

Checklist for Coaches

Create a positive environment

- Learn names quickly.
- Smile, praise and encourage.
- Be patient and supportive.

Set achievable goals

- Keep the athlete's maturation in mind.
- Make sessions challenging.
- Ensure skill development is progressive.

Vary your sessions

- Change format and activities regularly.
- Ensure equal opportunity for all athletes.
- Avoid elimination games where athletes sit out.
- Include non-competitive teamwork.
- Include supervised play with minimal guided instruction.
- Use different teaching/coaching methods (tabloids/cards).

Teach skills

- Plan skills for sessions and introduce easiest ones first.
- Teach one skill, or one part at a time.
- Regularly revise skills from previous weeks.

Demonstrate

- Remember 'a picture paints a thousand words'.
- If you can't demonstrate a skill, choose someone who can.
- Demonstrate what to do, not what not to do.
- Make sure all athletes can see the demonstration.

Involve all athletes

- Have ample equipment available.
- Use several small groups rather than one large one.
- Aim to have every athlete practicing the skill each 30 seconds at least.

Provide instant feedback

- Use lots of praise.
- Be supportive - shouting and criticising won't achieve anything.

Use your voice well

- Don't shout or talk too much.
- Try to have as much one-to-one as possible.

The Warm-Up and Cool-Down

There can never be too much emphasis placed upon the importance of warm-up and cool-down routines. The warm-up prepares the body for the proceeding activity, as well as helping to prevent injury to muscles, which are more susceptible to injury when cold. The cool-down helps the body clear lactic acid that builds up during any activity. Less lactic acid means less soreness and stiffness the next day!

What is the ideal warm-up?

The ideal warm-up will depend on the sport and the level of competition. The warm-up should incorporate the muscle groups and activities that are similar to those that are required during training or competition. The intensity of the warm-up should begin at a low level gradually building to the level of intensity required during training or competition.

For young people, 5-10 minutes would be enough. However in cold weather the duration of the warm-up should be increased.

The warm-up aims to:

- Prepare the body and mind for the activity
- Increase the body's core temperature
- Increase heart rate
- Increase breathing rate

What about the cool-down?

Too many coaches neglect the cool-down at the end of a session. It is just as important, especially after vigorous exercise because the body needs time to slow down and it's an important step in aiding recovery.

The cool-down can be the same sort of exercise as the warm-up but with a walk substituted for the run. Stretching after activity helps to ensure maximum flexibility, relax the muscles, return them to their resting length and helps develop long-term attitudes to maintaining healthy lifestyles.

Stretching

Stretching activities should be included in the overall warm-up and involve all muscle groups that are going to be used in the activities to come. Stretches should move the muscle groups through the full range of movement required in the activity being performed.

Some rules when stretching

- Warm-up prior to stretching
- Stretch before and after exercise
- Stretch all muscle groups that will be involved in the activity
- Stretch gently and slowly
- Never bounce or stretch rapidly
- Stretch to the point of tension or discomfort, never pain
- Do not hold your breath when stretching; breathing should be slow and easy.