

Top 20 Tips for Successful Coaching



A guide for sport and recreation clubs and associations in Western Australia.



Department of Sport and Recreation
Government of Western Australia

Time and time again we hear athletes comment on the impact their coaches have had on them as athletes and people. No other role within sport can influence as greatly as that of a coach on an athlete.

The question is: How will you be remembered as a coach by your athletes? Will it be as one that screamed and yelled while sending them on lap after lap of the oval or a coach who was supportive and committed to their development?

The following tips provide some direction for coaches to increase their chance of having the greatest impact possible on their junior athletes.

1 Are you really ready?

You may think you are ready to coach, but are you REALLY ready to coach?

Coaching is so much more than just turning up and letting your athletes run around for an hour. As a coach you must be ready to deliver training sessions and game days that reflect the needs of the athletes. If you're not asking yourself "What is the best thing I can do for my athletes" then maybe you're not ready to coach at the moment.

2 Knowing yourself as a coach

Ask yourself "Why am I coaching"?

This is the start to developing and understanding your personal coaching philosophy. Knowing the answer will allow you to be consistent in the way you deliver your coaching.

Are you a coach who wants to develop the skills of young people and ensure that they enjoy participating in sport? Or are you more the 'I want to win' type of coach? Both thoughts are fine, although the type of team that you should coach may differ. If you are 'I want to win' type coach then maybe the under 8s aren't for you!

3 Know your athletes

Ask your athletes "Why are you playing this sport" and "What do you want to achieve this season". You will probably be surprised by the answers.

It is essential that you as the coach feel comfortable in addressing the needs and goals of the team.

If they are a group of athletes who want to socialise with their friends and enjoy themselves but you are a win at all costs type coach, then you are in for a VERY long season.

4 Become accredited

Becoming an accredited coach will provide you with the skills and the confidence to enjoy the season and make significant positive impact on your athletes. The Department of Sport and Recreation conducts a beginning and advanced General Principles course. Contact your relevant association for information regarding sport specific courses.

5 Maintain your accreditation and update your knowledge

Coaching is an ever changing beast. It is essential that you continue to update your knowledge by maintaining your accreditation and attending regular training courses.

The Department of Sport and Recreation deliver generic coaching courses and seminars. Go to www.dsr.wa.gov.au for more information on making the coaching experience a positive and powerful one.

If you would like to be notified of upcoming courses contact the Department's Coaching Consultant on info@dsr.wa.gov.au or 94929700 to be placed on the coaches' database.

6 Be familiar with your sports 'Codes of Behaviour'

Your specific sport should have developed a 'Codes of Behaviour' for their coaches. These provide a set of guidelines that when followed will provide a safe and positive environment for athletes to participate in. If your sport doesn't have 'Codes of Behaviour', then visit www.dsr.wa.gov.au for a generic set.

7 Child Protection

There is nothing more important than the safety of our children.

The Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 was implemented in Western Australia on 1 January 2006. The aim of the Act is to deter and prevent people who may harm our children from obtaining positions of trust within organisations. The Act introduces compulsory criminal record checking to ensure a consistent and high standard of checking of persons in child-related work.

Work is classed as "child related work" if the usual duties of the work involve, or are likely to involve contact with a child.

'Contact' includes any of the following:

- Physical contact
- Verbal communication, whether face to face or by the telephone or in another form
- Written or electronic communication

Contact with a coach easily fits into all 3 types. To find out if you or your coaches are required to complete the working with children process or for more information visit www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au or www.dsr.wa.gov.au and download fact sheet 11.

There is some exemptions to the checks including parents that coach at the same club as their child or for volunteers under

the age of 18.

8 Involve your parents

It is essential to involve parents from the outset to increase the chance that they will provide assistance throughout the season. This assistance could come in the form of help during your coaching sessions and game day or simply as support of your positive philosophies.

From the very outset;

- Encourage any help and support they are willing to provide.
- Call a meeting to explain your coaching philosophy and expectations for the season.
- Encourage parents to support this philosophy and expectations.
- Encourage them to positively encourage their children.
- Demonstrate that you are prepared to listen to their concerns and issues.
- Highlight that the development of their child is a team effort.

9 Be as patient as a saint

Whether you are coaching the under 8s or the under 21s all coaches require the patience of a saint. Guiding a group of athletes through the development of skills is at the best of times challenging. However, it can also be very rewarding.

If you feel your patience wearing thin, just stop, take a breath, rethink the situation and then either continue or try another tack.

If this is an ongoing issue for you find an experienced coach that can provide you with a few more tips.

10 Respect players, officials, coaches and spectators

The successful delivery of sport is a group effort. Coaches are very public role models. They must always be seen to be respectful in their conduct with players, spectators, officials and other coaches.

11 Failing to plan is planning to fail

Even the most experienced coach needs to plan. Planning increases the chance that the session will run smoothly and effectively. It also increases the chance that sessions will be sequential throughout the season.

12 Maximum participation

If athletes are going to improve then they have to practice... a lot.

Introducing practices and activities that involve small groups and lots of equipment assist in helping athletes develop skills and strategies more quickly. Time spent waiting in long lines is time wasted.

13 Keep on improving!

Improving as a coach is more than just attending courses and becoming accredited. Self evaluation is an essential skill. Following coaching sessions ask yourself;

- What were some of the good things I did during the session?
- What are some things I can improve on?
- What did my athletes achieve?

The answers to these questions will guide you to make adjustments to your coaching.

Asking more experienced coaches to watch your sessions and provide feedback is a very powerful way to continue your improvement.

14 Be inclusive

If you have ever coached you know that the difference in skill levels within your team can be significant. An inclusive coach is one that adapts and modifies activities and games to ensure that the greatest opportunity is given for all athletes to participate regardless of their age, gender, disability, skill level or ethnic background. Contact the Inclusion Officer at the Department of Sport and Recreation on 9492 9700 or visit www.dsr.wa.gov.au for advice and information on workshops that can help you to become more inclusive.

15 Set boundaries

One of the greatest fears we find with beginning coaches is the concern that they won't be able to 'control' their athletes in an environment without walls. One of the ways to overcome this is to ensure that you set boundaries for your athletes to work within.

Where appropriate, use field or court markings or coaching markers to indicate the area you would like athletes to complete the activities within. Just doing this simple task will make your coaching sessions so much easier to control.

16 Observe and demonstrate more

Coaches love to talk. However, there is usually a lot of time when they need to stand back, let their athletes practice and just observe what is going on.

What should you be observing?

- Look for ways to increase participation within the group.
- Are there any faults with the activity or technique as indicated by the struggle of athletes?
- Is one particular athlete struggling that needs your help?
- Are athletes following instructions

that you gave them or do you need to repeat the explanation?

There are also times when athletes need to focus their practice in peace and quiet.

Remember that over 60 per cent of any message comes from body language. Make your actions match your words and where possible show things rather than explaining them.

When you are ready to explain a drill, skill or tactic, try to demonstrate it rather than just talk it through. It will usually be faster to do and you will have a much better chance that your athletes will understand what is required.

Keep the coaching points to a minimum. Athletes usually only remember 1–3 points so after that you are wasting your breathe.

And while you are at it — remember to listen. Athletes can provide a huge amount of information on how effective your coaching is.

17 Provide feedback in a sandwich

It has been said that feedback is the breakfast of champions and breakfast is the most important meal of the day. There are ways to deliver your feedback so it is more effective for your athletes.

When providing feedback to your athletes use the 'sandwich' approach.

Layer the corrective feedback with a positive comment either side. For example, "That is great body position, make sure you extend your arm after you have shot, keep up the effort."

The athlete now has useful information and they feel good about their efforts.

18 What risk?

It is essential that a coach provides a safe environment for their athletes to train and compete in.

At the beginning of the session, check the area you will be training in. Look for anything that may cause an injury (e.g. rocks, glass, unprotected goal posts, fences etc).

Also, ensure that the drills/games that you deliver are safe.

Ensure protective equipment is used (shinguards, mouthguards etc).

During the session, keep the area clear of loose equipment that players may trip on.

19 Know your first aid or know someone who does.

As a coach, there wouldn't be a situation much worse than when one of your players is injured and you have no idea what to do.

Gain knowledge about dealing with first aid situations or ensure that there is always someone present that does.

At the very least ensure that there is a basic first aid (including ice) available at all training sessions and games.

Contact Sport Medicine Australia (WA Branch) on 9285 8033 or www.smawa.asn.au for more information about training opportunities.

20 Know you are doing a great service

Sometimes coaching can be hard.

There may be times when you just want to walk away because things aren't happening the way you want them to.

Hold on and remember that despite it all, if you have followed steps 1–19, then you are making a significant positive long term impact on your athletes.

In the end, when you reflect on the season the good times will far out way the bad.

Resources

Beginning Coaching Course

This is a national recognised course that allows for the beginning coach to gain some specific coaching skills.

It can be completed online (for free) at <https://learning.ausport.gov.au> or by attending a course run by the Department of Sport and Recreation.

Visit www.dsr.wa.gov.au for further information and application forms.

Library

The Department of Sport and Recreation has a library open to coaches. Please contact the library before coming in.

Websites

Go to the coaching section of www.ausport.gov.au for a mountain of tips and tool for coaches.

Visit www.dsr.wa.gov.au for the latest in coaching information and training opportunities. This site also has all the contact details of sporting associations in Western Australia.

Find a Club

Find a Club is where you can register or update your club's details in our Find a Club database. It is an exciting new initiative designed to increase participation in sport and recreation and help your club recruit more members and volunteers.

Located within the Department of Sport and Recreation's website, Find a Club will be a comprehensive database of sporting and recreational clubs within Western Australia.

Visitors to the website can search for clubs in their local area and are provided with activities, contact details, venue details and even a street map showing them how to get there.

By registering or updating your club details you receive:

- Free listing of your club contact details and activities.
- Up-to-date industry news and funding opportunities for your club.

To register as a new club

Visit www.dsr.wa.gov.au and click on Find a Club.

To update your club information

If your club has previously registered your contact details with DSR, your nominated contact person will receive a login and password to enter and update your club information.

Other Resources

This resource is part of the Club Development Scheme, which provides assistance to Western Australian sport and recreation clubs and organisations to become better managed, more sustainable and to provide good quality services to members and participants.

Other resources in the series include:

- Clubhouse CD-ROM
- 1 Step by Step... to starting a new club
- 2 Planning for Your Club – the future is in your hands
- 3 Taking the Lead! A guide for Club Presidents
- 4 The Key to Efficiency – the Club Secretary
- 5 Show Me the Money – a guide for the Treasurer
- 6 Take the 'In' out of Ineffective – ten steps to running successful meetings
- 7 Effective Club Meetings – a guide for the chairperson
- 8 Lighten the Load and Delegate – help for the overworked committee member
- 9 You Have the Answers – solving club problems
- 10 Marketing and Promoting your Club
- 11 Sponsorship – seeking and servicing a sponsor
- 12 Establishing Your Club Constitution and Becoming Incorporated
- 13 Risky Business – a club guide to risk management
- 14 Clubs' Guide to Volunteer Management
- 15 Member Protection for Clubs
- 16 How to be More Inclusive of People from Diverse Backgrounds
- 17 Passport into Schools – linking sports with schools
- 18 Youth Sport – junior sport policy
- 19 Long-term Involvement – junior sport policy
- 20 Getting Young People Involved – junior sport policy
- 21 Physical Growth and Maturation – junior sport policy
- 22 Sport Pathways – junior sport policy
- 23 Forming Links – junior sport policy
- 24 People Making it Happen – junior sport policy
- 25 Quality Coaching – junior sport policy
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- 28 Top 20 Tips for Officials
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