

Coaching Basics



Thank you for agreeing to coach a group of athletes who need a coach to enjoy everything that sport has to offer: fun, competition, friendship, and personal growth.

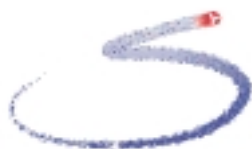
Thank you for taking the time from your personal schedule to devote to the development of young people who will benefit from your presence, your planning, your teaching, and your personal involvement in making sport a fun place to be.

Thank you for accepting the responsibility of helping young people become better athletes, for keeping them safe and helping them feel good about themselves and what they do.

Thank you for caring enough to seek some help in getting started. The first step is the hardest, but you'll find lots of help along the way. As you continue coaching, the 3M National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) will help you develop your skills as a coach.

If you get the impression we're glad you're here, you're right - we are!

We've created this introductory course to help you take the first steps in coaching. Here you'll find the basics of coaching, especially coaching young athletes, as well as links to more detailed information sources, programs and courses. You'll also find links to Ontario's sport organizations, who will help you obtain more information on the technical aspects of coaching your specific sport. Please feel free to print and circulate this information!



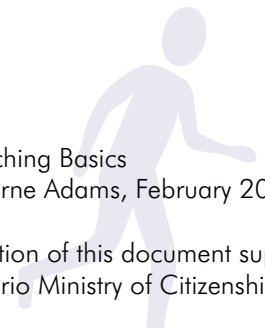
Sport Alliance of Ontario





COACHING BASICS

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Coaching Basics
by Lorne Adams, February 2000

Creation of this document supported by the Sport Alliance of Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

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1 YOUR ROLE AS COACH

People become coaches for many reasons: because they have a child in sport, because they were an athlete themselves, or because they want an opportunity to help in their community. Some coaches step forward; some are asked to help. No matter what the reasons, all coaches have the same roles. You will be a teacher, a leader, an organizer, and sometimes will even act as a counselor.

Coach has a nice ring to it. It sounds important. It is important. Think back to some of the lessons your coaches taught you. Perhaps you remember the importance of trying your best all the time. Perhaps you remember how important team goals and sportsmanship were. Perhaps you were taught how to solve problems or you were excited about learning new things. That coach made a difference in your life. You too can make the sport experience meaningful, fun, and memorable. That's why you're here. When your reasons for coaching match the needs and development level of your athletes, *everyone can win*.

In your role as a **teacher**, you will be asked to share your knowledge of the sport and prepare athletes to play by improving fitness and developing skills specific to your sport.

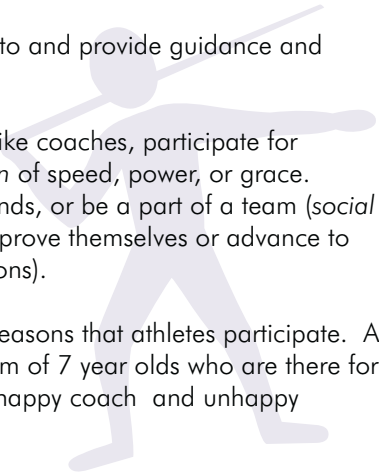
In your role as **leader**, you will make many decisions, to motivate your athletes and help them set and attain goals.

In your role as an **organizer**, you will manage practice and game schedules for the team, plan and evaluate practices and evaluate athletes.

In your role as a **counselor**, you will listen to and provide guidance and support for your athletes.

It is important to understand that athletes, like coaches, participate for different reasons. Some enjoy the *sensation* of speed, power, or grace. Some athletes just want to be with their friends, or be a part of a team (*social* reasons). Some athletes want to win, to improve themselves or advance to high levels in their sport (*achievement* reasons).

Match your reasons for coaching with the reasons that athletes participate. A coach who is driven to win, coaching a team of 7 year olds who are there for fun and social reasons, can result in an unhappy coach and unhappy athletes.



MAKE SPORT A **2** FUN PLACE TO BE

In sport, we need to foster the willingness to try new things, to take risks, to test potential. This is best accomplished in a supportive, encouraging atmosphere that is characterized by praise not criticism, full of rewards not punishment. Rather than saying "That's the wrong way to do...!" - it means saying "You've done this part well, now let's see if we can add..." Try to catch your athletes doing something right, not something wrong.

Sport should be fun. Fun doesn't mean that athletes need to laughing and giggling all the time. Part of the fun is challenge that is realistic and encouraging. Part of fun is playing - playing the game or playing at parts of the game. Fun is not standing in line waiting for your brief turn at an activity. Fun is being actively involved. Fun is being respected for your self and your particular talents. Fun means freedom from negative criticism and harassment. Fun means that we all count as part of the team. Fun means that we play the game fairly, not to bend the rules or break them to gain an advantage. Fun means having a sense of satisfaction that what you are involved in is gratifying and worthwhile. Fun is what your athletes should expect from you. Fun is what you should expect now that you are involved in coaching.

As a coach, you are an equal partner in making sport fun - you should neither be overly authoritarian nor merely a passive observer.



GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

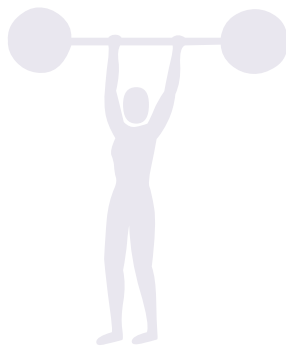
While it may be stating the obvious, it helps to remember that children are not miniature adults. Kids develop in stages and have differing physical and mental capabilities at each stage.

The sport system divides athletes by age groups, but age is not the only measure of their maturity or readiness for a specific sport activity. Not all 10 year olds are alike. Some are more mature physically, mentally, and socially while others are less mature. You may have on your team two or three groups of athletes who are quite different emotionally or physically even though they are the same chronological age. You may have to create activities appropriate for the different groups on your team.

As the athlete grows, develops, and matures their approach to sport will change. In general, the following is true about the young athletes you coach:

- Children under 7-8 are motivated by fun and often dislike competition.
- Cooperative games are very useful
- Children 8-10 begin to understand the importance of rules. They identify with personal prestige and skill levels more than winning or losing. They become more self-centred.
- Children over 12 become more competitive. Winning and losing become more important.
- Physical abilities change dramatically with maturity level.
- The ability to translate commands into action changes dramatically with maturity.

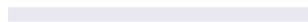
Asking kids to do things that are beyond their developmental capacities frustrates both athletes and coaches. Contact your sport organization or the Sport Alliance of Ontario to access resources which will help you develop appropriate programs for your athletes.



CREATE A STRONG SELF-IMAGE

How athletes feel about themselves (*self-image*) is important. If they don't feel good about themselves in a particular setting they avoid that environment- they quit sport, or do not perform to their potential. You play a large role in the development of an athlete's self-image. It's quite easy, really: do the things that others do to you to make you feel good.

- 👉 Know their names and use them (first names) when addressing them
- 👉 Establish eye contact - kneel don't bend
- 👉 Smile - often and readily
- 👉 Give approving nods, winks, thumbs up
- 👉 Develop a list of 100 ways to say "Way to go!"
- 👉 Applaud effort not just results
- 👉 Be enthusiastic, energetic
- 👉 Involve them in decisions
- 👉 Let athletes assume leadership in an appropriate situation
- 👉 Spend time with everyone
- 👉 Give them responsibilities
- 👉 Be their biggest fan/cheerleader - remind them of their achievements
- 👉 Treat them like you'd like to be treated when you are learning or being evaluated on some new task or skill.



ORGANIZE A GREAT PRACTICE

World-class coaches have both annual and daily plans for their practices. They start with a script of what will be done, how it will be done, and why it is being done. Like them, you should have seasonal goals for what you want the team, the individual athletes, and yourself to accomplish.

You need a plan for your daily practices, too!

It is extremely important to have a plan when you coach beginning athletes. They don't have a lot of experience or skill to draw on and if this is your first time coaching, neither do you. If you know what you want to do, when you want to do it, how you want it done, and why you want it done, you will be much more confident and assured- and so will your athletes.

PLAN THE PRACTICE

To begin, break your practice down into five to ten minute segments following this order:

Introduction

- explain briefly what will happen today, what they will learn.

Warm up

- get athletes moving, get them ready for activity
- raise body temperature through vigorous activity
- start slowly - then increase pace
- flexibility exercises - from general stretching to sport specific
 - slow static stretching
- activities that employ basic skills (i.e. dribbling) - but keep them moving

Review previously learned skills

utilize drills that give them an opportunity to practice fundamental skills or skills that they learned recently

Learn new skills

- describe the new skill
- pick 2-3 teaching points to emphasize
- provide drills that utilize the new skill
- make sure everyone gets to participate (learn) - avoid long lines of standing around
- provide feedback - and encouragement
- Change or modify skills as athletes improve



ORGANIZE A GREAT PRACTICE (CONT'D)

Game-like Activities and/or Conditioning

- simplified game situation - reduce area of play, number of players, rules
- incorporate fitness activities if appropriate

Cool down

- decrease level (intensity) of activity gradually
- stretching exercise (for muscles most used in practice)

Wrap up

- review practice and plan with athletes
- prepare them for next practice
- do your own personal evaluation- what could be better next time?

DON'T JUST PRACTICE- PRACTICE EFFECTIVELY!

An effective practice session has the following characteristics:

High Activity Level:

- Every athlete participates frequently. There is little standing in line, no waiting for equipment, minimal time listening to instruction.
- Drills and activities change frequently, athletes do something new every 5-10 minutes
- Drills have progression - easy to hard, simple to complex

High Variety Level:

- Skills are practiced in different ways
- Fun activities are provided
- Novelty is introduced - play new position, change rules, use different equipment
- Work with different people, individually, pairs, small groups

High Organization Level:

- Written practice plan
- Environment is organized - enough equipment in the right place before practice starts
- Start, stay, and finish on time

This may seem like a lot of work, but once you've tried it once or twice, it is quite simple and both you and your athletes will benefit.



ORGANIZE A GREAT PRACTICE (CONT'D)

PLAN FOR GAME DAY

You should also have a plan for game days or competitions:

Warm up

- prepare them for game activity as you would for practice

Establish what we want to do today

- play fair
- good sportsmanship
- do our best
- tactics and skill reminders: good passing, good defense, etc.

Post-competition wrap up

- Highlight the positive things that happened
- Praise effort - be positive
- Ready them for next practice
- Evaluate the game
 - make note of performance and accomplishments
 - make note of things to be addressed at next practice



GOOD COACHING NEEDS GOOD COMMUNICATION

Communication is not merely giving instructions and having athletes carry them out. Effective communication is a two way street. You are both the sender and receiver of information. That means that not only do you need to be understood when you communicate, but you also need to listen to the people you communicate with. Listening skills are as important as speaking skills. Here are some helpful hints.

When speaking:

- Use words the athlete understands (remember growth and development needs)
- Don't speak too quickly
- Make sure that they are paying attention to you
- Get down to their eye level
- Make sure everyone can hear (speak loudly enough, face them when speaking)
- Make sure they understand (ask them to state what you've asked them to do)
- Repeat yourself if necessary

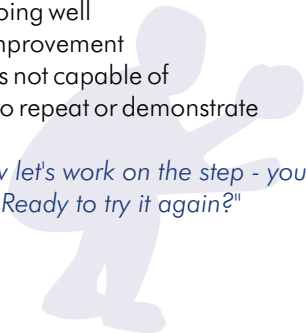
When listening:

- Establish eye contact
- Give signs that you are paying attention (uh huh, yes, I see)
- Have the rest of the group quiet
- Restate or rephrase what you've heard (you want to know what to when...)
- Be positive
- Thank them for asking the question or making a point

When you give feedback:

- Be prompt- give feedback while the athlete still remembers what they did
- Be positive- start by mentioning what they're doing well
- Be specific- explain exactly how to make the improvement
- Be sensible- don't ask for changes the athlete is not capable of
- Make sure the athlete understands- ask them to repeat or demonstrate

"That was good! You've got the arm action. Now let's work on the step - you need to point your toe like this. OK? Ready to try it again?"



HELP YOUR ATHLETES GET FIT

Even people who are new to coaching recognize the need for athletes to be fit in order to play the game. In fact, it may be one of the first things you try to do. However, getting athletes fit isn't just a matter of making them work until they drop from fatigue. Fitness development needs to be age (developmentally) appropriate, progressive and should not predispose the athlete to injury.

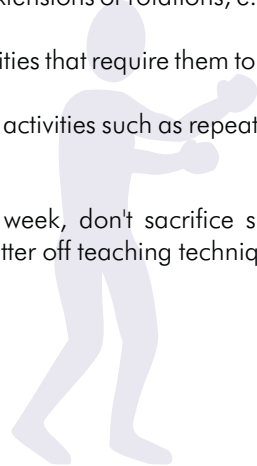
Here is a list of some basic do's and don't's for getting your athletes fit.

Do:

- Progress gradually over the season. Start with lower intensity, lower duration activities and work up over time.
- Build endurance first before introducing higher intensity activities (run continuously before sprinting).
- Put the fitness part of practice near the end after they have tried to learn new skills. It's more difficult to learn skills when fatigued.
- Always include a warm-up (see above).
- Monitor athletes and reduce or stop activity as they become fatigued.
- Provide plenty of cool water--particularly if the activity is intense or if it is hot and humid.
- Scale back intensity in hot, humid weather.
- Always have a 'cool-down' period at the end of practice (see the earlier section).

Don't:

- Ask athletes to perform extreme stretches, hyperextensions or rotations, e.g., neck bridges, hurdle stretch.
- Ask developing athletes to do strengthening activities that require them to lift or support more than their body weight.
- Ask developing athletes to perform high intensity activities such as repeated wind sprints.
- Don't deny your athletes water and rest breaks.
- If you see your athletes only once or twice a week, don't sacrifice skill development for fitness training. You may be better off teaching technique and fundamentals of the game.



HOW TO MAKE SPORT SAFER

Every coach wants to minimize the risk of injury to athletes. We can't totally eliminate the risk of injury but we can reduce it drastically. Many risks are under your control- and you have a responsibility to take the necessary steps to protect your athletes. Once again, it helps to have a plan.

- If your athletes use equipment (sticks, bats, etc.) be sure to teach them how to handle the equipment safely.
- Always survey your practice/game facility. Hazards are often simply overlooked until an accident happens.
- Make sure they have proper, well-fitting athletic wear (shoes, helmets, shoulder pads, skates, etc.)
- Remove obstacles or hazards. Move benches back a safe distance from the playing area.
- Pad objects that athletes may run into (end walls of gym, basketball standards, volleyball support wires).
- Provide plenty of water (particularly in warm weather)
- Have a first aid kit on hand
- Have a medical information form for each your athletes' past injuries, allergies, conditions, that may affect their ability to participate.
- Know your athletes' fitness, illnesses, etc.
- Be cautious returning athletes to activity when they have been injured or ill.

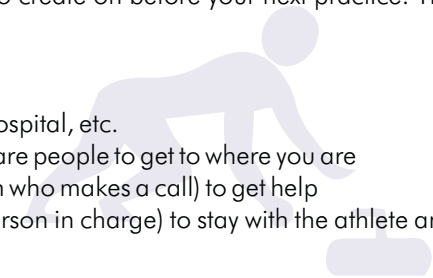
FOR YOU

It is beyond the scope of this project to teach you how to deal with injuries if they should occur. However, there are lots of places to go for help that will prepare you to deal with most of the sports injuries you will encounter. Red Cross, St. John's Ambulance, SIPAC (Sports Injury Prevention and Care), and the 3M NCCP Level I Theory manual are good sources of information and training.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

When things go wrong and there is a major injury, you must have an EAP (Emergency Action Plan). Take time to create one before your next practice. The plan includes the following:

- Location of the nearest phone
- Phone numbers of ambulance, hospital, etc.
- Clear directions for emergency care people to get to where you are
- Having a "call" person (the person who makes a call) to get help
- Having a "charge" person (the person in charge) to stay with the athlete and be in charge at the scene.



YOUR ROLE WITH PARENTS

As a coach, you'll often have to work with the parents of your athletes. The chances are that you are a parent yourself. If that is the case, ask yourself what kinds of things would you expect of a coach when they are dealing with your son or daughter. What would you like to know about their experience as a coach? What would you like to know about the interaction between your child and the coach? You probably had those kinds of questions as a parent, however, now that you are the coach, other parents are looking to you for answers. It helps to remember that "informed people are cooperative people."

How do people become informed? In the most simple and direct way. You talk to them, one on one or as a parent group. Tell them how you are going to conduct yourself, what expectations you have of the athletes and how you will treat them. Tell them what your expectations are of them as parents.

Another way to inform parents is to write them a letter, addressing the concerns that any parent would have. Tell them a little about your philosophy, your expectations, and create an avenue of communication. Good coach-parent relationships create a positive environment for the athlete, and everyone benefits.



In Closing

Thank you once again for taking the time to review Coaching Basics. As you can see from the materials and references we have provided you with, there is a lot to learn. However, now that you have started, the most important thing is to use what you have learned to enjoy your athletes, your sport, the competition, and to have fun.

The real rewards for your efforts are not in the awarding of trophies or medals but in the words of an athlete who, at the end of the season, extends to you a heartfelt "Thanks Coach!"

Enjoy your season, your athletes, and everything coaching has to offer!

