

Coding System Structure

DIMENSION OVERVIEW – Coach Behaviour

Content	Autonomy Support	Evaluation Climate	Rapport
1 - Organization	1 - Autonomy-supportive 2 – Neutral 3 – Controlling		
2 - Instruction/Feedback	1 - Autonomy-supportive 2 – Neutral 3 – Controlling	4 – Mastery-oriented 5 – Neutral 6 – Ego-oriented	
3 - Positive Evaluation/Encouragement	1 - Autonomy-supportive 2 – Neutral 3 – Controlling	4 – Mastery-oriented 5 – Neutral 6 – Ego-oriented	
4 - Negative Evaluation	1 - Autonomy-supportive 2 – Neutral 3 – Controlling	4 – Mastery-oriented 5 – Neutral 6 – Ego-oriented	
5 - Mental Skills	1 - Autonomy-supportive 2 – Neutral 3 – Controlling	4 – Mastery-oriented 5 – Neutral 6 – Ego-oriented	
6 - Social/Moral Behaviour	1 - Autonomy-supportive 2 – Neutral 3 – Controlling	4 – Mastery-oriented 5 – Neutral 6 – Ego-oriented	
7 – Non-sport Communication			7 – Personal 8 – General
8 - Observation			
9 - Not Engaged			
x - Uncodable			

General Coding Guidelines

Overview

The Assessment of Coaching Tone (ACT) coding system was developed for observations coaches in a sport environment. This coding manual is intended for observation of primarily practice/training time, but can be used for competitions as well.

Rules

- 3-second rule
 - Wait three (3) seconds before coding 'observation' (coach behaviour tone) when changing from any actively communicative code. Code for this behaviour only if it continues past the three (3) second waiting period. If within three (3) seconds a different actively communicative behaviour occurs, do not wait to code that behaviour.
 - Wait three (3) seconds before coding 'uncodable' (coach behaviour tone) when changing from any other code. Code for this behaviour only if it continues past the three (3) second waiting period. If within three (3) seconds a different behaviour visibly or audibly occurs, do not wait to code that behaviour.
- Default codes
 - For coach behaviour tone, specific behaviour codes are to be coded by default if criteria for any other behaviour within the dimension are not met. That is, use the default code in the absence of any other codable behaviour:
 - (behaviour) – 'observation'

Dimension – Coach Behaviour

Overview

The coach behaviour dimension is comprised of basic content codes and three (3) classes of tone modifier codes.

Each interactive content code (i.e., all content codes other than ‘observation’ and ‘not engaged’) is linked to one (1) or two (2) specific classes of tone modifier codes. For each observed interactive coach behaviour, a content code and a tone modifier code from *each* associated class **MUST** be scored. Thus, each observed behaviour is categorized by the combination of two (2) or three (3) codes – a content code followed by modifier code(s) (e.g., “Instruction/Feedback + Autonomy-supportive + Mastery-oriented” or “Organization + Controlling”, etc.)

If there is a change in any of these codes (content OR tone modifier), begin a new entry and code as new independent coach behaviour. Thus, if the coach begins with “Instruction/Feedback + Autonomy-supportive + Mastery-oriented” and moves immediately to “Instruction/Feedback + Controlling + Ego-oriented” in the same continuous interaction, code as two (2) separate behaviours.

CONTENT CODES

1 – **Organization:** Communication from coach related to organization of practice tasks and athlete actions, NOT intended to directly influence performance.

Notes

- E.g., “now we’re doing ___ drill”, “go over there”, “do 10 of these”, etc.
- Includes discipline, keeping control, etc.
- Includes timing or counting during skill execution/drills
- CANNOT include any technical instruction related to movement quality (code 2) or motivational encouragement (code 3). Code for each separately, even if these behaviours occur in immediate sequence.

Associated Tone Modifier Class(es) – must also code

- Autonomy

2 – **Instruction/Feedback:** Technical and/or tactical and/or teaching instruction or feedback from coach, directed at athlete(s) motor performance or skill execution.

Notes

- **MUST** include prescriptive/corrective technical information in reference to the *quality* of the movement or skill execution (e.g., how it should be performed, what could be improved, etc.)

Associated Tone Modifier Class(es) – must also code

- Autonomy
- Motivational Climate

3 – Positive Evaluation/Encouragement (verbal and non-verbal): Positive reaction or motivational encouragement from coach directed at athlete(s) motor performance or skill execution.

Notes

- Can be verbal (e.g., “good job”, etc.) or non-verbal (e.g., thumbs up, high five, etc.).
- If non-verbal, must be very obvious communication.
- Can be directed at desirable performance (e.g., “way to go!”), mistake (e.g., “don’t worry about it”), or future performance (e.g., “you can do it!”, “lets go guys!”).
- CANNOT include any technical instruction related to movement quality (code 2)

Associated Tone Modifier Class(es) – must also code

- Autonomy
- Motivational Climate

4 – Negative Evaluation: Non-technical negative reaction by coach to an undesirable motor performance or skill execution by athlete(s).

Notes

- Must include an evaluative word or implied meaning
- Verbal (e.g., “that was terrible”, sarcasm, etc.).
- Non-verbal (e.g., shaking head, etc.).
- If non-verbal, must be very obvious communication.
- CANNOT include any technical instruction related to movement quality (code 2)

Associated Tone Modifier Class(es) – must also code

- Autonomy
- Motivational Climate

5 –Mental Skills: Communication from coach related to individual mental/psychological skills, characteristics, qualities, or aspects of performance.

Notes

- Can be directed at general psychological topics related to performance (e.g., confidence, focus, mental toughness, etc.)
- Can be directed at specific strategies to improve psychology of performance (e.g., imagery, self-talk, goal-setting, etc.)

Associated Tone Modifier Class(es) – must also code

- Autonomy
- Motivational Climate

6 –Social or Moral Behaviour: Communication from coach related to inter- and intra-personal behaviour and conduct, NOT directed toward performance enhancement.

Notes

- Can include general social or moral topics (e.g., respect, support, empathy/understanding, representing the team, etc.)
- Can include encouragement of peer coaching/helping (athletes providing feedback or instruction to peers)
- CANNOT include performance-specific topics (e.g., team coordination to run a specific tactical manoeuvre, etc.)

Associated Tone Modifier Class(es) – must also code

- Autonomy
- Motivational Climate

7 – **Non-sport communication:** Communication from coach not directly related to task, performance, or personal development in the current team/training/performance context.

Notes

- E.g., joking with athletes, talking about school, etc.

Associated Tone Modifier Class(es) – must also code

- Autonomy
- Rapport

8 – **Observation:** Coach engaged in observing/watching athletes during training/performance activities, though not directly communicating with athletes.

Notes

- Default code if coach is engaged in training/competition activities but criteria not met for any actively communicative code.
- 3-second rule in effect before coding for ‘observation’ from an actively communicative code.

No Associated Tone Modifier Class

9 – **Not engaged:** Coach not engaged in training/competition activities directed at athletes and not directly communicating with athletes.

Notes

- E.g., talking to other coaches (even if talking about practice-related content), adjusting music, etc.
- High threshold to code ‘Not engaged’

No Associated Tone Modifier Class

x – **Uncodable**

Notes

- To be coded if coach is out of view with no verbal communication detected or microphone cuts out.
- 3-second rule in effect before coding for ‘uncodable’.

No Associated Tone Modifier Class

TONE MODIFIER CODES

Autonomy

Possible Preceding Content Codes

- Organization
- Instruction/Feedback
- Positive Evaluation/Encouragement
- Negative Evaluation
- Discussion of Mental Skills
- Discussion of Social or Moral Behaviour
- Non-sport Communication

1 - **Autonomy-supportive**: Conveys view of athlete(s) as capable decision makers and contributing members of the situation.

Notes

- Provision of choice
- Soliciting of athlete opinion(s)
- Questioning (must expect/allow an answer reflecting athlete input)
- Acknowledgement of athlete feelings/perspectives
- Provision of rationale/justification for decisions
- Encouragement of creativity, risk taking, or independent problem solving
- Acknowledgement of individual role/contribution

2 – **Neutral**: Absence of autonomy-related tone.

Notes

- Only code if no criteria from any other category is met (e.g., “good”)
- If in doubt, code as ‘neutral’ (high threshold for ‘autonomy-supportive’ and ‘controlling’).

3 – **Controlling**: Verbal statement conveying an autocratic tone, with coach as total decision maker.

Notes

- Indicates NO athlete input, consultation, or acknowledgement of athlete(s) perspective
- Typically directive statements, where coach has already made decision
- Can reflect current activities or coach-driven *expectations* for future behaviour (e.g., ‘should’ or ‘must’ or equivalent statements)
- CAN be positive statements (e.g., “I want you to keep that up next game”)

Motivational Climate

Possible Preceding Content Codes

- Instruction/Feedback
- Positive Evaluation/Encouragement
- Negative Evaluation
- Discussion of Mental Skills
- Discussion of Social or Moral Behaviour

4 - **Mastery-oriented**: Verbal instruction or feedback that is self (individual athlete)-referenced OR focused on the process of skill execution

Notes

- Discussion of improvement relative to own past performance (self-referenced - e.g., “that was much better than yesterday”)
- Process, rather than outcome, based feedback (e.g., “good follow-through on that one!” – even if the shot was missed; note that reference to effort is also considered process-based feedback)
- If both self-referenced AND outcome-based content is expressed (e.g., “you made more shots that time”), prioritize the self-referenced aspect and code as ‘mastery-oriented’

5 – **Neutral**: Absence of motivational climate-related tone.

Notes

- Only code if no criteria from any other category is met (e.g., “good”)
- If in doubt, code as ‘neutral’ (high threshold for ‘mastery-oriented’ and ‘ego-oriented’).

6 - **Ego-oriented**: Verbal instruction or feedback that is other (comparative)-referenced or focused on the outcome of skill execution

Notes

- Discussion of relative ability in comparison to teammates/opponents (e.g., “nice work beating that defender!”)
- Outcome, rather than process, based feedback (e.g., “Nice goal”)
- If both other-referenced AND process-based content is expressed (e.g., “that was the best follow-through on the team”), prioritize the other-referenced aspect and code as ‘ego-oriented’

Rapport

Possible Preceding Content Codes

- Non-sport Communication

7 – **Personal:** Verbal non-sport related communication from the coach making direct reference to personal information about the athlete.

Notes

- Personal information refers to athlete's feelings, perspectives/opinions, life circumstances, or experiences outside of sport (i.e., school, family, relationships, etc.)
- Can take the form of a question, requesting personal information (e.g., "how was school today?", "what do you think of that movie?", etc.)
- Can also take the form of a statement, reflecting previous knowledge of athlete's personal information (e.g., "I know you were feeling pretty low last week", "Congratulations on finishing exams!", etc.)
- Can make reference to sports, as long as it does not have any reference to the athlete themselves or his/her team (e.g., talking about pro sports).

8 – **General:** Verbal non-sport related communication from the coach NOT making direct reference to personal information about the athlete.

Notes

- Default code if criteria for 'personal' not met
- CANNOT reference athlete's feelings, perspectives/opinions, life circumstances, or experiences outside of sport (i.e., school, family, relationships, etc.)