

Coaching Responsibilities

What are your main responsibilities as a volunteer coach?

The coach assumes the responsibility of doing everything possible to ensure that the youngsters on his or her team will have an enjoyable and safe sporting experience.

With younger kids, coaches should be expected to ensure that players have fun, learn good values such as sportsmanship and teamwork, learn to love the game, and learn the basic rules and skills required of the sport.

The coach is responsible for planning and teaching activities in such a manner that the progression between activities minimizes risks. Make sure your players warm-up, condition your players with fun drills not just sprints and running laps. Monitor each child during conditioning drills. Don't assume good cardiovascular conditioning just because they are young. Inspect equipment and facilities before practice and make sure each player has the proper equipment for the sport. Encourage players to drink plenty of water before, during and after practice.

Obtain the number and ensure the availability of nearby emergency care units. Make sure that you have emergency medical information and transportation consent forms for each child during every practice and game.

The coach needs to find a balance between support and pressure to encourage kids to do their best. Concrete, usable feedback helps because it gives direct and guides players in the constant self-evaluation and self-correction that characterize sports. Make sure you point out individual progress to each player. Help your players understand the difference between effort and natural ability. Pay attention to each player as a whole person, not just talent to be used to win. Know who responds well to stress and who doesn't.

The coach should be focused on creating a team. Develop a sense of belonging, camaraderie, and commitment among the players. Encourage group activities, such as team dinners, professional sporting events, visiting a nursing home, and volunteering for community projects. Teach your players about responsibility, coming to practice and games on time and ready to work hard.

Listen to your players, parents and game officials. The final decision is yours to make, but decisions based on more information are usually better than those based on less information.

Teach your players respect. Besides teaching respect for your teammates, coaches should also teach respect for the game and for oneself. Your players should know the rules and play by them. They should exhibit good sportsmanship, don't allow offensive language, cheating or fighting. Make sure your players understand the difference between aggressive and hostile play. Aggressive play is playing physically within the rules with the intent to win and do one's best. Hostile play is excessive roughness with the intent to injure. Trying to injure another player should never be tolerated. There is no pride in winning a game by breaking the rules or causing purposeful harm to other players.

Stand up for your team so that they are not penalized by mistakes in officiating, but don't be abusive. Be calm, remember the officials are also human beings doing their best. The most effective approach is to ask the official quietly to watch for specific infractions. Never allow your players to criticize the officials. This goes along with having respect for the game.