

# The roles and responsibilities of the coach

A coach is a person who instructs, teaches, leads, guides and trains individuals or teams in sport or physical activity. Coaching is included in many realms of sport, from recreational level to professional level. Ideally, a coach's role is to improve player performance and build on the potential of an individual and/or a team.

## Characteristics of an effective coach

Coaching sport is a rewarding but challenging task. The characteristics and qualities of the coach will directly influence the athletes' performance and enjoyment of their sport.

### Activity

*Below is a list of the characteristics of an effective coach. Describe the behaviours you would see from a coach who has mastered that aspect of coaching.*

Characteristic	Description
Knowledge	
Organisational ability	
Communication	
Leadership	
Instructional style	

## Instructional style

The instructional style a coach employs is generally a reflection of their personality and what they experienced themselves as an athlete. To successfully engage athletes and maintain their interest, a coach needs to assess what style suits the age, expertise and personalities of players. For more information on different instructional styles, watch the clip at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9jWK-IOmPg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9jWK-IOmPg)

### Activity

1. Provide a definition of the three general styles of coaching.

*Authoritarian*

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*Democratic*

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*Laissez faire*

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2. Describe the coaching style that you think best suits the following groups (you can nominate a blend of two styles if it is appropriate).

*Elite athletes:*

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*Young children:*

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*Beginners:*

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*Competitive adults:*

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*Recreational adults:*

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## Activity

**Complete this questionnaire to rate your coaching ability, or if you have never coached you may like to rate one of your coaches....**

Communication	Mostly	Never	At times
Did I reinforce the actions of the participants in a positive manner when they performed correctly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I reward effort?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I give compliments sincerely and honestly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I give constructive and specific feedback?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did what I say to the participants match my non-verbal actions towards them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was I consistent and fair in my treatment of all participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I over-coach by giving too many instructions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I change my communication methods to suit the needs of the participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment on your communication:			
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Motivation	Mostly	Never	At times
Did I show the enthusiasm while coaching that I expect from the participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the participants have fun during the training session?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was I aware of any anxiety experienced by the participants and did I help to reduce this?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment on your motivation:			
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Environment	Mostly	Never	At times
Did I monitor the environment for hazards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I foresee potentially dangerous situations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment on the environment:			
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Leadership	Mostly	Never	At times
Was I prompt in arriving at training/game?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was I well prepared and organised for training sessions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was my session interesting so that it challenged participants and developed self-esteem?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was I able to analyse skills and correct errors when they occurred?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was I sensitive to the individual needs of all the participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was I patient and tolerant with all participants, regardless of individual skill levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment on your leadership:			
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Equipment	Mostly	Never	At times
Did I provide the necessary equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I inspect equipment regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I provide equipment appropriate for the age and ability level of participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I explain how to use the equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment on the equipment:			
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Planning	Mostly	Never	At times
Did I supervise participants at all times?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I plan for progressing to the next drill or teaching a new skill?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the session include achievable progressions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I provide instruction regarding the safety of the activity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment on your planning:			
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## Case study

### Instructional styles



#### Coach 1

My coach is so cool. Nothing fazes him. He never gets angry and I've never heard him yell like the coach I had last year. He doesn't even care if we win or lose, which is a bit strange because we did win the competition last year and now we don't win much at all. Anyway, winning is not everything and at least we are all having fun this year.

#### Coach 2

Wow, is the pressure right on me now that I am in A grade. The coach is full on and always thinks I am not trying hard enough. I'm pretty competitive and like winning as much as anyone, but if he gets in my face again and yells at me at half time I am going to quit.

#### Coach 3

I joined up at this new club when we moved into the area. I was a bit worried about meeting all the new players, but the coach was great and went out of her way to make me feel welcome. She even had a BBQ over at her place so my parents could meet all the other parents. She listened to me and let me start the year in my usual position and always encourages me. She's great.

### Coach 4

I've been a hockey goal keeper for the past four years and was looking forward to another great year, but our new coach's daughter also wants to be goal keeper so I have been out on the field this year. I have tried to talk to her about it but she just ignores me. Dad had a talk to her but she says I am so good on the field that she needs me out there. It's just not fair!

### Questions

1. From the scenarios, identify the effective and not so effective characteristics of the coaches.

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2. Reflect on a successful coach you have had or that you see in professional sport. What characteristics make them more effective than other coaches?

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## Legal and safety implications

The main aim of safety in sport is to reduce the risk of injury. To ensure sport is as safe as possible, the following should occur before every training session and/or game:

- Make checks prior to the game or practice session to identify and remove any hazards from the environment where the game or practice session will take place.
- Participants should be encouraged to wear protective clothing and equipment during games and practice sessions. An understanding of the rules will help to ensure safety.
- Supervision during games and practise sessions is essential at all times, particularly if children are involved.
- Ensure properly trained medical personnel are available. This guarantees that if an injury does occur it can be minimised and the appropriate treatment is sought immediately.
- Participants should have the required skill level and fitness to safely participate in the chosen game or sport. Participants that lack skills and/or fitness significantly increase their risk of injury.

The welfare of participants is the coach's main area of concern. They have a legal and moral duty to provide a safe learning environment.

## Accreditation

You will see this scenario at the start of nearly every junior sport competition. The parents arrive with their children for registration day and, the next thing they know, they have been convinced to be the coach. They say to themselves: "After all, I am coming to the games anyway, aren't I? Surely it can't be that hard? There is no one else willing to do it." Then the doubts creep in: "What have I got myself into? I don't know much about coaching, except what I remember as a player 20 years ago! What if I do something wrong and someone gets injured? Where can I go for help? Who coaches the coaches?"

Fortunately, SportAus has its Community Coaching General Principles (CCGP) course, which is free for Australian coaches. The course covers a range of coaching topics such as safety, planning, communication, working with parents and inclusive coaching practices. Sporting organisations may also have sport-specific accreditation requirements.

*Activity*

Research the coach code of behaviour for a sport of your choice and compare it to the template at [www.playbytherules.net.au/resources/templates/code-of-behaviour](http://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources/templates/code-of-behaviour).

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**Duty of care and Workplace Health and Safety**

All coaches are in a position of responsibility and have a duty of care for the players under their supervision. The duty of care involves a commitment to putting procedures and practices in place that will identify potential risks, assess the likelihood of the risk to cause injury and then take appropriate action to minimise or remove the risk. Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) legislation further reinforces the need to address safety issues in the workforce, including areas such as gyms, sporting centres and recreational venues.

Watch a video on coaching processes at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yj1Ue4JwG4s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yj1Ue4JwG4s)



### Activity

Identify the risks in each of the following scenarios and suggest what actions the coach could do to minimise or reduce the risk.

1. The night training session finishes, lights go off, parents arrive and take their children home. All except one girl, who says her parents know to pick her up, but must be just running late. They cannot be contacted by phone. The coach has an important meeting to go to and needs to leave.

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2. A football coach has told the team that the next training session will focus on full contact tackling and to bring all the necessary protective gear. Four players fail to bring their mouthguards.

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6. A player dislocates their finger in a game of OzTag. A parent comes over and tells the coach that they know how to 'put it back in place'.

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7. An Australian Rules coach is looking to save time, so doesn't bother with the warm up and goes straight into the drills.

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8. A basketball club has some portable posts donated to them and intends using them for practice. The posts are meant to be stabilised with a water filled bladder behind the post.

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