

# Facilitator User Guide – VEMS AirDrills

For use with the DAS 2025 Education Package



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## 1. Purpose and Background

The DAS VEMS AirDrills\* are structured, low-fidelity simulation resources designed to support the safe, consistent, and standardised implementation of the DAS 2025 Guidelines for Unanticipated Difficult Tracheal Intubation (Plans A–D). Visual Enhanced Mental Simulation (VEMS) is an educational technique where visual simulation (through simple image prompts) is used to activate and improve cognitive functioning. Using VEMS as a technique to run the DAS Airdrills, provides departments with a focused, table top session to reinforce this key training within teams, without need for a high fidelity simulator or manikin.

## 2. Concept: 'Drills' as Low-Fidelity Simulation

These VEMS drills are short, focused, table-top or 'tea-trolley' style sessions that bring teams together to practice the cognitive and communicative components of crisis management.

- Rehearse decision-making, declaration, and communication around the DAS 2025 algorithm, strengthening the awareness of human factors across all teams involved in airway management
- Encourage muscle memory for language (*'Failed intubation declared', 'Can't intubate, can't oxygenate'*).
- Embed local familiarity with equipment, team roles, and escalation pathways.
- Promote psychological safety and reflection in a low-stakes environment.

Typical duration: 15–20 minutes

These drills are intended to be teams based therefore inclusion of anaesthetic assistants, ODP's, scrub/recovery staff, theatre coordinators etc. is encouraged. The airway participants can include all grades of anaesthetists and clinicians involved in airway management (e.g. Critical Care or Emergency Department clinicians/practitioners). Setting of the drills can be flexible and open to adjustment based on clinical setting.

Facilitators can include Simulation/Education Faculty, Airway Leads or experienced anaesthetists.

*\*This is an active document – and may be open to refinement based on user feedback.*

### 3. Visually Enhanced Mental Simulation (VEMS)

Visually Enhanced Mental Simulation (VEMS) combines mental simulation with a *think-aloud* approach, using visual representations of a patient and equipment made out of paper cut outs. Running a clinical simulation with participants physically placing equipment and team members around the paper patient allows clinical teams to work through clinical scenarios focusing on mental models, team management and utilising algorithms.

This method is based on well-established educational principles showing that both mental rehearsal and think-aloud techniques help learners understand and reflect on their thought processes. Instead of focusing on individual tasks such as intubating a manikin, participants are required to verbally explain their thoughts and actions together, including how they set up equipment, communicate with the patient and progress along the DAS guideline as the scenario evolves.

### 3. The 'Pause–Play–Rewind' Framework

This structured learning method underpins all DAS AirDrills and ensures clarity, repetition, and retention.



Phase	Purpose	Facilitator Role	Example
<b>Pause</b>	Let participants think aloud and reflect.	Pause the action at key trigger points.	<i>'Pause here - where are we on the algorithm now?'</i> <i>'How can we make this clear?'</i>
<b>Play</b>	Resume scenario.	Observe interaction; reinforce adherence to DAS Plans A–D.	<i>'Let's play from declaration - proceed as a team through Plan B.'</i>
<b>Rewind</b>	Restart from key transitions to consolidate learning and test retention.	Adjust difficulty or team composition; focus on handovers and leadership.	<i>'Let's repeat from the declaration of CICO and run again with role allocation.'</i>

## 4. Setting Up a Local VEMS AirDrill

### Preparation:

- Ensure all printed out equipment is available:
  - Print and cut out AirDrill VEMS picture package and AirDrills Handout. Laminate the VEMS cards if possible.
  - Consider having a copy of the DAS 2025 Airway Algorithms (Plans A–D) available to facilitate teaching – note these are available also on the AirDrills Handout.
  - Consider local registration of learners and feedback collation methods.
- Familiarise with Facilitator Prompts and Discussion Points – context and content can vary depending on learner(s).
- Consider priming with the User Guide video for further familiarisation.
- Identify suitable space e.g. theatre coffee room, anaesthetic room, or trolley bay.

### Running the Session:

1. Brief participants and emphasise this is an opportunity to understand the changes to the DAS algorithm and practice implementing them as a team.
2. Explain the conduction of VEMS to shape the expectations of realism for participants. Consider a short scenario demonstration by faculty to illustrate the process.
3. Present the opening scenario as per drill script – context and content can be adjusted depending on learner(s).
4. Guide through Pause–Play–Rewind flow as required, prompting transitions through Plans A–D.
5. Focus on language, transitioning, and escalation, not technical performance.
6. Discuss local factors such as equipment location or escalation process.
7. Aim for concise, high-impact discussion (~10 mins).
8. Please complete facilitator and learner feedback to DAS Educational team via QR code link.

## 5. Debriefing

Structured debrief is central to embedding learning and reinforcing shared mental models. Debriefing the scenarios should be carried out using a model that the facilitator is familiar with. The model below is an example of a structure that can be used.

1. Reactions - How did that feel?’

Acknowledge emotional responses; normalise uncertainty.

2. Description of event – What happened?

Discuss sequence of events, language, escalation, communication

3. Analysis - Why did this happen?’

Discuss human factors, and local systems.

3. Application - What will you do differently in the future?’

Encourage participants to identify 1–2 key takeaways and capture improvement ideas.

## 6. Integration into Local Education Programmes

- Incorporate VEMS AirDrills into weekly education, on-call handovers, or M&M meetings.
- Combine with AirBites (technical skill cards) and AirClips (videos) for blended learning.
- Deliver interprofessionally to strengthen teamwork.
- Submit participation data via QR feedback for DAS quality assurance monitoring and improvement.

## 7. Facilitator Tips

- Keep energy positive and supportive; avoid performance pressure.
- Use open questions to promote reflection.
- Rotate through Plans A–D for full coverage.
- Reinforce standardised terminology and reference DAS 2025 algorithm.
- Summarise key learning visually and signpost additional resources.

## 8. Summary

DAS VEMS AirDrills are designed to reinforce guideline familiarity, standardise crisis language, build cross-disciplinary teamwork, and promote psychologically safe discussion. Consistent use creates a shared safety culture and embeds DAS 2025 principles in clinical practice.