

Information from <https://www.breakthroughbasketball.com>

Best Overall Advice for Youth Basketball Coaches

1) Keep things fun!

Did you know that the #1 reason kids quit sports is because it's not fun anymore?!? It's very important to play plenty of games and keep a positive attitude.

Be positive and make things fun. Even if the kids get cut from the team or decide not play basketball at an older age, they'll still have a positive image of basketball and may continue to play it recreationally when they get older.

If you act like a drill sergeant when coaching a bunch of 10 year-olds, the kid will get a negative image of basketball and have negative emotional feelings when thinking of basketball. Kids will also get sick of basketball if they play TOO many games each year. As a result, they will not likely play basketball when they get older. It can even affect their feelings towards fitness in general. If a person dislikes fitness and becomes inactive, they are more likely to be unhealthy!

2) Be Positive & Do NOT Correct Every Mistake!

Don't be too critical and stop them to make a correction on every mistake. Let them play and learn themselves. If you stop or correct them on every mistake, you'll get a basketball player with low confidence that is always unsure of what to do, instead of a confident player that reacts to the defense.

Now, if they continue to make the same mistake over and over and over, show the player a better way to do a certain thing. For example, if you see one of your players stand straight up every time they touch the ball and a defender crowds them and causes the offensive player to travel. Say to the player, "Way to hustle, Johnny! Let me show you something that will help you when the defender crowds you. When catching the ball in this position, keep your hips back with your knees bent, and pivot. Be ready to attack. Then if the defender comes to crowd you, it will be easy for you to dribble right by him!" Notice, I did NOT focus on the negative and say "Stop bringing the ball up!"

Don't focus on the negative. Focus on the way to help them. Let's be positive as coaches!

3) Allow your players to be successful!

Sometimes competition is not a motivator for young kids. However, ALL kids need to taste success (and hopefully lots of it). Now this doesn't mean winning. It means getting better and succeeding in practice. Allow your players to run drills that they can succeed at and feel good about. Celebrate small accomplishments and successes with your players.

4) Teach life lessons in your practices!

Read this article about teaching life lessons and improving team bonding.

5) Don't worry about winning!

You don't have time to worry about winning. There's only time to do the right thing... If you do things "right", winning will eventually be a by-product of your actions. Be patient. True success takes time to do things right. It doesn't happen overnight.

You must first build a SOLID foundation for these kids to build on. Taking the time to build that foundation will cause you to sacrifice winning some games. Trust us. This is better for your players in the long run.

6) Avoid year-round basketball and play other sports!

There is a reason that NBA GM's don't like their ELITE, PROFESSIONAL basketball players competing in the summer World Championships and Olympics. It's been scientifically proven that playing a sport year-round leads to tired muscles and a tired muscle has a much HIGHER chance of injury. Now, if these PROFESSIONAL athletes with proper nutrition and training are supposed to avoid year-round basketball, don't you think that a DEVELOPING, young athlete (most likely without proper nutrition and training) should be avoiding it as well?!?

If you force your child to play, it can also lead to burnout, injury, and resentment of the sport or fitness altogether. People are much more driven when they choose to do something they enjoy, rather than being forced to do it. If you want your child to enjoy basketball, play GAMES with him when they want to, and watch basketball-related activities with them. 9 times out of 10, kids enjoy sports that their parents enjoy if approached the right way.

At this age, it is best to improve overall athletic ability which is done by playing multiple sports, such as gymnastics, baseball, soccer, martial arts, football, track, volleyball, softball, swimming, and so on. Keep in mind, that you want to have seasons for these sports. Avoid playing 2 or 3 sports at once and multiple practices on the same day. If you want to focus on one sport at age 16 or 17, GREAT. Not at age 10 or 11. And who knows what your child will take an interest in or show talent in at age 10? Most of the time, things change a lot in the next 6 or 7 years!

7) Don't press or play zone defense!
You can read why and get advice here.

8) Use small basketballs and lower rims!
Using rims that are too high and basketballs that are too big will RUIN your players shooting form. They are NOT strong enough yet.

Do we send 6 year-olds to Yankee stadium and start throwing from the big mound? No, we start with tee-ball, then parent pitch, then little league (close bases), and move up.

It's ridiculous to throw 5-10 year-olds on a full size court with 10 foot rims and youth basketballs that are way too big! It's no wonder so many kids have horrible shooting form when they get to high school!

9) Teach the right things!
Just keep in mind that if you can teach your young players the following skills, then you should feel good that about what you accomplished and know that you're teaching your player the right things (that they need to be successful)!

Your young players should be able to:
Dribble with their left and right hands equally well.

- Make lay ups with their left and right hands equally well -- and jump off the proper foot (left foot when shooting with right hand, and vice-versa)
- Perform a jump stop without traveling.
- Pivot on their left and right foot without traveling.
- Perform accurate chest, bounce, and overhead passes.
- Perform a defensive slide (feet wide, good balance, staying between the offensive player and the basket).
- Shoot a basketball with proper form.

These simple skills should be your number priority and your goal should be to help your players master these skills. Once they have truly mastered these skills, you can start building from there.

Important Tips:

When working with young kids and running basketball drills, there are three very important concepts you need to consider:

1 - Kids need to be highly active!

Just by using fast paced drills and keeping things moving, your players will have more fun and get in better condition. Your kids should be breathing hard and their hearts should be pumping. It's good for them!

Avoid standing in lines as much as possible and keep the ball in their hands as much as possible.

2 - Kids want to feel successful!

With very young kids, competition doesn't always serve as a motivator. You should always provide activities that help them build their skills and confidence. Strive to focus on the learning process instead of measuring up to those around you.

You'll want to avoid adding pressure and competition until the players have developed their skills, confidence, and become proficient with the basics.

Put them in situations where they can succeed.

3 - Kids want to have lots of fun!

This is an important stage for young players and your actions could determine whether they enjoy sports or not.

It's important to make things fun so they can improve and become confident.

Youth basketball drills don't have to be boring. Almost any drill can be modified to provide high activity, high success, and high enjoyment.