

**YMCA OF  
METROPOLITAN  
DENVER**



**Youth Sports  
Coaches Handbook**

YMCA of Metropolitan Denver  
Sports Branch  
**COACHES HANDBOOK**

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## **YMCA YOUTH SPORTS**

### **Who we are...**

The YMCA of Metropolitan Denver has been serving the Denver area since 1875. Over the years the YMCA has expanded its service to include our youth sports program for both boys and girls. We look forward to serving you and your family. The YMCA strives to provide safe, affordable, convenient, and quality programs to meet your family's wants and needs.

### **Our Purpose...**

The YMCA is an independent, not-for-profit association of members, volunteers, contributors and staff whose common goal is to provide quality programs which promote good health, strong families, youth development, enhance human and community growth and international understanding.

### **Our Mission...**

The Mission of the YMCA of Metropolitan Denver is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

### **Our Vision...**

The YMCA's vision is to enhance its role as Metropolitan Denver's leader in nurturing the healthy development of children and teens, the support of families, and the strengthening of communities.

### **Our Philosophy...**

Our youth sports program is a values' and skills' based sports program designed for 3-17 year old boys and girls. Through the resources provided for our YMCA Sports Program coaches, players, parents and officials will be prepared to offer sports programs that emphasize fun, personal excellence and skills while deemphasizing winning at all costs and encouraging healthy competition.

## **YMCA Youth Sports Pledge**

At the start of each game the coaches and players will recite the following sports pledge:

**I pledge to play the game, the best I can,  
to be a team player, to respect my opponents,  
the rules and officials,  
and improve myself, in spirit, mind and body.**

## **Seven Pillars of YMCA Youth Super Sports**

YMCA Youth Super Sports is not just another sports program. We have a mission, and that mission is stated in our Seven Pillars of YMCA Youth Super Sports.

- **Pillar One—Everyone Plays.** We do not use tryouts to select the best players nor do we cut kids from YMCA Youth Super Sports. During the season everyone receives equal practice time and plays at least half of every game. As part of a team, everyone contributes to the team's success.
- **Pillar Two—Safety First.** Although children get hurt playing sports, we do all we can to prevent injuries. We've modified each sport to make them age appropriate and more enjoyable to play.
- **Pillar Three—Fair Play.** Fair play is about playing by the rules and following the traditions of the game. It's about coaches being role models of good sporting behavior and guiding their players to do the same.
- **Pillar Four—Positive Competition.** We believe competition is a positive process when the pursuit of victory is kept in the right perspective. The right perspective is when adults make decisions that first are in the best interest of the athletes participating and then decisions that help win the contest.
- **Pillar Five—Family Involvement.** YMCA Youth Super Sports encourages parents to be appropriately involved in their child's participation in our sports programs. In addition to parents' helping as volunteer instructors, coaches, officials and timekeepers, we encourage their presence at practices and games to support their youngster's participation.
- **Pillar Six—Sport for All.** YMCA Youth Super Sports is an "inclusive" sport program. That means that youngsters who differ in various characteristics are to be included rather than excluded from participation.
- **Pillar Seven—Sport for Fun.** Sports are naturally fun for most kids. They love the challenge of mastering the skills of a game, playing with their friends and competing with their peers. Remember, YMCA sports are for the kids; let them have fun!

# Character Development

## The YMCA Challenge

We at the YMCA are committed to quality programs that enhance the spirit, mind and body of all. Through the delivery of these programs we strive to incorporate and enhance the character values of caring, honesty, responsibility and respect. YMCA coaches must be willing to take the YMCA challenge to accept and demonstrate these character values.

This can be partially accomplished by providing an environment in which the four character values are fostered. Coaches, parents and officials are all role models and their behavior should be conducive to character development. The four values should be demonstrated by all at each game and practice.

**CARING** is demonstrated throughout the youth sports program. A coach's attitude and the way he/she communicates with his/her players helps demonstrate this value. Remember to treat the players the way you would like to be treated if you were learning a new skill or task. Players can exemplify caring by applauding for players injured during a game or by being supportive of teammates during games and practices.

**HONESTY** is an important component of our programs. For the youth sports coach and his/her players, honesty and integrity should be put before winning and performance. Once again, this concept is best demonstrated by your example to your team. It should be maintained in all interaction with parents, players, and officials. The same should be true for your players in their interaction with teammates, opponents, coaches, and officials. An example of this would be admitting to a foul or penalty rather than attempting to "get away with one".

**RESPECT** is shown by both players and coaches during a season. First and foremost is to show respect for the official and for the calls he/she makes. To dispute, mock or second guess calls does not show respect for their position of controlling the game. Respect can also be shown during interaction between players and coaches. An example of this is the ability of both players and coaches to listen to one another.

**RESPONSIBILITY** as a YMCA youth sports coach includes areas such as being on time, personal appearance, teaching basic skills, and overall leadership in the program. The participants should also be aware of the responsibilities of being on a team. These include paying attention at practice, working with others as a team, and most of all, treating others the way they would like to be treated.

## Coaches Teaching Values to Players

A Values Coach provides the leadership needed to promote sportsmanship, fair play, and the four character values (caring, honesty, responsibility, and respect) to the players, parents and spectators. The Values Coach can be the person who is constantly on the lookout for players demonstrating the four values and recognize them for doing so. There are a few important things to remember when teaching values to children:

1. Ask open ended questions rather than giving the answers.
2. BE YOURSELF. Children respect an adult who listens and speaks honestly.
3. Demonstrate caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility in your actions during all interactions with your team.
4. Hold a team discussion at the end of every practice. This is the time for players and coaches to get together to talk.
5. Give each person the chance to respond or "pass". Don't feel you need to comment on their responses. You can reinforce participation with nods, smiles, and short words like "yes", "thank you" etc.
6. When the discussion comes back to you, summarize the responses to show that you were listening. Add your own feelings if it's appropriate.

## Code of Conduct

### Parent/Coach Behavior

Parents, coaches, participants, and spectators are expected to conduct themselves in a respectable, responsible, honest, and caring way. The YMCA has a no tolerance policy for behavior that is disrespectful, disruptive or rude. We will not hesitate to ask someone to leave the gym and/or facility for inappropriate behavior.

**Facility Supervisors and officials have the authority to ask any spectator or coach, who does not display conduct consistent with the YMCA philosophy, to leave the game area. This includes inappropriate comments to the officials, staff, or other participants.**

### Code of Conduct Forms

Each season coaches receive copies of Parents Code of Conduct forms that all parents are expected to sign before the start of the season. With the Parent Code of Conduct forms are also Coaches Code of Conduct for the head and assistant coaches to read and sign. All of the teams Code of Conduct forms will be collected by staff at the first game. Please be responsible for your own behavior and set a good example for the kids.

# Child Abuse Prevention

## Purpose

In response to an increasing incidence of abuse and neglect being both reported and confirmed locally, but also on a national scale, we have established some guidelines and procedures to raise awareness of child abuse and to minimize the potential for abuse/neglect occurring within our programs and facilities.

## Strategies to Prevent Child Abuse

1. The YMCA has in place a comprehensive pre-employment screening procedure to screen out staff and volunteers not suited for working with children. All of our volunteers go through a criminal background check.
2. The YMCA will take any allegation or suspicion of child abuse seriously.
3. Staff and Volunteers understand their legal obligation to report suspected abuse.
4. Staff and Volunteers understand what practices may be considered abusive and the difference between what may be considered appropriate and inappropriate touch.
5. Staff and Volunteers protect themselves and the YMCA by agreeing not to be alone with YMCA youth or program participants outside of YMCA programs or facilities (ie: babysitting, take children on trips, etc.) Players may not go to coaches homes, unless their parents are with them.
6. Coaches should monitor the release of participants on their teams to ensure a child is never left alone or picked up by a stranger.
7. Profanity, inappropriate jokes and any other type of harassment is prohibited.
8. Coaches will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable. Side hugs, pats on the back and high fives are appropriate contact for coaches to have with their players.
9. Coaches must use positive techniques of guidance including positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism.

## Reporting Child Abuse

- When you suspect that a child has been abused, whether at or outside of the YMCA, you must report the information immediately to the Athletic Director.
  - It may be necessary to remove the child out of an activity if they appear to be in pain or are withdrawing from the group. In this case, make sure the child is with an adult that they trust.
  - Do not discuss the situation with anyone except the Athletic Director.
  - You will be asked to write down the facts or assumptions that you have made.
  - The Athletic Director will make the appropriate phone calls to the Police department or Social Services.
- Remember, you are not making the determination that child abuse has actually occurred. You are reporting that you suspect child abuse.

## Risk Issues

**Bad Weather:** In the case of bad weather on a practice night, it is up to the coach to determine if practice should take place or not and to contact their team in the event of a cancellation. The YMCA will not reschedule missed practices.

Unless extreme conditions exist, games may not be called until the game time. Minor weather conditions may result in games being postponed. As soon as cancellations are made coaches will be contacted and asked to contact their team. Information will also be posted on the YMCA website. Every effort will be made by the YMCA to make-up cancelled games.

**Lightning:** Activities will be stopped and all people asked to move inside to a safe location when either of the following occurs:

1. Cloud to ground lightning is observed and less than 30 seconds pass from seeing the lightning and hearing the thunder from the flash
2. In cloud lightning is occurring directly overhead

The outdoor activities can be considered safe to continue 30 minutes after the last lightning is seen. It is the responsibility of the YMCA staff person on site to determine when play should be stopped and when play should resume.

**Tornado Warning:** In the event of a tornado warning, practices and games should be discontinued. Return to the building or seek shelter nearby. Practices and games may only continue when the warning has ended and no dangerous weather conditions are present.

**Media:** Please do not speak with the media regarding any incident. All inquiries are to be sent to the YMCA.

### Missing Children

If you notice a child in your care is missing:

1. Determine through a quick search that they are really missing (never leave other children unattended).
2. Arrange for other adults to continue searching while you call the YMCA to notify the staff in charge. The YMCA will send help and call the parents.
3. Activate the 911 system.

### Unattended Children

Occasionally, parents drop off their children and don't return on time to pick them up. The coach is responsible for that youth until the parents arrive. Always attempt to call the parents and emergency contact person if a child has not been picked up. Don't transport the child home. Do not put a child in your vehicle without another adult present. If you have no choice but to drive the child to the YMCA, always call the YMCA and tell them the name of the child and your expected arrival time.

# Emergency Medical Plan

## Required Information for All Game and Practice Sites

1. The closest working phone is:
2. The exact address of the activity site is:
3. The major cross streets are:
4. The exact entry location (which door) for emergency personnel is:
5. The first aid kit is:

## What to do When a Child Gets Hurt.....

1. Acknowledge what happened and take care of the child (band-aids, ice packs, ice cubes, etc...administer first aid, seek medical attention etc.).
2. If the parent is not present notify them immediately, even if the injury is minor. If someone other than the parent transports the child, tell them and then call the parents to follow up.
3. If the injury is serious make every attempt to notify the parents or emergency contact and let them make the judgment for treatment. If they are unavailable or the injury demands immediate attention, you make the determination of whether to seek medical assistance.
4. If you are not comfortable providing medical attention or feel the situation needs someone with more medical training, contact 911.
5. Notify your YMCA Athletic Director. If the injury occurs during a game, please make sure the YMCA staff person present is aware of the situation. If a serious injury occurs at your practice please notify the YMCA so that they can follow up with the family involved.

## Injury Prevention

Know the risk factors of the sport specific physical activity that your child is participating in. Make sure that the athlete has the appropriate protective equipment to prevent injury. Help your athlete develop strength, flexibility, and endurance. *Encourage your child to report pain and injury.*

**Warm Up:** Warm up activities are slow sustained stretching exercises, calisthenics and slowly increasing the intensity of motion. A good warm up should increase your body temperature, respiration, and heart rate, followed by stretching muscles with a slow static stretch.

**Cool Down:** Gradually reduces workout intensity. Have athletes walk at a slow rate until their heart rates get near normal. Follow up with light stretching.

**Over Use Injuries:** It is very important that coaches and parents are proactive and ask pointed questions if they suspect an athlete is injured or overly fatigued. Athletes commonly continue to play when fatigued or injured and may not report an injury to their coach.

**Dehydration Prevention:** Make sure your athlete has the proper amount of liquids and is staying properly hydrated. Fluid should be caffeine free. Athletes should have water breaks every 10-20 minutes and more often when exercising in extreme heat.

**Heat Related Injuries:** Know the signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Make sure athletes are in appropriate clothing and receiving fluids & rest periods during high heat conditions

**Concussions:** Athletes need to be in proper protective gear for their sport. In the event of a head injury athletes need to be cleared by a medical professional before returning to play.

## **Injury and Risk Prevention Guidelines**

### **DONT'S**

To further protect the youth, the YMCA, and yourself, avoid these things:

1. Don't administer medications. This includes aspirin and sun screen.
2. Don't transport the injured child/youth yourself. If you feel the youth needs medical attention notify the parents or call 911.
3. Don't give a diagnosis of injury unless you are a physician. Just state the symptoms and what happened.
4. Don't leave any youth unattended without adult supervision.
5. Don't give a statement to the media concerning an incident. Direct them to the Athletic Director.

### **DO'S**

1. Regularly inspect your playing area and equipment for hazards. Report dangerous conditions right away and do not let your athletes play until it is safe.
2. Warn your players of potential injuries which can occur in sports and point out their responsibility for the health of teammates and opponents. List common injuries and how to prevent them.
3. Make sure that players do not participate in physical activities when hurt.
4. Make sure that players warm up/cool down before all practices and games.
5. Supervise all activities and teach strict observance of game rules. "Horsing around" is a common cause of injuries.
6. Prevent heat injuries by encouraging regular water breaks and including brief rest periods.
7. Advise players about proper playing equipment. For example, teach players how to prevent blisters by wearing footwear that fits correctly.
8. **Never be the only adult on site.** An accident requires a lot of attention. Always take a first aid kit.

## First Aid Basics

### Emergency Basics:

- Developing first aid common sense is an important part of providing first aid care.
- First aid, given properly, can reduce the effects of injuries.
- First aid must be given quickly and effectively.
- First aid must be administered calmly and efficiently. In the excitement of an emergency it is important to stop for a moment to clear your head and think before you act.
- If you remain calm it will set the tone for the victim and bystanders to remain calm.

### Principles for First Aid

1. Look at the whole picture
  - a. Don't just look at the victim, look at the area around the victim. Is the scene safe?
2. Find out what has happened.
  - a. If the victim is conscious, ask specific questions to determine what happened.
  - b. If the victim is unconscious. Look around for clues. The scene itself often gives the answers, ask for witnesses, look for a medical alert tag.
3. How many people are injured?
  - a. Look for other injured people who may be unnoticed.
4. Are there bystanders that can help?
  - a. Use these people to help find out what happened.
  - b. Use them to call and activate the Emergency Medical Plan.
  - c. Use them to keep onlookers from getting too close to the scene.

### Safety Checklist

Safety is our primary concern.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Inspection of the playing surfaces prior to use.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You have asked all the athletes if they have any current injuries and/or pains.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inspection of equipment for any damage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Review the proper use of equipment with any newteam members or new coaches.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inspection of equipment to make sure it fits the athlete.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spectators are observing from a safe area.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You have a copy of the emergency procedures document.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You have a copy of the first aid basics document.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You have access to a first aid kit.

## Facility Use Guidelines

Without the assistance and cooperation of city and school, gyms and fields our YMCA sports programs would not be possible. Each facility needs to be treated with the utmost respect. Specific rules for each facility are given to coaches with their practice permit. If guidelines are not followed gyms and fields can be lost therefore reducing the size and quality of our programs. Please review the general guidelines below and contact the YMCA if you have any questions about the facility that your team is using.

1. Teams are only allowed in the gym or on the field during their scheduled practice time. Please arrive and exit practice and game sites on time.
2. Parents must check in with the coach at each practice and game, do not just drop your kids off! Parents are encouraged to stay for practice and get involved.
3. If a player's siblings are present during practice or games an adult must accompany them. Please do not let your children run around, they must stay under your **direct supervision**.
4. No one is allowed outside the gym except to use the restrooms or to exit the building. An adult must accompany any children needing to use the restrooms. Do not allow children to play in the hallways, classrooms or outside of the building.
5. **No food or drink is allowed in the gyms or turf fields (Duncan YMCA only)**. Water in non-breakable containers is acceptable. Teams having snacks after games need to find an appropriate place as designated by the YMCA.
6. No alcohol or tobacco may be used on YMCA or school property.
7. Any damage to site property will not be tolerated. Facilities need to be treated with respect.
8. Please make sure to pick up any trash and leave your practice location better than when you started. Any baskets or equipment in the gym that was moved needs to be moved back when practice is complete.
9. For practices at school gyms, enter only through the designated after hours entrance. You may not enter the facility any time earlier than your scheduled practice time. Do not pound on the doors to get them unlocked. If a practice is scheduled at a school then the designated door will be unlocked by the school's night supervisor at the time practice is to begin.
10. Fields with frost or puddles of water should not be played on. At any time when play in weather conditions is damaging the field, practices should be discontinued.

Thank you for your cooperation in abiding by these rules. Any person, group, or team breaking these guidelines, resulting in the loss of a facility, as determined by the YMCA Supervisor or School representative, will be removed from the league without refund.

## Equipment & Uniforms

Basic equipment for most sports will be checked out to coaches for the season. If you bring your own equipment to practices or games please make sure it is clearly marked with your name and phone number. Below is the information on basic equipment participants need for each sport offered by the YMCA.

**Basketball** – Each player needs to have non-marking tennis shoes and shorts or pants. Jr. Nugget's jerseys will be given to coaches to distribute to their players.

**Baseball** - Each player needs to have their own baseball glove, tennis shoes or rubber cleats (no metal) and shorts or pants. Other equipment as well as Jr. Rockies hats and jerseys will be given to coaches to distribute to their players.

**Roller Hockey** - Each child must have a helmet preferably with a full-face cage, elbow pads, wrist guards or hockey gloves, knee pads, in line skates and a hockey stick. Also recommended but not required are shin guards. The YMCA will provide players with shirts.

**Soccer** - Each player needs to have shin guards, tennis shoes or rubber cleats (no metal) and shorts or pants. Other equipment as well as YMCA reversible jerseys will be given to coaches to distribute to their players.

**Volleyball** - Each player needs to have non-marking tennis shoes and shorts or pants. Knee pads are recommended but not mandatory. The YMCA will provide shirts for games and volleyballs for coaches to use during practice.

**Lacrosse** - All kids will need tennis shoes or rubber cleats (no metal) and shorts or pants. Mouth guards are recommended. The YMCA will provide shirts and all other equipment.

**Flag Football** - Each player needs to have tennis shoes or rubber cleats (no metal) and shorts or pants. Mouth guards are recommended. Other equipment as well as team shirts will be given to coaches to distribute to their players.

### Lost & Found

The YMCA is not responsible for lost or stolen property. Items that are found, are kept at the YMCA facility were they are turned in. Unclaimed articles are given to charity.

Items left behind during games at non-YMCA locations are collected by YMCA staff and brought back to the branch. However, not all items are always found by staff so it is important to also contact the facility were the item was left. They may have found the item and put it into their lost and found. Participants would also have to contact the facility when items are left at practice sites.

### Medals & Trophies

Medals or trophies are provided for participants in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade or younger. These will be distributed to coaches for their team at the end of the season.

## 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

1. Start your meeting by passing out game schedules, rosters and any other season information.
2. Have parents check the team roster for mistakes and add extra emergency numbers or contact information that may not be listed.
3. Arrange for a parent who will be at every practice to help with drills, lavatory duty or gym supervision. If you need an assistant or a backup, now is the time to find them.
4. If one parent is not available to be an assistant coach have a sign up sheet ready for each parent to pick a week to be the assistant coach. This spreads the duties out among the parents and does not leave you stranded with out any assistance.
5. This is also a good time to find a team parent who can help with phone calls and organizing team functions. (Ex. pictures, snacks, cancellations, etc.)
6. Go over the code of conduct forms and make certain that each parent signs a copy and returns it to you. Remind them that this is an important contract into which they have entered with the YMCA.
7. Let your parents know your expectations of them and their child. Find out what they expect from you. If the expectations are unrealistic, now is the time to address them.
8. Go over your coaching philosophy including, how you will work with the kids, your approach to games and practices, and issues like discipline and commitment.
9. Indicate how important practice time is. It can be negative for a child and the team when a player arrives at a game without the necessary information and preparation to be a successful member of the team. Keep in mind that if kids are not at practices it is most likely something going on with their family and is not their fault. Do not punish the child for what is out of their control.
10. Review the league rules. A lot of the YMCA rules are age appropriate to allow kids to get a better understanding of the game before all the rules are called & enforced. Parents need to know these special rules so they are not reinforcing their child to do something that is incorrect for the age group.

## 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. 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 person's 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 warm up 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:
  - a. Positions – Each position and its role should be explained. Stress the need for each position and how players need to work together.
  - b. Strategy – Teach basic defense and offense by using controlled scrimmages.
  - c. Basic skills – Use drills to teach the basic skills and rules needed to fully participate and perform in the sport.

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 preformed with out pressure (and without any other restrictions)
2. Skill preformed with limits on time
3. Skill preformed in a restricted area
4. Skill preformed with opponents 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 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 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.

## **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!

See the YMCA volunteer/coaches website <http://training.ymca.net> for more information on the games approach and much more information.

## Practice Session Outline

See the YMCA volunteer/coaches website <http://training.ymca.net> for more information on building your own practice plan and for additional drills and practice ideas. Below is an outline of the main sections that should make up your practices.

### Warm Up

Warm up activities prepare the body for more intense activity, thus reducing the risk of injury. Each practice must begin with some simple warm up exercises. The following are tips for leading warm-up exercises with children:

- A Demonstrating the exercise while giving verbal instruction
  - 1. Explain the purpose of the exercise.
  - 2. Speak in words the players can understand.
- B Exercising with the players (be a positive role model)
  - 1. Give all players an opportunity to lead the exercises.
  - 2. Make sure all players can see and hear the leader.
- C Discussing good habits with the players while exercising.
  - 1. Suggest positive thoughts like "jog one lap and think about the best thing that happened to you this week".
  - 2. Remind players about the YMCA house rules.
    - (a) Speak for yourself
    - (b) Avoid put-downs
    - (c) Take charge of your actions
    - (d) Listen to others
    - (e) Show respect
- D Using a variety of exercises
  - 1. Allow players to help select the exercises.
  - 2. **Never use exercise as a form of punishment.**

### II. Skill Development

The skill development component should be age appropriate and organized so that everyone is involved. Use individual and partner drills frequently. Arrange players so that everyone has room to practice at the same time. This allows a player to make mistakes without fear of being ridiculed in front of teammates and ensures plenty of activity. This part of practice consists of two parts:

- A Practice previously taught skills (all players benefit from working on fundamentals)
  - 1. During this part of the practice, players should work on improving skills they already know.
  - 2. Ask for player input on what skills they need to work on based on previous practice sessions or games.
- B Teach new skills (at least one new skill per practice should be taught, using the existing skills for a foundation).
  - 1. Give players something new to try at each practice
    - (a) Briefly explain the skill.
    - (b) Demonstrate the skill (coach or player)

- (c) Let players try the skill.
- C Keep instructions to a minimum as players are practicing skills
  - (a) Give encouragement.
  - (b) Try to correct errors in a positive way .

### **III. Play (20 minutes)**

Scrimmages are fun and they increase the likelihood that skills learned in practice will be used in games. Include activities that simulate the contest conditions players will face and that will develop useful team skills.

- A Rotate players so they all get to play all positions.
- B Scrimmage using simplifications of the game (e.g. half court or field)
  - 1. Play for specific periods of time, not score.
  - 2. Focus on one or two rules or skills at a time.
  - 3. Control the scrimmage by periodically stopping play and pointing out learning opportunities.
- C In older age groups, allow players to take turns at being an official or assistant coach.

### **IV. Team Circle and Evaluation**

Team circles provide for cool down exercises, evaluation, and reflection. In terms of good health habits, players should always participate in a cool down routine after intense exercise. During the cool down period, the coach may do the following:

- B Announce the topic of the day and ask players to think about it as they cool down
  - 1. Use a topic related to YMCA Youth Sports philosophy such as caring, honesty, respect, or responsibility for the other team and discuss how players demonstrated that in their actions during practice or a recent game.
  - 2. Describe a situation that might occur in practice (ie. a player not showing up) or in a game situation (ie. an opponent pushing a teammate) and talk about how the team should respond.
  - 3. Use an incident that actually occurred and discuss what was good about the team's response or how they could have handled it differently
- C Ask for player input for planning the next practice
  - 1. Review the practice in terms of skills and values.
  - 2. Discuss what the players feel needs to be improved.
  - 3. Make assignments such as leader for warm up, assistant coach for review drill, demonstrator for new skill, or scrimmage official (when players know they have a special part to play, it generates enthusiasm for practice).
- D Finish practice by giving players a skill or drill to practice at home (this is helpful in getting family involvement).
- E Remind the team of the next scheduled game or practice.

# 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 necessary
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.
  - a. 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.
  - b. 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

1. 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.
2. Try to be enthusiastic and compliment players on good performances. Remember, everyone on your team deserves encouragement, not only the best players.
3. Substitute players allowing everybody to play at least half the game regardless of the score. Make sure no player plays the entire game.
4. 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.
5. 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

1. Always congratulate the other team by shaking their hands and thank them for their participation.
2. Talk to your team about the positive things that happened during the game, regardless of the result of the game.
3. 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.

## **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. As such, 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.

## **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. Make sure that all discipline is positive and not degrading.

### **The 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. Compliment their skills and encourage them to include all the players on the team. Give them a challenge like having everyone on the team touch the ball before a shot is taken. 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. 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.

## **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.

1. 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.
2. We want to maintain a positive playing environment and cutting down officials on the court is not positive.
3. Calls will not start to go your teams way if you ride on officials all game long.
4. A better approach for coaches is to wait until half time or until the game is over, thank the person for officiating the game and then express your observations.
5. Most officials want to improve and appreciate constructive criticism, when it is given in a positive and respectful manner.
6. 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 to the Athletic Director.

## **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.

1. 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.
2. Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease with you.
3. 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.
4. Most important, be fair. If you treat all players equally, you will gain their respect.
5. 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.
6. 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
7. Do not blame the players for their parents' actions, if negative. Try to maintain a fair attitude.
8. 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 to run 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.
9. 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.

## **Communication with Staff**

Each game site has a YMCA sports supervisor in charge of the events at that location. Any emergencies or concerns should be brought to the attention of this staff person. If you feel your concern has not been met or addressed by the YMCA staff person on site, please contact your YMCA Athletic Director.

Each YMCA has an Athletic Director who oversees all sport programs, which may include many offsite facilities. Please ask your program site supervisor for the contact information for your athletic director, visit our website or pick up a business card at the front desk of the YMCA facility.

## **Website**

The following information can be found on our website

[www.denverymca.org](http://www.denverymca.org):

- Online registration
- Athletic Director and Sports Coordinator's contact information
- Season dates and program offerings
- Game Schedules
- Volunteer Applications
- Financial Assistance Applications
- Weather cancellations and updates
- \*And much, much more!\*

## **Coaches/Volunteer Training Site**

Coaches and volunteers can go to <http://training.yymca.net> for valuable tools and other free coaching resources. Courses include YMCA Youth Sports Programs, Coaching YMCA Youth Sports, Safety and Emergency Action and other sport specific coaching guides with more to come! Each sport specific coaches training includes how to teach basic skills, practice plans, drills, and more. The YMCA highly recommends these trainings for coaches new to the YMCA or any coach wanting to refine their skills or looking for new ideas.

## **Evaluation of Programs**

Evaluations will be done online each season through an online evaluation tool. All participants, who provided their correct email address, will be emailed the link to take the online evaluation. Surveys will be open for feedback until the end of the season. Evaluation questions are written by YMCA sports staff and may vary from season to season.

Results from the surveys will be compiled and reviewed by appropriate YMCA staff at the end of the season. Determination of major division changes will be made by the Athletic Director and/or if necessary by the whole sports core group of directors.

## **Community Support Campaign**

To ensure that no one is denied a chance to participate because of inability to pay, the YMCA has an annual Community Support Campaign to raise money to provide scholarships for swim lessons, day camp, family/senior memberships, youth sports, child care and community outreach programs.

You have the opportunity to become involved in our Community Support Campaign by making a donation, volunteering to help raise money for our community or by helping with special events during the campaign. Please speak to the executive director at your branch for more details.

**THANK YOU**  
**for volunteering for**  
**YMCA Youth Sport**  
**Programs**

