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# Back to School Netball Style: An Emerging Highly Inclusive Game for Physical Education or Sport

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Physical educators are looking for new ways to excite students to participate in lessons. Brusseau and Burns (2015) identified that the most valuable units for increasing physical activity levels during physical education (PE) lessons are fitness activities and large-space invasion games. SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators (2015) recommends well-designed PE programs that keep students active for most of their time in class. Invasion games have the ability to adhere to this recommendation and are particularly popular in many PE classes; however, not all invasion games are created equal. Novel games are said to support students' multicultural experience, especially if the selected game is played in another country or culture (Clancy, Portman, & Bowersock, 2007). Netball is a fresh invasion game option to involve students of all ability levels. It is an inclusive and engaging "true" team global sport that has the ability to keep students active and engaged in PE classes.

## History of Netball

The sport of netball has taken off in the Commonwealth countries. It started in 1891 when Senda Berenson Abbot adapted basketball rules for her students at Smith College, Massachusetts (O'Reilly & Cahn, 2007). It is currently played semi-professionally in the top four-ranked netball countries in the world: Australia, New Zealand, England and Jamaica. However, the United States has never made it into the top four in the world. Even though netball has been played in the United States for 40 years, several organizations have failed to get

Americans to play the sport. Netball America is the leading authority on netball in the United States, and they are focused on showing how netball creates an exciting atmosphere of participation and supports individual progress, team unity, good health and youth education. They also provide young people with the opportunity to learn netball and then progress through a pathway to either recreational play or elite netball.

Netball America's aim is to encourage all children and families to be physically active and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Netball America's Be an Inspiration Program falls in line with SHAPE America's National Standards and Grade-level Outcomes for K-12 PE (SHAPE America, 2014). The National Standards identify the skills and knowledge necessary to support the development of physically literate individuals — those who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity.

Netball America seeks to have netball included as part of the core curriculum in educational systems throughout the country, and runs clinics and education programs throughout the United States to get youth moving, reduce obesity, and provide opportunities for underserved youth through inclusive strategies for all. They are also the first netball organization to have introduced netball into core U.S. education curriculums. Miami-Dade County Schools, under the leadership of District Director Jayne Greenberg, was the first school district to have netball introduced at the teachers' continuing education day.

## Benefits in PE

Netball provides many benefits in PE. It is a team-orientated sport, and a wide range of positions suits all ability levels. It can be played at any age by both males and females, and it is a cost-effective sport to implement and maintain. It is also a great way to enhance youth's hand-eye coordination, and it teaches them space awareness and body control. Playing netball requires participants to run around the court, sprint short distances, and change directions quickly.

Implementing netball in a PE curriculum is relatively painless, as many students have already been provided with opportunities to play similar sports such as basketball, handball and Ultimate Frisbee. These "sister sports" allow students to make cognitive connections between familiar activities. That being said, the sport provides an opportunity for students to learn a new game on a level playing field. Thus all students learning the game at the same time gives everyone a fairer chance to succeed.

Netball is an inherently fair sport due to its inclusivity. The court is split into three zones, and the ball has to be passed and touched in each zone; therefore, everyone has to actively contribute to the scoring of the game. This is achieved by passing the ball to other players in each of the thirds before one of the two goal shooters can shoot for goal. Consequently, all players are of equal value and importance within the game, as each one has a designated role. The various roles are restricted within areas of the court, and this creates a group environment where teamwork is vital.

## Implementation

When implementing the game of netball, teachers should consider the students in their classes and set up games that support student success and allow students to make direct connections. An example recommended by Clancy et al. (2007) in their netball article was to pass the ball the same way you would a basketball. Teachers might also consider the

instructional model used to teach netball. It is recommended to teach netball through the teaching games for understanding model or the sport education model. An outline and more information on these models can be found in Metzler (2005). Ultimately, the reasoning for this is to increase student activity levels, promote an authentic sporting experience, and promote teamwork. Table 1 outlines

the basic rules and scoring of netball that will assist in implementing the sport in a PE curriculum, and Table 2 outlines teaching cues for basic movements in the game.

## Setup

The equipment is easy to set up, is portable, and can be used indoors, outdoors and even on flat, grassy surfaces.

**Table 1.**  
**Basic Rules and Scoring of Netball**

Rule	Explanation	Infringement/Rule
<b>Contact</b>	No player may contact an opponent accidentally or deliberately touch another player.	Penalty pass to opposing team = against a player, therefore the infringer may not take part in play until the ball has been released or make any attempt to intercept the penalty pass. Anyone can take the penalty pass in that area.
<b>Obstruction</b>	A player must stand 3 feet from the player with the ball.	Penalty pass to opposing team
<b>Footwork</b>	Having caught the ball, a player may land or stand on one foot — while landing foot remains grounded, the second foot may be moved anywhere, pivoting on the landing foot if desired. Once the landing foot is lifted, it must not be re-grounded until the ball is released; or once one foot is moved, the other is considered to be the landing foot, as just stated. Hopping or dragging the landing foot is not allowed.	Free pass to opposing team: Any player allowed in that area may take the free pass. The infringer does not have to stand where the infringement happened.
<b>Playing the ball</b>	Once the ball is caught it must be passed or shot within 3 seconds. A player who has caught the ball may not bounce or drop the ball and replay it.	Free pass to opposing team
<b>Offside</b>	A player moving out of own area, with or without the ball (on a line counts as within either area), is considered offside.	Free pass to opposing team
<b>Over a third</b>	The ball may not be thrown over two transverse lines without being touched.	Free pass to opposing team
<b>Out of court</b>	The ball is out of court when it contacts anything outside the court area (not the goal post). The ball is returned into play by a throw-in taken from a point outside the line where the ball left the court. The player stands with foot close to the line.	Throw-in within 3 seconds
<b>Scoring</b>	Each goal is worth one point only, and must be shot within the goal circle.	Only the goal attack and goal shooter can score
<b>Starting the game</b>	The game is started (and restarted after each goal) with a center pass from the center circle, which must be received in the center third.	If the center pass is not received in the center third, a free pass is given to the other team.
<b>Simultaneous contact/fouls</b>	Toss-up between players at a height no more than two feet above the shorter person's shoulders. Ball may be caught or batted.	

**Table 2.**  
**Teaching Cues in Netball**

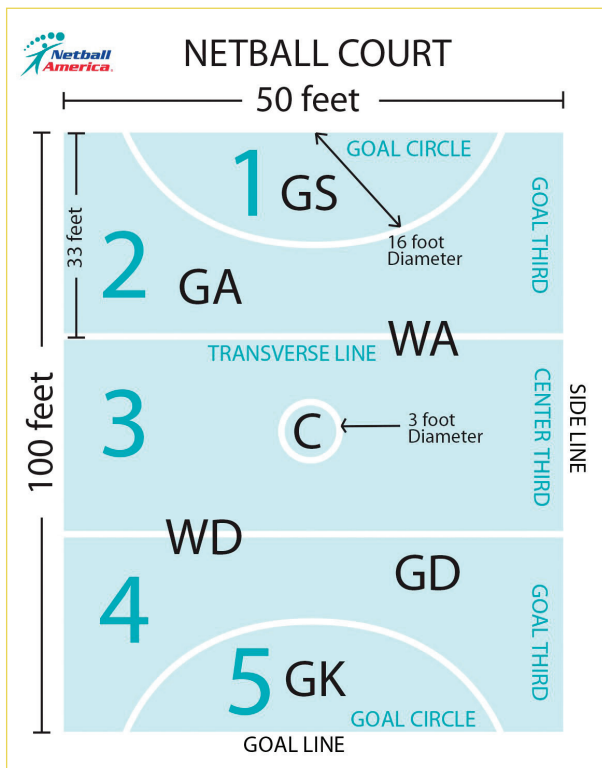
<b>Movement Skill</b>	<b>Teaching Cues</b>
<b>Footwork</b>	Safe landing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knee and toes face the same direction</li> <li>• Knees slightly bent</li> <li>• Shoulder-width apart for firm base</li> </ul>
<b>Pivot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knees slightly bent</li> <li>• Keep ball close</li> <li>• Turn on the ball of the grounded foot</li> <li>• Non-grounded foot should be lifted to help with balance</li> <li>• Turn and face your team's goal post</li> </ul>
<b>Attacking</b>	The dodge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep eyes on the ball thrower</li> <li>• Body upright, feet shoulder-width apart</li> <li>• Move 2–3 steps away from intended catching position</li> <li>• Place outside foot on the ground and push off in the opposite direction</li> <li>• Use arms for speed</li> </ul>
<b>Defending</b>	Shadowing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand in front of the opponent/opposite player with your body halfway across theirs</li> <li>• Keep arms in, close to body</li> <li>• Feet shoulder-width apart and knees bent</li> <li>• Ensure you can see the attacker and the ball</li> <li>• Fast, small steps</li> </ul>
<b>Shooting</b>	[no back board and one-handed] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ball above head</li> <li>• Arms extended with shooting arm straight and close to ear</li> <li>• One shooting hand, one support hand on side to guide the ball</li> <li>• Bend elbows and knees, then straighten</li> <li>• Flick the wrist as you release, follow through with arms and fingers pointing toward post</li> <li>• Always follow in for rebounds</li> </ul>
<b>Ball placement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim to place the ball in front of the moving player</li> <li>• Receiver to catch the ball at full stretch, in front of defender</li> <li>• Pass into space created by attacker</li> </ul>

Courtesy of Gene Ozgar



Courtesy of Michael Clubine





## Playing Positions

Each playing position has a specific area of the court in which to play:

**GS (Goal Shooter)** Scores goals and works in and around the goal circle with the Goal Attack. Areas 1 & 2

**GA (Goal Attack)** Feeds and works with the Goal Shooter to score. Areas 1, 2 & 3

**WA (Wing Attack)** Feeds the goal circle players giving them shooting opportunities. Areas 2 & 3

**C (Center)** Takes the center pass and controls game flow between attack and defense. Areas 2, 3 & 4

**WD (Wing Defense)** Looks for intercepts and prevents the opposition Wing Attack from feeding the ball into the goal circle. Areas 3 & 4

**GD (Goal Defense)** Defends the Goal Attack, looking for intercepts, trying to prevent the opposition Goal Attack and Goal Shooter from scoring. Areas 3, 4 & 5

**GK (Goal Keeper)** Works with the Goal Defense to prevent the opposition Goal Attack and Goal Shooter from scoring. Areas 4 & 5

**Figure 1.**  
The netball court and playing positions

The equipment is also adjustable for different ages. A netball court is 100 feet by 50 feet, divided into three areas (thirds) with two goal circles, as shown in Figure 1. Most gymnasiums in the United States have a basketball court, which can easily be adapted and marked using painter's tape.

### Player Roles

There are seven individuals on a netball team, and each player must remain in their assigned playing area and has a specific role (see Figure 1). That being said, players can rotate during interval periods. Two students can also serve as umpires (one on each side of the court).

### Conclusion

Netball might seem daunting to many teachers to implement in their curriculum, and many may wonder where to start. A netball resource was created for the SHAPE America national conference in Boston outlining sessions for implementation and can be found on Netball

America's website ([www.netballamerica.com](http://www.netballamerica.com)). Help is always at hand from Netball America, and readers can contact them at [Info@NetballAmerica.com](mailto:Info@NetballAmerica.com) to organize clinics for schools and PE teachers. Teaching netball can effectively promote sport-related motor development concepts, physical activity, and cultural awareness. Furthermore, with support from Netball America, it can provide recreational and elite opportunities for students who develop a passion for the sport. Lastly, as the spirit of netball is inclusive, it increases teamwork and collaboration between students, which is needed now more than ever to provide an engaging curriculum to students. For more information, visit Netball America's website ([www.netballamerica.com](http://www.netballamerica.com)) or contact Sonya Ottaway at [President@NetballAmerica.com](mailto:President@NetballAmerica.com).

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