

Putting YOUTH Back Into Sports

Coaches' Guide

What can you do as a parent

Respect your players' need for knowledge.

Are your expectations developmentally appropriate? Do you communicate your instructions at their level?

Be careful not to push your thoughts, ideas and dreams onto your team.

Make an effort to listen to what each player is saying, and try to meet his/her needs.

Remember that sports are primarily an opportunity for youth to learn and have fun.

Most children will not grow up to be professional athletes, as few children possess the talent or desire to play competitive sports at the highest level.

As a coach, you play a key role in Putting YOUTH Back Into SPORTS.

Dealing With conflict...Keep the Game FUN

Coaching means working with both athletes and parents. Follow the basic conflict resolution steps to keep the game fun for everyone:

- Approach the parent with your emotions under control.
- Identify the facts to be discussed.
- Listen. Listen. Listen.
- Do not pile on issues and stay focused.
- Suggest different ways the parent can channel his/her energy.
- Separate yourself from the situation if necessary.

Cooperation vs. Competition

One of the main benefits of participating in sports is for youth to belong to a team and learn teamwork. To be a true competitor, a young athlete needs to learn cooperative skills and sportsmanship. Coaches need to encourage young players to:

- Focus on self-comparison rather than peer comparison.
- Use positive communication skills.
- Encourage and help their teammates improve their skills.
- Respect their teammates and coaches.
- Learn and follow the rules of the game and accept officials' rulings.
- Understand that winning and losing are part of sports, learn from the win or the loss, and apply that knowledge to the next game.
- Understand that they are part of a team and that the team is more important than an individual star.



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Coach's 'To-do' List...

Be Proactive

- Host an orientation meeting for athletes and their parents.
- Practice frequent communication with athletes and their parents.
- Look for signs of an excitable parent.

Get Parents Involved

- Encourage them to be positive role models.
- Hold regular parent meetings.
- Have planned skill-development activities for parents to work on at home with their children.

Create a Positive Environment

- Treat every player as very important regardless of ability.
- Build a partnership with parents and let them help support the team.
- Educate parents on the importance of their attending the games and acting appropriately as spectators.
- Emphasize team pride and spirit.

Promote sportsmanship

- Encourage parents to applaud for all players and to avoid insulting players on either team.
- Respect officials.

Make 'Feedback' Meaningful

Providing feedback is a constructive way to teach children about the game and themselves. The following tips will help you as a coach meet your team's need for a positive learning environment:

Ask questions about the game.

Find out what the players want to focus on. What's important to them? They may be worrying about something that can easily be addressed by an adult.

Build a "feedback sandwich."

Start with a positive comment such as "I liked the way you choked up on the bat." Then add constructive advice like, "Now we need to focus on watching the ball more closely." End with a positive comment, such as "It's great to see the new technique we discussed in practice."

Use both individual and group feedback.

This gives you more opportunities for teaching without appearing to focus on one player.

Make sure your instructions are developmentally appropriate based on age, ability and experience of the young player.

Use simple strategies and a concrete, hands-on approach.

Understand that children have different learning styles. Let them guide you on how they best learn.

Understand the difference between a "teachable" and "non-teachable" moment.

The best time to teach children is during practice or after a game, not by embarrassing them during the game unless the game is structured to take advantage of teachable moments. Are you making time to work individually with each young player?

Remember that body language speaks just as loudly as verbal feedback.

Does your body language indicate acceptance or frustration?



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Create a positive sports experience for youth!

Coaches and parents must work together to send a similar message about the importance of doing one's best rather than winning at all costs.

Participating in sports helps youth develop life skills, appreciate health and fitness, learn about sportsmanship, and enjoy the challenges of good competition while making friends and having fun!

The following guidelines are suggested for youth sport coaches to use in working with and building a positive relationship with parents:

Keep the player out of controversy.

If a parent has a problem with your coaching, ask the parent to talk to you directly. Keep the young athlete from becoming involved in the situation.

Provide feedback.

Be open to constructive comments from parents about their child and the game. Provide positive encouragement to their child.

Ask parents to refrain from giving instructions during the game.

Parents naturally want to teach their child, but that is your job as coach. Encourage parents to be good spectators.

Encourage parents to provide positive support.

Ask them to focus on the positive things their child and his teammates are doing.

Encourage parents to be part of the home-court/home-field advantage.

Ask them to be enthusiastic and positive during the sporting event.

Encourage parents to avoid putdowns.

Parents should not make demoralizing or insulting comments to youth on either their child's team or the opposing team.

Understanding Youth Development – Every Child Has An agenda.

Youth development includes physical, social, moral and academic development. Children also need to develop self-esteem, character and self-respect on their path to adulthood.

As a coach, you play a key role in helping young athletes master these competencies. Here are examples of actions you can take to aid children in sports with their developmental agendas:

Physical skills

Do not push a child to perform skills for which he is not developmentally ready. Encourage self-mastery rather than using comparisons with other children.

Social skills

Help youth learn social skills. Teach conflict resolution and communication skills and provide opportunity to practice.

Moral behavior

Remember that as an adult, you are a role model for your players. Your actions as a coach send a message about moral behavior.

Academic success

Be sure to remind your players that academics are an important part of an athlete's success. Unfortunately research indicates that some youth would rather fail in school than in sports.



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Self-worth

Teach your players that self-worth should come from effort, self-improvement or mastery. As coach, do not compare children during sports practice or competition—treat each youth as an individual.

Character

Sports can allow youth to learn persistence, self-discipline, responsibility and integrity.

Remember that role modeling is the best way to teach.

Self-respect

As a coach, you must model self-respect. Teach your players the value of choices and independence.

Coaching is about more than just winning!

Did you know that youth have expectations of you as a coach? Here are characteristics that youth prefer in a coach:

- Knowledgeable
- Instructive
- Empathetic and Understanding
- Motivating
- Fair and Consistent
- Democratic (preferred more by females than males)
- Promotes a positive group atmosphere
- Promotes warm interpersonal relationships
- Supportive and Encouraging
- Honest and Sincere
- Enthusiastic
- Reliable

