



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

7 Pillars of YMCA Youth Sports

Everyone Plays	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone who registers is assigned to a team regardless of ability.• Make sure everyone receives equal practice and playing time (at least half of every game).
Safety First	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure the equipment and facilities are safe.• Teach the sport in a way where the skills are appropriate for children's developmental level.
Character Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use sports to the YMCA's Four core values: Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, Caring• Be a role model of sporting behavior and guiding your players to do the same.
Positive Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make decisions that put the best interests of the children before winning the contest.• Help children to learn to compete and cooperate in a competitive world.
Family Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage parents to help as volunteer coaches, officials, timekeepers, and team parents.• Encourage the family to be at practices and games to support their child's participation.
Sport for All	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage and appreciate the diversity of children in our society and encourage the children and their parents to do the same.• Make sure that all children are included in every practice, game and team
Sport for Fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remember the sports are for the kids; let them have fun.• Avoid dominating the activity to the point that it destroys children's enjoyment of the sport.



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Team Meeting

As soon as you get your roster call your team, introduce yourself and give them information about the team meeting. Remind them of when and where the first practice is if they do not already have this information.

- While you have the parents on the phone ask if their child has any special needs and what his/her ability level is.
- Ask parents about their experience with the sport and if they will be around to help instruct and help during practices and games

OUTLINE OF FIRST PARENT MEETING

1. Introduce yourself
 - Briefly tell about yourself
 - Talk about coaching philosophy
2. Explain The “Y” philosophy and youth sports programs
3. Conduct and how you will handle player and parent conduct
4. Y Rules and regulations
5. Equipment
 - What does the YMCA provide?
 - What does each player need for practice and games?
 - What can't be worn during games? Jewelry, earring, necklaces
6. Safety protocols
 - Bad weather policy
 - Game and Practices cancellations
7. Practice schedule- Where? When?
 - Rules for Practices- attendance and conduct
 - Parent participation a must.
 - Practice is not a babysitting service.
 - Siblings must be monitored the entire time.
8. Game Rules
 - An approved Coach is the only person allowed on benches/player sidelines
 - Coach is the only person allowed to have discussion with officials
 - Parents are prohibited from entering playing field
9. Playing Time
 - Minimum -Half of the game
10. Introduce Assistant coaches, Team Parent coordinator
11. Discuss communication process
12. Season Dates
 - First Game
 - End of Season
 - Awards
13. Establish drink and snacks for end of games
14. Have a question and answer session
15. Thank Parents for being part of a new season.



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Practices

The key to a good practice is organization. Know what you want to do and don't worry if you don't get through it all or have to deviate from the plan. If a drill is not going as you planned, ditch it and move on.

Don't waste your time during your short practice.

DO

- Have a plan developed for practice
- Always start with a warm-up/stretch
- Involve Parents
- Break players into small groups
- Work on skill based drills
- Have Fun! Reward effort
- Conclude practices with recap of skills that were taught
- Instruct parents on drills and skills they can work with the child outside of practice

DON'T

- Arrive late. If you are running behind have assistant start practice.
- Scrimmage the whole time!
- Work in large groups
- Do it by yourself
- Harshly criticize, instead explain and encourage
- Be alone with a child



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Here are other tips for running an effective practice.

1. **LEARN EVERYONE'S NAME FAST.** Use name tags if you need to. But nothing is worse than calling the kids by the wrong names or not being able to get someone's attention because you don't know their name.
2. Get to the practices early. Even if you did all of your planning ahead of time you will want time to familiarize yourself with the gym or field, get your equipment out and feel prepared before your players and parents start to arrive.
3. **Make sure every child present is on your roster. If someone shows up that is not on your roster, then most likely they are not on your team. Get the persons name and contact the League Director as soon as possible so they can clear up the problem. Friends and neighbors may not participate in practices or games. Only the League Director may add a player to your roster.**
4. The number one reason kids drop out of programs is because they do not feel connected to the team. It is your job to create team unity and encourage new friendships from the start. Make sure the kids who know each other are separated and mixed with kids they do not know.
5. Kids will be excited at the beginning of the practice, but also a little nervous. It is okay to start warming up and do some light running before you talk with them. Let them shoot around and play with each other as they gather before you start the official practice.
6. Be organized. Have your practice planned out in detail. Go over the practice plan with your assistants before the practice, so they not only know what is going on but can help you to stay on track.
7. Do not forget to spend time warming up and stretching. Remember, we are trying to develop good fitness habits now, rather than later. Keep the warmup the same so the players are used to the same routine.
8. There are usually 1-2 practices scheduled before the first game. These practice sessions should be used to provide the basic rules, skills and procedures needed for the first game. During these practices, the players should learn:
 - Positions – Each position and its role should be explained. Stress the need for each position and how players need to work together.
 - Strategy –Teach basic defense and offense by using controlled scrimmages.
 - Basic skills –Use drills to teach the basic skills and rules needed to fully participate and perform in the sport.
 - Use a variety of drills that work on the same skill to mix things up. Make sure that the drills cater to the age, skill and developmental level of your athletes. The goal of drills should be challenging but attainable.
 - Remember your objectives. Participating in sports helps to increase the self-esteem of the athletes and develop character in youth. When you explain a drill or make a statement to a player, think of it as a self-esteem drill or a character development statement.



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- Spend a minimal amount of time teaching and organizing athletes, especially young athletes, have a limited attention span and need as much hands-on time as possible. Get all the athletes involved as much as possible. Standing in line is not a good use of practice time.

Skills Progression

Proper progression is one of the most important areas in teaching skills effectively. The first step is assessing the existing skills of the players and progressing accordingly. For example, you are probably not going to be teaching first graders how to crossover dribble. The following outline is a progression for dribbling in either soccer or basketball:

1. Skill performed without pressure (and without any other restrictions)
2. Skill performed with limits on time
3. Skill performed in a restricted area
4. Skill performed with opponent's pressure/obstacles
5. Dribbling in game like situation to beat a defender to the goal.

Each skill has a proper progression, but progression is not limited to individual skills. Many skills lead to other more advanced skills and they should be taught in order from basic to advanced skills without skipping any. Failure to follow a progression may lead to the players being unable to perform the skills properly, thus leading to frustration.

Providing Feedback During Practices & Games

- Recognize what players are doing correctly.
- Demonstrate skills as much as possible, kids learn better by having an example to follow.
- Always be positive and genuine in your comments.
- Try to state a compliment followed by a correction and then another compliment
- How you communicate is as important as what you are saying.
- Speak clearly, in an appropriate tone and volume
- Watch your athletes for signs of confusion or frustration
- Use terms and language your athletes can understand
- Show athletes that you are interested and be enthusiastic
- Make sure to spread your attention around to all your athletes.
- Always encourage your athletes to try their best and let them know how proud you are of them.



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Tips for Teaching New Skills

Young players respond best to challenges. Try to build on the foundation of skills and give your players something new to practice in each session. When you present a skill:

1. Give a brief introduction
2. Demonstrate the skill (use a player if they can perform the skill)
3. Explain the details of the skill.
4. Let players try the skill. Observe and assist them. Remember that players learn more from doing rather than listening, so keep instructions to a minimum. As the players are practicing, give encouragement and try to correct errors. Remember to be positive in your comments, so players are not discouraged.

Some helpful rules for teaching new skills:

- Get into the practice skill activity without hesitating.
- Choose something that is familiar or that is easy to explain in a few words, and get the group actively interested from the very start.
- More difficult material may be presented after the players have gained confidence in themselves.
- Practice a skill until it is almost at its best, and then move on to another. Progressive learning and exposure to several skills will help eliminate boredom.
- Actively participate.
- Use positive reinforcement. Your players need smiles, eye contact, encouragement and communication when they do well.
- Keep practices fun through a games approach to drills.

The Games Approach

In traditional techniques for teaching sports too much emphasis is put on the individual skills and not enough on how to play skillfully. In the games approach, by contrast, you learn what to do first and then how to do it.

Play the game –Learn the tactics –Learn the skills

The games approach lets players discover what to do without you telling them. What you do as an effective coach is help them discover what they have experienced. It empowers players to solve problems that arise in the game. It also allows more kids to play right away and makes practice more fun!



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Games

Game should be the fun reward for all the hard work put in by both the players and coaches at practice. Games should always be a positive experience for players if parents and coaches keep the right perspective.

Before the Game

1. Arrive early, so your players have time to find you and the team.
 2. Decide who is playing in each quarter/half beforehand but be prepared to make adjustments if needed.
 3. Find any necessary volunteers, and fill out proper line up sheets if applicable.
 4. The performance of most athletes will increase if competition pressures can be reduced. A brief pregame talk gives you the opportunity to put the importance of the game in its proper perspective.
- Remind players of the skills they have been practicing and tell them to concentrate on performing these skills rather than worrying about what their opponents will do.
 - Emphasize the need to think and play as a team and not to criticize teammates. Above all, stress the importance of behaving properly at all times, not arguing with officials and having fun.

During the Game

- Relax and enjoy, remember we are having fun. To be a good coach you do not always have to give advice. It is okay to spend some time smiling and being supportive by clapping and not talking.
- Try to be enthusiastic and compliment players on good performances. Remember, everyone on your team deserves encouragement, not only the best players.
- Substitute players allowing everybody to play at least half the game regardless of the score. Make sure no player plays the entire game.
- When players come out of the game, first try to say something positive about their performance, and then give them ideas and suggestions for improvements, followed by a positive compliment. Do not focus on what a player is doing wrong, focus on what you would like them to do right.
- Make sure children not participating in the game are supervised. Remind them that they can learn a lot by watching their teammates and they should be helping and supporting them.

After the Game

- Always congratulate the other team by shaking their hands and thank them for their participation.
- Talk to your team about the positive things that happened during the game, regardless of the result of the game.
- Help us to clear the playing area of people connected with your team, so the next game may get underway or the staff can clean up.



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Sportsmanship –Winning and Losing

Coping with winning and losing is, of course, an essential part of playing sports. Ideally kids first learn about how to deal with victories and defeats from their parents even before the youngster's lace up their first pair of sneakers.

But as the coach, it is up to you to reinforce the appropriate behavior for winning and losing.

When They Win...

Every player will tell you that it is more fun to win than it is to lose.

But as the coach you should strongly remind your team that "winning with class" is how you expect them to play.

- If you spot one of your players taunting or humiliating an opponent when your team is way ahead in the game, simply call "time out" and have the player sit the bench next to you. Explain to him or her that such behavior will not be tolerated by you and unless they can learn to control themselves, they will not be allowed back into the game. Don't worry. The ultimate fun is in playing and the child will quickly modify their ways to get back into the action. If they do happen to repeat the offensive actions again, put them back on the bench until the lesson is learned. Make sure the parents are aware of why the child was on the bench and spend time in your next practice talking about appropriate behaviors with your team.

When They Lose...

Many times, especially for younger kids, a loss will be accompanied by tears of disappointment.

As the coach, understand that losing is for many players a new and painful experience. Console them, praise them for their efforts, but never embarrass them. Tears are a normal reaction for young players who have just felt the sting of a defeat.

- Your job is to reassure them that today "Just wasn't our day," and that "We played well, but the other team played a little better." Those are the kind of thoughts you want your team to hear. Kids are resilient and for most players the bitterness of a loss and the tears that go with it often disappear quickly. Within minutes they will bounce back and be asking about what their next activity for the day will be.

The best guideline to follow is to always remember that good sportsmanship starts with you! Players quickly watch, monitor and copy their coach's behavior. How you handle and react to a loss or victory will affect how your team does the same.



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Coaches Troubleshooting Guide

Discipline It does not make sense to have a long list of rules.

The best coaches make a few rules stand out.

Make sure all the kids on the team understand not only the rule, but why it is important and the consequences for breaking it.

- **Ball Hog** - Especially in younger teams there is occasionally the one player who likes to control the ball and take all the shots. If you sense this happening, have a chat with the player.
 1. Compliment their skills and encourage them to include all the players on the team.
 2. Give them a challenge like having everyone on the team touch the ball before a shot is taken.
 3. This approach recognizes the players talent, but it also suggests the fact that the team should come first.
- **Running Up the Score**- At some point your team may have a game where it is clear that your team is going to win –and win big.

Do you allow your kids to keep running up the score? No, that is not good sportsmanship.

 1. Call a time out and challenge your team to do so many passes before a shot is taken or focus on other skills. You still want them to work hard but redirect them to focus more on their skills and less on scoring.
- **Vacations/Schedule conflict**- Ask parents for a list of days in which their child will not be able to make games. This will help you when putting together your subbing schedule for the next games and will not leave you scrambling beforehand to change your plan.
- **Pre-Game Jitters**- Young players can become nervous and anxious before a big game. Be careful to not become the source of the pre-game anxiety. Before the game, wear a smile and look relaxed, even if you are nervous! Players will be more prepared if they are relaxed and ready to have fun. Bring them together and have a quick meeting to remind them to have fun, relax and concentrate on what they have learned at practice.
- **Pushy Parents**- What do you do when you have a parent who always wants to give you a piece of his or her mind? Give them 10 uninterrupted minutes to speak. Then look them in the eye, thank them for their feedback and respond to their suggestions and comments. If you have a parent with a bunch of ideas, or someone who thinks they can do it better than you, ask them to be an assistant coach. The invitation may get them to back off or even better, you may have a new assistant and they will have to do everything they were asking you to do.



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- **Tardiness-** You have a right to expect players to be on time for practices and games. However, keep in mind that most of the time when kids are late it has more to do with their parents than them...they can't drive themselves to practice. Call the parents and explain to them the importance of their child being on time.
- **Player Problems-** If you are having any type of problems with a player, it is your job to communicate the problem to the parent(s) immediately. Most of your problems are solved just by making the parents aware. Adopt a philosophy of stopping small problems before they become large problems.
 - If you discipline a player in practice (i.e. having them sit by the side for 5 minutes) always indicate what behavior was unacceptable and what behavior is more appropriate. And inform the parents of what took place, so they can work with the player on their behavior outside of practice.
 - If behavior problems become frequent, ask a parent if they would please attend the whole practice/game, so that they can deal with the problem and you can then focus on the other players.
 - If your efforts with the parent seem to be ineffective, notify your League Director for further support.

Working with officials

Youth Sports officials are usually parents, other coaches, high school or college students. Most of these people are learning how to officiate through practical experience. Officials do receive training from the YMCA, but they improve as officials by officiating! Coaches and parents should try to be sympathetic rather than critical of the official's role.

- Officials do make mistakes and miss calls. It does not help the game or players to embarrass the official by pointing out errors in front of everyone.
- We want to maintain a positive playing environment and cutting down officials on the court is not positive.
- Calls will not start to go your team's way if you ride on officials all game long.
- A better approach for coaches is to wait until half time or call a timeout.
- Do not discuss calls with officials after your game.
- **Judgement calls can not be appealed or discussed.** Limit your discussion to rules instead of judgement calls.
- Most officials want to improve and appreciate constructive criticism, when it is given in a positive and respectful manner.
- Keep in mind that the officials work for the YMCA and are not obligated to discuss their job with coaches, parents or spectators after each game. Should an official not want to speak with you, please respect their wishes and direct your feedback staff.



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Working with Parents

Coaching a youth league team is exciting and rewarding. But from time to time, you may experience difficulty with parents. Some may want their children to play more, or they might question some of your judgments as a coach. This is normal, so do not feel that you are alone if this happens. Here are a few thoughts to remember when dealing with parents.

- Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children who are involved. Encourage parents to communicate with you. It is always best to get concerns out in the open.
- Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease with you.
- No coach can please everyone. Do not try. Give the parents a response to their concerns but do not feel like you need to give a lengthy justification for every decision you make.
- Most important, be fair. If you treat all players equally, you will gain their respect.
- Handle any confrontations one-to-one, and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Do not argue with a parent. Listen to their viewpoint and thank them for it, then give them your response. If they have an issue that you cannot resolve, refer them to the League Director.

- Ask parents not to criticize their (or other) children during a practice or game. Do not let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
- Do not blame the players for their parents' actions, if negative. Try to maintain a fair attitude.
- If you have a parent who always wants to contribute, put them and their ideas to work. Ask them to write out their practice ideas or to come to practice and help with a few drills. Get them involved and give them a job to support the team, do not shut them out. You can never have too many assistants if they all know their role and purpose.
- Always remember that you are dealing with all types of children and parents with different backgrounds and ideas. One of your main challenges as a coach is to deal with these differences in a positive manner so that the team's season will be an exciting and enjoyable experience for all.