



Managing children's behaviour

Tips for managing behaviour

- Ensure that participants, parents and administrators are aware of the expected codes behaviour and consequences that will be applied
- Deal with the problem by focusing on the behaviour – don't get personal. Do not publicly insult or embarrass the participant.
- Avoid punishing a group for the poor behaviour of one participant.
- Take a firm, fair consistent approach to managing behaviour. Apply consequences quickly and fairly. It may be necessary to exclude an individual from an activity. The exclusion should be brief and the coach should discuss the incident privately with the individual while they are excluded.
- Avoid punitive consequences. Instead, require the offender to compensate and/or restitute the situation caused by the poor behaviour.
- Avoid using punishments such as running laps or push-ups
- Use rewards, praise and acknowledgment to reinforce desired behaviours.

Strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour

Initially, quietly correct the child's behaviour:

- children, even young ones, know that there are rules of behaviour that are considered acceptable. Just drawing the child's attention to the fact that they have been noticed is usually enough to get them to change their behaviour
- do this as soon as possible after the inappropriate behaviour occurs
- alternatively, use non-verbal cues where possible — move closer, nod, frown slightly or stare
- join in and partner the problem child, without commenting
- divert their attention by asking a question: 'John, how is that serve coming along?', 'Sarah, can you organise this activity with your group, please?'
- praise a good aspect of their involvement
- ask them if they are having difficulty
- remind them of the group rules and appropriate behaviour (privately)
- address the behaviour, not the character, of the child - 'That's a silly thing to do, Matthew', not 'You are silly Matthew'
- find out why they are misbehaving and ask if it is helpful to the group (privately).

If the behaviour is not corrected, then relate the problem back to group rules:

- the coach might ask the child, 'What are you doing? Is this against our rules?' then ask what they should be doing
- politely ask the child to change their behaviour, reminding them of the consequence if they do not.

If the inappropriate behaviour continues:

- politely and calmly issue the consequence, or loss of privileges
- be respectful but firm and specific
- do not use punishment, blame, shame, pain, ignoring or sarcasm
- be consistent
- be brief — do not nag, lecture or interrogate
- remain calm — do not show anger, keep a 'cool head'
- forgive and forget

One way of dealing with inappropriate behaviour is to withdraw the child from the activity:

- place the child in 'time out' for a period before inviting them to rejoin the group. Rejoining the group occurs only if the child agrees to abide by the team rules
- the 'time out' area should be somewhere away from other children but still located close enough so that the coach is able to supervise the child
- on the child's return, find an early opportunity to praise them or involve them in leading a group
- be patient as some inappropriate behaviour may need time to correct.