

Subject on a Page: Physical Education



What is Physical Education?

Physical Education is the academic and practical study of **how and why humans move**, focusing on the **scientific, psychological, and social** aspects of sport and physical activity.

Core Areas of Study

- 1. Anatomy & Physiology** - How the body’s systems (muscular, skeletal, cardiovascular) support movement.
- 2. Exercise Physiology & Biomechanics** - How training affects performance and how forces act on the body in motion.
- 3. Skill Acquisition & Sports Psychology** - How we learn skills and how mental factors influence performance.
- 4. Sport & Society** - The role of sport in culture, history, and contemporary issues (e.g., technology, ethics).
- 5. Practical Performance & Eval** - Students perform or coach in one sport and analyse performance to improve it.

Think like an athlete :

In **A Level PE**, **critical thinking** refers to the ability to **analyse, evaluate, and apply knowledge** rather than just recalling facts. It’s about thinking deeply and making informed judgments in both theoretical and practical contexts.

Here are some examples:

1. Evaluating Training Methods

- Not just:* “Interval training improves cardiovascular fitness.”
- Critical thinking:* “Interval training is effective for team sports due to its high-intensity bursts, but may not be ideal for endurance athletes who require sustained effort.”

2. Analysing Performance

- Not just:* “The athlete performed poorly.”
- Critical thinking:* “The athlete’s performance declined due to poor pacing strategy and lack of anaerobic conditioning, which could be improved through targeted interval training.”

3. Debating Ethical Issues

- Not just:* “Doping is wrong.”
- Critical thinking:* “While doping undermines fair play, some argue that stricter regulations and education are more effective than lifetime bans in promoting clean sport.”

4. Linking Theory to Practice

- Not just:* “Skill acquisition is important.”
- Critical thinking:* “Understanding cognitive and associative phases of learning helps coaches tailor feedback and drills to the athlete’s development stage.”

Read like an A level PE student :

Core Textbooks (AQA Approved)

- AQA A-level PE (Year 1 and Year 2)** – *Carl Atherton, Ross Howitt, Sue Young* (2019, Hodder Education)
This is the main course textbook, covering all specification content.
- My Revision Notes: AQA A-level PE** – *Sue Young, Symond Burrows, Michaela Byrne* (2018, Hodder Education)
Great for exam preparation and topic summaries.

Wider Reading & Enrichment

- Bounce** – *Matthew Syed*
Explores talent, practice, and performance psychology.
- The Sports Gene** – *David Epstein*
Looks at genetics vs training in elite performance.
- Why We Sleep** – *Matthew Walker*
Relevant to recovery and performance.
- The Chimp Paradox** – *Dr. Steve Peters*
A practical guide to understanding and managing the mind in sport.
- PE Review Magazine** – *Hodder Education*
Articles written by examiners and experts, directly linked to AQA topics.

Progress to a career in the world of sports:

Why Study PE?

- Develops **critical thinking, teamwork, and analytical skills.**
- Prepares students for careers in **sports science, physiotherapy, teaching, coaching,** and more.
- Encourages a lifelong appreciation for **health and physical activity.**