



Silent Sidelines ... Quiet please. Children learning.

COACH GUIDE:

The Herts Youth League and our member clubs seek to provide children, coaches and referees with the best possible start in football. We want our children to have fun and enjoy playing their football with freedom in a calm and safe environment which allows them to make, and learn, from their own mistakes.

Children learn best in a calm environment. A wall of noise can be distracting, confusing, off-putting or even intimidating, and the groans of adult disappointment after a mistake can put children off trying new skills for fear of failure and adult disapproval. Constantly shouting out instructions does not help long term player development. If adults always tell children what to do, they simply stop the children making their own decisions and prevent them from learning.

The rules adopted by our league seek to promote learning, in particular:

More silent sidelines - We ask spectators to stand back from the pitch in the designated spectator area, applaud good play by both teams and not shout out.

Fewer instructions - We also ask coaches to stay in designated technical areas, remain calm and issue fewer instructions when the children are playing.

Quarters - All matches are divided into four quarters to allow coaches to offer more constructive guidance during games.

Remember the role of the coach is to help our children have fun whilst developing the skills and confidence of each player and team, NOT to drive a team to victory. Good coaching can create a very positive environment for our children to learn and enjoy playing, whilst poor coaching can create a very negative atmosphere (e.g. aggressive, high-pressure games) that harms their learning and spoils their enjoyment.

You can get your ideas across in training, pre-match and in the scheduled breaks. During matches, stay calm and just try to let the players play and let the game be the teacher.

We also ask coaches and spectators to support our referees. They too are learning. We want them to grow in confidence so that they actively manage games and help our children.



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COACH DOs and DON'Ts:

GOOD COACHES...

- Have done their game preparation before the match;
- Let the children play once they are on the pitch;
- Don't constantly shout instructions (pass, shoot etc);
- Don't tell each player where to be on the pitch;
- Prompt players to think for themselves;
- Give praise for trying new things (even if they fail);
- Encourage players if their heads drop;
- Remain quiet most of the time and analyse the game;
- Give accurate, useful, constructive feedback during scheduled breaks.

BAD COACHES...

- Kick every ball and issue a stream of instructions;
- Constantly organise the team ("Sam, goal side... Billy, out wide");
- Give negative feedback ("you should have... how many times have I said... that was rubbish...");
- Criticise players for trying new things ("not there... just get rid...");
- Commentate on the game like John Motson;
- Sound like a fan on the terrace ("Go on... go on, all the way, yessss!!!!");
- Over-celebrate goals;
- Encroach on to the pitch or move up and down the touchline;
- Claim throw-ins, corners and free kicks ("Red ball... c'mon ref, that's a push!");
- Question the referee's decision in front of players;
- Encourage player aggression ("Get stuck in!!!").



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POSITIVE COACHING GUIDE:

The aim of junior football coaching is NOT winning every game... it is player and team DEVELOPMENT.

Relax. The score is irrelevant. What matters is that the players gain experience and confidence.

Any coach can shout a stream of instructions to control the players and may get a better instant result ... but a GOOD COACH allows players to make their own decisions, make their own mistakes and learn from them.

Experienced, confident players who can think for themselves will win many future games.

The more mistakes, the more they learn. Stopping children making mistakes by constantly shouting instructions stops them learning. Your tactics or advice should generally be conveyed in training or scheduled breaks NOT during the game.

Might a good coach SHOUT during the game?

Possibly, but not much. You shouldn't need to. You should be too busy analysing your players' performance in order to give them accurate and positive feedback. Maybe take notes.

A few times in a match, a good coach might shout out:

"Well done [child's name]" if the child has done something they haven't previously done (but not if they do that every week).

"Great effort [child's name]" if the move hasn't come off but you want to encourage them to keep trying.

"Heads up [child/team name]" if they are looking downhearted.

If particular players lack confidence or tend to panic on the ball...

"Make a good decision" helps them to focus but doesn't tell them what to do.

"Relax" might help them to compose themselves before shooting at goal.

If the practiced team shape has gone completely **"Shape"** is a single-word trigger that could make each player remember where they should be, or to remind players to make good decisions in their own penalty area **"Danger area"** may be an effective call.

But the loudest thing you should be able to hear is the children themselves. The less you shout, the more space there is for the children to hear themselves think and to hear each other.