

Essentials for Coaching Children

Coaching Tips 7

Getting the best from your players and managing children's behaviour

Providing feedback to kids

It is essential for beginners that feedback is:

- positive, constructive, corrective – not negative. Do not shout, be sarcastic or use put downs
- general (e.g. 'well done', 'fantastic Rosie', 'good kick', etc)
- specific (e.g. 'great shot – you flicked your wrist that time Matt, did you feel it?').

Give more feedback to beginners, providing less as they improve.

In training, once an activity is in progress, stand back and try to see the whole picture first. The players may all be making the same mistake. Rather than correct each one, stop the group and provide feedback. This is more effective and saves time in the long run.

Coach's role in preventing behaviour issues

Managing behaviours

If kids are engaged, they will generally participate well and enthusiastically. If they don't, it could be because of something you as the coach are doing or not doing.

To minimise behaviour problems, as a coach, you should be providing:

- a safe, respectful, welcoming atmosphere
- fun and enjoyment
- plenty of meaningful active participation – activities chosen must keep all of the kids active for most of the time, but it needs to be meaningful activity, ie relevant to the game
- skill development – kids will become bored / disheartened if they are not improving.
- rules, routines, expectations, known consequences and routines from the very beginning.
 - who makes the team rules? Suggestion: The coach makes and shares the rules and the team develops the consequences (time out, pick up the gear, call parents). Avoid using physical activity (i.e. laps/push-ups) as a consequence, make it relative to the offence and deliver respectfully, not with anger.
 - kids are more likely to misbehave if they do not know what to do (e.g. start of practice, pre-game, where to stand, post-game routine, how to celebrate victory, how to respond to a loss). Show them. Be prepared to change the routine if team is bored.

- a personal interest in the well-being of the child
 - get to know them each personally
 - listen, encourage, involve in decision making, be happy, guide behaviours, encourage good sporting attitude
 - value individual differences in abilities, talents, contributions, personalities
 - remember the plodders, youngest, smallest, tallest, children with disabilities:
 - praise small improvements
 - ~ ask how they are going/feeling and their opinion on the game so far
 - ~ praise them publically
 - ~ give them small challenges
 - value the team clowns and their contribution to the morale of the team – give them more responsibility to harness their energy, but don't always acknowledge their attention seeking behaviours.
- effective communication (both ways)
 - listen and give opportunities for them to speak
- verbal or other rewards for good behaviours.
 - praise good behaviours, when they least expect it – both for individuals and the whole team.
 - look less for mistakes, more for good behaviour / performance.
 - give them personal attention / small rewards when they are not demanding it, eg you have worked hard and all cooperated well , so let's go for a run under the sprinklers.



Behaviour problems can be minimised by developing the above strategies from the very beginning of the season. It is important to do this early because it is hard to implement or change behaviours once bad habits have formed.

Other tips for managing children:

- be respectful but firm.
- be brief – do not nag, lecture or interrogate.
- do not use physical punishment.
- do not shame, blame, ignore or use sarcasm.
- be consistent.
- remain calm. Do not show anger. Keep a 'cool' head.
- take it further if needed – to the school, club or parent.
- forgive and forget.

More from the Australian Sports Commission:

https://secure.ausport.gov.au/asc_internet/participating/coaches/tools/coaching_children