



# GOOD SPORTS<sup>®</sup>

# GUIDE FOR COACHES

Developed by Active, Good Sports is funded  
by Sport NZ, New Zealand Community Trust and  
supported by Auckland University of Technology.

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# What is Good Sports®?



**Good Sports is all about creating quality sporting experiences for children - ultimately, to ensure they are lifelong sport participants.**

We do this by working together with the key adult influencers in children's sport: parents, coaches, teachers, and sport administrators; with a particular emphasis on facilitating adults' learning and understanding about how they can support children to have these 'quality sporting experiences.'

Quality sporting experiences for children don't just focus on building children's sport skills, but they also consider a wider concept known as physical literacy. This includes developing the physical skills they need, and just as importantly, looks at developing the motivation, confidence, knowledge and understanding they need to choose to be involved in sport now while they are children, but also throughout their life.

The philosophy of the initiative goes back to basics and reminds us of what's important in children's sport - children play sport to have fun; being with their friends and learning new things is some of the many things that children identify as having fun in sports. Based on local and international research, it recognises the need to take a holistic approach when supporting children's learning and development. The philosophy emphasises the importance of having fun and enjoyment for everyone involved to foster a lifelong love of sport and being active.

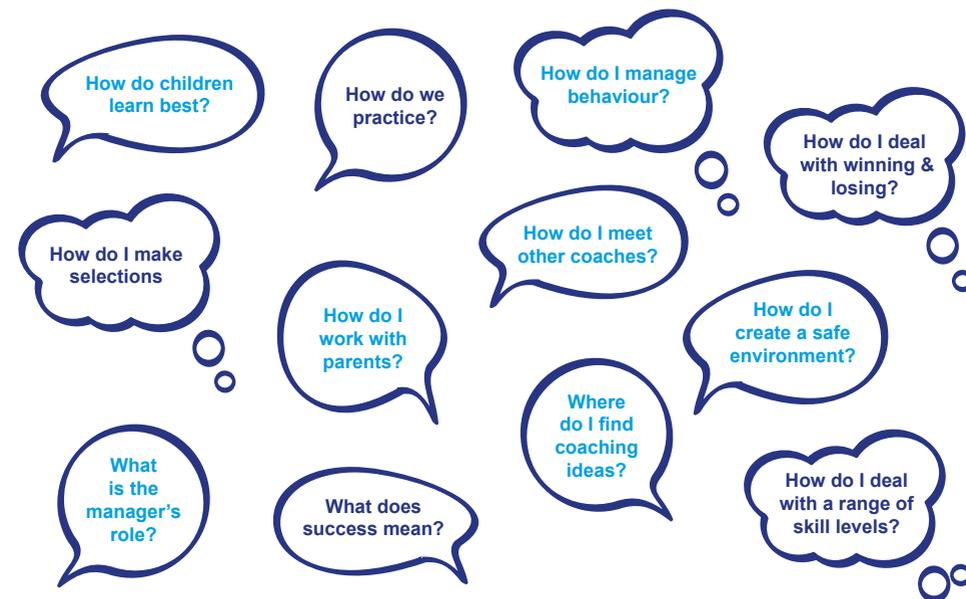
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## How to use this guide

The aim of Good Sports Guide For Coaches is to support coaches to create quality experiences for the children they coach. The guide is best used in conjunction with code-specific coaching resources available from your sport, particularly about what skills, activities and outcomes are appropriate for the children you coach.

To support you with your learning process, you will note that topics are sometimes framed used the prompts above.

This guide is not meant to be read front-to-back. While we think we have done a good job outlining the most important areas that will have an immediate impact on how you coach, we would suggest that you skim through this guide and start with the areas that interest you most!

**Still don't know where to start?**

**Have a look at the thoughts of this coach and reflect on the things you will need to consider.**

# Introduction



**Every year, thousands of New Zealanders find themselves, often by default, appointed to the position of coach. It is likely you are reading this guide because this is or recently was you – a coach.**

If so, we would like to congratulate you on taking the dive into one of the most rewarding roles we know of (even if we are a little biased) – coaching children!

Good coaches are critical to the growth of individual children and teams.

If the role is done well a good coach will:

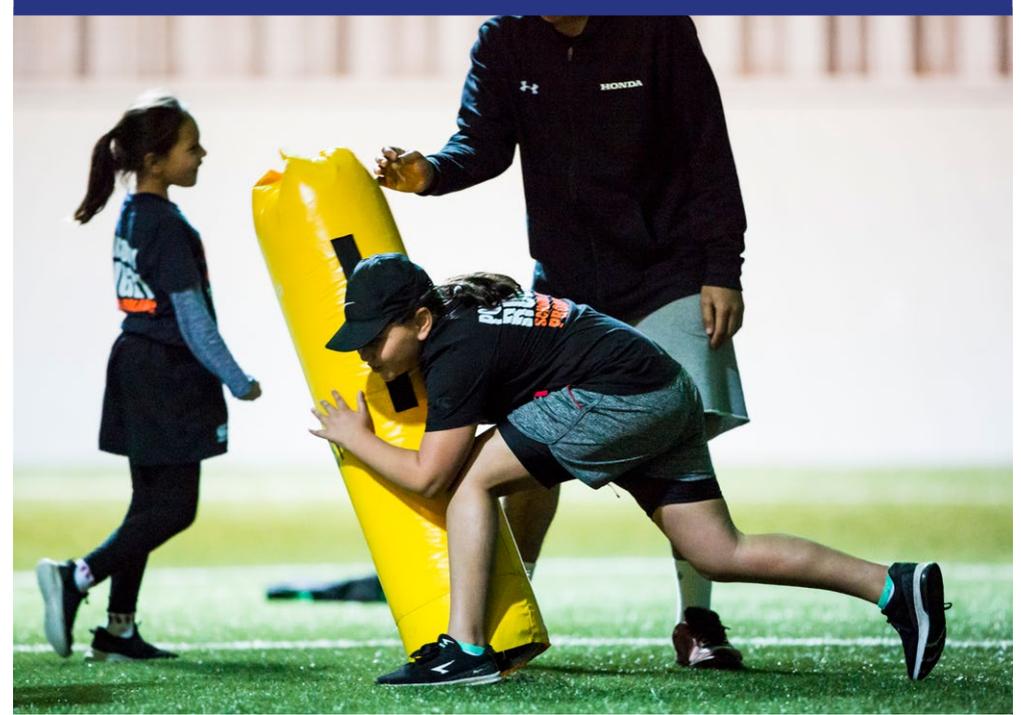
- Support children to grow their confidence,
- Support children to learn, motivate children to develop a lifelong love of sport,
- Help children to develop their sporting skills, and also develop as a person.

Coaches face many challenges. If they have played the sport themselves there will be some comfort around the basic skills required. However, there is more to effective youth-coaching than skill development. It's also about ensuring young people are engaging in their sport in a fun and positive environment that meets their needs.

Remember as a coach in children's sport you will very likely lead children's first introduction to the sport. As such, your actions will have a lasting impact on whether they grow to love the sport.

The Good Sports Guide for Coaches has been written for coaches working with children. It follows the principles of Good Sports. This guide provides advice and tips for coaches on how to support children to learn, have fun and ultimately promote a 'Climate of Development' for all children involved.

# Why do children play sport?



**As coaches, we often get caught up in children's sport and wanting to see everyone succeed and do their best. Because of this we can lose sight of the most important question, why do children play sport?**

**What does this mean for a coach?**

Good coaches understand why the children they coach play sport.

Research indicates that the main reasons children give for playing sport are to have fun, play with their mates and learn new skills. What about winning then? Children do like competition, but what is surprising is that winning is not as important as fun; in fact, an overriding emphasis on winning can make sport less fun.

Sport NZ does an annual survey of young people and adults across the country regarding physical activity, most recent research highlighted these top five motivators for young people participating in sport.

1. For fun
2. To hang out with family or friends
3. For fitness or health
4. To learn or practise a new skill
5. To physically challenge myself or to win
6. I have to (my parents/caregiver or school made me)

Throughout this guide there is an underlying message that sport should be fun and enjoyable. This is in line with the Good Sports philosophy, which seeks to help all adults understand how they impact (sometimes unknowingly) on children's sporting experiences.

# The Good Sports Spine

We have developed a tool that will help you as an adult take a step back and reflect on the bigger questions.

- Am I helping a child have a quality sporting experience?
- Am I helping children fall in love with sport?

The Good Sports Spine aims to help you answer these questions. The Good Sports Spine is a great tool for reflecting on what kind of environment you're promoting in children's sports. As a coach you should use this tool to guide how you coach.



The Good Sports Spine is also available in  
Te Reo Māori, Samoan, Mandarin & Korean

# The holistic needs of a child in sport

Take a moment and think back to when you were a child playing sport. What did you enjoy about playing sport back then? It might have been the thrill of competing, it might have been that you were playing with your friends, it could have been that you learned how to kick a spiral punt, or maybe it was the half time oranges. The key thing is that what you enjoyed about sport as a child was probably unique to you and this hasn't changed – each child is different. So, what makes a child have a quality sporting experience and ultimately fall in love with sport?

The Good Sports Spine recognises a holistic approach to the needs of a child in sport is essential; consider their physical; social and emotional; cognitive; and spiritual needs. When taking into account what we've seen in sport with our study of the research there are five things that have been shown to most affect the quality of their experience in sports and this is what you need to focus on.



In the same way a healthy spine maintains the body, the health of these five needs shapes a child's motivation, confidence, learning and enjoyment and the quality of the experience, leading to their love of sport.

# The environment we create

**As a coach in a child's life, your behaviour matters.** Through your daily actions, you can do things that support and/or undermine a child's experiences and their needs for development. We've found that the attitudes and behaviours of adults in children's sports tend to cluster into two patterns that we call

(1) a Climate of Development and (2) a Climate of Performance. We use the term climates because we're talking about the environment that surrounds a child.

**As a coach, you have a duty of care to the children you coach, which includes their physical, mental, emotional and social well-being. Your #1 job is to provide a quality experience that means they keep coming back!**



## Climate of Performance

Being with this climate you work against what children need and increase the chances of losing interest, burnout, and overuse injury. Correcting every mistake has a way of making children feel they aren't good enough. While adults who focus on performance tend to focus on the 'best' at the exclusion of others.

## Climate of Development

This climate is most likely to support children's needs and creates engagement, interest, and learning, but ultimately supports children to develop a love of sport. Focusing on effort and improvement encourages children to strive to play hard and focus on developing to please themselves as opposed to others. It also supports children to develop resilience as mistakes are something to learn from.

# Creating a climate of development



One of the significant challenges a coach faces is providing a Climate of Development for the children they coach. Children need to explore and feel safe that their mistakes will be accepted as an important part of the learning process.

**We recommend the use of the Reflect - Consider - Take Action model to create understanding of what we are doing**

### Reflect:

- Am I coaching in a Climate of Development?

### Consider:

- What does success mean to me?
- Do the reasons I coach match the reasons the children are playing?
- Does my outcome, session plans and behaviours:
  - Provide all children opportunities to be creative, experiment and try different things?
  - Provide all children equal opportunities to be creative, experiment and try different things?
  - Reward effort and attitude over results?
  - Acknowledge that mistakes and failure are an integral part of the learning process?
  - Teach important life skills like communication, the value of working hard and teamwork?

### Take action:

- Write down answers to the above questions.
- Explain how and why. Describe the behaviours and actions. A good starting point is to ask your players what they hope to achieve this season.

# Planning for a great season



A key skill in delivering quality coaching is understanding the benefit of planning for the season. Planning is a key component of good coaching. It gives your season structure and makes each session easier, more enjoyable, and beneficial for you and your participants.

Within this section we outline a five step planning process that will help you make the upcoming season successful.

## Plan-Do-Review

The ability to plan and deliver sessions and then evaluate their effectiveness will lead to ongoing continued improvement. We call this Action Learning or Plan-Do-Review. This process is not linear but more a cycle as illustrated.

## Reflect:

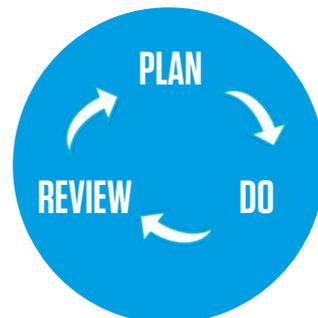
- What is the role of planning in my season?

## Consider:

- How will planning assist me to deliver effective coaching sessions?

## Take action:

- Read each step in the planning process and list the key components that will assist you. Ask an experienced coach for assistance.



**Tell me, I'll forget  
Show me, I'll remember  
Involve me, I'll understand**

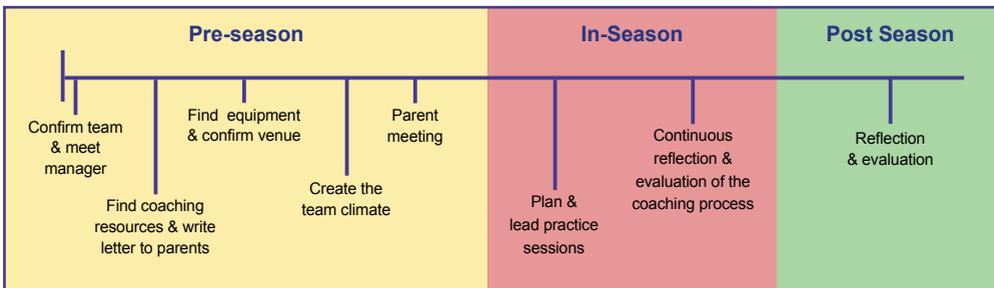


## 1 Managing your season

Pre-season is a great time to work out what you need to make the experience enjoyable and rewarding for everyone.

See the suggested season timeline and tasks below on how to make your season a successful one for your players and your development as a coach.

### Season timeline



#### Ask yourself the following questions:

- When does the season start?
- What areas of coaching do I need upskilling in?
- Do I need any support to understand the needs of children?
- Where do I get training and support?
- How do I plan a coaching session that meets the needs of children - inspiration, connection, empowerment, play and variety?
- What age group is my team and what are their developmental characteristics?
- How will I know if I'm getting it right?
- How and when am I going to develop relationships with parents?
- When is my first meeting with my participants?

## 2 Session planning

Planning and preparation are done before your session or game. It involves setting practice and game goals, outlining activities and looking at what you'll say and do to create a climate of development.

#### Things to consider when developing a session plan are:

- Does my session allow all children to succeed (most of the time) by:
  - Providing equal attention to each child
  - Maximising children's time on task
  - Ensuring optimal opportunities to explore, practice and learn skills.
- Does my session flow from task to task and use time efficiently?
- Does my session plan align with a Climate of Development?

## 3 Deliver

This is the actual doing part of the process to implement and manage your various coaching strategies, game tactics and goals for the team. Some days even the best laid plans just don't seem to work. That is alright. If a session doesn't go to plan, reflect on what you might change for the next one.

Good coaches continually ensure that the activities they have planned are both challenging and enjoyable. Regardless of the situation it is important to stay positive and provide your team with plenty of praise.

## 4 Review

This should be completed after each training session or game to assist in evaluating your coaching effectiveness and whether the children are having fun and learning. The information you have collected will also assist you to start planning for your next coaching session/game.

## 5 Reflection

Reflection is an important tool in coaching and part of the review process. While reflecting on your strengths and weaknesses may make you feel uncomfortable, it is an important part of your development as a coach.

#### Ask yourself the following questions:

- How do I know the way I coach is working?
- Do the things we do in training work in competition?
- Are the children developing and improving?
- Am I meeting the needs of all my players
  - inspiration, connection, empowerment, play and variety.
- Am I coaching in a Climate of Development?



An example of a template can be found on the next page



# Coaching Session Plan

Participants Name/Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Session No: \_\_\_\_\_

What went well last time?      What areas do we need to work on?      Equipment:

1      1

2      2

3      3

Time:      Task:      Organisation/description:      Coaching Point/question:

## COACHING SESSION REVIEW & EVALUATION

[www.aktive.org.nz/what-we-do/good-sports](http://www.aktive.org.nz/what-we-do/good-sports)

For more support on how to create a fun and engaging coaching session reach out to your local regional sports trust or regional or national governing body.

## Let play and games be the teacher



**A great coaching tool to develop children’s technical and tactical skills is games. Research shows that children will have more fun and learn more by playing adapted games. Good coaches use small sided games and modified activities that are appropriate for their players’ physical, social, emotional, spiritual and cognitive development stages.**

There may be a number of small sided and modified games already specifically designed for your sport that you are unaware of. A great place to start is contacting either your sport’s regional or national governing body to see if they have any suggestions. A search of the internet could also provide you with games that are appropriate for children.

Try searching '[your sport] + small sided OR modified games' to find ideas for training games.

The process of finding which games work best with the children you coach may be trial and error. Remember games are meant to be challenging, and promote problem solving, however, if it’s too difficult or challenging the children may lose interest and find the experience unenjoyable.

Great coaches think of themselves as ‘game designers.’ They set problems for children to solve with little to no intervention once the games are underway.

### Games allow children to:

1. Try out and master new skills or concepts and experiences.
2. Come up with new ideas and solutions.
3. Spend more time ‘doing’ rather than ‘watching’ and ‘waiting’.
4. Allow children to gain tactical awareness of the game.

Remember, there are many different reasons why people coach.



Make sure you are coaching for the right reasons.

## Event day coaching

**TOP TIP!**  
Check out how to plan your substitutions for a game before season and incorporate responses into your session planning.



### Reflect:

- Is my role different on event day?

### Consider:

- The impact of sideline coaching on the players.
- How will the state of the game affect my coaching decisions?
- How will I manage winning and losing?

### Take action:

- Draw up an event day plan.

The role and behaviour of the coach can vary depending on circumstance and this is no more apparent than on event day.

You should strive to ensure that your approach on event day reflects a climate of development.

### Some key points to consider on event day are:

- Game time is a time for children to be allowed to figure stuff out for themselves
- Keep messaging for the day brief and limited to three key points
- Avoid overcoaching during the game  
This includes the breaks. Rather reiterate key messages
- Focus on praising positives, not critiquing mistakes
- Lead by example. Be aware of your body language and demeanour. Respect officials and thank the opposition
- Keep perspective whatever the result – treat winning and losing the same
- Look for teachable moments as failure is part of learning
- Avoid providing excuses for a poor result e.g. the officials or the conditions
- Focus the post-match review on the three key messages you outlined. Ask the children for their thoughts.

# How do we know the children are developing

Children generally learn new skills by observing others and trying it themselves. This self-discovery can be assisted by the coach (guided discovery). Ideally coaches should always display a positive, encouraging demeanour, and be selective with interventions. Feedback should be focused on progress brought about through positive learning behaviours.

This encourages a growth mindset and inspires children to continue trying and playing.

## Consider the following actions when you begin coaching:

- Allow the children some choice in how sessions are shaped e.g. what warm up game do you want to play?
- Make sessions fun, challenging, and age/stage appropriate
- Allow children the space and time to figure things out themselves
- Avoid being an 'error detector' - focus on the positives and praise progress
- Provide appropriate feedback that is focused on effort and attitude
- No two children are the same so consider strategies for dealing effectively with differences at training and on event day
- Ask questions rather than give answers in training and during breaks in games
- Each child needs to feel they belong so connect individually with their teammates e.g. a high five at the start and end of every practice or game.



**TOP TIP!**  
Want to know more about learning and a Growth Mindset?  
Visit [trainugly.com](http://trainugly.com)

## Reflect:

- How will I know if my players are developing?

## Consider:

- What do I know about my players?
- How am I meeting all my players' needs physically, socially, emotionally, spiritually and cognitively?

## Take action:

Ensure you are prepared to meet the needs of everyone. Evaluating a child's needs must consider, age, gender, size and their motivation for playing. A good starting point is to ask everyone what they hope to achieve this season.

# Working with your manager



It is important to establish a good working relationship with your manager and this enables you to speak with one voice on topics which in turn will avoid confusion for everyone. This is particularly important when you speak with parents, other teams and sport organisations.

A good manager is an important asset to any coach, and as such it is important that you can establish clear roles and responsibilities.

## Some responsibilities that you may need to consider or share with your manager:

- Choosing the team
- Arranging players' uniforms
- Finding a place to train
- Entering the team in the competition draw
- Working with parents
- Letting parents know where and when the next game is
- Chasing up missing players
- Challenging bad behaviour by team members
- Understanding competition rules
- Challenging bad sideline behaviour at games
- Completing and submitting score cards at games.

As you can see, some of these responsibilities are easily defined, while others aren't. While there are no hard rules it helps if they share your coaching philosophy to establish guidance on how you view the manager's role.

## Reflect:

- What is the role of my manager?

## Consider:

- How do we communicate?
- Who does what?
- How do we resolve conflict?

## Take action:

- Develop a list of roles and responsibilities and meet with them regularly.

# Working with parents



Parents of young children are generally the most influential enabler of a child's approach to sport. Think of the parents of the children on your team as partners. To ensure clarity of message it is important to outline your coaching philosophy and that you will value their support over the season. Be consistent and fair in your dealings with them.

In an ideal scenario, parents will continue to support your coaching philosophy away from the team environment by reinforcing the attitudes and behaviours encouraged in the Good Sports Spine.

A Code of Conduct may be helpful if this is something that children and parents agree upon. This would need to be developed prior to the start of the season.

Other initiatives such as pre-season meetings with parents can be a great way to get your parents on-side. This creates a platform for you to share your philosophy and expectations prior to the season. You could also get the children in your team to work collaboratively with their parents to decide on personal goals and milestones.

## Reflect:

- How do I develop and maintain positive relationships with parents?

## Consider:

- What's the value of engaging with parents?
- What's the best way to communicate with parents?
- Have I sent parents a coach introductory letter?
- How best can parents support and promote the team climate?
- How do I work with inappropriate sideline behaviour?
- Do parents know what a climate of development looks like?

## Take action:

Review the information and decide on how you will work with parents. Email an introduction letter to parents - visit [www.aktive.org.nz](http://www.aktive.org.nz) to share the Good Sports Spine with parents.

# Want or need more?

## Player Safety and Wellbeing

Sport New Zealand Coaching Safety Net  
[www.sportnz.org.nz](http://www.sportnz.org.nz)

## First Aid

Please refer to your sports regional or national governing body to find out what you will need in a first aid kit

## ACC Sportsmart

[www.accsportsmart.co.nz](http://www.accsportsmart.co.nz)

## Child Protection

[www.aktive.org.nz](http://www.aktive.org.nz)

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