

As a **youth basketball coach**, you have one of the most important and exciting jobs in the world!

You'll be teaching habits that will stick with these kids for the rest of their lives. And whether you like it or not, you'll be setting an example and teaching kid's lessons about life (good and bad). Kids are impressionable. They pick up on things.

You have an obligation and responsibility to teach them the right things - in both basketball and life.

When you think about it, teachers would do anything to get the enthusiasm that you get from your players. Kids actually like and want to play basketball.

Your players look up to you. They listen to you. And you have an amazing opportunity to make a POSITIVE impact on their lives!

What should you teach?

Example-kids (7 to 10 Year Old)

Here's what to teach, ordered by priority:

1. Lay ups - You should practice lots of lay ups with both hands. Your goal should be to get all players to make lay ups with their left and right hands equally well!! Teach them to jump off the proper foot. They should jump off the left leg when shooting a right hand lay up. They should shoot off their right leg when shooting a left hand lay up. It will be difficult but work on it. You'll probably need to start really close to the basket, with no dribble, and take just one step to practice the footwork. Once you add the dribble, they should dribble with their left hand when shooting left hand lay ups. And vice versa.
2. Footwork - Teach them triple threat positioning, pivoting on their left and right foot without traveling, jump stops, and to square to the basket as soon as they catch the ball in a triple threat position. You should spend a lot of time on footwork!
3. Shooting form - For this age group, we highly recommend using smaller balls and lower baskets. If that is not possible, allow the players to dip their elbows which will give them more strength.
4. Ball handling - You should teach your players to dribble with left and right hands equally. Basic dribble moves such as the speed dribble, crossover, protect-the-ball dribble.
5. Athletic & movement skills - Teach them how to run, jump and land, skip, stop, move laterally, squat, lunge and any other basic movements.
6. Basic passes - Teach and practice the basic chest, bounce, and overhead passes.

7. Play plenty of 2 on 2 and 3 on 3 games to teach concepts (no dribble keep away). It gets the players more experience and allows them enough space to operate and use the new skills they have learned. Make sure to use plenty of fun basketball drills & games.

...Once players feel comfortable on the court, show them proper spacing.

8. Basic cuts & how to get open - If time permits, you can introduce the basket cut and straight cut. I would suggest that you just work these cuts into your shooting drills at the beginning of practice. This will save loads of time.
9. Defense - Teach the basic stance, defensive slide, and basic off-ball principles. Don't worry about spending as much time on defense. As they get older, you'll gradually spend more time on defense. Focusing on it 5 to 10 minutes per practice would be more than sufficient.

Basic Off Ball Principles:

- Stay between man and the ball
- Always stop the ball if it is in front of you!

Focusing on the fundamentals

The fundamentals include working on the little things that will make you better. The fundamentals of basketball are the basics for every individual play, offensive or defensive strategy, and every move that your players make. The best players have perfected the basics of the game. Learning and mastering these basics make the rest of the game much easier! For example, by working on the fundamentals of shooting, you will get better no matter what offense you run. The fundamentals of shooting include proper foot alignment, leg bend, hand position, arm angle, follow through, and so on. These are some of the little things that make a difference.

For youth players you should focus on teaching the proper technique and fundamentals for:

- Lay ups
- Shooting
- Foul Shooting
- Passing
- Dribbling and ballhandling
- Jump stops
- Triple threat position and pivoting

- Basic screening and cutting
- Defense
- Rebounding
- Basic post moves

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.

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.

Don't focus on the negative. Focus on the way to help them

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!.

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.

7) Don't press or play zone defense!

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.

9) Teach the right things!

3Just 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.