



COACHING CHILDREN

When coaching children, remember:

- children’s sport should be fun!
- children need lots of opportunities for unstructured play, a broad range of activities and the opportunity for creativity
- early sports specialisation is not recommended for young children
- the social aspects of sport are highly valued by children
- the focus is on skill development and individual improvement, not winning
- to give all children time and attention, not just the most talented.

Children’s characteristics

Children’s social characteristics	Coaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned with themselves • Learning social roles and skills • Learning how to cooperate • Different cultural and social backgrounds • Learning how to cope with winning and losing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote cooperation, teamwork and fair play during activities • Reinforce the contribution all children make to the group • Provide a supportive environment and show sensitivity to individual differences
Children’s level of understanding	Coaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning the best way to do things • Unable to process a lot of information at once • Do not do things automatically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use role models to demonstrate good performance • Introduce one thing at a time, keep instructions and questions short and simple • Allow time for children to absorb information and practise skills
Children’s physical characteristics	Coaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very active • Lack fine motor control • Develop at different rates and any group may have both early and late developers • Have different levels of ability • Growing rapidly • Less tolerant of heat and cold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan a variety of activities • Allow time to learn skills • Cater for varying ability levels • Be aware that growth periods will alter a child’s coordination and skills • Ensure children wear adequate clothing drink enough fluids
Children’s personality characteristics	Coaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily motivated • Wide range of reasons for playing sport • Sensitive to criticism and failure • Short attention span 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to what the children say • Be positive, compliment effort and the parts of the skill that were performed correctly • Maintain interest with a variety of activities, maximum participation and limited talk

Note: these characteristics may vary among children.

The ideal coaching session will last between 45 and 75 minutes, depending on the age of the children.

