

TOP 10 TIPS Coaching Youth Soccer

By Alan Jones

#1 Leading The Way Up Requires Guiding In The Right Direction

Have a positive personality. Children will respond to people who are friendly, upbeat, encouraging and have a sense of humor. Provide positive reinforcement – point out the positives of a child's technique, effort and enthusiasm rather than the negatives.

#2 Reaching for the Sky Is Fine, but Touching It Is Even Better

Always set individual achievable goals. Avoid giving the whole group the same targets (eg I want each group to get 10 passes in one minute.) Only a small % of players will achieve this and it will have a negative effect on everyone else's self esteem. Instead, have the players keep score of their own performance and the next time they do a repetition, try to have them beat their own individual score. If needed, give them more time and/or space to achieve this (another trick: don't tell them they're getting more time).

#3 Seeing is Believing... and Understanding too

The ability to demonstrate a technique is key – a picture paints a thousand words. Make sure the picture you paint is an excellent one – if you can't demonstrate, let one of your player's do it.

#4 Does Practice Make Perfect?

Not so much. Practice makes permanent... perfect practice makes perfect.

#5 Can We Have Your Attention... Please!

Avoid line drills – technique improves with repetition. Have players working with one ball each or in twos – a maximum of four in a group. Players who are not actively engaged in a drill will get bored and boredom leads to a lack of discipline. Strive for maximum participation.

#6 Juggling is for Jugglers... Not Coaches

Do not try and teach too many things at once. Give one coaching point out at a time – if all of the players can achieve this, then move on to the next progression. If individuals are having difficulty, then pull that player(s) aside and show them what to do and then let them practice.

#7 Pressure Molds Character

Introduce pressure at the appropriate time – whether it is by using time, space or putting in defenders. Too much pressure too quickly will have a negative effect on their success. Introduce opposition gradually (eg: warm up to unopposed to opposed (4 v 1, then 4 v 2 etc.) then into small sided games.

#8 The Pyramids Were Preplanned & Built from the Bottom Up

Be prepared. If you fail to plan, you can plan to fail. Prepare your sessions fully so you achieve as much as you can in the time given.

#9 Parlez-vous Española, Right?

Use vocabulary that your children will understand – analogies often help in painting pictures to the world the child lives in.

#10 Walk This Way... Talk This Way!

Be a role model. The way you dress, how well groomed you are; how early or late you arrive at practice and games all send signals to children as to your standards (or lack of).