



DEVELOPING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE!

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Teaching Tips

An effective coach is both knowledgeable and knows how to share that knowledge. Educators have the benefit of understanding how children learn and process information. For those of us who don't have the background, here's a crash course in Teaching 101:

Catch their attention

Use varying techniques to capture the players' attention. Children are ingrained to respond to "1-2-3 Eyes on Me" with "1-2 Eyes on You." You might also try clapping (clap once if you can hear me. Clap twice. Clap three times). You may also shine a spotlight on someone who is paying attention to reward good behavior ("Tommy – I really like the way you're paying attention"). Be sure to compliment others who follow that behavior.

Make eye contact

Take off your sunglasses. Remove your hat. Eye contact improves the delivery of your message, by making it more personal.

This may also mean kneeling – get to the height of your players to better connect.

Additionally: when addressing your team, have their backs to the sun so that they can see you, and the sun is in your eyes.

Limit information

Avoid lectures. Keep things simple. Remember your audience (they're kids).

Use key, consistent, age-appropriate words

You may encourage players to accelerate when dribbling, or dribble "faster than a cheetah with a jetpack on." Be consistent with terminology – both within your team and within the world of soccer (e.g. positions).



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Differentiate

Coaches must tailor their instruction to meet individual needs of players. Some players learn from verbal direction. Others need to see a visual demonstration. Some will need to physically perform or walk-through it. Most may need to do all three!

Differentiation also means coaches may have to vary one or more of the following:

- Content – what players learn or how they access it;
- Process – the activities to learn or master content
- Products – additional opportunities to rehearse, apply, and extend what they learned;
- Learning environment – how the session works and feels.

For example: you may organize an activity so that the more advanced players compete against each other, while those still developing face off against similar abilities. Just be cautious about doing this too often, as it may create negative stigmas or perceptions for some of those players.

Check for Understanding

Ask the players to explain what you just told them, or ask them to demonstrate it. This helps to ensure your message was received clearly.



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Command vs. Cooperative Coaching:

A command-style coach issues directives to players (WHAT to do), which is the common coaching style in sports like football and basketball. Soccer is a free-flowing and player-centric sport, which means most decisions are made on the field by players in real-time. There are no timeouts in soccer to draw up a play. Once the game starts, coaches have little influence.

This means most instruction should consist of cooperative coaching – where players are asked questions to consider not just WHAT to do but HOW, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY. The use of asking questions to deliver information is called Guided Discovery. Coaches can utilize this technique to help players think about the game. While it's lead by the coach, it gives athletes a voice in the process. It also gives them more buy-in because the answers they reach were accomplished by their work, instead of being delivered information by the coach.

Guided discovery questions can be factual (do you want to dribble in front of your own goal?), conceptual (where you should we avoid dribbling near on the field?), or provocative (why don't you want to dribble in front of your own goal? When might you have to?). The goal is to ask provocative questions, which help players learn about the game.

The command-style of coaching can still be utilized – such as during half-time talks – but should be used cautiously in the flow of a game or training activity. It can cause cognitive overload for the player, because the game is already complicated enough. Coaches need to avoid “joy-sticking” their players and team. Even if the results are effective, the ramifications (players don't learn and improve, players don't enjoy having decisions stolen from them, etc.) are far greater.

Coaches are encouraged to use the cooperative approach as often as possible. The end result is that players improve their ability and knowledge, which increases their enjoyment, which in the end keeps them playing.



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Vary your Coaching using the Coaches “Tool Kit”

The Coaches “Tool Kit” allows each coach to deliver information and teach in a variety of methods. Variety is important for players, as each have different learning styles. The same approach from the coach will often result in players tuning them out. Here are five ways to deliver coaching points:

Coach within the flow of the game.

- Provides clear, brief instruction to individuals or small groups of players as the ball is moving
- Not an ongoing monologue (no joy-stick coaching!) but at a critical time to influence play

Coach the individual player as the game continues.

- Stop an individual player but not the activity
- His/her team plays down as they receive brief and concise instruction, and then returns to play.

Coach at natural stoppages.

Address groups of players when game is still (ball out of play, water break, etc.)

Focus on a problem while it is fresh in the players’ minds

Least intrusive method since the play is already stopped.

Allow the conditions of the activity to coach the theme.

- The conditions of the activity provide the problem for the players to solve.
- Example: a 1v1 game to coach attacking moves forces players to dribble and may incentivize the use of moves (e.g. use a move and score = 2 pts)

Coach using the “freeze” method.

- Game is “frozen” or stopped at coach’s command.
- Used to paint a visual picture for players.
- Use with caution – too much disrupts the game and frustrates the player.
- Be brief but brilliant.