) and experience the challenges and responsibilities of each role.

### Setup:

1. Form a team of four (or adapt for pairs/triples).
2. Play a normal end, but with **swapped roles**:
  - Leads become skips.
  - Skips become leads.
  - Seconds/thirds rotate accordingly.
3. Continue with bowls in the usual order, but the “new skip” calls the shots.

### Method:

1. Play one full end with swapped roles.
2. The new skip must give clear tactical instructions.

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3. Other players follow the direction, even if it feels unusual.
4. After the end, rotate roles again if desired, until each player has experienced a different position.
5. Review as a team: how did communication feel from each role?

## Coaching Points:

- Emphasise that the drill is not about perfect shot-making, but **understanding communication challenges**.
- Ask players to reflect on:
  - *“How did it feel being the skip, giving instructions?”*
  - *“How did you respond differently when playing as a lead?”*
- Highlight the importance of empathy — players often gain new respect for how hard other roles can be.
- Reinforce that **good teams communicate both ways**: skips giving clear instructions, leads providing useful feedback.

## Progression:

- Play multiple ends, rotating positions each time.
- For pairs: swap lead/skip every two ends.
- Add tactical complexity (e.g., set a challenging head) to test communication further.
- Run as a competitive mini-game, but score not just shots — also teamwork and communication clarity.

## Outcome:

- Builds empathy between roles (e.g., leads see skip’s pressure, skips see the challenge of starting well).
- Improves communication flow across the team.
- Strengthens team cohesion and respect.
- Prepares players for stepping into new roles when needed in competitive play.

## Communication Drill: Positive Call Challenge (Constructive Communication Only)

### Objective:

To promote constructive, encouraging communication within a team by limiting players to

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supportive phrases only. This builds a positive team culture, boosts confidence, and reduces negative self-talk or criticism.

## Setup:

1. Form teams (pairs, triples, or fours).
2. Play one or more ends under a simple rule: **all verbal communication must be positive.**
  - Examples:
    - *"Good line."*
    - *"Unlucky — right idea."*
    - *"That weight will be perfect next time."*
    - *"Great effort — we've got cover now."*
  - Phrases such as *"too short," "bad bowl,"* or *"that's wrong"* are **not allowed**.
3. The coach observes, ensuring players follow the positive-only rule.

## Method:

1. Play a full end, enforcing constructive language.
2. After each bowl, teammates must give **one positive comment or encouragement**.
3. If negative language is used, pause and ask the player to reframe it positively.
4. At the end, review: did positive calls improve morale and focus?

## Coaching Points:

- Stress the power of language in confidence building — positivity supports better performance.
- Highlight that supportive communication doesn't ignore mistakes, but reframes them constructively.
- Ask reflective questions:
  - *"How did it feel when your teammates only used positive calls?"*
  - *"Did it change your focus or confidence?"*
- Reinforce Skip's role: clear tactical calls + encouragement.

## Progression:

- Extend to multiple ends with stricter rules (every comment must include a positive phrase).

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- Allow only **short, clear calls** (to train concise supportive communication).
- Add pressure scenarios: the team must stay positive even when behind in score.
- Run a debrief where players suggest alternative supportive phrases for common negative ones.

## Outcome:

- Builds a **positive team culture** that lifts morale.
- Reduces unhelpful negativity or blame in team communication.
- Reinforces that encouragement helps performance under pressure.
- Prepares teams for high-stakes matches where **confidence and unity** are as important as tactics.

## Communication Drill: Pressure Communication Drill (Timed Calm Communication)

### Objective:

To improve clarity and composure in communication when under time pressure, ensuring teams remain efficient, calm, and supportive.

### Setup:

1. Form teams (pairs, triples, or fours).
2. Play a series of **timed ends** — for example:
  - Each team has **3 minutes to complete an end** (adjust timing depending on ability).
  - Use a stopwatch, phone timer, or shot clock.
3. Stress the rule: **communication must remain calm, concise, and efficient** despite the time limit.

### Method:

1. Begin the end with the clock running.
2. Skip gives shot instructions quickly and clearly; teammates must acknowledge without lengthy discussion.
3. Deliver bowls within the time frame, keeping communication supportive and controlled.
4. If players begin to rush or communication breaks down, pause and review how to reset calmness.
5. After the end, discuss:
  - Was communication clear?



# Berkshire Bowls Coaching Scheme



- Did time pressure cause rushed or panicked calls?
- How could efficiency be improved?

## Coaching Points:

- Emphasise *conciseness*: use short, clear tactical phrases.
- Encourage body language and simple signals to save time.
- Remind players that calm communication reduces errors, even under pressure.
- Ask reflective questions:
  - *"Did you feel rushed?"*
  - *"How did your tone of voice change under time stress?"*

## Progression:

- Reduce time available (e.g., from 3 minutes → 2 minutes).
- Add an audience or observers to increase pressure.
- Run consecutive timed ends to simulate a match scenario.
- Score points not only for bowls but also for **team communication quality** (rated by coach/peers).

## Outcome:

- Builds the ability to stay calm and concise under stress.
- Improves Skip's efficiency in calling shots.
- Reinforces trust and understanding between teammates.
- Prepares teams for competitive formats with time restrictions (e.g., televised matches, tournaments).

## Communication Drill: Debrief Circle (Reflective Team Review)

### Objective:

To encourage players to reflect on how well they communicated during play, identifying strengths and areas for improvement in a quick, constructive manner.

### Setup:

1. Form teams (pairs, triples, or fours).
2. After each end, players gather in a **small circle** (around the mat or sideline).

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3. Each player gives **one quick observation** about communication in that end.

- Example prompts:
  - *“What worked well in our calls?”*
  - *“Was there anything unclear?”*
  - *“How could we improve next end?”*

## Method:

1. Play an end as normal.
2. Immediately after completion, pause for 1–2 minutes in the **Debrief Circle**.
3. Each team member shares one point (keep it short and focused).
4. Agree on one communication improvement to apply in the **next end**.
5. Continue for several ends, tracking whether improvements are applied.

## Coaching Points:

- Keep reflections **constructive** — avoid blame.
- Encourage active listening: don’t interrupt teammates during feedback.
- Reinforce that communication is as much about tone and clarity as it is about tactics.
- Ask reflective questions to guide the discussion:
  - *“Did we stay positive?”*
  - *“Were instructions clear and consistent?”*
  - *“How did we respond to pressure?”*

## Progression:

- Use a **time limit**: 60 seconds per debrief to keep it sharp.
- Rotate leadership: at each end, a different player leads the debrief.
- Add an observation role: one teammate/coach watches silently during the end and contributes at debrief.
- Run it as part of competitive play — encourage quick tactical/communication review even under match pressure.

## Outcome:

- Builds a **habit of reflection** after play.



- Encourages shared responsibility for team communication.
- Promotes positivity and constructive dialogue.
- Strengthens team unity and adaptability across ends.

## Appendix B – Glossary of Coaching Terms

Silent End Drill: A practice end where players must use only non-verbal signals for communication.

Role-Swap Drill: A drill where players change positions (e.g., lead becomes skip) to experience different team responsibilities.

Positive Call: A supportive phrase or comment that reinforces confidence and team spirit.

Team Dynamics: The way individuals interact, communicate, and collaborate within a team.

Leadership Rotation: A method of giving different players the chance to lead or skip, building experience and confidence.

