



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

NYS strives to create and maintain a positive, no-pressure atmosphere in a fun, safe and supportive environment for young athletes. Healthy competition is promoted, rather than the high-pressure, “win-at-all-costs” mentality prevalent in so many youth sports leagues today. Our primary focus is on the kids having fun, making friends, and soaking in all of the positive life lessons that youth sports can provide. No matter the outcome of the game, every child is a winner to us!

YOU CAN COACH A YOUTH SPORTS TEAM!!

Coaching a team of youngsters can be a tremendously rewarding experience, giving you the opportunity to help young players grow and learn, face challenges, and experience success.

No prior coaching experience is necessary - as a youth sports Coach, you will be given resources and support to help you succeed.

If you have a child playing in the league, you can coach their team.

NYS Recreational League Coaching Overview

- Coach a team of boys and girls ages 3-15 years old.
- Coach practices at least 1 day per week for about 1 hr. in duration
- Coach Games on weekends for about 1 hr. in duration
- Teach players the fundamentals of the game.
- Emphasis on sportsmanship, fair play, and full participation.
- Provide a safe and fun environment for the players.
- Learn and follow all league rules, policies, and procedures.
- Give each player equal playing time. NYS has a 50% play rule.
- Put the feelings of the players ahead of the coach's desire to win.
- Communicate effectively with parents and coaches, as needed.

Qualifications

- Be enthusiastic, organized, and dependable.
- Make ensuring a positive experience for players a priority over winning.
- Be patient, especially with the players.

Principles for Coaches and Parents:

1. A coach should be enthusiastic without being intimidating. He/she should be sensitive to the player's feelings and genuinely enjoy spending time with them. He/she should be dedicated to serving children and understand sports provide physical and emotional growth for its participants.

2. A coach needs to realize he/she is a teacher, not a drill sergeant. He/she should help children learn and work to improve their skills. Personal gains are never a consideration. The job does not depend on winning. The best interest of the player transforms into the best interest of the game.

3. The safety and welfare of the players can never be compromised. A coach will consider these factors above all others.
4. A coach needs a tremendous amount of patience. Don't push players beyond their limits regarding practice. Children have many daily pressures, and the athletic experience should not be one of them. Playing sports is supposed to be fun.
5. A coach should care more about the players as people than athletes.
6. A coach should encourage his/her players to dream and set lofty goals. It is important to remain positive and refrain from making discouraging remarks. Negative comments are remembered far more often than positive affirmations.
7. A coach needs to remember the rules of the game are designed to protect the players, as well as to set a standard of competition. He/she should not circumvent or take advantage of the rules by teaching deliberate misconduct. A coach who puts his/her opponent's team at risk should not be involved with children.
8. A coach should be the first person to demonstrate good sportsmanship. He/she should take a low profile during the game and allow the kids to be the center of attention.
9. Parents and players place a lot of trust and confidence in the coach. The coach has an important role in molding the athletic experience of the child.
10. A coach can measure success by the respect he/she gets from his or her players, regardless of victories or defeats. Children who mature socially and physically while participating in sports are the best indications of good coaching.

Additional Coaching Tips

- Take time to introduce yourself to parents via email and then in person on the first day.
- Set "team rules" so everybody hears them and knows what to expect.
- Use mistakes as positive opportunities to learn rather than negative outcomes to dwell on.
- Encourage your parents to attend practice and games.
- Make sure you are creating a fun and pleasant atmosphere for your players during practices and games.
- Play ALL your players. Remember all players who arrive at the game from the beginning should play at least half the game.
- Motivate your players to work toward achievable goals.
- Keep your players who are not on the field together on the sidelines.

HAVE FUN!! Always Remember: You are doing this for fun and to help the players!

Working with Parents: The success of your team involves everyone's participation. The key to keeping parents involved and happy is **communication**. Encourage parents to talk to you, ask questions and give input.

Dealing with disruptive parents is a dilemma. If the circumstances warrant, please refer the matter to an NYS Staff Member. NYS will help with conflict resolution with the child's best interest at the forefront of every decision.

Getting Started

Teaching young players, the game can be really fun and ultimately rewarding. As a coach, you will be looked upon as a teacher, leader, role model, and authority figure by the kids on your team. Don't underestimate the influence (positive or negative) you can have on a child. Kids are very impressionable and will watch your every move. The team will take your lead, adopt your attitude, and take on your personality.

Sounds daunting, but while you shouldn't be overwhelmed by the responsibility, you also should not take your coaching responsibilities lightly.

Helping others, especially children is such a rewarding endeavor. If you can have even the slightest positive influence on a child's life, your coaching experience will have been a success. Watching a player improve as both player and as a person can be one of the most fulfilling accomplishments a person can have. Valuable lessons kids can learn from sports:

- Ethics and how to follow the rules.
- Coping with Failure: How to cope with both winning & losing.
- Goal Setting - How to set and work toward achieving goals.
- Teamwork - How to work with others.
- How to respect authority.
- How to follow directions.

League Rules - Prior to the start of the season, obtain a copy of the League Rules and familiarize yourself with them.

Practices and Games – know when and where and have schedules to distribute to parents as needed.

Get in contact with your Team

Once you receive your roster for the upcoming season, the first thing you'll want to do is reach out to the parents and players. You will want to introduce yourself and set expectations for the team, players, and parents. In most cases, your letter will be the first time your players and parents hear from you as the coach.

Here is a list of items to address as a coach in your letter to players and parents:

Coaches: Names, Titles, Contact Information

Location: Practice and Game Fields

Schedule: Practice and Games

Team Goals: Have Fun, develop friendships, teamwork, and skill development.

Coaching Philosophy: Practice Expectations

Communication: Let the parents know how you want to communicate. It can be via group chat or an app that the parents can download.

Volunteers: Ask for help if needed. Team Parents and Assistant Coaches will be a huge help.

Equipment: Required Player Equipment, (i.e. cleats, shin guards, soccer ball)

Parents: Provide support for volunteers. Respect everyone's time. Work together.

Handling Issues: How to bring up issues or concerns with the coach (not at practice or games)

The First Practice

Finally, the first practice is here. What an exciting time for every coach, player, and parent. You have already emailed your letter to your team and parents. Now it's time to fulfill the goals and expectations you've set for the team. The first practice is the most important practice of the year. All your players, coaches, and parents will have your full attention. Spend the first few minutes introducing yourself to your team. Introduce your coaches and your goals for the team (play as a team, focus, improvement on a particular skill). You will also need some sort of icebreaker. Have the players introduce themselves and announce one of the following:

- Favorite Player / Team
- Favorite Position
- For younger age groups, keep it fun. Ask them what their favorite animal is.

Now is a great time to ask for volunteers (for the practice and for the whole season). This is your best chance to get as many volunteers as possible for your Team Parents, Assistant Coaches, Practice Coaches, etc. Every practice should have a plan. **If you do not have a plan, chances are your practice will be chaotic.** Break the practice schedule down into time periods. Clear communication and demonstration will be needed, especially for younger-aged teams. You should use the **"IDEA"** method for introducing new skills.

I – INTRODUCE the skill by discussing it in a team huddle.

D – DEMONSTRATE the skill by showing them the correct way to complete it.

E – EXPLAIN why mastering the skill is important to the team's success.

A - ATTEND to each player as they work through drills and help them get better (no punishment for mistakes just repeat the drill).

Here is an example of a soccer practice schedule with time periods:

Thursdays at Sonata park, Field #1, 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

5:30–5:45 Warm-ups

5:45-6:00 Dribbling and passing

6:00-6:15 Proper field positioning, offense/defense

6:15-6:30 Defense Fundamentals

Keeping them moving will keep their Attention.

All children, especially young children have short attention spans. It's your job to keep them focused and interested in what's going on. The best way to keep the players focused is to have constant movement and change. If one small group is practicing plays, another group can be doing drills while waiting for their turn. This keeps everyone busy and prevents boredom. Have an assistant or parent supervise one group while you coach the other. Use several balls so that every player can perform the drills at the same time. That will cut down on the amount of time a player is standing around and watching the other players go through the activity. The time that a player is not engaged in activity is the time you will "lose them". Also, to keep everything new and exciting, each drill should last no more than 5-10 minutes. Gauge your team's attention span and adjust the length of each drill accordingly.

Additional Coaching Resources

**For specific sports coaching resources, please visit the Coaches Corner on the NYS website or reach out to your coordinator.

Always remember this is a recreational league and the main priorities of the league are to learn the fundamentals of the sport, learn to be a team player, and HAVING FUN!

Good Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship occurs when teammates, opponents, coaches, and officials treat each other with respect. Kids learn the basics of sportsmanship from the adults in their lives, especially parents and coaches. Kids who see adults behaving in a sportsmanlike way gradually come to understand the real winners in sports are those who know how to persevere and behave with dignity – whether they win or lose a game.

Parents and coaches can help kids understand good sportsmanship through small gestures and heroic efforts. It starts with something as simple as shaking hands with opponents before/after a game and includes acknowledging good plays made by others and accepting bad calls gracefully. Displaying good sportsmanship is not always easy; it

can be tough to congratulate the opposing team after losing a close or important game, but the kids who learn how to do it will benefit in many ways.

A child who practices good sportsmanship is likely to carry the respect and appreciation of other people into every other aspect of life.

Some suggestions for building sportsmanship on your team:

- Keep your comments positive. Don't bad-mouth other coaches, players, or game officials. If you have a serious concern about a parent's behavior, discuss it privately with the child's parent or with a league official.
- When you're talking to your team after a competition, it is important not to dwell on who won or lost; instead ask your team how they felt during the game. If a child mentions he or she didn't do well at a particular skill, offer to work on these skills with the child at the next practice or before the next game.
- Applaud good plays no matter who makes them.
- Set a good example with your courteous behavior toward the parents of kids on the other team. Congratulate them when their kids win.
- **Try not to run up the score** Ideas to keep this from happening include:
 - Only allow players to shoot with their non-dominant foot.
 - Tell players they have to complete 5 passes before anyone can shoot on net.
 - Players that have already scored need to pass to other players to shoot on net.

Coach's Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct

1. I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my players ahead of any personal desire to win and remember the game is for the youth, not adults.

Expected Behavior:

- Allow and encourage players to listen, learn and play hard within the rules.
- Fulfill the expected role of a youth coach to adopt a "children first" philosophy.
- Place emphasis on fun, participation, and team.

2. I will remember to treat each player as an individual, remembering the large spread of emotional and physical development for the same.

Expected Behavior:

- Recognize the differences of each child and treat each player as an individual while demonstrating concern for their individual needs and well-being.

- Encourage all players, regardless of skill level.
- Recognize some physical tasks, drills and demands are not appropriate for all youth.

3. I will do my best to provide a safe playing situation for my players.

Expected Behavior:

- Maintain a high level of awareness of potentially unsafe conditions.
- Correct or avoid unsafe practice or playing conditions.
- Use appropriate safety equipment necessary to protect all players.
- Report unsafe conditions to NYS staff.

4. I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players.

Expected Behavior:

- Establish practice plans that are interesting, varied, and productive, which are aimed at improving all players' skills and individual abilities.
- Devote appropriate time to the improvement of each individual player.
- Conduct practices of reasonable length and intensity appropriate for the age and conditioning of the players.

5. I will lead, by example, in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship by supporting all players and officials.

Expected Behavior:

- Abide by and support the rules of the game as well as the spirit of the rules.
- Provide an environment conducive to fair and equitable competition.
- Use the influential position of a youth coach as an opportunity to promote, teach and expect sportsmanship and fair play.
- Use appropriate language at all times. At no time is profanity acceptable.

6. I will use appropriate coaching techniques for each of the skills I teach.

Expected Behavior:

- Study and learn the rules of the game for the appropriate age group.
- Review all coaching material provided to coaches.

7. I will not use alcohol and tobacco products during league-sponsored events.

Expected Behavior:

- Be alcohol and drug-free during all league-sponsored events.
- Refrain from the use of any type of tobacco product at all team activities or in the presence of players.
- Encourage parents to refrain from the public use of tobacco products or alcohol during team activities.

8. I will remember that children play, referees call, fans cheer, and coaches TEACH.

Expected Behavior:

- Exercise your authority/influence to control behavior of fans and spectators.
- Treat parents and coaches of other teams with respect.
- Treat officials and league administrators with respect.

9. As the coach, I will respect and support the decisions of the contest officials.

Expected Behavior:

- I will back and support the decisions of league officials and assist in enforcing all league rules.
- If I have concerns or questions, I will direct them to the league administrator at an appropriate time.
- I will not criticize another coach, game, or league official.
- I will cooperate and offer assistance whenever I can.

10. I am aware I have a tremendous influence on my players, and I will not place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character.

Enforcement

NYS is dedicated to raising the standard of service to youth through the enforcement of this Code of Ethics. Our Code of Ethics defines the expectations for individuals serving as coaches in our program. It also provides the tools to be used by NYS, when necessary, to check behavior and to protect all children from the psychological, emotional, physical, or social abuses that can be perpetrated against them by youth sports coaches.

NYS firmly believes the youth sports experience should be positive and safe while providing learning opportunities. For this to be possible, volunteer coaches must be held accountable for their behavior when working with and around children. Every volunteer coach is required to adhere to the Coaches' Code of Ethics Pledge

In the event a coach is found to have violated the Code of Ethics, a list of possible disciplinary actions has been compiled to accompany the Code of Conduct. NYS reserves the right to reprimand violators of the Coaches Code of Ethics. This list is not all-inclusive and is subject to change. Possible actions include:

- Warning
- Probation
- One game suspension
- Multiple game suspension
- Season suspension

- Indefinite suspension
- Permanent suspension

Factors that will result in a harsher penalty include:

- Child endangerment
- Violation of law
- Prior complaints/review action
- Number of expected behaviors violated.
- Breach of duties as a role model