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# Keeping classes interesting!

**L**ike most people who become instructors, my passion for fitness was so strong that I decided to make it my career. As new fitness instructors we are presented with the challenge of translating our personal enthusiasm into a passionate teaching style – and maintaining it.

When we start to instruct at a facility the novelty of our new environment can be enough to inject excitement into our class presentation. Similarly, when teaching in a different timeslot or instructing a new style of class we bring a new face, teaching style, music, choreography and fresh ideas to the table; participants find it refreshing to have a new perspective on old class formats. From here onwards we tend to develop a comfortable relationship with our class participants, becoming aware of their general ability level and discovering how best to motivate them.

Over time, however, some difficulties present themselves. When we are faced with teaching the same class at the same time in the same facility with pretty much the same participants each week, the class can become stale and predictable, members become disengaged and class morale wanes. So how can we as instructors keep motivation levels up and classes interesting, both for participants and for ourselves?

## Creating new moves

This may be a basic principle that all instructors strive to achieve, but adding new moves and layered techniques is a great way of reinvigorating a class. After cutting and joining the standard moves and adding arm patterns, try creating some new ones other than the conventional step touch and grapevine. Watching film clips or partaking in a dance class can often inspire the creation of a new move. Focusing on which basic aerobic move this has derived from makes it easy to teach using the layering technique. Inserting some of your new moves into standard routines adds to the fun and unpredictability of a class, without making it too hard for participants to follow.

## Directional change

This is another basic principle, but thinking outside of the box can reap interesting rewards. We naturally tend to think 'left and right', but there is so much more opportunity to be creative. Try incorporating more forward and backward movements and don't forget about the possibilities afforded by moving up and down! Altering the plane of movement can spice up the variety of your routines and doesn't overload the class with complexity. A very simple variation could be a low 'Mambo Cha Cha'.

## Teaching Style

Vary the way in which your participants learn from you. Avoiding the same holding patterns and repetitive breakdowns will add another element of change to keep the class on its toes. Varying your teaching method can take the form of layering from base moves, displaying, describing or even altering patterns without cueing (when only the observant participant will notice the change). You can even teach from different points in the room; rather than teaching the whole routine facing forward, you could flip them and teach the rest of the class from the back of the room.

## Creative dialogue

This tool can be applied to any class style. Constant repetition leads to boredom; renaming or describing the same move differently, can vastly improve



the freshness of your class. Try changing 'dead lift' to 'tilting' or 'bowing' from the waist, and include themes to spice things up; 'Cha Cha' at Melbourne Cup time could become 'horse riding' or any other appropriate description or theme. Finally, once a block or pattern is achieved, instead of calling each move individually, try renaming the whole block, thereby eradicating the repetitive cueing of every single move.

### Music

You don't buy new aerobic music every week, so use what you do have strategically to get the most out of it. Mix and match your CDs, being careful not to always start on the same track and use drink breaks to switch CDs. This way your class doesn't know what song is coming next. Avoiding over-playing your favourite music will also give you more class life out of the tunes in the long run.

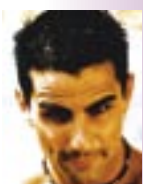
### Entertainment

You are not only a fitness instructor, but also an entertainer, so use voice variations to increase excitement. Starting the class overly intensely results in the inability to build to a higher peak towards the end of the session when participants most need it. Adding humour and personal flourishes can add to the entertainment, as long as they don't overshadow the purpose of the class. People come for a workout and for you to motivate and entertain them through the process, making fitness less of a chore.

### Spread your talent

If you find yourself teaching more and more classes then why limit yourself to one venue? Share your talents with a wider audience by teaching in assorted locations – this will give other instructors a chance to teach at your regular facility and you a chance to reach and motivate a larger group of people. Don't be afraid to recommend other instructors or styles of class to your members, as the more variety they embrace, the fresher your style remains.

These are just some of the ways you can add variety to your classes, keeping participants focused, interested and eager to partake in your workouts. Now that you have started thinking about it I am sure you will find many more tricks of the trade to keep participants coming back for more! ♦



**Paul Peroy**

*Paul started his movement career as a dancer and choreographer. Beginning in group fitness in 1993 he studied with the School of Sports and Leisure studies, University of NSW. Further studies include fitness trainer with the International Sports Science Association, the Fitness Institute of Australia and the Pilates Institute, specialising in all freestyle classes, Pilate's and BODYPUMP®. Paul has taught, trained, coordinated and managed in many of Sydney's leading facilities.*

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