

Coaching is Teaching

“One of the greatest gifts you can give is your best example” -- Jerry Krause

All coaches need to become better teachers by learning how to develop young people through the sport of basketball. Thus, it is helpful to know and apply such laws of learning as:

- **Readiness to learn**

Players need to be taught appropriate skills at their maturity level. They need to be open to learning and continual growth. All must guard against the close-minded attitudes commonly seen with higher skill levels and greater experience.

- **Demonstration of skills**

Skills should be demonstrated by coaches, players, or dvd. Players should imitate the skill demonstrations, and coaches should correct the imitation. Coach demonstrations should be correct and repeated as necessary with clear and concise accompanying explanations plus critical coaching cues emphasized.

When correcting the imitation, coaches should give more information and less emotion. Correct the behavior/performance and not the person. Focus on skills and other goal areas (respect, attitude, effort, knowledge, rules, etc.) Give specific feedback to build confidence and maximize improvement.

- **Execution of skills quickly and correctly many times until they become automatic**

- **Telling players why they need to learn something**

For example, focusing on respect allows all players to have fun and build confidence (the reason for respect).

Communication

All coaches need to be able to communicate well in order to teach players the game of basketball. This includes the guidelines of:

- **Earning player respect**

Establishing credibility with your players is a product of what you know and what you do. It helps to be positive, knowledgeable about basketball, and consistent.

- **Developing all communication skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening and non-verbal)**

Speaking, listening and the use of non-verbal language are especially important skills in coaching. The latest developed areas seem to be listening and non-verbal communication. Listen with respect to players and search for the meaning of what they

say. Give full eye contact, become an active listener. As Stephan Covey states, “Seek first to understand before you hope to be understood.” Also, become more aware of your non-verbal language (i.e., how you communicate).

- **Become a good role model**

Walk your talk in all areas of your contact with players. Do as you say—your actions on and off the court are important tool for teaching. Actions do speak louder than words. This means that you need to role model all goal areas. It has been said that one of the greatest gifts you can bestow is your best example. This certainly holds true when you apply John Wooden’s competition rule to “win with humility and lose with dignity”. Remember, your most important role is to develop young people through basketball. You are not just teaching basketball, you are coaching young players to play basketball. Be accountable; prepare and work as hard as you expect your players to work. Be yourself, but be sure it is your best self. Express yourself without the use of profanity—model appropriate communication.

- **Insisting on and using direct eye contact when teaching and learning**

- **Teaching young players—getting to know and understand them**

Care about their problems and deal with those problems directly. Make time for you players. Spend time with them before and after practice.

- **Teaching in specifics**

Players need specific information, which requires critical coaching cues in order to learn better and faster

- **Teaching positively**

Tell players what to do rather than what not to do. For example, say, “Start with the lead foot first,” rather than, “Don’t step first with the back foot”.

Teaching Tips

Many useful guidelines exist for teaching players to play basketball. Some of these are:

- **Practice makes permanent (not perfect)**

Thus, it is important to go slowly only in the beginning stages of skill learning, and then proceed quickly to focus on doing game moves at game speed.

- **You really know skills when you can teach them well.**

Involve players in teaching themselves; teach them to take responsibility for their own learning and their teammates’ learning.

- **Develop a proper mentality regarding mistakes.**

Mistakes are important for learning as a status and progress report. Allow players to try new things at an uncomfortable pace and make mistakes. Coaches should also take responsibility for their mistakes and be big enough to admit when they are wrong.

- **When teaching, use the following three steps:**

- **Previewing** – tell them what you are teaching and why it is important.
- **Viewing** – teach using coaching cues and the reasons why a skill is important. Focus on only one thing at a time; players learn more by doing than by listening.
- **Reviewing** – tell them what you taught.

- **Focus on fundamentals and fun.**

Players (come first), playing (everyone does it), and play (fun or challenging enjoyment).

- **Use the following teaching progressions:**

- **Slow to fast**
- **Basic to advanced**
- **Old skills to new skills**
- **Simple to complex**
- **Individual to team**

- **Give feedback to your players.**

Feedback includes not only what they need to correct but also, and more importantly, what they are doing correctly. Feedback can improve the rate of learning, but it must be appropriate, specific, and generally information-based (not always emotional). Giving feedback is one of the most important teaching tools; use it in a positive way by focusing on the critical coaching cues. Other feedback guidelines are:

- Correct the early learning of skills with frequent feedback. Then, gradually reduce the frequency so that players do not rely on the coach.
- The amount of information that coaches use in their feedback should decrease as the complexity of the skill increases.
- Feedback about the general direction of a player's errors is more useful than feedback about the magnitude of their errors.
- Instantaneous feedback can impede learning because it hinders the player's internal feedback processing (i.e., how it felt) and development of error detection capability. Thus, it is often useful to allow time for processing before

giving feedback to the athlete.

- Prescriptive feedback that informs the players about specific changes to make in their movements is more effectual than descriptive feedback that merely notifies players about the mistakes they made. Tell them specifically what correction to make.

From the book: Basketball Skills Progression by Jerry Krause, c2003