

Guidelines to Creating a Safer Environment

COACH'S GAME PLAN

YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES

Being a coach, whether at the community or elite level takes a commitment of time, energy and emotion. You are appreciated by those who recognize the importance of your involvement in a person's life. These guidelines and exercises have been created by leaders in the sport and recreation field to help you and your athletes get the most from your coaching by participating in a physically and emotionally safe environment. It starts by taking 20 minutes in your first practice to set up your season for success. It's always good to involve both parents and participants, especially if you are coaching young athletes. Some of these exercises focus on the beginning of the season, but the information presented here will work for you and your athletes throughout the season.

KEEP IT POSITIVE

Do you know how many kids are not having fun in sport? According to the Coaching Association of Canada, 70% of kids drop out of sport by the age of 13 because they aren't having a good time.

For many, it's because of poor coaching practices which could include being harassed or abused. Whether it's having to do excessive exercises as punishment, being embarrassed, pushed towards unrealistic goals or being subjected to negative attitudes, they are dropping out of sport, and research indicates most are heading to the mall to hang out or playing video games.

We all have heard of bad experiences in sport. It's everyone's responsibility to reduce the likelihood of harassment so athletes can participate and compete in an environment that is fun and safe.



HARASSMENT OR ABUSE...

WHAT IS IT? There are differing degrees of abuse and harassment - all provide serious setbacks to a participant's enjoyment of sport.

☑ **Physical** - where a person is intentionally injured or made to do excessive exercises as punishment;

Example of abuse - "You guys sucked out there. Hit the track for an hour!"

☑ **Sexual** - where a person is exposed to, or invited to participate, in sexual contact, activity or behavior;

Example of abuse - "It was just a little pat on the bum, but don't tell anyone."

☑ **Emotional** - where a person is made fun of, criticized, discriminated against, or put under an unrealistic pressure to perform;

Example of abuse - "OK Darrell, I guess you'll have to play with us you're the only one left."

☑ **Neglect** - where a child is not provided an appropriate level of care and supervision;

Example of abuse - "I've got to go, but you wait here until your parents pick you up."

WHO'S AT RISK?

- coach to athlete
- athlete to athlete
- parent to coach
- coach to coach
- coach to official
- board member to coach
- parent to athlete
- parent to parent

THE DANGER

Harassment and abuse can result in:

- undermining self-esteem
- health problems - physical and mental
- increased dropout rate by participants
- anti-social behavior
- violence

If not addressed, unacceptable coaching behavior becomes acceptable. Speak out and provide solutions.

REPORT IT

If you suspect child abuse of a physical or sexual nature, you must report it to your local police and/or to [child protection authorities](#) through the Helpline for Children:

- ☑ Helpline for Children - 310-1234 (no area code is required)
- ☑ Crimestoppers Tips Line 1-888-222-TIPS (8477)
- ☑ Victim Information Line - 1-800-563-0808
- ☑ Youth Against Violence Line - 1-800-680-4264

NEED MORE INFO?

Contact your Provincial Sport Organization to obtain a copy of the sport's Harassment Policy and Procedures.



ATHLETES BILL OF RIGHTS

Athletes participate in sport for a variety of reasons and have many expectations. Whether it's to attain a personal goal, a higher level of competition or simply for the pure joy of sport, parents and coaches hold the key in athletes' choices to participate.

Athletes have the right to:

- ☑ have fun through sport;
- ☑ participate at a level that is consistent with ability;
- ☑ have qualified, sensitive leadership;
- ☑ participate in a safe and healthy environment;
- ☑ share in the leadership and decision-making of their sport;
- ☑ as a child, play as children and as an adult, play at the appropriate competition level;
- ☑ have the opportunity to participate in sport regardless of ability or income level;
- ☑ proper preparation for participation in the sport;
- ☑ an equal opportunity to strive for success;
- ☑ be treated with dignity by all involved;
- ☑ say 'No'.



NEED MORE INFO?

In Canada there is a national organization that represents the rights of athletes. For more information, contact AthletesCAN www.athletescan.com

USING POWER POSITIVELY

The proper use of power is important in all coach-athlete relationships.

Power is the ability to get things done, the capacity to act, or the ability to choose what will happen.

Power is an integral part of leadership. In sport, where coaches have considerable power, this term is synonymous with action.

The challenge for coaches is taking the right actions-actions that contribute to all-round development of athletes, while participating in sport and throughout the rest of their lives.

Long-term success in sport requires that coaches do much more than focus on athletes winning medals and becoming champions. Coaches must make it a priority to work with athletes to ensure that they mature into independent, self-reliant individuals capable of making appropriate decisions inside and outside of sport.

Becoming aware of your power, and learning how to use it wisely, is a leadership skill that helps build healthy coach-athlete relationships and enables athletes to perform better.

Coaches have various sources of power including:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> positional power | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> personal power | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> information power |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> reward power | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> coercive power | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> resource power |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> enabling power | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> expert power | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> relationship power |

To find out more about the various types of power refer to “Need More Info”.



Answer the questions to reflect on how you use your power

People are not born with the skills for using power positively; instead, they learn them through a conscious effort and considerable experience over a lifetime of successes and failures. Consider whether you use power positively as coach.

1. Think about a difficult situation in which power was a factor and you were a key participant. What went well and what would you do differently?

2. Think about yourself as an athlete you coach. What are your top three priorities for how you would like to be treated by your coach.

As a coach you have incredible influence on your athletes. Many people look back and remember their coaches as important role models. Participants’ experience and enjoyment of sport and life can be enhanced by their coach-athlete relationships. Coaches can shape a positive outcome by using power wisely:

- use power positively with athletes
- be a good role model
- follow the coach’s code of conduct, be aware of the athlete’s bill of rights
- focus on clear and regular communication with athletes, so boundaries and goals are mutually agreed upon.

The information on this page was taken from a Coaching Association of Canada resource called “Power and Ethics in Coaching” written by Paul Tomlinson and Dorothy Strachan.



NEED MORE INFO?

The Coaching Association of Canada promotes the education of coaching through a five-level National Coaching Certification Program ranging from community coaching to Olympic and Paralympic coaching. For more information, visit www.coach.ca

KNOW THE CODE

Coaches Code of Conduct

Did you know there is a code of conduct for coaches? Developed by Coaches viaSport in conjunction with the PromotionPlus Women in Coaching Committee and the Sport Branch, it addresses the expected behaviour of a coach.

- Treat everyone fairly within the context of their activity, regardless of gender, ethnic background, color, sexual orientation, religion, political belief or economic status;
- Direct comments at the performance rather than the person.
- Consistently display high personal standards and project a favourable image of your sport and of coaching.
- Refrain from public criticism of fellow coaches.
- Abstain from and discourage the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco products in conjunction with sport.
- Refrain from the use of profane, insulting, harassing or otherwise offensive language while coaching.
- Ensure that the activity being undertaken is suitable for the age, experience, ability and fitness level of the athletes and educate athletes as to their responsibilities in contributing to a safe environment.
- Co-operate with registered medical practitioners in the overall management of your athletes' medical and psychological problems. Consider the athletes' future health and well-being foremost.
- Recognize and accept when to refer athletes to other coaches or sport specialists. Allow athletes' goals to take precedence over your own.
- Regularly seek ways of increasing professional development and self-awareness.
- Treat opponents and officials with respect, both in victory and defeat and encourage athletes to act accordingly.
- Co-operate with the athletes' parents or legal guardians, involving them in their child's development.
- Be aware of the academic pressures placed on student athletes and conduct practices and games in a manner so as to allow academic success.



Photocopy and distribute to your participants and their parents.

You must:

- Ensure the safety of the athletes with whom you work.
- At no time become intimately and/or sexually involved with your athletes. This includes requests for sexual favors or threat of reprisal for the rejection of such requests.
- Respect athletes' dignity; verbal or physical behaviours that constitute harassment or abuse are unacceptable.
- Never advocate or condone the use of drugs or other banned performance enhancing substances.
- Never provide underage athletes with drugs, alcohol or tobacco products.

I agree to abide by the code

(Signature of Coach)



NEED MORE INFO?

The Coaching Code of Conduct was developed by Coaches viaSport in conjunction with ProMotionPlus Women in Coaching Committee and the Sport Branch. For more information about becoming a member of Coaches viaSport visit www.viasport.ca/coaching

BOUNDARY SETTING

DON'T CROSS THAT LINE!

Personal space. Everyone has it so you need to establish and maintain boundaries that respect that space. This will keep your relationships safe and healthy.

- involve athletes and their parents depending on kids' ages
- talk about what is acceptable and non-acceptable, like:
 - **physical boundary:** using drills to develop fitness is okay but using exercise as punishment is not
 - **emotional/verbal boundary:** positive feedback on performance is acceptable but negative feedback on the person is not
 - **social boundary:** the coach should attend sport-related social events like awards banquets, but shouldn't go to non-sport related parties with athletes
 - **sexual boundary:** correct contact with an athlete to learn a new skill may be acceptable but touching which may make the athlete uncomfortable is not.

THE BOUNDARY CROSSING GUARD

Crossing the line can be prevented by developing and maintaining clear boundaries for coach-athlete relationships. The following interactive exercise encourages discussion between you, your athletes and their parents regarding what is acceptable/unacceptable and why.



At the beginning of the season photocopy the following grid to distribute for discussion. In preparation of the discussion, you and each of the participants should write down their views in preparation of the discussion. Determine if boundaries should be set, what the impact would be if the scenario occurred and what are possible solutions. (solutions can be found throughout this Coach's Game Plan). Feel free to adapt these scenarios to your specific sport and to add some of your own.

Scenario	Views
<p>SEXUAL While spotting a female athlete in a manoeuvre, a male coach touches her breast.</p>	
<p>EMOTIONAL A parent repeatedly yells negative comments at officials and/or their own child.</p>	
<p>NEGLECT A group of kids are instructed to start a rotation of a gym full of equipment, but there aren't enough spotters for each station.</p>	
<p>PHYSICAL A room full of kids is told that the last one to touch four walls does 20 pushups.</p>	
<p>SOCIAL A coach tells his players that he's got a case of beer on ice in the truck if they do well in the game. Some of the players are over 19, but not all.</p>	
<p>A person notices another person's inappropriate behavior - what should they do?</p>	



NEED MORE INFO?

All coaches should be trained if they are to take a leadership role with children. The National Coaching Certification Program offers courses regularly in your area or by home study. For more information about NCCP, visit www.viasport.ca/coaching

FAIR PLAY CODES

Harassment can stem from a lack of communication and respect. One way to have a successful season is to work together with your participants. Discuss these Fair Play codes with your participants and their parents. They may agree with them in principle, but discuss how you can ensure that they will live by them. The following codes are taken from a resource manual developed for community coaches by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES).

FOR ATHLETES

- I will play by the rules and in the spirit of the game.
- I will control my temper- fighting and “mouthing off” can spoil the activity for everybody.
- I will respect my opponents.
- I will do my best to be a true team player.
- I will remember that winning isn't everything - that having fun, improving skills, making friends and doing my best are also important.
- I will acknowledge all good plays/performances - those of my team and of my opponents.
- I will participate because I want to, not just because my parents or coaches want me to.
- I will remember that coaches and officials are there to help me. I will accept their decisions and show them respect.

I agree to Play Fair. _____
(signature of athlete)

FOR PARENTS

- I will remember that my child plays sport for his or her enjoyment, not for mine.
- I will encourage my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
- I will teach my child that doing one's best is as important as winning, so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game/event.
- I will make my child feel like a winner every time by offering praise for competing fairly and trying hard.
- I will never ridicule or yell at my child for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- I will remember that children learn best by example. I will applaud good players' performances by both my child's team and their opponents.
- I will not force my child to participate in sports.
- I will never question the officials' judgment or honesty in public.
- I will support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from children's sporting activities.
- I will respect and show appreciation for the trained volunteer coaches who give their time to provide sport activities for my child, understanding that I have a responsibility to be a part of my child's development.

I agree to Play Fair. _____
(signature of parent)



Photocopy this and hand out to your athletes and parents. Have them sign it and commit to their agreement. Fair Play can be recognized by the presenting of a Fair Play Award at you sport awards night.



NEED MORE INFO?

Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport promotes integrity, fairness and respect in sport through education, research and special initiatives, in partnership with the Canadian sport system and other organizations, to ensure a safe, ethical and accessible sport and recreation environment for all Canadians. For more information, visit www.cces.ca

WHAT WILL MAKE THE SEASON A SUCCESS?

You've discussed acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, boundaries and codes, so now what? The season is beginning and you and your athletes need to determine what everyone wants out of the months ahead. Together, rank the following and work toward having a good year. Feel free to add more ideas. Responses could be limited at each level of importance to only 3 or 4, which will better prioritize what the athlete(s) cares about. e.g. athletes list only 3 as "very important".



Photocopy for feedback from your team.

What do you want this season?	Level of importance		
	Very important	Important	Not so important
Be active and get fit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make the Playoffs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve my skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stay healthy and not get injured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have a winning season	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be with my friends/ make new friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make the all-star or provincial team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not sit on the bench/ play more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____			



We hope that you've found the information and exercises helpful in preparing you and your athletes for the upcoming season. There is a lot of information available to you from the associations we've mentioned in these pages.

Your local recreation department and library are also great resources. Talk with other coaches or find out who is a National Coaching Certification Program course conductor in your area and look into taking some coaching courses. There are lots of ways to become a better coach. It is important to be a good coach as coaches are tremendous contributors to the development of healthy individuals and communities.

Good luck and have a great positive season!



SPORTSafe is an initiative of the Province's Sport Branch partnership with Sport BC, Coaches viaSport, BC Recreation and Parks Association, ProMotionPlus and other organizations.