

Developing Basic Skills & Overcoming Errors

Players in the associative phase of learning gateball skills

Once a player has mastered their routines for stroking, sparking and sliding they need to apply them to a range of situations. They are associating their routine with the range of situations required in a game.

Block and Random Practice .Skills cards with a variety of strokes, sparks and slides commonly needed in a game can be useful. A number of them can be found as links from the Gateball Basics page. A beginner with little or no success and who is in the cognitive stage of motor development and is perfecting basic routines can benefit from transitioning to this sort of block practice. This is when the same skill is carried out in the same way every time.

However, there are limits to how often the repetition of exactly the same skill should be practiced in exactly the same way. Research has shown that varying the length, starting position or intended outcome of a skill will produce more learning in the long run. Playing follow on strokes, sparks or slides can add variability in a practise session. This is random practice. In short, don't over rely on constant repetition of the same drill to correct an error. In the Gateball Information Pamphlet, Gateball for Beginners, pages 12-18 are a number of basic drills but, for each one, a suggestion is made about how to add some variety into the practice

Performance Anxiety

When learning and applying routines for stroking, sparking and sliding it is important to follow a number of steps. It helps a player work out where things may be going wrong. When using drills, it will often be appropriate to review specific steps in a stroking, sliding or sparking routine. There is a danger, however, that a player can be too analytical. Mental overload and anxiety limit performance. The player can suffer "**paralysis by analysis**"

To avoid this trap, players can:

- **Develop an external focus.** Focussing beyond the actions of the body can be encouraged. There is a well known example of a rugby player who was having problems with his goal kicking. His plan to overcome this was to visualise a woman, called Doris, standing behind the goal. Initially his focus was to hit her with the ball but, as his skills improved, he then attempted to knock the newspaper out of her hands and, ultimately, a soft drink can. The results of visualising a target were significant. It can help if players to begin to think about the outcomes they want from the strokes they will play.
- **Learn implicitly.** Performing a secondary task while enacting a primary task can increase success (eg singing a song, creating errorless learning conditions eg. bringing gate 1 closer to the starting area or cross training.) A prompt at a crucial moment can also help.
- **Use analogy.** In cricket,for example, batsmen can think about placing their bat and body like a number 4. When stroking a ball, we might like to think like a pendulum.

Routines for Stroking: Additional Error Correction

Important note: For beginners, a routine of Grip, Stalk, Stance and Swing as described on the Basics page should be enough to assist in identifying errors. These notes are additional and may be valuable at later stages when players are going through a bad patch and believe that going back to the basics of their routine can help to analyse what is going wrong.

Some blanks have been left in the table in the hope that further ideas will be sent to info@gateball.com.au

Error	Possible cause and correction
Overhitting, balls keep going out	Stress that in GB, players who have previously played croquet need to shorten their backswing. Make sure the player can visualise how far away the ball is.
Keep missing the gate or ball and always to the left (or right)	-Check the foot positions. They should be pointing straight forward or at the same small angle. The foot can also be too far form the line of aim so the stick does not swing below the dominant eye. Watch the player form in front to check these -Take a longer backswing so the mallet head has a chance of being straight by the time it hits the ball and no pushing occurs with the stick

	<p>-Relax the bottom hand so that it is used more as a guide and reach forward along the ground in the follow through</p> <p>-Error can sometimes be caused by tightening the grip while stroking. Set the tightness of the grip and keep it relaxed during the stroke. From the side it may be possible to notice that the mallet head twists between the full extent of the backswing and hitting the ball. The effect of this can be demonstrated by tightening the grip in the initial position. This will lead the mallet head turning a degree or two</p> <p>-</p>
Mallet head keeps twisting as the ball is hit	<p>Caused by not hitting the ball in the middle of the stick face. The impact of the ball then causes the twist</p> <p>Line the shot up carefully, keep the shoulders still, swing smoothly from the shoulders and, importantly keep the eyes on the back of the ball. Keep the eyes on the place where the ball was resting at least until it is well out of sight</p>
Hit the ground especially for slides or long shots	<p>Shoulders are dipping as the player swings often in order to hit the ball a bit harder</p> <p>Concentrate on keeping the shoulders absolutely still for every shot</p>
Add additional examples	

Reference

These notes are a summary of ideas relevant to gateball from *Croquet Coaching: Recognition of Errors*. <http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/coach/riches/errcor/index.asp#Toc40003235>