

Children are all at different stages of physical, mental and emotional development. Chronological age and their developmental age are not the same.

Children are athletes at every stage of their development. The coach should recognize their differences and coach them accordingly. Addressing acceptable behavior with child-athletes is primary. Making a training plan for the level of understanding and skill is the art of coaching children. Using small groupings to assess those levels is preliminary to a coach achieving a positive outcome for every child.



Coaching Children

- 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 specialization is not recommended for young children
- the social aspects of sport are highly valued by children
- coaches should focus on skill development and individual improvement, rather than winning as the outcome
- all children deserve time and attention, not just the most talented

Children's Characteristics (Note: these characteristics may vary among children)

1. Children's Social Characteristics Coaches Should Know

- concerned with themselves
- learning social roles and skills
- learning how to cooperate
- come from different cultural and social backgrounds
- learning how to cope with winning and losing
- 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

2. Children's Level Of Understanding Coaches Should

- learning the best way to do things
- unable to process too much information
- do not do things automatically
- use role models to demonstrate good performance
- introduce one thing at a time, keep instructions or questions short and simple
- allow time for children to absorb information and practice skills

3. Children's Physical Characteristics Coaches Should

- very active • lack fine motor control
- develop at different rates
- have different levels of ability
- growing rapidly
- less tolerant of heat and cold
- children develop at different rates, and coaches may have both early and late developers in any group
- plan a variety of activities
- allow time to learn skills
- cater for varying ability levels

- be aware that growth periods will alter the child's coordination and skills
- ensure children wear adequate clothing, drink enough fluids

4. Children's Personality Characteristics Coaches Should

- easily motivated
- wide range of reasons for playing sport
- sensitive to criticism and failure
- short attention span
- 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