

SPORT COACH+ RESOURCES

Tips for coaches to co-create ground rules with young players



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The following are suggestions for how to engage young players in co-creating ground rules (including consequences and rewards). Note that there are some ground rules that are considered essential for all sport activities. If these are not suggested in the co-creation dialogue, coaches should be sure to raise and include them (adapting the language and wording as needed to the context and culture):

Essential Ground Rules	Example of ground rules co-created with young players (in their language):
Treat everyone with respect.	Be kind.
Use respectful language (no name calling, shaming, stigmatizing or humiliating anyone).	No name calling.
Physical violence, or any action to inflict bodily harm (e.g., aiming a ball at someone's head), is never allowed.	Treat everyone fairly and no hurting anyone.
Everyone has a chance to participate.	Encourage and support others.
Follow the rules of the game and play fair.	No cheating. Learn from winning and losing.

Establishing ground rules should happen at the beginning of coaches working with a new group of young players in order to establish a safe and positive atmosphere for everyone. Ground rules should be routinely referenced by coaches, for example by reviewing them at the start of activity sessions, and ensuring new players are oriented and agree to the ground rules.

Ground rules should be posted where everyone can see and read them in their own language. Or consider visual representation.

When creating ground rules together, consider not only what young players should not do (e.g., 'no name calling'), but also what they should do to have a welcoming and safe environment for everyone (e.g., 'everyone is respected for who they are'). Framing ground

rules in the positive is inspiring for young players to live up to the ideals of safe and supportive sport and in co-creating a supportive community.

Coaches can engage young players in this process in different ways, depending upon the age and capacities of the young players. Some ways to facilitate this include:

- Bring the group together in a circle for the open dialogue, suggesting and discussing different ground rules and consequences.
- Break into small groups, with each group proposing 2-3 ground rules they feel are important.
- Have individual participants write down suggestions for ground rules on sticky notes anonymously. The coach and young players can group and prioritise to create a list that everyone agrees on.

Small group work or anonymous suggestions may be helpful for increasing the chance for shy young players to participate. Small group work can also help players from different backgrounds to know each other better and start forming relationships. For younger players, coaches may have to help in suggesting ground rules and facilitate the discussion more actively. A game or activity may also help to engage younger players in the process of coming up with ground rules and appropriate consequences.

Once the ground rules are created, it is also important to create together with young players the consequences of keeping or breaking ground rules. Be sure that consequences themselves are safe and appropriate for young players - that is, not shaming and not using sport as a punishment (e.g., having to do push ups or being excluded from a game or team if a rule is broken). Remember that consequences can also be positive - to honour young players who are respectful of the ground rules and who champion them.