



# The GROW Coaching Model User Guide

## The model

- Agree actions/next steps
- Agree timescales
- Confirm understanding and commitment
- Identify support/help required
- Explore options
- Evaluate options
- Invite suggestions
- Offer suggestions



- Agree objectives for the conversation (yours/theirs)
- Agree objectives/desired end goal for the issues/situation
- Define success
- Invite self assessment on current reality
- Ask for specific examples
- Challenge assumptions/misconceptions

Source: Alexander Graham & Sir John Whitmore

GROW is a widely used approach to developmental coaching. Developmental coaching refers to a process of supporting an individual while they achieve a specific personal or professional competency, result, or goal. Developmental coaching is based on a belief that people generally have within themselves the capability to address their challenges.

Although it is a powerful capability for a sporting coach to have, developmental coaching is distinct from the *technical* coaching that is more familiar in sport.

The GROW acronym represents the four stages of a conversation between a developmental coach and the person they are supporting, who is usually referred to as a 'coachee' in developmental coaching:

<b>Goal</b>	In this stage, the coachee articulates what it is they are trying to achieve, and how they will know when they have achieved it.
<b>Reality</b>	In this stage, the coachee assesses where they currently stand in relation to their goal. This stage aims to gain clarity about the 'reality', not to assign blame or inspire judgement of the coachee for not yet being at the goal.
<b>Options</b>	In this stage, the coachee identifies a range of ways in which they might pursue their goal. At first the aim is to identify lots of possible options, before evaluating them to determine which are feasible and, ultimately, which the coachee will select to implement.
<b>Way forward</b>	In this stage, the coachee develops a detailed implementation plan to follow. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note: In the original version of the model, this stage is called 'Will', as in 'What *will* you do?' We have used 'Way Forward', as it makes the intent of this stage less ambiguous.

Learn more about the GROW Coaching Model by watching this [animated video](#) on YouTube .



## How we use the model

Developmental conversations are two-way, with the coach assisting the coachee to move their thinking through the stages of GROW. The coach primarily does this through questioning; the coach actively seeks to minimise any time spent offering advice or telling the coachee what to do. The coach's aim is to develop the coachee's capability to draw on their own experience and internal resources to come up with an answer to their current situation.

The GROW model can be used to structure a conversation between coach and coachee to help develop clarity about what the coachee is trying to achieve and how they are going to do it. The conversation might be a few minutes long, or it could go for an hour or more; if the challenge is substantial, the conversation might unfold over several sessions. There is usually a follow-up conversation where the coach can help the coachee think about what happened during implementation, learning for the future.

## Why the model is useful

One of the originators of the GROW model, Sir John Whitmore, described a benefit of coaching using the GROW sequence as causing the coachee to become more interested in taking responsibility for themselves. One way by which this happens is through raising the coachee's awareness of the situation, the possibilities for addressing it, and their agency to act. Using GROW also encourages the coachee to take ownership for addressing their own situation, leading to them taking considered, committed action.

## What it looks like in practice

Using the GROW model can be as simple in practice as it is conceptually, even if it is not as part of a formal developmental coaching relationship. If you are supporting the development of another person, you can use GROW to provide structure to your conversation:

### Goal



First, you are going to ask them questions that help them understand their goal and how they will know when they have achieved it. This refers both to the goal in relation to the person's overall challenge and, where the challenge is larger, to their goal for the conversation.

### Reality



You then want to help them to consider where they currently are in relation to that bigger picture goal; asking for specific examples can help the other person to become very clear about their reality. Your questions should also be aimed at helping them to understand what needs to be done to close the gap. Be prepared to identify and explore with the person any assumptions or misconceptions evident in their self-assessment.

### Options



The next part of the conversation is to help them identify and consider their options for achieving the goal they've defined and to evaluate those options. Your questions should encourage suggested options from the other person, but, once they have exhausted their options, you might also ask permission to offer any suggestions you have.

### Way forward



The final stage is where you help the other person to get very clear about their way forward. This includes asking them what actions they are going to take, what the time frames are for those actions, and what support they will need to mobilise around them. The other person should leave the conversation with a commitment to implement their clear plan.



While these four stages are described in this nice sequence to aid understanding of the model, your real GROW conversations are likely to be less straightforward than this implies. In reality, the conversation is much less linear. The conversation might start with the goal, move to reality, go back to goal to refine it, jump to options, and go back and forward a few times between options and reality before finally arriving at the way forward. The four stages of GROW are there to provide a structure for the conversation, not a script.

You might have times when the other person starts the conversation with you at 'R', such as when they express frustration or complain about things. With their permission, you might ask them a question such as "What would you prefer the situation to be?" and take the conversation back to 'G'.

And, sometimes, you might not need to go through a full GROW conversation. A well-formulated question and some good listening to the other person can help them to advance their thinking.

## Contextual scenario

To keep this scenario short, Tom already has a reasonable idea of his goal, reality, and options. That means that his answers come quickly and succinctly and do not need to be elaborated upon. And Graham has focused, helpful questions ready at each stage.

In a genuine conversation, you might expect more time being needed to come up with helpful questions and to think through answers to the questions, and more adjusting of responses as the coachee voices them, hears the answers, and evolves them. You might expect to help the coachee spend more time than shown here thinking through how they will know when they have succeeded, developing some options, determining which are feasible, and coming to a firm action plan.

Graham – referee coach guides the conversation	GROW stage	Harry, a soccer referee (the coachee) responds
Hi Harry. What would you like to talk about today?	Goal (for the conversation)	I'm not sure I am getting my approach to refereeing quite right in some games. I'd love some help to think that through.
Sure! What do you think 'getting your refereeing right' means?	Goal (regarding the challenge)	I think it means refereeing in a way that creates an enjoyable place for the players where they develop skills while having fun. Actually, it's more than that – I want to referee in a way that creates an environment that helps people to love playing soccer.
Ok, so what's currently happening?	Reality	At the moment, I find myself umpiring the Under 14's like they are playing first grade. I can see they are too challenged with their ability for that level of refereeing. I feel an expectation to referee to the letter of the law, but if I do that the game will be really stop-start and boring, and kids will drop out.
So, what might you do to start changing the way you referee?	Options	<p>I think I could communicate better with the coaches about how kids play to have fun. That might help the coaches and parents to look at the game as being part of growth and developing a love for sport, which would hopefully make it clear that really nit-picky refereeing would not help at this level.</p> <p>Another option would be to be clearer with the players about what I am doing, talking with them on their level. That might mean letting them know where I will be more lenient and why, and explaining my decisions as the game is happening.</p> <p>And another option might be to ask at the end of my games what everyone liked about the way I refereed.</p>
Those are three great options for first steps, Harry. What are you going to do?	Way forward	The first thing I am going to do is to connect on Monday evening with the club and coaches in the competition to share my concerns about the potential for strict refereeing to get in the way of the kids having fun and developing skills. I can then listen to what they think and, assuming they think the same way, we can agree a refereeing approach that will make the soccer more enjoyable for the kids.

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## How to know if it's working

Success with the GROW model is dependent on your overall approach to supporting the coachee's development. If you are asking good questions, listening and thoughtfully responding to their answers, and seeking to help the other person's thinking towards arriving at outcomes that they have created, then you should be able to use GROW.

If you are using GROW well, you should notice that you are having considered and focused conversations, and that the coachee leaves those conversations with clear and actionable plans that they have developed and can implement. You should also find that it is easier for you to follow up the conversation as you support the coachee to implement and, as necessary, adapt their plan in pursuit of their goal.

## Other useful tips

Developmental coaching is not something you do to someone; it must be done with them. If the other person does not know you are going to adopt this approach – and agree for you to do so – it is likely that you will come across as quite weird as you start asking them an unusual number of questions. So, be clear with the coachee that you are offering to act as a developmental coach, and make sure they know what that means and agree to it.

In this type of developmental conversation, you, as a developmental coach, will spend most of your time asking questions to help the thinking process of the person who is looking to develop. You should, therefore, be speaking much less than the coachee.

## Self-reflection and action learning

Use the [Action Learning Guide](#) to practice applying the models and techniques in your specific context and situation.