

Managing behavior is a challenge for every coach.

Age variations determine the degree of immaturity, but all children are self focused, still learning their social roles and experiencing their physical limitations. In order to maintain the authority over behavior for a positive outcome for every child the coach should establish, implement and enforce guidelines for acceptable behavior.



Managing Children's Behavior

Tips for managing behavior

- Ensure that participants, parents and administrators are aware of the expected codes behavior and consequences that will be applied
- Deal with the problem by focusing on the behavior – don't get personal. Do not publicly insult or embarrass the participant. • Avoid punishing a group for the poor behavior of one participant.
- Take a firm, fair consistent approach to managing behavior. Apply consequences quickly and fairly. It may be necessary to exclude an individual from an activity. The exclusion should be brief and the coach should discuss the incident privately with the individual while they are excluded.
- Avoid punitive consequences. Instead, require the offender to compensate and/or retribute the situation caused by the poor behavior.
- Avoid using punishments such as running laps or push-ups
- Use rewards, praise and acknowledgment to reinforce desired behaviors.

Strategies for dealing with inappropriate behavior Initially, quietly correct the child's behavior:

- children, even young ones, know that there are rules of behavior that are considered acceptable. Just drawing the child's attention to the fact that they have been noticed is usually enough to get them to change their behavior
- do this as soon as possible after the inappropriate behavior occurs
- alternatively, use non-verbal cues where possible — move closer, nod, frown slightly or stare
- join in and partner the problem child, without commenting
- divert their attention by asking a question: 'John, how is that serve coming along?', 'Sarah, can you organize this activity with your group, please?'
- praise a good aspect of their involvement
- ask them if they are having difficulty
- remind them of the group rules and appropriate behavior (privately)
- address the behavior, not the character, of the child - 'That's a silly thing to do, Matthew', not 'You are silly Matthew'
- find out why they are misbehaving and ask if it is helpful to the group (privately).

If the behavior is not corrected, then relate the problem back to group rules:

- the coach might ask the child, 'What are you doing? Is this against our rules?' then ask what they should be doing
- politely ask the child to change their behavior, reminding them of the consequence if they do not.

If the inappropriate behavior continues:

- politely and calmly issue the consequence, or loss of privileges
- be respectful but firm and specific
- do not use punishment, blame, shame, pain, ignoring or sarcasm
- be consistent
- be brief — do not nag, lecture or interrogate
- remain calm — do not show anger, keep a 'cool head'
- forgive and forget

One way of dealing with inappropriate behavior is to withdraw the child from the activity:

- place the child in 'time out' for a period before inviting them to rejoin the group. Rejoining the group occurs only if the child agrees to abide by the team rules
- the 'time out' area should be somewhere away from other children but still located close enough so that the coach is able to supervise the child
- on the child's return, find an early opportunity to praise them or involve them in leading a group
- be patient as some inappropriate behavior may need time to correct.