

Keeping Perspective

The dos and don'ts when coaching youth athletes

Sometimes it can be hard to know exactly what to do in your role of a coach to make sure your players are having the best experience possible. Here are a few do's and don'ts for coaching youth athletes:

DO:

- **Remain calm, cool, and collected during practices and games.**
 - If you lose your cool and start yelling, your players may become frustrated and embarrassed. The added pressure from you becoming worked up can cause them to make mistakes. Instead, staying calm, cool, and collected can help to keep your athletes calm and confident as well!
- **Make your coach-player relationship independent of your players' performance on the field.**
 - Your athletes need you to be supportive and encouraging no matter how they play! Players who perform at a higher level than others should not be treated any differently than those players who are not at that performance level.
- **Reinforce sportsmanship with your players.**
 - Sportsmanship is a valuable life skill that can easily be learned through any sport. Reminding your players to take their hats off and shake hands with the opponents after games is a good way to ensure that your athletes practice good sportsmanship.
- **Push to follow through on commitments, hard work, and being a good person.**
 - These values will help your players succeed in not only baseball and other sports, but life in general as well. There is no short cut for hard work, and baseball is a great testament to that for your athletes.
- **Keep it fun.**
 - Baseball is a game, and games are supposed to be fun! Try not to take baseball, or any other sport, too seriously as it can add pressure for your players. Make sure your players are having fun playing baseball.

DON'T:

- **Continuously critique players throughout the game on every play made.**
 - Not every play is going to be made as smoothly as the professionals. Sometimes everything can go wrong in a play and a good outcome still occurs. In these cases, it can be easy to break down all of the mistakes, but it may be better to give one critique and then congratulate your players on making the play.
- **Criticize your players and give an in-depth analysis after every game.**
 - During the post-game meeting try to be as positive as possible and focus on the good things that happened during the game. Keep a note of the things that could have been better during the game, and work on them during the next practice.
- **Substitute players in key situations for a more skilled player.**
 - All of your players should feel that you have confidence in them. By taking a player out of a situation and putting a more skilled player in, you are saying that player is not good enough to get the job done.
- **Control all decision making related to baseball.**
 - If you make all the decisions related to baseball for your players, it can be hard for you to tell if they are actually learning the game. By letting your players make decisions on their own in games, you will be able to better gauge just how much your players are learning about the game.
- **Allow baseball to dominate your life.**
 - While it is great to have a passion for baseball and want to play or coach all the time, there has to be a balance in your life between baseball, family, friends, work, and other activities. You should be able to identify yourself as more than just a baseball coach.