

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 ninth core practice of using situation-specific routines to build connections.



What It Is and Why It Matters

Situation-specific routines are intentional actions coaches use during practices, games, or competitions to build connection, focus, and reflection. These routines help athletes transition into and out of activity, manage emotions, and celebrate effort and growth. When used consistently, routines strengthen team cohesion, promote predictability, and reinforce a mastery climate where athletes feel safe, supported, and ready to learn.



What It Looks Like In Practice

RUNNING OPENING AND CLOSING ROUTINES

- Coaches can open and close practice with a team routine that can help athletes transition between practice/competitions and the rest of their day.

Quick Tips from MCC Partners



From Positive Coaching Alliance:

- **Winner's circle:** The end of a game is a crucial time for a team because of the emotion generated by a competition. Right after a game is ideal for focusing on tank filling using a winner's circle. Get your players into a circle and open the floor for tank-filling comments. "Who noticed someone doing something to help our team today?" The coach generally speaks last, making sure to make comments about players who have not gotten tank filling from the others. End with a positive about the whole team.

- Include a routine to close out and celebrate the end of the season. Coaches should ensure their team ends the season on a positive note.

INCORPORATING ROUTINES THAT REINFORCE SKILLS AND MINDSETS

- Consistently practice routines that help athletes reset and focus, using them beyond high pressure or game-specific routines.
- Practice a mistakes routine to help frame mistakes as opportunities and remind athletes that mistakes are okay.



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