



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

Behaviour Management

Good behaviour management and strategies to deal with misbehaviour are essential to carrying out a coaching session. Strategies aimed at conducting effective and safe sessions go a long way to preventing misbehaviour.

Common causes of misbehaviour

Inappropriate behaviour and/or a lack of interest and attention may be caused by:

- > insufficient equipment for group size
- > limited supervision and lack of interest shown by the coach
- > activities which are slow to start, due to too much talking by the coach
- > activities that run for too long
- > children waiting in long lines for their turn
- > activities that are boring and not challenging enough
- > unclear rules and expectations.

In other words, sometimes the coach's program, organisation or style can contribute to disruptive behaviour.

Strategies to prevent misbehaviour

- > Create a team atmosphere: be positive and encouraging and give feedback.
- > Ensure children have a clear understanding of rules, routines and appropriate behaviour. Manage inappropriate behaviour as soon as it occurs.

- > Understand pre-existing rules and routines, and what strategies and approaches work well with a particular group or individual.
- > Learn about any children with physical, behavioural, emotional or social problems.
- > Look for good behaviour and reward through praise and privileges.
- > Provide fun and variety, and high levels of activity.
- > Challenge more experienced children and make discrete allowances for those less skilled.
- > Use inclusive coaching practices, that is, adapt and modify coaching practices to ensure all children have the opportunity to participate.
- > Remember to use the CHANGE IT principle.
- > Plan activities that follow on from each other, thus reducing waiting time.



How to manage misbehaviour

The following table provides a suggested routine for dealing with misbehaviour. Ensure you are consistent and patient in following the suggestions as some misbehaviour may need time to correct.

Misbehaviour presents	Quietly correct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Do so without delay. > Non-verbal cues may be appropriate. > Join in and partner with the misbehaving child without comment. > Divert the child's attention. > Ask a skill-related question, such as: 'How is that serve coming along?' > Remind the child discretely of group rules and appropriate behaviour. > Address the behaviour of the child, not their character.
Misbehaviour still an issue	The coach's next step...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Relate the problem back to team rules. > Explain how their behaviour is impacting others. > Ask the child: 'What are you doing?' and: 'Is this against the rules?'. Follow on with: 'What should you be doing?'
Misbehaviour continues	Explain the consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Be polite, calm, brief and specific. > Do not use punishment, blame, shame, sarcasm or cause pain. > Do not ignore the child. > Forgive and forget. > Remove the child from the activity; use a time-out away from other children but close enough to supervise. > Provide an opportunity for the child to rejoin the group, if they agree to abide by the rules.
Referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > If the problem is not rectified, refer the matter to an appropriate person. 	



Over Competitiveness

A desire to win at all costs may promote negative behaviours and discourage the cooperation and participation of others.

Identifying behaviours

Children may:

- > Not cooperate during group activities
- > Break rules to win the game
- > Criticise other children and their abilities
- > Disrespectfully celebrate a win

What you can do

- Simple changes to activities may help to address over competitive behaviours. Remember to address a child's behaviour and not their character, and be a good role model at all times.
- > Highlight examples of cooperative play and good sportsmanship. Issue bonus points to reward desirable behaviour.

- > Reduce emphasis on scoring and set other types of challenges, for example, individual challenges rather than team challenges.



- > Use activities in which personal bests can be achieved.
- > Use small group activities, or circuits, to narrow children's attention to their own performance.



- > Encourage team building routines, such as handshakes and three cheers at the end of the game.
- > Select a 'spotter' who rewards sportsmanship.



Example:

During a netball game one of the players, Rachel, was becoming increasingly frustrated and yelling at her team-mates each time they made an error. This resulted in the team becoming discouraged and no longer enjoying the game.

This behaviour escalated until the coach, Roger, decided to stop the game, and introduce a game of Numbers netball where the focus was on team work and cooperation.

Roger observed that Rachel was not offering any encouraging comments, but, when it was her turn to shoot, the other children gave plenty of encouragement. Roger strongly encouraged the team's supportive behaviour until, eventually, Rachel started providing positive comments, even when a player missed their shot. Roger then rewarded Rachel's behaviour through praise, and felt ready to try another game of netball.

