

Smith, M. D. (1991). Utilizing the games for understanding model at the elementary school level. *The Physical Educator*, 48(4), 184-187.

**Issue/focus**

The “games for understanding” curriculum model places games at the center of the educational process rather than students. It leads to teachers explaining strategic and tactical points rather than teaching. The model has also not been tested. Smith’s purpose is to change to model so students are the focus rather than the games.

**Reasoning**

Smith suggests a three stage approach to teaching students. The first stage is *game selection*. Teachers decide between a territory, target, court, or field game. From there the teacher arranges the students into small groups and encourages that correct strategies and techniques are understood in the *games playing* stage. The students are questioned on the techniques by the teacher to enforce that they are understood. In this stage they are also encouraged to modify rules and equipment. The third stage, *games invention*, involves two phases. In the first phase, the teacher acts as a facilitator and lets the students work without input. In the second phase, the teacher acts as an advisor and works with the students if attention is needed. Smith argues that this three step method familiarizes pupils with the types of games and sports which they will experience in high school. It also helps develop cognitive and social skills.

**Assumptions**

Smith assumes that all students have the ability to work together to modify games in groups. It is also assumed that teachers have the ability to choose specific games suitable for all the students in the class, and provide constructive criticism at the appropriate time.

**Conclusion**

The three step method is an effective way of teaching elementary students the techniques and tactics of complex games and sports without playing the full version. It encourages cognitive and social skills to be improved.

**Significant Information**

- Simplified versions of full games should be used in Elementary schools.
- Small-sided and conditioned forms should be used to encourage learning skills.
- Enforcing correct tactical and strategic decisions can be done through questions.  
Eg. Special awareness, space making and space denial.
- Game invention using various types of equipment is important.

**Personal Comments**

This article provides many useful strategies to help teachers work with students to understand games and sports better. I think the three step method is useful and should be used by teachers working with students in Elementary physical education.