

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 eighth core practice of running purposeful practices and scrimmages.



What It Is and Why It Matters

Running purposeful practices and scrimmages means designing each session with clear goals and intentional structure. Great practices balance fun, challenge, and learning so they keep athletes active, engaged, and motivated. When coaches plan ahead, integrate skill development with teamwork and choice, and maintain consistency, they help athletes build confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging. Thoughtfully designed practices don't just improve performance, they strengthen team culture and support positive youth development.



What It Looks Like In Practice

FINDING THE RIGHT LEVEL OF INTENSITY, CHALLENGE, AND FUN

- Coaches should consider how to make drills and activities both fun and competitive.
 - ➔ Create “just-right” challenges for athletes.
 - ➔ Use group check-ins to check the pulse of the group.
 - ➔ Offer players options to set their own pace.
 - ➔ Mix up competition to build resilience.

STRUCTURING PRACTICE

- Coaches should identify practice objectives and priorities.
- Coaches should be consistent in setup so players know what to do and where to go.
- Coaches should include different types of activity to create a dynamic practice.

Quick Tips from MCC Partners



From How to Coach Kids:

No Laps

Exercise should never be a punishment.

No Lines

Do everything you can to keep them moving.

No Lectures

Keep instructions short and to the point.



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