



## PLANNING

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# CHAPTER



# Chapter 6

## Planning

### INTRODUCTION

There are many factors that are important for effective coaching. However, if there is any one area that is perhaps more important than the others, it is the area of planning.

### THE YEARLY/SEASON PLAN

A yearly plan is an essential component of effective coaching for players intending to optimise their development. Players involved in the lower levels of sport often achieve some success without a yearly plan, but few will reach their full potential and go on to become high-level players unless they have a structured training and competition plan. School, club, zone, state and national programs should all be linked together, and through optimal calendar planning should ensure a progressive structure and sequence of training and competition.

The yearly plan helps players maintain a balanced lifestyle, prompts the coach to organise facilities, equipment and transport well in advance, enables parents and schools to cater for the needs of the participant (and allows the players to organise training and competition around school requirements) and provides an objective measure which coaches can use to assess the effectiveness of their program.

Yearly plans vary between sports, players and cultures. Many factors affect the composition of such plans, including:

- Family and school commitments.
- Characteristics of competitions.
- Level of maturity and ability.
- Resources.
- Climate.
- Attitudes.
- Demands of the sport.
- Coaching events.
- Time of day.
- Access to athletes

### PHASES OF A YEARLY PLAN

In order to be successful, the coach must be well prepared and plan ahead. The importance of planning cannot be underestimated. A major reason for having a yearly plan is to schedule the various phases throughout the year in order to bring about optimal performance so that the playing group is at the peak of its training at the time of competition. A team's training schedule should be organised and planned to also ensure individual and group goals are achieved. The planning process therefore should be an organised, methodical and scientific procedure which assists the players and coach achieve predetermined standards.

A yearly training program should be simple and flexible. All coaches should have a yearly plan dividing the training year into small phases. Each of these phases will have specific training objectives. This enables the coach to work within manageable segments.

A yearly plan can be divided into three phases:

- Off-season or transition phase.
- Pre-season or preparatory phase.
- In-season or competition phase.



## PLANNING THE TRAINING PROGRAM

### Off-season phase (October-November)

This eight to 10-week period follows the intense competitive season. The aim during this time should be to maintain physical conditioning and facilitate recovery.

- The following principles apply to the off-season phase.
- Maintain a general level of fitness around 50-60 per cent of the in-season phase.
- Change the training venue and later the type of training.
- Analyse past performance and construct a yearly plan for the new season.

During this period, players should stay active to maintain endurance fitness and control body weight. Off-season recreational activities are useful. This period is the most suitable for overcoming weaknesses in body structure, conditioning and skill. Weight-training programs, speed work and skill development can be carried out.

### Pre-season phase (December-March)

This is the period which immediately follows the off-season phase. During this time the coach should plan to develop the players' capacity for effort, general physical preparation, techniques and strategies. After a base has been established, speed and power activities should gradually be incorporated with endurance activities decreasing. Skill activities should be the focus of training.

#### During the pre-season phase, activities should be structured to:

- Progressively adjust the physical and psychological components according to the requirements of competition.
- Provide a high volume of training with only 30-40 per cent devoted to high-intensity training.
- Improve endurance, strength and speed as the physical groundwork for further performance accomplishments.
- Devote the later portion to specific exercises directly related to the skills and/or technical aspects of the sport. The intensity of training should increase but the total volume of training will be reduced by 20-40 per cent.
- Improve and perfect techniques and tactics.

### In-season phase (April-September)

Training during this period should be appropriate to football. Activities should be selected to maintain pre-season fitness and develop individual and team skills.

During the competitive phase, activities should be structured to:

- Maintain the physical standards acquired in the preparation phase.
- Perfect techniques and tactics.
- Gain competitive experience with the aim of improving game skills and mental capacities.

## TRAINING VARIABLES

The training variables that need to be taken into consideration in the yearly planning process include the volume, intensity, frequency and specificity of training and training load.

In the practice of planning:

- The volume of training relates to the amount of time spent training or total number of repetitions per exercise.
- The intensity of training is related to the amount of effort required.
- The frequency of training refers to the number of training sessions performed within a given time frame (i.e. day, week).
- The specificity of training refers to the content or to the 'direction of training' performed within a given time period, or to the percentage of training performed with reference to sport-specific versus general training.
- Training load includes the quantitative and qualitative components of training, that is, combined volume and intensity of training.
- The volume and intensity of training are related in that when training volume is high, the intensity should be low, and vice versa. When training volume is low, the intensity should be high.

*The general operating principle of planning is to start with high volume, low intensity in the pre-season and move towards high intensity, low volume during the season.*

## PLANNING A TRAINING SESSION

The training session is the basic building block of coaching. It is essential that coaches thoroughly plan each training session. At training, football skills are learned, conditioning and fitness levels are achieved and team confidence is developed. In football, the training session will contain various drills and training activities set between a warm-up at the beginning and a cool-down at the end. To decide on what drills are suitable for a particular session, the coach must first evaluate the team performance and then plan for optimal practice time. Goals should be established before each segment of a training session. This will ensure individual and team deficiencies and strengths will be focused on.

When planning a training session, the following considerations should be noted:

### Venue

Various venues can be used during the football year, particularly in the pre-season period. In addition to the home ground, coaches should seek alternative venues ranging from an athletics track or swimming pool, to a well-grassed hilly surface, indoor gymnasium or basketball court. If carefully selected, these venues can greatly improve the general standard of training.

### Equipment

The well-prepared coach will have a variety of equipment on hand at training.

This can include:

- Footballs, pump.
- Witches hats.
- Whistle, stop watch.
- Handball target.
- Tackle bags, ruck bags.
- Portable goal posts.
- Training jumpers and an adequate supply of water for players during and after training.

### Outline of the training session

Many coaches now provide the players with an outline of the training session before training. Players can be informed on the overall aims of the session, in addition to the approximate length and intensity of practice.

### Be specific

Training must be specific to the demands of the game. With running training, the distance covered, the intensity and the number of repetitions must be appropriate to the game and the various playing conditions. It is essential that running work be supplemented with activities using footballs.

### Quality not quantity

In general terms, the emphasis should be on a quality, non-stop training session rather than one of low volume and long duration.

## TRAINING DIARY/PLANNING SHEET

Coaches of all levels should use a system for planning and recording details of training sessions and competitive performances of their players/teams. This will enhance sequential development of players. The following sample pages from a football coach's diary illustrate one method and you can use any diary or notebook to develop your own if you wish. A sample training session plan, which you can copy and use for planning your sessions is included on page 69.

## SAMPLE TRAINING DIARY

### Training Plan: Pre Season or In Season

Phase of Season: In season

Session Number: 3

Date: Tuesday 20/4

Time of Session: 75 mins

Venue: Ripplebrook Res - U/15 Team

Assistants: P Clogg J Johnson

Aims of Session:

Work on individual level ground skills - Open forward line

Equipment Needed: Bump Bag, 15 balls, Focus Pads

Reminder Notes for Team Briefing:

Map out training; chase up forwards from weekend re congestion and on-ballers, organise forwards vs backs

### Session Outline (Don't forget hydration breaks)

**WARM UP/CONDITIONING - 15 mins**  
lane warm up - Stretches  
Include low-to-ground pick up  
Introduce Bump Bags  
"Bag Barge" in Warm-Up Library

### SKILL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES or TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT (Game Sense Game)

ASSISTANTS: All

TIME: 30 mins

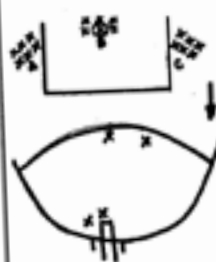


J Johnson and P Clogg  
umpire  
"Dodgem" - see Games Library  
2 teams  
Need 2 Focus Pads, 10 cones  
Use injured players as catchers  
x 2 games

### GAME SPECIFIC DRILLS

ASSISTANTS: As above

TIME: 20 mins



"Feed the Forward" - see Full Ground Library  
"Forwards vs Backs" - see Full Ground Library

"Feed the Forwards" - Set up forward lines as shown. Coach kicks to groups of 3 at A, B and C (throughout drill), group deliver to half-forwards or full forwards and follow kick until goal scored.

### WARM DOWN:

ASSISTANT:

TIME: 10 mins

lane cool down

### EXTENDED DRILLS or GAME SENSE EXTENSIONS

ASSISTANTS: N/A

TIME:



(Draw diagram here)

### GAME SENSE QUESTIONS TO ASK

How can we create space in forward area?  
What do forwards need to do to create space?  
What can backs and onballers do to help keep forward line open?

## Training Plan: Pre-Season or In Season (cont)

### Managerial Duties

#### PLAYERS TO TALK TO:

NAME:	COMMENTS:
Peachy	Running backwards into spaces
Broun	Not offering second lead
Sticks	Poor timing of lead
Jacko	Poor decision making re delivery into forward line
Smithy	Fantastic tight game at full-back

#### TEAM MEETING:

TEAM MEETING: 15 mins

#### VIDEO POINTS:

Show self-inflicted congestion  
Show good 11ers in defence  
Show fumbling by on-ballers and forwards

#### STATS HIGHLIGHTS:

Ball-ups inside 50 m  
Marks taken by key forwards "one on one"

#### OUTCOMES:

Reduce ball-ups inside our forward 50m  
Increase marks taken by our forwards "one on one"

#### INJURY STATUS:

NAME	INJURY	PERIOD OUT	REHAB PROGRAM
Harry	Hamstring	2 weeks	Pool, physio
Sticks	Corky	1 Week	Pool, physio
Ando	Knee	1 week	Resume training at 3/4 pace

### Session Evaluation

TRAINING: Rate and comment on the following:

DURATION OF SESSION: Adequate

EQUIPMENT: Need more bags and ruckbag

ASSISTANTS: Clogg - more info re delivery to forwards

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED: CHF still running backwards into space

DRILLS USED: Good

MOTIVATION LEVEL OF PLAYERS/STAFF: Good

#### MENTOR FEEDBACK:

#### PLAYER TRAINING PERFORMANCE:

Random notes on performances you noticed:

Ellis Looked "hungry to play seniors"  
Jeff Looked lethargic  
Stan Got aggro in forwards v backs drill

#### AREAS TO FOCUS ON AND IMPROVE:

Forwards prepared to sacrifice leads  
Clogg needs more input from me

#### AREAS TO CONTINUE WITH:

"Area coaches" will work  
Sharp video highlights were good - use more positives



## Recovery

Optimal hydration, nutrition and recovery activities such as swimming can facilitate recovery and maximise team performance. It is extremely important that appropriate recovery strategies are included following games, particularly, and training to ensure complete recovery of all team members. In addition to this, massage, relaxation and stretching should either be an integral part of the cool-down procedure or be completed following training and competition. After the season has finished, it's important for players to have active rest, which can be anything from 8-18 weeks, depending on the level of football. This time is for recovery and vital in preventing symptoms of overtraining/fatigue. Players should also significantly reduce the volume/intensity of training and focus on other recreational pursuits.

## Tapering

As part of the coach's yearly plan, it's important that they include periods of tapering in the program. There are several times throughout the yearly plan when coaches should consider tapering and these include:

- Following the pre-season period or at the beginning of the season.
- Mid-way during the season.
- If the team is looking likely to contest finals, taper again for the finals.

Coaches can incorporate tapering into the yearly program by reducing the quantity of training. This will allow player fitness levels to be maintained while also continuing to refine and develop technical and tactical skills. Scheduling appropriate times to refresh the players is also important to limit wherever possible the risk of injury and overtraining.

## THE WEEKLY PLAN

Just as the football year can be divided into three main phases, so too can these phases be further subdivided. Training progresses in cycles of activity usually considered to be of seven days' duration. The format of these cycles will depend on the number of training sessions held each week. In planning the typical competitive week, the coach should take into account both the volume and intensity of training. The coach must allow for the physical nature of the game and the limitations of his/her players in coping with heavy loads without adequate rest. Overtraining is a real problem and can lead to a sudden drop in performance. The coach must be able to evaluate all these factors in planning the weekly program. The effective coach must monitor the players' performances and tailor the volume and intensity of training to have the team at a peak before each game.

Most clubs organise two or three training sessions per week with rest days between sessions. A complete rest day or a light training session becomes an important consideration during the normal rigours of a football season. This 'hard-easy' approach to the planning of a weekly training program is a sound principle to follow. It allows players to progressively adapt to a greater level of work without suffering undue fatigue.

## GOAL-SETTING

The words "goals", "aims", "objectives" and "targets" essentially mean the same thing – they are statements by which the success of a team can be judged. Goal-setting is one of the most basic preparation techniques. Goals set targets for achievement over a certain period of time. They help in planning and monitoring the development of skills and other abilities. They are also natural and powerful motivators because they focus attention on relevant activities for progress towards desired results.

The coach should involve each individual and the team as a whole in the goal-setting process. Under the coach's guidance, players can set appropriate goals that they are eager to work towards. Process goals (factors which can be controlled by individual effort) should predominate over outcome goals which can be too dependent on external factors. Both long-term and short-term goals should be set.



Goal-setting is an important part of the planning process. Goals should follow the SMART principle. They should be:

### **S Specific**

Set goals specific to your players'/team's needs. Identify weak areas in your game and develop appropriate strategies that address these weaknesses. Specific, challenging goals are most effective in improving performance via behavioural change.

### **M Measurable**

Goals need to be expressed in measurable terms. Quantify everything wherever possible by identifying target times, etc., e.g.

- Each player will get equal time in games over the season.
- The team will finish higher in the league than last year.
- Players will better their score on a skill circuit.
- Players will better their times by 10 per cent.

### **A Achievable**

Goals need to appropriately reflect your player's and team's potential. While some goals should be challenging, it is important initially to establish goals that can be achieved before progressing to more difficult goals. Coaches should also discuss the goals within the group to convince their players they can reach the standard set.

### **R Realistic**

Coaches need to set goals that are difficult enough to challenge but realistic enough to be achieved. A way to ensure the goals are realistic is to use past experiences as a guide, thus indicating what you are likely to achieve in the future.

### **T Time bound**

Identify target dates for accomplishing your player's/team's goals. Setting dates helps motivate coaches and players and is a continual reminder of the urgency of achieving such goals in a specified, realistic time frame.

## **Other essential goal-setting tips**

- Set positive goals on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis.
- Set goals for both training and games.
- Develop strategies for each goal.
- Write goals down and keep them where they can be reviewed regularly.
- Provide for goal evaluation. Recording your goals and evaluating your feedback is essential if goals are going to be effective in enhancing individual and team performance.
- Be flexible in the approach. Unforeseen circumstances may cause you as coach to re-evaluate your team goals and develop alternative strategies.
- Ensure ownership over goals. Goals become motivating when the whole team has direct input into them and feel accountable to achieving the goals.

## **Long-term goals**

To provide a blueprint for a season, long-term goals should be set from the beginning. The first step is to map out the training and competition schedule for the time period under consideration. Then the coach and players should decide on what they would like to have achieved by certain dates. The majority of long-term goals should be process-orientated and focus on development of physical and psychological abilities through means controllable by the player.

Goals are set not as an end in themselves, but as a guide to and measure of achievement. Monitoring and adjusting goals is an essential part of that process. It is rare that a goal is exactly achieved and people either fall short or exceed a goal. The coach should help players understand that each evaluation of goal progress is simply a way of determining whether to adjust the standard to a more reasonable level or raise it to a new, more challenging one. Long-term goals should be reviewed on a regular basis.



### **Short-term goals**

While long-term goals determine the desired destination, short-term goals describe the steps to get there. These are the daily and weekly goals which promote continual development. They should be process goals which are challenging enough to be motivating, but also achievable. Good short-term goals focus on things that improve abilities relevant to achieving the long-term goals.

#### **Short-term goals can be set for:**

- Fitness – conditioning, weight training, flexibility and endurance.
- Specific skills – development of new skills, maintenance of well-learned skills.
- Performance strategies – overall style of play, contingency plans for varying circumstances, decision making.
- Emotional control – controlling arousal levels, coping with frustrations/anger, remaining positive.
- Team play – communication, coordination of players' performances, cooperation.
- Social aspects – friendships, cohesion, managing life around sport.

To get the most out of training and competitions, clearly state specific short-term goals before each session. This will help direct attention to working on these aspects. After the session, ensure that any evaluation is based on how well these goals were achieved. Much of the value of goals is in the evaluation of progress and the adjustment of goals for the next time.

No one can focus effectively on a large number of goals at the same time. On any given occasion, players should be directed towards only a small number of goals (no more than four). As skills develop, earlier goals will be achieved automatically and new ones can be put in their place. In addition, alternating the goal focus from session to session will help to keep players fresh and motivated. Finally, recognising successful advancement on goals through verbal praise and occasional rewards is crucial. It is just as important to provide lots of encouragement when players fall short of their goals. Great coaches will help players to get over the temporary failures and eagerly move to the next challenge.

## **PLANNING STRATEGIES FOR KEEPING ADOLESCENTS IN THE GAME**

The following information proposes a set of principles for designing training and practice activities for adolescents. These principles are aimed at increasing the young players' desire to participate not only in the game but also the training program for an extended time over several seasons. It must be remembered that in a structured coaching program, the effective design of activities alone will not guarantee that a player will participate for a long period of time and/or realise his/her potential. Therefore, the following principles need to be supported by quality interactive coaching behaviours, effective management and organisational techniques and an applied knowledge of sports science.

## **PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

### **Field time**

Most sporting organisations now include in their codes of coaching behaviour for children's sport that coaches must give all players equal time on the field. With adolescents, the concept of providing maximum participation for all players tends to demand a more sophisticated interpretation than just the amount of time on the field.

Adolescents will assess the fairness of their injection into a game according to the ratio of 'opportunities to respond' (moments of competitive activity) to 'time in the game'. An acceptable ratio will be situationally specific. Also more mature adolescents will fully understand and accept the complexities of their sport and will adjust the ratio according to the position they play. A back pocket player in football will not expect to have as many possessions as the rover.

Effective coaches will ensure that all of their players have adequate opportunities to respond, not only to develop their playing abilities, but also to satisfy the player's participation expectations. This principle needs to be applied to training and practice as well as to competition. For example, if a footballer has had their allotted amount of time on the field compared to their teammates, but has not had the opportunities to perform their prescribed function, then they should be left on the field until there have been reasonable opportunities for them to perform their function.

## **“What’s next?”**

A feeling of worth is usually associated with successful completion of tasks and/or achievement of standards that are either defined by the players themselves or by others (coach, team, community and/or the sport culture). Players who have sound self esteem regarding their ability to perform will adopt the attitude of “what’s next?” at training or in competition they accept the challenges that will take their abilities to a higher level. To nurture the self-esteem of adolescent players, coaches should design activities which guarantee a positive outcome. This can be achieved by varying the terrain, the regime and/or the drill so that each player has the opportunity to use their strengths and avoid overexposing their weaknesses.

When using competitive team drills at training, it is appropriate to consider using grids and to divide the team into practice units. The number of players in each unit and the ability of the players per unit will determine the success of each of the competing players. For example, when teaching players to use a variety of passing plays to evade the opposition, the slowest and least skilled players could be in a larger grid with fewer players in each team (unit) while the faster and more skilful players could be in a smaller grid with more players on each team (unit).

## **Peer acceptance**

One of the more difficult factors to control when designing training activities is an adolescent’s feeling of peer acceptance. On many occasions, friends will choose to participate in a sport to play on a team together. Even before they start training and competition against other teams, there is a feeling of acceptance between them. Continuing to have opportunities to play together to achieve a common goal is often important to them. If the anticipated link between friends is not maintained by the coach then they may choose not to play the sport. All other factors being equal, coaches should endeavour to provide opportunities for friends to work together in training drills and practices and for them to play on the same team.

In the more common situation where young people independently join a club to become a player, the coach needs to develop inter-player confidence, respect and acceptance. Structuring activities so that players have the opportunity to gain the respect of their peers is important. When improving players in difficult and new training situations where the chances of success are minimal, the drills should be designed so as to limit the opportunities for players to observe other players’ attempts at achieving the task. When players consistently reach a level of performance that the coach knows will be acceptable to other members of the team, then the pressure of the drill can be increased by introducing extensions to the drill.

During training, practice and games, the coach should use every available opportunity to place players in positions of responsibility. The behaviours required in these positions should be understood by all team members. When a player fails to meet the intended criteria, coaches need to immediately confirm that it was not due to a lack of commitment or ability on behalf of the player, but rather the circumstances that surrounded the event. This can be achieved by quietly talking to them about the event and by outwardly acknowledging respect for their interpretation of the event. At this point, the player and coach should be seen to be working on possible solutions should an error occur in the future. By modelling respect for players, the coach encourages similar attitudes in team members.

Creating a convivial atmosphere allows the coach to structure drills where all players constantly have to work with all other athletes and therefore cope with the ineptness of some and the wizardry of others. Through these experiences, teammates learn what each of their peers are capable of doing and also learn to support their teammates when they are below their best and acknowledge them when they exceed expectations.

## **Success**

Obviously there is no greater motivator than success. Grading players into appropriate competitions, sequentially increasing the level of difficulty of training drills, resetting the required performance standards and establishing realistic coach expectations of the player are well-documented principles that coaches should adopt when designing their programs. This principle applies to all stages of player development and probably warrants equal attention at each stage.

Coaches and adolescents are often overheard discussing the significant dropout of players that occurs in the mid-to-late teenage years. While the above principles do not pretend to solve the dropout problem, they will enhance the quality of the experience for all participants and therefore increase the probability of them remaining in the sport for longer periods of time.

Effective coaches will ensure that all of their players have adequate opportunities to not only develop their playing abilities, but also to satisfy the players’ participation expectations.



## ADOLESCENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Some coaches may feel apprehensive about including players with a disability in football. It is important to remember that every individual has the right to participate in sport. Including players with a disability is not difficult – it simply requires enthusiasm and understanding.

When involving players with a disability in your club, remember to:

- Encourage the carer/parent to be involved and assist in activities and be responsible for the needs of the player.
- Work with what the player can do and if you are not sure, ask their parent or carer.
- Introduce the player to other members and create a 'buddy' system with other players.
- Make simple modifications to various activities. This will allow greater participation by everyone.
- Allow the player to participate in all aspects of the day's activities.
- Provide activities where players can succeed and develop self-esteem.
- Encourage all players to participate in all activities.

## COACHING FEMALE PLAYERS

When coaching female players, whether they are members of an all female team or as individuals in predominantly boys' teams, the most important thing to focus on is that you are coaching people. Therefore, all of the general coaching advice provided throughout the manual applies equally to coaching female players.

Generally female players come to a team with similar motivations to male participants and they respond to training with the same physical, physiological and skill development outcomes as their male counterparts.

Each athlete is an individual and has a unique set of circumstances under which they will perform at their best. Female players (and generally all players) will be best served by a coaching process which pays attention to the following:

- Be welcoming, supportive and ensure safety and an absence of any forms of harassment – a safe, supportive environment is the key to encouraging girls to become or stay involved.
- Coaches, particularly males coaching females, must be sensitive to the impact of personal proximity and be aware that unnecessary touching is inappropriate and may offend. Ensure physical contact with players is appropriate and necessary for their skill development. Contact should only be used to facilitate learning or safe participation. (For more information about this area, see Australian Sports Commission, Harassment-free Sport Guidelines for Coaches – [www.activeaustralia.org/hfs/Coaches.pdf](http://www.activeaustralia.org/hfs/Coaches.pdf))
- Conduct programs where individuals experience success and skill development.
- Respect each player's abilities – do not water down activities specifically for females.
- Spend equal time and attention with all players to avoid perceptions of favouritism or neglect.
- Do not treat females in a totally different way or continually draw attention to the fact that they are girls.
- Ensure female players have a say in program planning and any issues discussed by the team.
- A person's sports performance should not be a measure of their self-worth.
- Learn as much as possible about young female athletes and be open and professional with players about specific issues related to their growth and development as outlined in Chapter 1.

# Training session plan

**Session no:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Topic:** .....

**Aim of session:** .....

## WARM-UP

(Generally includes activities to increase body temperature, stretching, ball handling and movement specific activities)

**Time:**

## EXTENDED DRILL ACTIVITY

(Generally drills designed to extend skill level to game situation)

**Time:**

**Extended drill:**

## SKILL DRILL/SKILL DEVELOPMENT

(Generally reinforces skills taught or tactics introduced or can include introduction of new skills to players)

**Time:**

**Skill drill:**

## GAME ACTIVITY DRILL

(Generally use drills that reinforce the method or pattern of play the team should adopt)

**Time:**

**Game drill:**

## WARM-DOWN

(Generally used to assist in the recovery of players after training sessions)

**Time:**

