

CODE OF CONDUCT *for coaches*

VERSION 1



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This code sets out common ethical, professional, and pedagogical standards for coaches in sport, especially those working with children and youth. The aim is to create a safe, fair, and encouraging environment based on respect, professionalism, and modern scientific approaches. All recommendations in the text are based on our interpretation of the collected information and do not represent expert opinion. The data is derived from interviews with young and experienced coaches as well as selected literature.

1. Heart for Children

The foundation of quality coaching in children's sports is genuine affection for children. If a coach does not like children, they cannot create a safe, trustworthy, and motivating environment. Affection is not merely a personal trait but a fundamental requirement for working with young people.

Key Recommendations

- The coach must be emotionally invested in children's well-being, not just in sporting results.
- Children quickly recognize whether an adult genuinely respects and accepts them.
- If a coach is not willing to build relationships, listen, be patient, and playful, this profession is not suitable for them.

Why This Matters

- A coach who loves children more easily builds trust, respect, and long-term commitment.
- An empathetic environment allows children to develop confidence, learn through mistakes, and build social connections.
- Emotional safety is a prerequisite for learning; if a child does not feel accepted, they will not enjoy learning

With the support of sources

- *Seligman et al. (2005): Positive psychology emphasizes the importance of acceptance, optimism, and positive relationships for development and learning.*
- *Earth.com (2024): Coaches who show compassion improve athlete performance.*
- *Frontiers for Young Minds (2022): Children achieve more if they feel that adults mean well for them.*

2. Core Values of a Coach

Core values determine the essence of a coach's actions. Values such as respect, integrity, responsibility, compassion, professionalism, and trust build confidence and support the healthy development of youth.

Key Recommendations

- Respect all participants in sports (children, parents, referees, opponents).
- Demonstrate integrity: honesty, consistency, credibility.
- Behavior must be an example of responsibility and professionalism.
- Encourage a safe environment and understand children's emotional needs.

With the support of sources

- *SHAPE America (2006): Ethics as an important competency.*
- *Seligman et al. (2005): Positive emotions such as compassion and gratitude increase perseverance, satisfaction, and personal progress*

Why This Matters

- Respect and integrity of the coach are linked to motivation, commitment, and persistence of children in sports.

3. Coaching Behavior Standards

Behavioral standards ensure consistency, respect, and safety in a coach's daily work. This includes how feedback is given and how training sessions are conducted.

Key Recommendations

- No swearing, yelling, or belittling.
- Mistakes are treated as part of learning.
- Rules apply to everyone and always.
- Communication should be clear, reasoned, and age-appropriate.

With the support of sources

- *Weinberg & Gould (2019): Importance of coach's emotional intelligence.*
- *SHAPE America (2006): Ethical and safety standards.*

Why This Matters

- Consistent and respectful communication creates a safe environment and improves learning effectiveness.

4. Coaching Competence and Ongoing Education

Coaches should develop professional knowledge, pedagogical skills, and psychological understanding. Continuous professional development is essential.

Key Recommendations

- Develop skills in communication, psychological support, leadership, and safety.
- Regular education and staying up to date with professional innovations.
- Reflective work and self-evaluation.

With the support of sources

- *Hobson et al. (2020): Reflective practice and mentoring.*
- *Martens (2012): The role of lifelong learning in successful coaching.*

Why This Matters

- Professionally trained coaches increase the quality of training and reduce risks for children.

5. Sustainable Practices

Coaches should consider the environmental impact of sports and promote sustainable practices.

Key Recommendations

- Encourage shared transport, less plastic.
- Educate children on sustainable environmental attitudes.
- Use reusable bottles and separate waste.

With the support of sources

- *IOC (2017): Stakeholders in sports are key to promoting sustainable practices.*
- *SHAPE America (2006): Environmental impacts on sports training.*

Why This Matters

- Cleanliness and education for responsible behavior contribute to a healthy environmental attitude.

6. Mentorship and Coach Development

Mentoring relationships are key for developing young coaches. Practical observation, reflection, and involvement in processes boost confidence and competence.

Key Recommendations

- Young coaches should start as assistants with clear guidance.
- Rotate between teams and observe other coaches.
- Reflect, record training sessions, and provide feedback.

With the support of sources

- *Effective mentoring supports mentee development.*

Why This Matters

- Targeted mentoring demonstrably increases confidence and learning speed.

7. Coach Behavior at Competitions

At competitions, pressure is higher, and the coach must be especially emotionally stable and professional. Their behavior influences the team's overall dynamic.

Key Recommendations

- Maintain calmness and respectful tone, even when mistakes happen.
- Use routines to manage stress.
- Encourage and support instead of showing frustration.

Why This Matters

- The coach reflects the team. Their behavior sets the tone for players' responses under pressure.
- The psychological stability of the coach has a significant impact on the emotional safety and motivation of young athletes.
- Coaches who remain calm and self-aware help reduce stress within the team and promote better responses from players in competitive situations.

With the support of sources

- *Becker (2009); Harwood et al. (2015): Coach psychological stability affects athletes' emotional safety and motivation.*
- *SHAPE America (2006): Coach behavior is an indicator of quality.*
- *Weinberg & Gould (2019): A calm coach improves team performance under stress.*

8. Building Respect and Authority

A coach builds authority through professionalism, respectful communication, consistency, and the ability to explain. Children's respect is based on the coach's competence, fairness, and safety.

Key Recommendations

- Clearly set rules and enforce them consistently.
- Behavior should be mature, calm, and respectful.
- Explain decisions and actions; the “why” is key to understanding.
- The coach must be prepared, punctual, and responsive.

Why This Matters

- Children develop respect faster for a coach who teaches, leads by example, and explains their decisions. Authority based on trust leads to greater discipline, engagement, and long-term loyalty.

With the support of sources

- *Cassidy et al. (2015): Leadership is based on integrity, communication, and exemplary behavior.*
- *Hobson et al. (2020): Respect stems from mutual relationships, not coercion.*
- *SHAPE America (2006): Authority results from consistency and professionalism.*
- *Turnnidge et al. (2014); Gould et al. (2002): Young athletes respond better to coaches who show emotional intelligence and empathetic, predictable behavior.*

9. Practical Instructions and Reflective Learning

To successfully implement the code in practice, coaches must understand each recommendation and know how to carry it out. The following sections offer extended recommendations, real-life examples, and self-reflection exercises.

9.1 Extended Key Recommendations (Section 8: Building Respect and Authority)

Clear rule-setting and consistent enforcement:

At the start of the season, clearly explain the basic behavioral rules to children (e.g., punctuality, use of equipment, respect for teammates). If rules are broken, apply the pre-agreed consequences consistently and without exception. For younger children (ages 6–10), rules must be concrete, simple, and visually illustrated (e.g., with cards or posters), as they are still developing abstract thinking (Piaget, 1964; Cassidy et al., 2015).

Example: At the start of the season, the coach tells all the children the basic rules: "We arrive at training on time. When the coach or teammate speaks, we listen. We clean up the equipment together." If a child breaks a rule (e.g., arrives late), the pre-agreed consequence follows. This applies to everyone, with no exceptions.

Why? Children learn responsibility and feel safe within a structured environment.



Mature, calm, and respectful behavior:

Even when tired, disappointed, or under pressure, maintain a calm tone, avoid raising your voice, and do not use sarcasm. Adolescents (ages 12–16) are especially sensitive to insincerity and disrespect, as they are developing their identity and need for autonomy (Erikson, 1968). A coach who respects their opinions gains their trust more quickly.

Example: After several repeated mistakes, instead of shouting, the coach calmly says: "I can see today isn't your best day. Try to gather your thoughts, let's take a short break and continue together."

Why? Adolescents quickly sense disrespect, which can lead to resistance or withdrawal. Respectful responses build trust.

Explanation of decisions:

If someone is benched, always explain why. The explanation should be adjusted to the child's level of understanding—short and concrete for younger children, more reasoned and dialogical for older ones (Cassidy et al., 2015).

Example: A player repeatedly ignores instructions during a drill. The coach says: "We're practicing quick responses. If you don't follow the instructions, you can't improve. So sit out now—this isn't a punishment—it's a chance to watch others and learn. Tomorrow, you start again."

Why? Children understand the consequence, feel a sense of fairness, and remain motivated.

Preparedness and punctuality:

A coach who arrives on time, with prepared content, runs a structured session and appears focused, is immediately respected. Children in early school years (ages 6–12) need structure and routine to feel safe. This affects their participation and willingness to learn (SHAPE America, 2006).

Example: The coach arrives 10 minutes early, sets up the equipment, and writes the training plan on the board. When children arrive, they are greeted with a consistent opening ritual.

Why? Children feel safe in structure. A prepared coach is also more respected and effective.

Use of routine elements to manage stress:

A coach can create a sense of security and predictability through repetitive behavior patterns before and during competitions—e.g., the same motivational phrase, consistent greeting, structured warm-up, and a fixed way to end sessions (e.g., 3 key compliments, 1 improvement point). These routines reduce anxiety and create psychological stability, as confirmed by research on structured environments and children's emotional regulation.

Example: Before each game, the same ritual is followed: group greeting, three praises, one task. After the game, there is a final reflection circle.

Why? Routines reduce anxiety and help with emotional regulation, especially in younger children.

9.2 Practical Examples from Daily Work (by Age Groups)

Ages 6–10

Situation:

After completing a drill, a child loudly comments on another player:

"That was really bad!"

Coach's Response:

"We have a rule that we don't talk to each other during drills. Now show me how well you can listen. Let's try it again together!"

Explanation:

Children at this age are still developing an understanding of social rules and empathy. With a calm tone and no scolding, the coach reminds them of the agreed-upon rule and immediately offers a new opportunity. The focus is on repetition and learning, not punishment.

Ages 11–14

Situation:

A player is upset because the coach assigned them to a defensive role, even though they prefer to play offense.

Coach's Response:

"Your role today is defense. I know you like to attack, but we're training versatility. After training, I'll explain more if you want."

Explanation:

Adolescents want to feel heard and respected. The coach shows understanding but also clearly explains the decision as part of the larger learning process. By offering a follow-up conversation, the coach builds trust and cooperation.

Ages 15–18

Situation:

After several mistakes, a player becomes frustrated and starts showing signs of resistance or disengagement.

Coach's Response:

"Everyone has days like that. Tell me—do you want to take a short break, or would you prefer to continue with an easier task?"

Explanation:

Older adolescents appreciate having choice and control. The coach acknowledges that tough days are normal and offers two equal options. This promotes responsibility, self-reflection, and emotional regulation.

9.3 Self-Reflection Exercises (Weekly Insight)

- **How did I respond to children’s mistakes this week?** Did I explain, or did I show frustration?
- **Was I consistent with the rules?** Did the rules apply equally to everyone?
- **Did I show that I respect players even when they’re not perfect?**
- **What would I like my players to say about me at home to their parents?** Am I setting that example?
- **What will I do differently next week?** Write down one specific change.

At the Start of Cooperation, Every Coach Commits To:

- Respect this code;
- Continuously learn and reflect on their work;
- Lead by example;
- Provide a safe, encouraging, and sustainable sports environment.

Coach’s Signature: _____

Date: _____



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