



ACTIVITY GUIDE FOR MINIROOS



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WHAT IS COACHING KIDS ALL ABOUT?

Not so long ago, children learned football by playing the game on the street or in the park, for hours, making their own rules. It was free play – with no adults to interfere – and they played because they enjoyed it.

For a host of reasons, street football has virtually disappeared. The challenge today for grassroots football deliverers is to recreate that environment of fun and freedom and deliver the learning foundation that street football used to provide.

We believe that this fun and free approach to playing football will give thousands of young players' enjoyable football experiences, and hopefully foster a love and passion for the game that will last a lifetime.

This approach will help us produce more creative players who will have a life long connection with the game.

ENJOYMENT IS THE THING, NOT WINNING!

When children are training or playing games against other teams they need a fun environment where they can play without pressure. The game result, for younger players, should be irrelevant.

**'WINNING' WAS THE LEAST
IMPORTANT VALUE.**

If the emphasis is on winning matches or the competition, the development process is doomed to failure and the fun of junior play is replaced by the pressures and frustrations of adult football. Winning is a poor indicator of individual development as each player learns and matures at different rates. A study of youth sport values showed that the most important values were:

- enjoyment;
- personal achievement .

The junior Program Leader must value, above all else, the individual development and welfare of every single player. Research has shown that the emphasis should be on the child experiencing fun and excitement. Children at this age are still sampling many sports and activities; MiniRoos Kick-Off Program Leaders can have an impact on which sport the child will choose.

LEADING FUN SESSIONS

Perhaps the first and most important step is to take the word 'coach' out of your mind. Your role is summed up in the above title – see yourself as a leader of fun, safe and engaging practices.

It is a mistake, made far too often, for children's 'coaches' to imitate the coaches they see on television. In fairness, these are usually the only models there are to copy, but unfortunately, the job of a high-profile coach in a professional team bears no resemblance to the job of a kids' coach. The Program Leader is more akin to a children's entertainer than a master tactician.

As soon as you think of yourself as a 'leader', or a 'facilitator of learning', you start to see the role in its true light.

Your job is to plan and organise safe, fun practices. And . . . let them play!

This book will help you select practices that have a role in the long-term development of young players. The practice is the teacher, and the kids will learn from the experiences provided.

Remember that helping young players learn and watching them develop can give the same, if not greater, satisfaction as winning trophies and medals with senior players.

WHAT TOOLS DO I NEED?

There is a range of tools that all football Program Leaders require. At this level, the two main tools needed are personal skills and organisation skills.

PERSONAL SKILLS

Be enthusiastic

If you look like you are having a good time, it will generally follow that the kids will have a good time. Try to show the children that there is no place you would rather be than on the field with them.

Be friendly

The kids need to feel that you are on their side, as a friend as well as a mentor. Make sure you greet every player on arrival and say goodbye to every player when they leave, thanking them for their efforts in the session.

Show your sense of humour

Fun is the key word; young players are not preparing for the World Cup, so let them enjoy themselves. Letting the children see you laugh is a great way of showing them you are a warm, likeable person. Try 'beat the Program Leader' activities: you try to tag them in a square; you go in the goal and they try to score past you; or suggest that 'If you score ten goals in three minutes, I'll have to sprint to the halfway line and back'. (The kids ALWAYS win).

Respect every individual

Children need to feel valued, which helps them develop self-confidence during this key phase of their social growth.

Give lots of praise

Praise is not only given for doing something well; it should also be used to recognise effort.

Encourage after mistakes

Program Leaders of youngsters should never see the kids' errors or mistakes as negatives. Everything that happens is a learning experience. Young players can learn just as much from a miskick or loss of possession as from a successful shot at goal.

Display excellent social skills

Your behaviour is usually imitated by children, so make sure you are a good role model. Be polite, respectful, calm and no pressure. Communicate with each player individually, and talk regularly to their parents.

Be patient

Training with younger age groups can be frustrating at times, so remember that patience is a virtue. Don't have unrealistic expectations – expect things to go wrong. Usually, it's not their intent to stop things working, it's just their age!

ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS

Plan practice sessions in advance

Use the session guides and activities provided in this manual and add in any other games you think will be relevant to your playing group. It is always better to have more planned than less.

Arrive early and set up your area

A player's time and effort are priceless resources, don't waste them! You should never leave kids standing around or filling in time while you move cones to set up the next practice area.

Give clear instructions

The experienced Program Leader will wait until everyone is listening before giving instructions. Then, you should speak in a loud, clear voice accompanied by distinct hand/arm signals. You might say, for instance: 'those of you in red bibs, stand up. When I give you the signal, move into that square there'.

Demonstrate quickly and efficiently

Remember that a good demonstration saves a lot of talking. There is also nothing wrong with using one or more players from your group to show the others what they need to do. Get the group active as soon as possible.

Keep the session flowing

Young children have short attention spans. Keep them interested by regularly changing the activity, and build this factor into your session plan.

How to use this Manual

Be Flexible

Use the session plans as a guide. Each session will throw up its own set of unique challenges and issues, so be flexible in your delivery and be willing to change your session to cater to the circumstance presented.

The 'suggested changes' are only suggestions, they may not be relevant to the particular group of children you are working with. Think outside the square and modify your games however you see fit to ensure players are achieving the objective.

Don't be afraid to ask players for feedback. They will tell you if they like the game they are playing or not. Be willing and ready to change the game if needed.

Be Prepared

Before you start your sessions make sure you have read the session plan and considered what you might do, should things not go according to plan.

After you conduct your first session you will have a greater understanding of the ability of your participants and will be better placed to prepare for the next 5 or more sessions.

Always keep a couple of extra games up your sleeve (that you have used before and know the players enjoy) and be prepared to use them should the session plan not be working effectively.

Remember – If they are having fun, they are all involved and there are opportunities to repeat the desired skill, you are succeeding!

IF DURING THE SESSION....

There is laughter

Every child is involved at all times

Every child is experiencing some sense of achievement

AND AT THE END OF THE SESSION

They are all smiling

They have all received several high fives

They have all made contact with a ball between 50-100 times

...YOU HAVE ACHIEVED YOUR OBJECTIVE.

How you get there is up to you. This session guide provides just one set of options.

Game Sense – what is it?

Key Concepts

Game Sense is an approach to skill development that uses well designed games rather than drills to introduce the skills and tactics of the particular sport or structured physical activity being delivered. Each session is designed purposefully, so that the games progressively introduce and develop the particular skill that is the focus of the session.

The game is the focus

Players develop sporting skills and tactics by playing fun games rather than traditional drills.

Coach is a facilitator

The Program Leader sets challenges for the players to find solutions through games rather than instructing players on how to perform a skill.

Player role modelling

Program Leaders highlight players during the game that are trying hard to encourage other players to maintain effort.

Discrete coaching

Allows players needing extra assistance to be discretely coached on the side in an unobtrusive way while the game is in progress.

Involve the players

Program Leaders should seek feedback from players throughout the session to gauge their level of understanding and interest.

“CHANGE IT”

Vary any one or more of the following game elements to maximise participation and better meet player needs and game objectives.

It is more important to remember the concept of “CHANGE IT” than to remember what each letter represents.

If it's not working... “CHANGE IT”

C – COACHING STYLE	The way a Program Leader behaves and communicates with their players is critical in maintaining interest and creating a fun environment. Know your audience and adapt accordingly.
H – HOW TO SCORE	Removing goal keepers and adding extra goals are examples of how you can help provide more opportunities for players to score. Higher success equals higher enjoyment.
A – AREA	Change the size of the playing area to make the game easier or harder depending on your observations and the objective.
N – NUMBERS	If there are long lines or games where only a few players are actively involved at a time, split the group so that you have 2 games with less numbers involved in each. Fewer players equal more touches on the ball.
G – GAME RULES	Modify game rules to help players achieve the objective and to ensure everyone is involved. '2 passes before you can score' is an example of a rule change aimed at increasing involvement.
E – EQUIPMENT	Changing the size of the goals or adding an extra ball to a game are examples of using equipment modifications to change the game.
I – INCLUSION	Make changes to ensure that everyone in your session is included, having fun and achieving success. Ask the players what would make the game better.
T – TIME	Use time as a tool to increase intensity and create a sense of urgency. '10 seconds to go!'



Golden Rules of Safety

1. Encourage participants to keep the ball safely on the ground during activities and promote positive behaviours.
2. Program Managers and Program Leaders have a legal responsibility to provide a duty of care to participants; this includes ensuring players are directly supervised at all times;
3. Ensure that the playing area is free of hazards and is a safe distance away from walls and fixed objects;
4. Remind players to look out for others and to look ahead in tagging games;
5. Ensure there is a safe distance between groups of players;
6. Ensure all equipment is appropriate, safe and working correctly;
7. Most acts of contact or misconduct at this level are caused by lack of coordination, with no intent. In these cases try and give the advantage to the attacking team and continue play; and
8. Stop the activity if you observe dangerous play and explain what is appropriate and expected.



Group Management Tips

Clearly define your playing area

Use colour coded markers and cones to clearly identify boundaries and goals. This will help you explain your activities using visual cues.

"Can everyone see the red square? That is area we are playing in. The green markers at each end are the goals"

Avoid long lines (3 or more players)

Children need to be involved and engaged in order to maintain interest. Standing at the end of the line for too long will cause a child to get frustrated and bored. This is also time they could be spending working on the desired skill.

No elimination games

Elimination games are a big 'no-no'. Generally speaking, the same children will get eliminated early on in the game, every time. Not only does this affect their confidence in a negative way, they are also starved of valuable playing time that can be used to improve performance.

Organised chaos is a good thing

If players are running around like crazy, balls are flying everywhere and the sound of laughter fills the air, your session is going well. All you have to do is steer the ship so that ALL players are continuing to achieve the objective.

