



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

23

People making it happen

– junior sport policy



This booklet is part of a series covering the nine guidelines outlined in the Junior Sport Framework (JSF) as developed by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC).

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The guidelines cover topics to address the needs of young people in sport and include:

1. Long-term involvement
2. Physical growth and maturation
3. Sport pathways
4. Forming links
5. People making it happen
6. Quality coaching
7. Making sport safe
8. The law and sport.

These booklets outline the main points of the guidelines to assist in the delivery of best practice in junior sport and to encourage young people to make a life-long commitment to sport.

A complete copy of the JSF is available on the ASC website: www.ausport.gov.au

People making it happen

The most important resource in junior sport is the people who provide the infrastructure for the delivery of activities and set the social atmosphere around sport.

They include:

- Young people
- Parents and carers
- School teachers
- Coaches
- Officials
- Administrators
- Other volunteers.

What they do is important because the quality and quantity of their involvement has an enormous impact on the sport experience of young people.

Codes of Behaviour (see 'resources') have been developed for the important roles in junior sport and these should be adopted by all sports.

Young people

To enjoy their sport, young people should be able to:

- Experience skilled and sensitive leadership through their coaches, officials and administrators
- Have input into how sport is provided for them
- Participate in an inclusive, positive and caring environment where they are not exposed to physical or verbal abuse from other young people, their parents/carers or sport providers.

To promote their life-long involvement, young people should also be encouraged to take on volunteer roles (e.g. coach, official).

All participants should be given a copy of the Code of Behaviour for Players so they know what is expected of them. Also displaying a poster of the code will help remind everyone of his or her obligations.

Responsibilities of young people

All young people have a responsibility to practice fair play by:

- Participating fairly, safely and in the spirit of the rules
- Cooperating with coaches, officials, teammates and opponents
- Accepting decisions without dissent
- Acknowledging good performance by teammates and opponents.

Strategies for young people

- Follow the advice in the Code of Behaviour and Play by the Rules (see 'resources')
- Respect the rights and worth of all participants whatever their gender, ability, cultural background etc.
- Always play fair and acknowledge others' good play
- Do not provoke or use physical or verbal abuse against anyone.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers are a major influence on a young person's initial involvement in sport. Their support is important and their opinions and actions play a large part in choosing:

- Which sport/s young people will be involved in
- How much time will be devoted to it
- Whether young people continue their participation.

Many parents appreciate the benefits of junior sport and actively support it by taking on roles in administration, officiating and coaching as well as the parental roles such as 'taxi driver'.

Other parents feel they are unable to get involved. However, involvement can be rewarding for parents and is important in keeping young people participating.

Administrators can motivate parents to help by:

- Letting them know their active interest is valued and is vital to their children's participation
- Involving them in planning, and attending social functions
- Educating them about the sport
- Acknowledging the critical role played by their informal and less tangible support (e.g. emotional support and encouragement).

Responsibilities of parents and carers

Parents make a difference to the way sport is delivered and can assist best by:

- Being a good role model
- Asking the sport provider how they can contribute to their children's participation and to the team or other players
- Understanding and accepting the role of sport for their children and their motivations for involvement
- Accepting wins and losses graciously, following the Code of Behaviour.

Strategies for parents and carers

- Follow the advice in the Code of Behaviour
- Take an active role by contributing to your child's sports participation
- Look for opportunities to promote fairness, safety and respect for all (coaches, officials, teammates and other teams)
- Focus on your children's and team's efforts rather than winning or losing
- Make it clear that the interests of your children are more important than winning
- Recognise that young people play sport for fun, friendship and personal achievement
- Send children ready for safe participation with protective equipment (e.g. mouth guards, head gear, hats and water bottles).

School teachers

School teachers, in particular physical education teachers, frequently provide young people with their first experiences in sport.

Teachers can provide valuable support by:

- Promoting the benefits of sport
- Giving young people and parents information on local sport opportunities
- Forming school – community links for mutual benefit (see booklet 22 of this series, Forming links – junior sport policy)
- Undertaking professional development to better allow them to assist all young people, particularly those with disabilities and special needs and from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds.

Strategies for school teachers

- Promote the benefits of sport and encourage young people to be involved
- Provide young people and their parents/carers with information on sport in the local area
- Form links with clubs to increase opportunities for young people to participate and progress in sport
- Update knowledge and skills through professional development particularly for special groups (e.g. disabilities and CaLD backgrounds).

Coaches

Quality coaching is vital in sport and to young people receiving the best possible education and experience from their sports participation. The coach fills many roles including leader, psychologist, friend, teacher, personnel manager, administrator and role model.

Important aspects of coaches' behaviour are set out in the Code of Behaviour.

The multi-faceted role of a coach means they need to develop a wide range of competencies.

Teaching sports skills

The most identifiable role of the coach is helping to educate young people in:

- The fundamentals of physical and technical skills and strategies
- Concepts and attitudes that influence their psychological growth and social skills

Details are covered in booklet 24 of this series, Quality coaching – junior sport policy.

Organisation

Organising effective sport requires careful planning and covers:

- Seasonal programs and individual sessions based on the sequential development of basic skills, physical fitness and strategies (see booklet 24 of this series, Quality coaching – junior sport policy)
- Management of each session, use of space and time and what equipment and facilities are needed
- Management of potential safety hazards in the sport and integrating risk management procedures into training and competition (see booklet 25 of this series Making sport safe – junior sport policy).

Communication

Good communication underpins many roles of the coach in dealing with young people, parents/carers, officials, administrators, the media etc.

Strategies for coaches in communication

- Give praise, positive feedback, reinforcement and encouragement after mistakes and achievements
- Motivate (do and say things that make young people feel accepted and successful)
- Be a good listener
- Counsel (where a young person does not act appropriately or violates rules)
- Resolve conflicts and defuse difficult situations.

Strategies for coaches in setting an example

- Display control and respect for all involved (opponents, other coaches, umpires, administrators, parents and spectators)
- Develop team respect for the ability of all participants including opponents as well as for the judgment of officials and opposing coaches
- Work with others, especially officials, to show young people how they should behave.
- Speak to all participants using inclusive and respectful language
- Be a positive role model with regard to lifestyle factors (e.g. no smoking or alcohol use in front of participants).

Developing a coaching philosophy

For young people to have positive sport experiences, their coaches must:

- Know why they coach
- Know why young people participate and let this guide their actions
- Consider the opinions of others
- Develop and maintain a set of personal standards for operating as a coach.

Strategies for coaches in developing a coaching philosophy

- Discuss with other coaches reasons for coaching
- Reflect on the things that bring satisfaction in coaching
- Ask a mentor to assist in self-development.

Officials

The educational role of officials is important in the development of junior sport participants. Their essential tasks can be grouped into two broad roles:

- Rule management (game safety and fairness)
- Rule education (athlete development and sportsmanship).

Through their management of rules and procedures, officials provide a safe and secure environment to protect players from physical injury and mental abuse. This contributes to player satisfaction, enjoyment and commitment.

Officiating is a highly complex task because rules fall into two categories:

- The written (public) rules specific to each sport
- The unwritten (private) rules that reflect value systems and fairness within specific sports.

Through experience, young people learn how to play within these rules. Progress through the sport ranks depends on their ability to meet performance demands and social behaviour expectations.

Officials play a key role in teaching participants how to play within the acceptable range of rules rather than simply to play by the rules.

Officials educate young people about acceptable behaviour and the concept of fairness. In some sports, skilled referees spend a lot of time in direct communication with players offering encouragement and advice.

Strategies for officials

- Be guided by the Code of Behaviour for Officials
- Inspect facility, equipment etc. for safety
- Regulate the conduct of competition and explain rules to help participants understand how the rules apply to competition situations
- Caution participants before incurring an infraction in an effort to change their behaviour
- Acknowledge participants when they demonstrate good behaviour
- Be fair, consistent and positive in your interactions with everyone
- Control negative reactions and comments from spectators

- Set a good example through your actions and words
- Know what is expected of you and keep up to date with the latest trends and safety practices.

Administrators

Effective leadership and management skills are essential for every organisation.

Administrators play a primary role in the management of the sport, recruiting volunteers, training all personnel and ensuring leadership succession.

Management

Administrators are essential in sport because they handle general organisation or specific components of the sport (e.g. managing a team).

The following are important management roles:

- Manage the financial, physical and human resources of the sport
- Plan and implement the program and events
- Market the sport
- Provide position descriptions for all significant roles
- Establish and maintain communication with other stakeholders for the best provision of junior sport within their region
- Modify Codes of Behaviour to suit the sport, and give copies to everyone involved
- Assist with promoting appropriate values and behaviours in parents and carers and other people involved in the club
- Provide opportunities for sport providers, parents/carers and other to increase their knowledge and skills.

Strategies for administrators in management

- Obtain Codes of Behaviour and modify for relevance to your sport, have them displayed and see that everyone receives a copy
- Plan and monitor risk management, making sure all policies (e.g. child protection, responsible alcohol use) are communicated and actioned
- Actively target potential volunteers for recruitment and involvement
- Look for opportunities to recognise volunteers' contribution (e.g. at functions, competitions etc.) and with awards, certificates, gifts etc.
- Conduct an audit of parent/carers skills
- Acknowledge parents' input (e.g. in newsletters, at award presentations etc.)
- Develop partnerships with, and maximise the contribution of, others (e.g. parents and schools).

Working with volunteers

Sport is heavily dependent on volunteers, however, recruiting and retaining volunteers can be difficult. To make it a positive experience for volunteers they should be:

- Recognised for their contribution to junior sport in public ways
- Supported in their work with training and resources so they can carry out their role with efficiency and personal satisfaction.

Establish links with high schools and train students to assist primary school students.

- Provide volunteers with training and resources
- Develop a mentoring system where experienced volunteers guide new recruits
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to build partnerships.

Training personnel

Sport has a high turnover of personnel making effective training important. Reduce the loss of information and skills when personnel leave an organisation by providing:

- Procedures manuals
- A back-up person for each role so staff/volunteers can learn from someone already in the role.

Formal training programs for all roles in sport are becoming more sophisticated as they include more coverage of socio-emotional aspects of involvement in addition to the essential information on functional delivery.

A range of different delivery methods, including online training, caters best for the diverse training needs of personnel.

Strategies for administrators with volunteers

- Promote opportunities for volunteers so they are aware how they could help
- Extend junior sport participation to include volunteering opportunities.

Strategies for administrators with training personnel

- Provide training/accreditation for personnel and back-up personnel if possible
- Document procedures for use in training new personnel
- When conducting training, document the date, course content and who completed the training
- Encourage all personnel to increase their skills through training, accreditation and updating
- When offering formal training:
 - keep prices low
 - offer convenient packages (time, location, modules)
 - provide necessary resources
 - use a mixed delivery mode (lecture, workshop, practical sessions) including web-based options.
- Use assessment as a learning tool as well as motivation to learn
- Provide update opportunities
- Include mentoring, self-reflection, peer-support etc.

Leadership succession

Effective leadership is crucial for rewarding sport experiences for young people. Current coaches, officials and administrators need to plan for leadership succession.

As well as current staff and volunteers, include young people in planning. Benefits are twofold, for example:

- Junior sport volunteers benefit by learning valuable life skills including citizenship and positive social behaviour
- The sport benefits because some young people will continue their involvement in sport (as coaches, officials etc.) as adults.

Having strategies in place takes advantage of the window of opportunity while young people are still participating to encourage them into leadership roles.

Nurture potential leaders by making sure they have successful and satisfying leadership experiences, especially junior volunteers.

Provide leadership training and resources but be careful not to over-manage or control sport leaders.

Job satisfaction includes feelings of competency, autonomy and responsibility, so allow leaders to experience these feelings and let them lead – don't force them to be followers!

Strategies for administrators for leadership succession

- Give young people experience in organisation, administration, umpiring, coaching etc.
- Develop a mentoring system where experienced leaders assist others
- Provide resources for leaders to extend their skills
- Provide incentives for involvement in leadership roles (e.g. letters for CV from club president).
- Recognise the work of leaders at formal functions.

Volunteers

Volunteers are important in sport, acting as coaches, officials and administrators. They work to benefit others, often putting back into sport after having been a participant

The delivery of junior sport would not be possible without the continuing commitment of volunteers in all roles and at all levels of competition

Volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that sport is conducted in a safe and fair manner

Volunteering can be a satisfying way for young people to extend their involvement in sport.

Strategies for volunteers

- Abide by the Codes of Behaviour for all roles in which you are acting
- Take up opportunities to increase your knowledge and skills through training and practical experience.

Key points — people making it happen

- Many people are involved in the delivery of junior sport including young people, parents, coaches, officials, administrators and other volunteers
- Act as a mentor assisting others to increase their skills
- Build partnerships with other volunteers.

Key message

People in many roles contribute to the total sports experience for young people. In different ways they:

- Make sport accessible and provide a safe and enjoyable environment for activity with friends
- Teach them sports skills
- Pass on an appreciation of attitudes leading to a healthy lifestyle
- Teach them important life lessons such as playing fair, and coping with winning and losing.

Most importantly, a positive experience is required for young people to maintain a lifetime commitment to sport.

- Young people should be encouraged to assist in providing their sport
- Parents/carers are a primary influence on a young person's participation and are an important source of volunteer assistance
- Coaches need to be multi-skilled and competent in communicating, planning and organising. They must also set a good and consistent example as a role model
- Officials maintain order and safety during competition. They are also educators, teaching young people the rules of the game
- Administrators provide leadership and management (e.g. working with volunteers, training personnel and ensuring leadership succession)
- The role of volunteers is important to sport delivery and must be supported
- Many roles are needed to provide a quality sport experience and motivate young people to:
 - make a long-term commitment to sport
 - pursue their goals in sport.

Further reading

Briefing papers

- Physical Activity Pedagogy for Junior Sport
- Preparation of Personnel Responsible for Junior Sport Delivery.

Resources

- Codes of Behaviour, Australian Sports Commission www.ausport.gov.au/supporting/clubs/resource_library/managing_risks/codes_of_behaviour_or_conduct
- Play by the Rules: www.playbytherules.net.au
- Volunteer Management Program, Australian Sports Commission https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/185248/Vols_VolCoord.pdf
- Australian Drug Foundation: <https://adf.org.au/>

Other resources

This resource is part of a series which provides assistance to Western Australian sport and recreation clubs and organisations to become better managed, more sustainable and to provide good quality services to members and participants.

Other resources in the series include:

1. Starting a new club
2. Planning for your club – the future is in your hands
3. Taking the lead! A guide for club presidents
4. The club secretary – the key to efficiency
5. Show me the money – a guide for the club treasurer
6. Effective club meetings – a guide for the chairperson
7. Making meetings effective – a short guide
8. Delegation – help for the overworked committee member
9. Problem solving – a guide for clubs
10. Promoting your club
11. Seeking and servicing a sponsor
12. Establishing your club rules
13. Risky business – a club guide to risk management
14. Clubs' guide to volunteer management
15. Member protection for clubs
16. How to be an inclusive club
17. Passport into schools – linking sports with schools
18. Youth sport – junior sport policy
19. Long-term involvement – junior sport policy
20. Physical growth and maturation – junior sport policy
21. Sport pathways – junior sport policy
22. Forming links – junior sport policy
23. People making it happen – junior sport policy
24. Quality coaching – junior sport policy
25. Making sport safe – junior sport policy
26. The law and sport – junior sport policy
27. Top 20 tips for officials
28. Top 20 tips for successful coaching

You will find the full series of the booklets on Sport and Recreation (WA)'s website:

www.dsr.wa.gov.au/clubs