

## 8 essential rules for coaching kids

While you can (and should) play to win matches, your prime objective as a youth soccer coach should be to create the right conditions for your players to enjoy themselves, get fit and develop new skills. They can experience all this while doing what they enjoy most - kicking a ball about.

However, to achieve this outcome you need to remember these 8 essential rules:

1. Have a plan but be flexible - if the plan isn't working, do something else!
2. Plan age-appropriate coaching sessions - always bear the physical and mental capabilities of your players in mind.
3. Focus on ball skills rather than tactics - do not waste time trying to teach tactics to players who can't pass the ball properly.
4. Give your players as much playing time as possible - players don't learn anything sitting on the bench except, perhaps, that their coach is not interested in them as a player or as a person.
5. Accept everyone into your team or club - all children deserve the chance to succeed.
6. Communicate your coaching philosophy to parents before you start - if parents know what you are trying to do, they can't complain later.
7. Have clear rules (not guidelines) regarding behavior - everyone should be made aware of how you expect them to behave.
8. Avoid getting sucked in to a 'win-at-all-costs' mentality - that is when you stop being a coach and the team starts playing for your benefit instead.