



COACHING BASICS

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Your primary role in the Learn to Play Program is teaching the basic skills of hockey to beginner players. This means that you will be a coach, to the children and a leader to the other adults or parents who volunteer to help out. It is therefore important for you to have a basic idea of what is expected of you in the leadership role and how to communicate to everyone involved

Leadership Styles

There are 2 main leadership styles:

- (1) Autocratic
- (2) Democratic

Autocratic - the autocratic Coach is:

- Is the "only authority"
- The BOSS
- A strong disciplinarian
- Leads by force (no questions)
- Inflexible
- Communicates one way
- Uses Fear

Democratic - the democratic Coach is:

- Seeks input from participants
- More flexible in approach
- Leads using accepted methods
- Enforces discipline once rules have been decided
- Will listens to reason
- Seeks leadership help from others



Is there one leadership style to be used by a Coach?

No. A coach's leadership style is largely situational in nature. Sometimes you must be the authority figure, while the democratic approach is appropriate at other. You will most likely have parts of each style which go to make up your own unique leadership style. The important thing is to recognize that there are different styles and which one is effective and appropriate in what situation.

Your coaching role in the Learn to Play Program will be a combination of these two Leadership styles. This means being democratic while using the good points of autocratic coaching. Remember your players are young and inexperienced; you are the authority figure that must be in control of the group at all times. This is in order to maximize learning, minimize opportunities for injuries occurring and to provide the necessary structure in the program.

Effective Leadership Qualities and Techniques

Some recommended leadership qualities and techniques associated with being a good coach:

a. Qualities:

- Patience
- Good communicate skills
- Understands individual differences
- Is a good example
- Willing to listen
- Motivates players

b. Techniques:

- Role model
- Be yourself
- Accept differences
- Encouraging independence
- Responsible
- Develop responsibility in others
- Try new things
- Listen
- Communication



Principles of Effective Communication

Good instruction is a result of clear and meaningful communication. When you are teaching skills, correcting errors, solving problems, or explaining a new drill, it is done through communication. That's why it is important for coaches to have good communication skills.

As a Learn to Play coach, it will be necessary to communicate with your players in many different formats; a large group, smaller groups and individual. The same principles for communication apply to in all these situations.

1. **Be Enthusiastic** - Be an enthusiastic coach of your group. Your enthusiasm is important, as it will affect your players' enjoyment of the game of hockey.
2. **Be Positive** - interact with your players in a positive manner. Set a good example of desired behavior. Give constant encouragement and praise to the players.
3. **Be Demanding But Considerate** - clearly establish what is expected of the players. Your expectations of the players should be based on their abilities and experiences. Don't expect more than is reasonable and realistic.
4. **Be Patient** - With beginning players, the coach's best virtue will be patience. Remember that coordination is not yet fully developed and that the activities must be practiced over and over again. Give recognition at every opportunity and your patience will pay off.

Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

Communication can be both verbal and non-verbal. Coaches communicate many messages to players by their actions, facial expressions, body position, as well as voice characteristics. Effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, with your players is affected by how well you use your voice and body.

Verbal

Effective verbal communication, which should compliment and support your non-verbal communication, involves good use of your voice. The following are suggestions for using your voice effectively:

- Avoid lengthy and complicated explanations when demonstrating and explaining a skill or drill.
- Use language that is easily understood by the age and skill level of the players you are instructing. Watch for reactions from the players that indicate whether or not they understand your explanations.
- Use a voice that is only slightly louder than a normal speaking voice except for the few times it is necessary to project your voice a long distance, (e.g. in an arena). Speaking unnecessarily loud encourages players to make noise themselves and is hard on the nerves of all concerned. Many coaches are able to settle players down by lowering their voices so that close attention is required to hear. Try it!

- Speak clearly and move your eyes about the group of players as you speak. Periodically, look carefully at those who are farthest away from you. Can you see clear indications that they can hear? If there is any doubt, ask them

Use inflections or changes in the tone of your voice to communicate varying moods (e.g. energetic, patient, serious, concerned)

Non-Verbal

What you communicate non-verbally to your players can be as important as what you communicate verbally. The coach's non-verbal behavior should reflect what is said to the players. A positive example of non-verbal communication is a coach who acknowledges the successful completion of a drill with a smile and a pat on the back. It is important to be aware of the message you are sending to your players.

The following are ways of making sure you are giving the right message:

- Make an effort to gain eye contact at an eye-to-eye level with all players you are talking to. This will add to the sincerity of your instructions and will help you to determine whether players hear and understand your instructions.
- Move about your players when they are practicing a skill so that they feel you are spending time with each of them.
- Use variations in facial expressions (smile often!) positions of the arms, legs and body to change the mood you are trying to convey.

It should now be obvious to you that the correct combination of verbal and non-verbal communication is the most effective method of getting your point across. There are all kinds of lessons being learned by your behavior, your actions, your gestures, facial expressions and by the way in which you use your voice. It is therefore very important to try to ensure that your words and actions are as consistent as possible.

Guidelines for Handling Common Situations

Research shows if athletes have coaches who follow the guidelines listed below, the athletes generally; enjoy playing more, like their team-mates, think of their coaches as more knowledgeable and have a greater desire to continue playing in the future.

How to be more positive:

- Give a lot of positive feedback
- Have realistic expectations
- Give positive feedback for desirable behavior as soon as it occurs
- Praise effort as much as results

How to react to mistakes:

- Encouragement immediately after a mistake
- Give corrective instruction in an encouraging and positive way
- Avoid punishment
- Avoid giving corrective instruction in a hostile way



INTRODUCTION TO COACHING

How to get positive things to happen:

- Set a good example of desired behavior
- Encourage effort
- Be selective so that encouragement is meaningful
- Do not make sarcastic or degrading comments
- Encourage players to be supportive of each other

How to maintain order and discipline:

- Maintain order by establishing clearly what is expected
- Achieve a balance between allowing freedom and structure

How to create a good learning atmosphere:

- Set realistic goals
- Always give instructions positively
- Be clear and concise when giving instructions
- Be patient
- Acknowledge and reward effort and progress

How to communicate effectively:

- Ask yourself what your actions have communicated
- Encourage two-way communication between coaches and players
- Be sensitive to individual needs
- Communicate at a time when the player is most receptive

How to deal with individuals who are disruptive:

- Give them additional responsibilities
- Appeal to their sense of respect for others
- Be positive, not negative
- Discuss their behavior with their parent(s).

How to gain respect:

- Establish your role as a competent and willing coach
- Be fair and considerate
- Set a good example
- Earn the respect of your players ... don't demand it.

The Coaches Philosophy

A coach's philosophy is built on experience, knowledge and abilities you have acquired over the years. To be able to demonstrate and express a sound philosophy, you must be able to:

- Be an effective teacher
- Be able to communicate
- Be a model of cooperation and fair play
- Be a good listener
- Be accountable for your actions
- Share responsibilities with players, e.g. picking up pucks
- Develop in your players a respect for other participants
- Develop self-respect and self-discipline in your players

To have a significant, positive effect on the players you coach, it is necessary to establish both in your own mind and in your behavior, a sound, personal philosophy.