

COACHING TECHNIQUE

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The game will tell you what the player needs to practice.

Technique is one of the four components of the game and leads to ball skill. Without ball skills a player cannot execute tactics, so during the first fourteen years of a young player's career the coaching emphasis must be on technique. Technique is the body's mechanical execution to impact the ball; i.e., receiving, catching, shooting, dribbling, parrying, etc. Skill is being able to execute technique under the pressure of opponents in tight space and most likely on the move. Some players will be able to execute technique in an activity, but fail to apply them as skill when under pressure from opponents. Some players will be competent with the ball, but not outstanding. Some players will be technical, but not skillful, while others will be skillful but not technical. Some players will be capable of executing some skills against one level of opponent, but not another.

Certainly, players will gain more trust and respect for a coach who can help them improve their technique and certainly they will feel more confident in having new skills at their disposal when solving challenges in a match. Players will spend time working on their skills alone, if they are motivated. Players will appreciate the importance and thrill of learning new skills and refining existing techniques if the coach creates the proper training environment. Then the players begin to equate fun with improvement.

Beginning coaches often find themselves in a Catch 22 at training sessions. They are positioned to have an influence on young players by helping them develop new skills and refine existing ones, but some coaches don't know enough about the skills they are teaching to offer relevant advice.

The execution of a technique is broken down into three phases:

- ❑ **PREPARATION** – the movements leading up to contact with the ball. Focus on the feet first as they will impact what happens with the rest of the body and they must get the body to where the ball is. Look at the distribution of body weight (body posture), the shape of the approach to the ball, the position of the body and arms, the position and shape of the supporting leg, the position and shape of controlling surfaces and the rotation of the body into contact with the ball. Eyes on the ball!
- ❑ **CONTACT** – the placement of the feet and the posture of the body upon contact with the ball. Again look for the distribution of body weight and how it impacts balance. Observe the hip and shoulder positions, the position of the supporting leg, the contact point with the ball and the movement of the limbs. Eyes on the ball!
- ❑ **FOLLOW THROUGH** – the movement occurring after contact with the ball. Once again focus on the distribution of body weight and posture. Is the follow through complete or halted too soon? Eyes on the ball!

The coach needs to know or learn the key points of the technique to be taught in a training session. A training session on technique should be conducted in a progressive manner when working with the U10 and older teams. The coaching methods when working with teenagers will vary from when working with preteens. In general the approach should be:

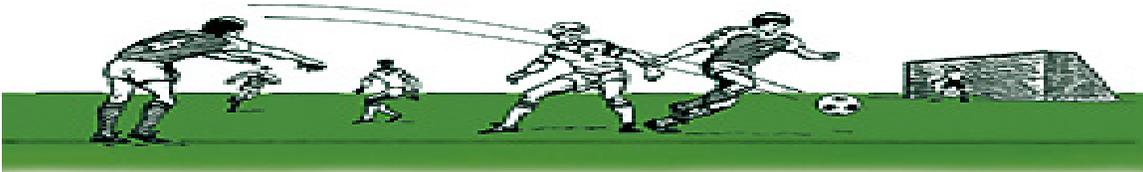
1. Warm-up – this is to ready the players physically and mentally for the tasks in the training session. It should implicate the technical points for the session. A form of active range of motion stretching can be included.
2. Individual activities – (if appropriate) each player with a ball to ensure the maximum number of contacts with the ball.
3. Small group activities – now the technical points of the workout can be trained in a more game-like environment keeping the numbers in each group small enough to provide dynamic repetition for each player.
4. Large group activities – this does not necessarily mean 11 vs. 11. It can be numbers even, numbers down or numbers up. It does mean a competitive game.
5. Cool-down – this would include light jogging/activities and active range of motion stretching.

Always write out a lesson plan for each training session you conduct. Be well organized before the players arrive with enough cones, training bibs, air pump, corner flags, goals (preferably portable), a first aid kit, water for the players and you and a few extra balls. Be sure too of the amount of space you'll have available for training and will it accommodate the activities in your lesson plan. Check the training area for any safety hazards!

TEACHING 'DOS' AND 'DON'TS' FOR COACHES

1. Preparation. Attention to detail. Prepare your lesson plan thoroughly, bearing in mind the players' abilities, the facilities and the equipment at your disposal.
2. The key motivator in soccer is the ball; use it as much as possible in your training sessions. If you are using equipment, try to make sure that your layout has visual impact. It is very important that warm-up sessions are well handled, as this is the time when the coach takes command and sets the tone. *"Well begun is a job half done."*
3. Action as soon as possible. Have the team working at the outset without an involved and complicated explanation.
4. Demonstration position – select a suitable demonstration position. This is important and certain basics should be followed:
 - Coach must see every player...do not begin to speak until all are in front and standing still...the players nearest you should crouch down.
 - Immobilize all footballs...have all balls out of the players' reach as you speak...if coaching in the activity, get the ball yourself.
 - Do not speak into a strong wind.

- Players should not be asked to look into the sun at the coach...it is better that the sun is in the eyes of the coach.
5. Do not demonstrate a difficult skill if you know that someone in your team could do it more efficiently.
 6. If demonstrating yourself, do not, if possible, speak while you are moving. A short explanation before and/or after the demonstration is desirable.
 7. Involve as many of the players as possible and try to ensure that each one has a specific job.
 8. Proceed from the simple to the difficult.
 9. Observe from outside the activity.
 10. Remember you are coaching players, not skills.
 11. When coaching, make sure you are wearing a neutral color from the players.
 12. Try to make all technical exercises as realistic as possible.
 13. The set up and collecting of equipment should be done efficiently.
 14. Always have an adequate supply of footballs available in order to avoid wasting time during a technical exercise.



*The Game for **All** Kids!*®