

What is Sports Coaching?

Everyone involved in sport sometimes wishes they could be better – that they could jump higher, run or swim faster, create better opportunities or score more goals. A coach can help people make these improvements.

You will find coaching a great way of staying in close contact with your sport, particularly if you are reaching the end of your own sporting career. If you are a parent or teacher, it is a very satisfying way of helping your own and other people's children fulfil their sporting potential. Coaching improves both the person and the performer.

People improve their performance when they believe in themselves, have a desire to succeed, or are willing to change. Coaching is about change. A coach is an agent and catalyst for such change. A skilful coach will change people's attitudes, aspirations, ability, lifestyle and personality for the better.

Coaching is often more to do with improving quality of life than performance, although the two usually go together. If you perform better and achieve more, you gain greater enjoyment from life and, at the higher levels of sport, can gain considerable rewards.

People normally improve with a programme of safe, guided practice, measured performance and competition.

Coaching usually involves a combination of questioning, demonstrating, explaining and guiding. Good coaches achieve their objectives through a carefully planned and progressive programme of activities. Many diverse activities are involved in coaching. However, effective coaching should always involve the following three stages:

- Planning and organising
- Guiding, challenging and directing
- Monitoring and evaluating.

Good coaches coach people, not the sport. They should:

- understand what people want to do and achieve (motivation)
- recognise and build on what people can do (talent identification and development)
- identify and correct, where possible, what people cannot do (eg skill limitations, inadequate fitness levels, weaknesses in attitude)
- discover and enhance what people will do (commitment and determination).

The coach must create and manage an environment in which people are motivated to maintain participation and improve performance. The coach must provide a balance between challenges set and the ability of the participant. If a challenge is too great for the participant's ability and experience, they will suffer anxiety and underachieve. If the challenge is too easy, the person will quickly lose interest and still underachieve.

If coaching is effective, those being coached will:

- become more skilful
- develop a greater awareness and understanding of the sport
- become more confident and self-reliant
- be more able to deal with success and failure
- become active learners and be:
 - able to learn naturally from experience
 - better equipped to cope with change.

Further Information

sports coach UK – Become a Coach
1st4sport – Coaching for Beginners
Australian Institute of Sport

Related sports coach UK Workshops

Safeguarding and Protecting Children
Equity in Your Coaching
Analysing Your Coaching