

1 MAKING IT FUN

1.1 COACHING 5-7 YEAR OLDS

When coaching this age group both games and practice sessions should be positive experiences in the players' sports and human development.

Winning should not be the fundamental objective. Instead, the players should learn to be good sports, respect the rules of the game, the referees and the opposing team, and to try their best. Most of all, the focus should be on having fun!

To make activities fun, the coach must first be having fun themselves! Kids have fun when:

- They are with friends
- They are active, not spending a lot of time watching or listening to the coach
- They are learning new things

In regards to learning, it is important that activities are at a level where the kids think that they can do it, that it is "close enough" to their current level of skill that it is achievable. Not spending too much time on an activity will also help to keep the players interested.

Coaches should avoid constantly dictating exactly how something is to be done, and instead should describe what they want done and let kids explore how to do it.

An example would be telling the kids to throw the ball up into the air and catch it behind their back. Even if the coach cannot do it themselves, they can describe it and kids will have fun trying to do it.

This approach equally applies to teaching skills of the game - for example telling the players to throw the ball as high as possible when shooting.

Teaching points such as "lock and snap" or "high elbow" can be introduced at a later stage. Asking the players to throw the ball as high possible will lead them naturally to push upwards and have a high release point.

COACHING 5-7 YEAR-OLDS

At the age of 5-7, children's sensory-perceptive abilities are largely unrefined. Fundamental movement patterns such as jumping, changing direction and running need to be developed by playing games with the body and often with different equipment. Size 3 or Size 5 basketballs are preferable and rings as low as 6'–8' make basketball more accessible.

The more actions and movements that are introduced the more a child's motor skills will improve. Games must be presented in a general form, asking the players questions like "let's see who can tag the most players?" Games do not have to replicate basketball and many fun games (that will help to develop skills such as changing direction) may not involve either basketballs or rings.

The practice must be held in a tranquil and relaxed fashion, with safety being of the utmost concern. Children must make their own "guided" discoveries rather than being "drilled" in a repetitive or monotonous manner. Music helps a lot and can facilitate learning.

Whilst there may be "winners" in activities, the overall focus should not be on winning, but on having fun and developing new skills. "Success" should be defined as being able to do something that you couldn't do before!

The analytical teaching of basketball fundamentals should be avoided at all costs at this age, instead the focus should be on games that involve skills such as:

- Running
- Jumping
- Changing Direction
- Throwing and catching etc.