



ACTIVITY 3 – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS USING A REFERENT MODEL

Key Reference Information

Selecting Referent Models:

- Criteria: Choose referent models who excel in the same discipline as the athlete, ideally those who have demonstrated consistent success at important levels of competition.
- Attributes: Focus on models whose physical, technical, tactical, and mental skills are well rounded and exemplary.

When selecting referent models for equestrian athletes, focusing on specific movements or skills, coaches should consider the following six key criteria, incorporating appropriate developmental stages:

1) Biomechanical Similarity:

- a) Choose models with similar joint mobility, coordination, and posture relevant to the specific movement or skill.
- b) Ensure the model matches the athlete's developmental stage for optimal learning.

2) Core Stability and Control:

- a) Models should demonstrate strong core stability, balance, and control, as these are fundamental across all equestrian disciplines.
- b) The model's skill level should align with the athlete's ability to maintain these fundamentals during the selected movement.

3) Symmetry, Alignment, and Joint Mobility:

- a) Focus on models showing proper body symmetry and joint alignment, crucial for balance and force distribution.
- b) Models should match the athlete's physical maturity and development.

4) Coordination and Movement Transitions:

- a) The model should highlight high coordination and fluid transitions between movements.
- b) The model should be suited to the athlete's age and stage of skill development.

5) Injury Prevention and Compensation Patterns through Proper Mechanics:

- a) Select models that demonstrate good mechanics essential for injury prevention, avoiding unnecessary compensation patterns.
- b) Focus on developing healthy movement habits based on the athlete's physical readiness.

6) Mental Focus and Adaptability:

- a) Mental composure and adaptability in the model are important for demonstrating how to maintain focus under varying conditions.
- b) Ensure the model represents the athlete's capacity for cognitive development at their stage.



Coaching Interventions: Helping, questioning, simplifying, demonstrating, visualizing

Activity Modifications: Progressions, tempo, equipment, environment, rest intervals

Competitive Interventions: Equipment, tactics, focus, visualization, goal setting.

DETECTABLE SIGNS OR INDICATORS OF GAPS

Corrective Measures		
Teaching Interventions	Activity or Drill Modification	Competitive Interventions
Help or reassure Explain or ask questions Simplify – reduce number of variables to process, or use examples Use mental skills strategy (i.e. refocusing, visualization, or goal setting) Demonstrate or model correct performance Provide feedback or results Adjust for athlete learning styles	Adjust equipment Adjust task demands or repeat Adjust progression Adjust speed or timing Adjust space or change environment Adjust work/rest ratios or intensity	Adjust equipment i.e. shoeing Changing tactics or plan Change focus Use mental skills strategy (i.e. refocusing, visualization, or goal setting) Provide feedback or results

Learning Objectives

- Use biomechanical indicators to compare rider performance against a referent model.
- Identify technical, physical, tactical, or mental performance gaps.
- Identify individualized correction strategies using teaching interventions and modifications.

Step-by-Step Activity Plan

Step 1: Referent Model and Viewing Setup (10 mins)

- Participants select the appropriate plane of view and performance areas (technical, physical, tactical, mental).
- Introduce an ideal referent model (demo rider) performing a pattern.
- Select 6 Skills to observe during pattern execution.
- Identify what "ideal" looks like in posture, alignment, timing, and flow (KPIs).

Step 2: Live Observation and Note Taking (20 mins)

- Observe rider performing same pattern as model.



- Observe rider performing the same skills as the model.
- Record observations using side-by-side comparison prompts.
- Compare across four domains: physical, technical, tactical decision-making, and mental focus.

Step 3: Corrections and Coaching Strategy (15 mins)

- Engage rider in reflection. What's working? What's not?
- Identify appropriate teaching strategies (demonstration, simplifying, visualizing).
- Suggest activity adjustments (speed, progression, equipment, environment).

Step 4: Debrief and Action Planning (15 mins)

- Present analysis: what was observed, what are the skill gaps identified, what corrections would Coaches suggest.
- Connect findings to future coaching adjustments and long-term training progress.

KPI Comparison Chart (Example)

Task	KPI	Referent Model Performance	Observed Performance	Coaching Comment
Simple Change of Lead Through the Walk.	Timing	Smooth, precise through trot	Delayed transition	Improve timing of aids
Leg Yield in Trot/jog.	Symmetry	Even bend, straight movement	Loss of shoulder alignment	Clarify inside leg to outside rein
Lengthen Stride in Canter	Balance	Maintains uphill balance	Leaning forward	Reinforce upper body stability



Observation Recording Chart

Skill/Task & Associated KPI	Referent Model What should it look like?	Observed Rider What did you see?	Performance Gap (So what?)	Suggested Correction (Now what?)



Skill/Task & Associated KPIs	Referent Model What should it look like?	Observed Rider What did you see?	Performance Gap (So what?)	Suggested Correction (Now what?)