



Six Tasks of a Coach

According to US Soccer Federation



- **Coaching Games**
- **Coaching Training Sessions**
- **Leading the Team**
- **Leading the Players**
- **Managing the Performance Environment**
- **Communicating With Players & Families**

This obviously creates a simplistic look into what it takes to be a coach. However, everything a coach has to do fits into one of these basic categories. How you approach these tasks will define how successful you will be. Not in results, but more importantly in how effective the players and parents view you to be in their overall development.



PHASES OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



DISCOVERY PHASE

AGES 5-8

First experiences of the game - first ball, first coach, understanding basic concepts, organized structure, beginning to play with other kids.

ROMANCE PHASE

AGES 9-13

Developing a passion for the game and falling in love with the sport with the help of coaches who place players in a fun learning environment which encourages creativity, technique, fundamental skills, exploration in a challenging and positive environment.

COMITTMENT PHASE

AGES 14-18

Players now need to commit to the sport, training becomes more tactical in nature and players begin to mature and the expectations and demands become higher.

Knowing where your players are in their relationship to the game is vitally important when thinking about how to approach practices, games, expectations for the teams and individuals!



Three Ways To Approach A Practice As Coaches & For Our Players!



Level 1) You show up. You do the job; nothing more, nothing less. You get a little better.

Level 2) You show up. You do the job, and you target certain tasks that'll help you toward your goal. You work the workout, push yourself, think about technique. You get a lot better.

Level 3) You show up, having thought about how today's session fits into the larger goal. You work *very* hard, pushing yourself into the discomfort zone over and over, with full commitment. Later, you reflect/analyze/critique your performance with a cool, objective eye. You get a LOT better, creating what Gambetta calls "the quantum leap."

One reason I like Gambetta's concept is that it takes us beyond the primitive idea of focus and into the more targeted idea of investment — sensing and measuring the total amount of time and energy put into the process of getting better. I also like it because it embraces the semi-revolutionary idea that some of the most vital work happens away from the practice space, in the time we use to reflect, strategize, plan, and figure out honest answers to those two simple but immensely difficult questions we face every day: where are we right now, really? Where we want to be tomorrow?



SESSION STRUCTURE

Traditional Session



Phase 1

Warm Up

First 0-10 Min

NO LAPS! NO LECTURES!

Phase 2

Technical Exercise

10-35 Minutes

Passing/Dribbling Sequences to match session topic & address Ball Mastery Goals.

Phase 3

Conditioned Game

35-60 Minutes

Small Sided Activity to match session topic. Not necessarily to “goal” but should have competitive element with 2 or more teams competing against one another to accomplish a goal!

Phase 4

Small Sided Game

65-90 Minutes

Split group into 2/3 teams – Free Play game of 4v4/5v5 to goal! Commonly known as a “scrimmage”.

***Based on 90 Min Session. *Easily adjustable to any practice duration.**



SESSION STRUCTURE

Play-Practice-Play Approach



Phase 1

PLAY

First 0-15 Min

Small sided. No more than 3v3. Ideally 2v2. Free play to small goal.

Phase 2

Technical Exercise/Conditioned Activity

10-40 Minutes

Passing/Dribbling Sequences to match session topic & address Ball Mastery Goals And/OR.. Small Sided Activity to match session topic. Not necessarily to “goal” but should have competitive element with 2 or more teams competing against one another to accomplish an objective that relates to the focus of the session! Ex: Switching Point of Attach. Speed of Play. Combination Play.

Phase 3

PLAY

40-60/75 Minutes

Split group into 2/3 teams – Free Play game of 4v4/5v5 to goal! Commonly known as a “scrimmage”.

***Based on 60-75 Min Session. *Easily adjustable to any practice duration.**



Creating The Training Environment



It is important to create an environment where players are challenged and stretched to the limit of their ability. That environment is called “Deep Practice” where players are forced to think faster and make quicker decisions, helping them build up their soccer matrix. This optimum environment allows players to reach their “Sweet Spot” for training and as a coach it should be your goal to create this environment with every training session.

Below is a list of suggestions on how to go accomplish this goal. Keep in mind that these are SUGGESTIONS. Different teams will have different levels and thus, require different strategies for achieving this goal of finding their “Sweet Spot”.

For Example, our BAYS “A” Team may follow these guidelines more closely, where as some NSCCL teams may need a more “loose” approach in order for kids to get motivated.

These are simply points of reference and each coach should use their personality to get the best out of the players!



Elements of a Training Activity

What to Include & Why



- **Organized**
 - Is the space clearly laid out? Was there thought put into the activity and how it relates to the bigger picture? How many players do we need? How do we divide them up? Where do they start? Where do they end up? How many balls do we need? How many teams?
- **Game-like**
 - Is it fast? Moving at game speed? Does it translate to particular situations that occur during the game? When might the players see this on the field and be able to use this to help them be successful? Is there pressure (defenders/opponents)? How would the opponent react in trying to defend this situation? So what should players think about while they are training?
- **Challenging**
 - Is it difficult or easy? Are we appropriately challenging our players? Are we encouraging them to overcome these challenges or allowing them to give up? Is it realistic that everyone can do what is asked? Do some players need tougher restrictions?
- **Repetitive**
 - Are we creating an opportunity for players to increase their Reps and muscle memory to be successful when using it in a game?
- **Coaching Points**
 - Are we relating this to the game? Have we thought about our Coaching points ahead of time? Both Technique and Purpose of why the players need to work on this? Are we demonstrating the proper way to do it to give the players the chance to see what we are looking for?



Creating The Training Environment



Preparation Use the curriculum to plan out your session which is specific to your group and the number / level of the players. Plan out the transition from phase to phase to all for a SMOOTH session that creates the most efficient TIME ON TASK.....less time moving/adjusting and more time training. Be efficient.

Command the group This should be done in a positive way, no laps or push ups, and always referenced with what it takes to get better. It is okay to identify a weakness in a player but **ALWAYS make sure you build the player back up again with positivity and help with their aspect of the game they need support with.**

Correct Mistakes as players make them.....Mistakes are simply guideposts to improving technique and/or decision making. Point out the mistake, Fix it, **give encouragement** by recognizing the improvement.

Coach the Individuals as well as the group as a whole. It is okay to put different restrictions on players that have superior technique. They need to be pushed just like the lower level players.

Competition This reveals players character and personality and by using competitions helps to engage the players and push themselves individually within the group. Put something on the line, loser picks up cones, moves goals, bags up the balls.... **Light! Know your team! Kids who are not into practice that day wont have more fun or be any more motivated to be apart of the team by being punished with fitness !**

Demonstrations Use Demo's when teaching technique. A picture paints a thousand words.....show the skill and more importantly how it relates to the game. If you want a player to keep a flat pass, show the technique but also explain how this buys more time for the next player.



Creating The Training Environment



Encourage Creativity We should **ENCOURAGE** creativity in all players and when a player shows the courage to try a move then it should be Celebrated! If mistakes are made then highlight that with the player but build their confidence by **rewarding the attempt**. We don't want ROBOTS!

Guided Discovery Ask the players questions about the session and the coaching points you are trying to make. The players should understand what you are asking them to do and instead of giving or dictating the information, ask the players”Why do I want you to scan your left shoulder as you receive the ball?”

Develop group to the best of their ability plan activities that are always challenging to the group but understand that with developing players sessions may need to be tweaked to gain success. It is always better to start simple and progress to complex. Don't give up on players! Reward to group for **the effort** and talk about improvements made.....highlight a player who was struggling and talk about improvement through willingness to stick with it!

Communication with players Always make sure the information is concise, explain the session topic and the goals for the session.....**no long lectures**, get in and get out with coaching points. Anything over 60 seconds is too long! This session is not about you but about the players. Always finish a session on a positive!

FUN Coaches that have fun typically have players that enjoy the session!

Attitude and Demeanor You work for the pro club and are running elite RDS sessions with players and this should come across in your attitude and the way you carry / present yourself to your group. Players pick up on this and they expect the coach leading their group to be confident and approach the session with positivity.



Creating The Training Environment



Focus Stay on topic! Don't overload players with too much information. Keep to 3 or 4 Coaching Points each session. What is the main concept for today? What are the 2/3 MOST IMPORTANT things my players need to understand about it?

Prepare/Plan for Success Look through curriculum topic and CREATE SESSION PLAN.....sounds simple but you must PLAN every session that is appropriate to the ability, that flows from phase to phase.

Energy/Passion *The most important element* of creating an environment is having a coach that is into it! Two coaches can run the same session with the same X's and O's but the one that has passion and energy will create the optimum environment for the player to be pushed and find the sweet spot of training. Players who are pushed to the edge of their ability will always benefit from your training.

Restrictions on touches When necessary, it will help players to think quicker. We want players to be creative and beat players but we want them to have the ability to play one touch under pressure.

Squeeze the space so that the area is a little tight.....this again will force players to have to think quicker and make faster decisions.

Evaluate At the end of the session ask the players if they understood the session.....**check for understanding** of the players and know that it may not always be perfect. Evaluate your own performance and tweaks to the session/set up/ progressions for the next time. Just because a session didn't go as planned or work as well as expected, doesn't mean we should throw it out! Think about what you could do differently next time and try again!