

## Being a coach – what should you teach

You have signed up to be a coach, received your team and booked your training time. Now the big question.... What should I be teaching?

The answer to this is quite simple. Vermont Vultures are a Community Basketball Team and want to make Basketball accessible and fun for kids of all ages and skills. We play games in junior domestic competitions only and don't compete in elite competitions like the VJBL. Although many of the kids in the higher grades will play at the elite level and want to be pushed, we also ensure that all kids are made to feel welcome, are treated the same and look forward to their game and training sessions. It is a way for them to have fun, make friends and learn new skills.

As a coach your goal will be to provide this fun and social environment while teaching them the skills of basketball. Here is a quick checklist of some of the Team sport ideals that Vermont Vultures encourage coaches to build into their training and games.

- Fun
- Fairness
- Teamwork, encouragement, and team mentality
- Equal time on court
- Minimal 'dead time' at training
- All team members are valued and have a role to play
- Develop each player differently and to the level they are at
- Teach all skills and positions to all players
- Good sportsmanship and respecting the opposing teams

Coaching styles vary just like the way school teachers teach. Some can be intense, some very business like and others quite casual. Different coaching methods work for different coaches and different teams. Your coaching style is up to you and the link below from FIBA goes into more detail on some of the identified styles.

<https://wabc.fiba.com/manual/level-1/l1-coach/l1-3-development/l1-3-2-coaching-style-and-philosophy/3-2-5-differing-coaching-styles-to-coaching/>

At Vermont Vultures we encourage your style and personality. Some of the approaches we value highly include:

- Asking questions rather than directing. Find out the thought process that goes behind the decisions made by the players in your team. The more we can help adjust the thought process the better the end decisions will be.
- Asking these questions makes the kids think more as well. Directing from the sidelines could cause less thought and the kids to close up.
- On court training during games can be hard. There is limited time between plays, large distance from the coach and calling kids out in front of others may not have the desired effect. Instead using timeouts, substitution time, or training times to ask about decision making processes or teach other options may be the best avenue.
- Build training plans that revolve around thinking. This could be drills that don't stop after one simple skill. It could involve a pass, movement, screen, movement, ball receive, shot and

position for the rebound. At the same time as simulating a game scenario, this will keep the kids engaged and thinking.

- Most of all there should be constant encouragement. Kids love to be congratulated and have their names used in front of others. They will leave training and games with a great feeling each time with this simple tip. At the same time kids may be more receptive to working with changes you are trying to develop if encouraged.

Once the personal, social and enjoyment aspects of coaching have been appreciated then we can move onto the skills, tactics and fitness the kids will require. These can vary greatly between age group and skill levels.

### Individual Skills

**Passing** – As kids move through the age group passing is the most important skill in a team sport. It defines how your team will play offence and defence. The better the ball movement the more options your team will have. Teach moving targets, passing in front of the receiver, strong and direct passing, long passes, short gives, etc.

**Defence** – Along with great passing comes defence. If your 5 players know exactly what defence you are playing as a team, where to stand and their goals, then you will be a very hard team to play against. It is widely written that man-on-man defence is the best way to develop kids. We agree that this should be the primary defence taught, but at the same time you will need to have a second option or variation. This could be half court man-on-man, or a full court or half court press defence. Zone can be quite effective at a young age, especially when shooting ranges are not developed, however this can decrease development in terms of decision making, fitness, and using the court effectively so is not recommended.

**Voice** – Knowing where your teammates are, calling for help if your player gets free, or encouraging your teammates are very important. Develop and encourage this at training. Drills may simply be the defender calling out 'ball' when their player has the ball, 'rebound' when the ball is shot, or 'help' if the offence gets a step ahead of the defence.

**Dribbling and Agility** – Dribbling in varied situations is important. Developing left and right hand, all crossover types, balance from hips and shoulders, eyes and head up, pressure situations, and the ability to analyse and change court spacing, will all be important to teach as kids develop.

**Shooting** – form\technique, balance, range suitable to age group, triple threat stance, foul shot process, jump shots, pull-ups, layups (standard, reverse, euro) , step back, etc.

**Rebounding** – This individual skill can be overlooked at many age groups. This is a pity as rebounding teaches so many valuable skills such as court positioning, reading the shooter, reading the ball and bounce, and keeping opposition out of the dangerous spots. It is also the start of your offensive transition and passing sequence.

## Team Skills

Combining all the individual skills to create drills that involve teammates, defensive pressure, court movement and decision making.

Defensive strategy is important to teach as a Team Skill. The goal of certain players may be to stop their opponent, whereas others may be to trap, force a pass, and intercept. Having a team defence strategy with set goals and deliverables is important. A second defensive type or variation may also be important if the primary defence is not effective.

Passing strategy is again highly important. This is how your team will move the ball. A good strategy here will lead to less turnovers, easier movement of the ball into offence, and shots that are taken with less defence. A great way to work out how your team should be passing is looking at the next age group up. What tactics are they using and how can you build this into your team?

Build game scenarios into training. This could be with 3-on-3 games, bonus points for skills you are developing, and building pressure situations.

Fitness. Although kids are generally quite active a few good running and agility games built into training can be fun also assist with fitness. Keeping the kids moving throughout training is also important here. The less they are waiting in line of watching others the better. Brief water and coaching breaks in-between high intensity and fun drills will keep them interested and unknowingly fit.

Build great decision-making processes that are team focussed. Great passing, helping others score, and team defensive plays should all be encouraged. At the same time asking questions to kids to understand decision making process and help evolve this. Fast decisions with purpose are important in competitive sport. Work with them on their individual and team thought process.

## Starting to coach resources

In addition to the individual and team basketball skill above, FIBA has some great resources on their website for coaches starting out. Please see the following link for more information.

<https://wabc.fiba.com/start-coaching/>