



## Guide to Effective Coaching

We want to ensure that not only do our players enjoy their hockey, and therefore remain with the club, but that they all understand the basics of the game. Being competitive is more important than winning, particularly for the youngest age groups. Below are some general suggestions that may be useful for your coaching:

1. Planning: Plan your session prior to the day, don't make it up as you go along. Better still, plan a series of sessions in advance so there is a gradual progression from week to week in the skills being coached.
2. Control: As coaches you need to maintain control in order to establish discipline and conduct effective training sessions. Pick a clear method of gaining attention (e.g. a whistle) at the start of the season and always use the same method.
3. Safety: Parents assume their children are safe when under our control. Only set up drills that are appropriate for the ages involved, and ensure the children are well supervised at all times. This is particularly important when the players are not directly involved in a drill so may start to entertain themselves such as hitting a ball into the fence / a goal. However, rather than ban potentially unsafe practices it is better if you can educate them with the safest way to go about the activity.
4. Drills: Try to use drills where the players are involved to a high degree rather than standing around for long periods of time, and which are of a level that allows the players to achieve the aim of the drill. If the drill is too difficult make it easier to ensure success.
5. Small Games: Children love games, however don't play them for the sake of it. Use games to focus on the skills coached previously, especially those covered in the same session. Always try to accentuate the involvement of the players, so rather than play 8 v 8 play 2 games of 4 v 4.
6. Teaching Skills: The accepted format for skill development is:
  - a. Identify the skill.
  - b. Demonstrate the skill. Ensure the demonstration is given by someone who performs the skill correctly. Children are very good at copying, so they need to copy an ideal model.
  - c. Ask the players what they noticed about how the skill was performed.
  - d. Point out the important aspects of the skill. Simplify the techniques where possible, and only concentrate on the key / critical aspects of the skill. Too much detail will confuse the players.
  - e. Set up appropriate practices. If necessary vary the practice difficulty for different players to ensure they all achieve some success.
7. Correcting technique: It is imperative that players perform techniques correctly if they are to reach their full potential. If a player is performing the skill incorrectly in front of you, don't ignore it, show them the correct method. This is particularly important with the younger players as teaching correct technique is easier earlier rather than later. However, when correcting techniques, always acknowledge the positives and then suggest improvements. We do not want to develop players who are afraid of making mistakes, so never use a negative approach.
8. Tactics: All children can be taught tactics, irrespective of their skill standard. Different age groups will obviously require different levels of sophistication, however they can all understand what the team is trying to do.