

A Practice Guide for Youth Coaches

While most coaches recognize the key role they play in promoting youth development, fewer than one-third of coaches have received training in how to do so. To close that gap, partners of the **Million Coaches Challenge** have trained one million coaches in youth development practices. The **MCC Practice Guide for Youth Coaches** identifies **12 core practices** and provides coaches with practical and actionable strategies that they can use, no matter the sport, age of their athletes, or experience level. This mini-guide is focused on the seventh core practice of providing effective coaching and instruction.

What It Is and Why It Matters

Providing effective coaching and instruction is about the pedagogy of sport—the intentional ways coaches teach, guide, and interact with athletes to support both individual development and team connection. This includes how coaches explain skills, structure learning, respond to behavior, and provide feedback to promote growth and engagement. When coaches adapt to individual needs and respond with care, they support both skill development and athletes' sense of belonging and engagement. Positive, effort-based feedback boosts confidence and motivation, while punitive responses can harm confidence and connection.



What It Looks Like In Practice

SUPPORTING POSITIVE TEAM ENGAGEMENT

- Create expectations together as a team.
- Keep consequences short, sweet, and age-appropriate.
- Consider ways to respond to athletes that encourage positive engagement.



PROVIDING INSTRUCTION

- Provide clear instructions, keeping them simple and clear. Consider how to
 - ➔ Show rather than tell by modeling instructions.
 - ➔ Pose problems rather than telling during instruction.
- Be ready to adapt and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of different athletes.

ENGAGING IN FEEDBACK AND COACHING CONVERSATION

- Consider when to give feedback.
 - ➔ Coaches should identify moments for learning and growth when athletes can hear them when the pressure is low.
 - ➔ Seize teachable moments.
 - ➔ To support mastery, give effort-based feedback, like celebrating trying.
- Consider how they give feedback.
 - ➔ Connect with the athlete before jumping into feedback.
 - ➔ Be specific.
 - ➔ Connect feedback to life skills.
 - ➔ Focus on what they want athletes to do rather than what you they don't want them to do.

Quick Tips from MCC Partners

LiFEsports.
at The Ohio State University



From LiFEsports at The Ohio State University and the Ohio High School Athletic Association:

- ➔ Implement feedback loops that are:
 - **Individualized:** Use player's name and direct your feedback to them.
 - **Specific:** Be specific with detail, explicitly defining what they are doing well or how they can improve.
 - **Immediate:** Provide feedback right after the behavior occurs, clearly connecting your comments to the specific action you observed.
 - **Frequent:** Offer feedback regularly to reinforce learning and growth, ensuring it becomes a consistent part of your interactions.
 - **Genuine:** Ensure the feedback has meaning and purpose behind it.

Explore the full Million Coaches Challenge Practice Guide for more strategies, examples, and coach tips on bringing these practices to life.