

# HANDBALL AT SCHOOL – DIDACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION (P.E.) STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

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## Summary:

A didactical framework conception for teaching handball at school shall be based on a 3-level model “Me and the Ball”, “With Each Other”, and “Team Against Team”. Appropriate teaching tools and manuals shall be offered to current and future P.E. teachers such as game and exercise sequences for developing general and specific playing skills, including facility management, pedagogical advice and new trend activities such as Beach-and Street Handball.

## Keywords:

Starting the game and teaching handball at school, didactical framework conception, P.E. teachers’ education at university, P.E. teacher’s further training courses

## Introduction:

In 2006 the EHF carried-out the 2006 EHF Conference “Handball at School” in Innsbruck/AUT as well as the 2006 EHF Youth Handball Convention in Vienna/AUT aimed at starting a process of Europe-wide deliberations on how to pave the way for handball into schools despite the different school systems and P.E. curricula used all over Europe. In 2010/11 the International Handball Federation (IHF) started a world-wide project “Handball at School” in order to spread and promote the same concept.

Nowadays methodological handball literature in Europe is comprehensive, professional and well-fitting for the purpose of developing the sport in many countries in Europe.

But – is that the right literature for the P.E. teacher at school, who is free to choose the sports and activities from a very general framework P.E. curriculum in his/her country?

Does he/she know how to start the game at school or how to attract and motivate his/her pupils for the game, if he/she has never played handball him/herself?

Can he/she understand methodological handball literature that is mostly lacking concrete hints for an appropriate, age-adequate didactical approach to handball?

Apparently the answer is “no”!

If handball wants to be competitive with other sports that already have created concepts for both starting and promoting their activities at school and educating P.E. teachers in an appropriate way, handball experts need to create, differentiate and reflect guidelines for handball didactical competence to be acquired by current and future P.E. teachers. They have to be attracted by the team sport handball and motivated to start and develop it at school against the background and competition of other attractive team- and trend sports. “Handball at School” is a very important market for the future of handball, worth starting deliberations on how to draw the pupils’ and their teachers’ attention to the game.

## Methods:

Based on my full-time professional activities for the European Handball Federation (EHF) in education, training and grass root development as well as my more than 25 years of work as an external lecturer for handball at the University of Vienna Institute for Sports Science the objective of my article is to present a specific didactical concept for P.E. university students and future teachers for simply “learning, practising and learning how to teach sport-game-oriented motor sequences in handball” which shall be offered as part of both curricula, for the university P.E. teacher education as well as for P.E. teacher further training activities.

An appropriate handball methodology – all practices, procedures and rules used by handball coaches/teachers - is important for teaching the basics of the game, but handball didactics, the art of teaching with regard to the teaching environment and facilities available, is even more important for starting and developing handball as an attractive team sport at school.

The following proposal is clearly inspired by age-appropriate, game-appropriate and action-oriented didactic models and includes cross-references to the current state-of-the-art of teaching concepts for sport games such as handball. It goes without saying that the approach applied is a hermeneutic (=interpretive) one based on acquired knowledge from handball literature and personal, professional experience in handball teaching and working with international experts.

## Development:

### “The route to handball” (EHF)

The 1997 EHF publication “The route to handball” by RINCK and GUERRERO was conceived as a proposal for handball-specific methodology with didactical principles to follow for developing the game in various age categories developed by experts from leading European handball nations within the EHF.

Level	Age	Philosophy	By children for children	Game	Competition	Contents	Requirements and skills
I	up to 7	The ball as a playing companion - getting used to the ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Come “and help”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Preparatory games</li> </ul>	NO	<u>Animation:</u> 1. Getting used to the ball 2. Handling the ball 3. Motor coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic motor skills</li> <li>● Learning how to fall</li> <li>● Activities and games with the ball: taking up, rolling, passing, catching games</li> </ul>
II	7-10	Mini-handball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1 referee from among the players</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 4+1 players</li> <li>● Smaller court</li> <li>● Goals 2.40x1.60m</li> <li>● Ball size 0</li> </ul> <hr/> Mini-handball playing festivals	NO  YES	<u>Game:</u> 1. Motivation 2. Physical relationship between the player and the court 3. Various experiences 4. Social experiences / playing festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic motor skills + passing, catching, bouncing, blocking</li> <li>● Moving into free spaces, watching, running loose</li> <li>● Playing elements in motion, distance and position towards the opponent</li> </ul> Cf. EHF publication “Mini-Handball”
III	10-12	„Basic Handball 1“	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1 – 2 referees from among the teams</li> <li>● 1 adult helper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transition phase to 6+1</li> <li>● Handball court 40x20m</li> <li>● Goals 3.00x2.00m</li> <li>● Ball size 1</li> <li>● Shorter playing time</li> <li>● Alternative playing formats: 5+1 half of the court 2 times 3:3</li> </ul>	YES/ NO	<u>Game / drills:</u> 1. No adult type training 2. Development of technical / tactical skills 3. Development of physical skills 4. Playing festivals and simple competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Age-appropriate communication and storage of information</li> <li>● Playing in motion – man marking, offensive defence, counter-attack, play on all positions</li> <li>● Versatile use of speed, integrated endurance, strengthening the body using its own weight</li> </ul>
IV	12-14	“Basic Handball 2“	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2 referees from among the teams</li> <li>● 1 adult helper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 6+1 players</li> <li>● Girls: Ball size 1</li> <li>● Boys: Ball size 2</li> <li>● Shorter playing time</li> </ul>	YES	<u>Drill / game</u>	Cf. EHF publication “Basic Handball“
V	14 and above	Handball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2 referees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 6+1 players</li> <li>● Girls: Ball size 2</li> <li>● Boys: Ball size 3</li> </ul>	YES	<u>Training / game</u>	Cf. handball-specific training theory

## Theoretical didactical principles for sport game teaching at school:

Based on various forms of simplification, KOLB distinguishes 5 basic didactic game concepts:

### **1) Analysis concept** aimed at “**Elementary simplification**”

- Gradual learning process for the individual technical and tactical elements of the game
- Practice order
- Accomplishment of the goal is only possible after the acquisition and command of the basic techniques

Problems:

- through an isolated acquisition process, techniques are often not appropriately applied to the game.
- children are more interested in playing than practising and training

### **2) Confrontation concept** (in case of problems: “**Conditional simplification**” )

- No game analysis based on individual game elements
- Students should experience the game in its entity

Problem:

- excessive demands on beginners

### **3) Children-friendly concept** aimed at “**Simplification of children-friendly strategies**”

- Acquisition of individual techniques in modified small games, as well as through exercising in the form of playing.
- Game order through “relating games” – from small games to big games

Problems:

- often restricted to superficial exercises in the form of playing not including any real game forms - today children are not familiar with the canon of small games

### **4) Game-friendly concept** aimed at “**Situational simplification**”

- Return to the central idea and basic conditions of the game, which are constantly expanding through the engagement of students with the core of the game: the competition-oriented, simultaneous and corresponding attack and defence acts in basic game situations.
- The basic game-form with simpler game conditions (smaller number of players, initially only one objective, less and simpler rules) is gradually expanded through the creation of more complex game situations.
- Corresponding points of the game order are introduced through the complementary exercise order. Exercises should exist in a functional interrelation with the game order.

### **5) Action-oriented concept** aimed at “**Action simplification**”

Based on the assumptions of basic action structures in all games, there are five action modes:

- Ball behaviour: acquiring the ball
- Space behaviour: carrying the ball
- Goal behaviour: bringing the ball to the goal
- Partner behaviour: helping the team-mates
- Opponent behaviour: disrupting the opponent

In between game sequences, individual exercise orders are connected to the form of playing, in order to teach the various individual game-action modes.

Problem:

- the designed teaching model is often far away from the goal of the game

### Didactic principles in P.E. framework curricula at school:

The didactic principles for sport game teaching at school usually laid down P.E. framework curricula are the following:

- Development of ability to play and versatile playing skills, to be acquired through spontaneous and creative play in various situation and the continuing development of playing competence with increased attention to technical aspects
- Development of awareness of rules as the ability to recognize agreements regarding the game and rules of the game, to change or redesign such rules as the situation requires, and to assume game leadership
- Being able to pursue tactical measures, take tactical decisions, and implement measures in the group and in the team.

### Implementation of the EHF education plan into a didactical model for “Handball at School”:

For the implementation of the EHF handball education plan as laid down in the 1997 EHF publication “The route to handball”, GUERRERO, GARCIA, OPPERMANN, NIELSSON GREEN, RINCK, HJORTH, SOLLBERGER and HÖRITSCH recommend an overarching master concept for teaching based on both an action-oriented and game-friendly didactic model of sport game introduction that is structured in three levels. It provides for the acquisition of basic technical skills, but also trains coordinating abilities and promotes the development of general playing skills and social awareness in a teaching friendly environment.

Level 1: “Me and the Ball” (“the ball, your playing companion”)  
(carrying, bouncing, rolling throwing balls)

Level 2: “With Each Other” (“me and my playfellow”)  
(bouncing, passing, catching balls, co-operating, hitting)

Level 3: “Against Each Other” (“team against team”)  
(running loose, feinting, defending )

At all three levels, the child-appropriate (e.g. motion history) as well as game-appropriate (systematic development of basic play leading to target play) didactic concept is clearly apparent.

The concept is thus ideally suited for acquiring general playing skills as well as, subsequently, specific skills for the sport game of handball, as the development of elementary, general skills as well as coordination and cognitive abilities is also of particular importance for the target sport of handball.

Components such as

- Moving in space, moving without the ball (peripheral vision, “spacing” – orientation in space, running loose, breaking away, positioning oneself)
- Getting used to the ball (taking up the ball, carrying it, putting it down, rolling it)
- Basic technical elements (ball control – bouncing/dribbling, passing, catching/accepting, throwing/taking shots)
- Basic components of individual and group tactics (“give and go“/ passing – running loose and offering to catch, switching from offensive play to marking and vice versa, feinting, 2 against 1 player, playing together/co-operation, e.g.: double passing, changing position/crossing, screening/blocking, etc.)

should be practised in quickly changing situations, such as adaptation of equipment, number of players, size of court, rules or additional rules (e.g.: when touched by the opponent either a) pass or b) loss of ball, etc.) in playing and practice sessions.

### University-level teaching and P.E. teacher further training courses

The following example, the course outline/programme for a one semester university course at the University Vienna Sports Science Institute in Austria, is focused on learning, practising and learning to teach sport-game-oriented movement sequences in handball:

The first third of the course is dedicated to the application of general ball-playing skills with special regard to specific components of the target game handball. The broad three-level master concept (Level 1 “Me and the Ball”; Level 2 “With Each Other”; Level 3 “Against Each Other”) is based on an action-oriented instructional model using sport-game didactics. Beside the acquisition and practice of technical fundamentals and coordinative abilities, it contributes to the development of tactical playing modes at the individual, group and team levels in playing and drill sessions held under changing situational conditions.

The remaining two-thirds are dedicated to teaching special playing skills in the target game of handball, i.e. handball basics, including technique and coordination (bouncing, passing, catching, passing variants, movement techniques, overarm shot, jump shot, falling jump shot, run-up, body feints, breakthrough, defence techniques, blocking, goalkeeper defence) as well as tactical skills (2:1 situation, passing the ball in motion, running towards the goal intending to take a shot, making space, running loose, marking, man-marking, space-marking).

At the same time, awareness and knowledge of rules are taught as well as general guidelines for educational game teaching. “Beach Handball” and “Street Handball” is presented in theory and practice as alternative variant and trend sport activities, both out-and indoors, with a structure and philosophy differing from traditional handball.

The aim of the course is to enable students to develop special playing skills in the sport game of handball, starting from a three-level action-oriented and game-friendly didactic model for sports games including “Me and the Ball”, “With Each Other” and “Against Each Other” modules as well as the practice of technical and tactical components.

offer students an opportunity to get to know, by way of examples, key didactic concepts for sports and games as well as methods and didactical approaches for teaching special tactical playing moves at the individual, group and team levels. This should permit the students to teach pupils at different levels of skill in different situational conditions (in terms of space and materials) including the differently structured alternative option of Beach Handball.

develop among students an adequate ability to demonstrate the basic modes of behaviour in sports and games as well as to train the ability of identifying faulty behaviour and suggesting improvements.

P.E. teaching competence shall comprise

- Knowledge of key didactic concepts for sports and games as well as methods and didactic approaches for teaching proper handball conduct on the basis of a “minimum set of rules”, awareness of rules, and fair play,
- Ability to provide special education in sports and games matched to different levels of skills and conditions,
- Ability to demonstrate basic patterns of conduct in ball games in the target game of handball, fundamental mastering of key tactics at the individual and group levels.

Implementation in university education courses for P.E students shall contain

- Alternation between practical implementation of didactic concepts for sport-games, specific teaching methods for skills and conduct during the game, and joint reflection on approaches with the students
- Independent preparation and execution of individual teaching units followed by critical reflection and feedback
- Combination with other courses in methodology, didactics, biomechanics and training theory
- Examination criteria

### **Conclusion:**

To successfully promote the game of handball at school P.E. teachers have to be educated or provided with proper didactical tools and teaching aids, thus helping them to bridge the gap between the excellent methodology in handball literature and the daily practice of teaching handball in a gym or outdoors, whatever facilities they have at their disposal. That is why didactical concepts have to be implemented in university instruction of P.E. students as well as in further training courses of P.E. teachers at school. Future authors of handball methodological literature or documentations, using whatever kind of media, have to pay more attention to the aspect of transcribing their methodological content into a didactical language for the teacher (e.g. manuals) in order not to weaken the position of handball as a “school sport” for boys and girls. It has to be the task of the governing technical and political bodies of EHF and IHF to assist and support P.E. teachers in their efforts and motivation to promote “Handball at School” all over Europe and the world.

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