

**ROCKY MOUNT PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
ATHLETIC DIVISION**

Youth Coaching Certification Clinic Study Guide

The Mission of the City of Rocky Mount Parks and Recreation Department Athletic Division is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens of Rocky Mount, by providing a comprehensive selection of athletic opportunities, programs and experiences; encouraging participation and involvement in athletic opportunities, programs and experiences through outreach, training and marketing; and providing programs that are well-designed, accessible and safe.

The purpose of the On-line Youth Coaching Certification Clinic is to offer coaches the essential information they need to coach children between the ages of 5 and 17. Youth sport coaches have tremendous responsibility to provide a fun, safe environment that helps their athletes learn skills and strategies. The Youth Coaching Clinic introduces potential coaches (and reinforces with veteran coaches) the importance of the following key concepts:

- Why do Kids Play Sports and Why do They Quit?
- Maintaining Positive Perspective
- Primary Responsibilities of a Coach
- Coaches Code of Ethics
- Athletes First; Winning Second
- Coaching With Character
- Communicating with Parents
- Keys to Becoming a Successful Coach
- Managing Risks and Creating a Safe Environment
- Coaching Aides – Practice Plans

Potential coaches should read through all of the included coach clinic info/concepts. After reading the training materials, please read the Coach Certification Test Instructions, and follow the directions.

Certification Clinic training materials can be very useful to parents as well.

Why do Kids Play Sports?

All kinds of kids sign up to play all kinds of sports. Some play because their parents push them, some are natural athletes that want to show what they can do, and some sign up just because their friends do, but here are the top 10 reasons that kids play sports:

1. FUN
2. Improve Skills
3. Excitement of Competition
4. Do Something They Are Good At
5. Stay in Shape
6. Challenge of Competition
7. Be Part of a Team
8. To Win
9. Go on to a Higher Level
10. Get Exercise

Why do Kids Quit Sports?

Most people realize that Youth Sports are different from Professional Sports and understand that Youth Sports are a recreational activity for their child that is educational and part of a maturation experience. The typical expectation is that the experience should be one of joy and adventure. When kids who dropped out of sports were asked what it would take to bring them to play again they answered “practices that were more fun” and “more playing time”. Studies also reveal that 70% of all children drop out of sports by the age of 13. As coaches, you have the opportunity to control the outcome for every child on your team. It will be through your efforts that youth participating in sports will or will not have fun, improve their skills, make new friends, or want to remain involved in sports.

Maintaining Positive Perspective

Acting out in anger or displaying any form of violence at or during a Youth sporting event is simply not acceptable. In recent years we have seen an increase in news coverage and some people think that the news media is blowing it out of proportion. Should we be concerned about this issue or is it not as bad as the media portrays it to be? In a Sports Illustrated For Kids Survey 74% of the kids surveyed said that they have seen out-of-control kids and adults at their games. Sports can sometimes bring out the worst in others and as coaches you need to be prepared for anything. The kids you are coaching are going to remember you for a very long time. Do you want to be remembered as a positive influence in their life, or be referred to as the person that they don't want to become?

Primary Responsibilities of a Coach

Provide a safe environment, Teach Tactics and Skills, Make it Fun. A coach can promote each players individual growth through well-planned and well-conducted activities.

Keeping practices and games fun is an important way to keep young people interested in sport. If athletes have too low a level of excitement/stimulation during practice or games they can become bored. On the other hand, if the excitement/stimulation level is too high, they can become anxious or scared and not perform well. The trick is to find just the right level of excitement/stimulation for your athletes.

1. What can coaches do to keep practice fun and not boring for the athletes?

- *Use a wide variety of drills and activities when working on skills.*
- *Keep all the athletes active rather than waiting in line for their turn during drills.*
- *Let the athletes have an opportunity to enjoy social interaction with their teammates.*
- *Create an environment where the players feel they are playing with each other rather than against each other.*
- *Avoid constant instruction during drills and scrimmages.*

2. How can a coach limit the athletes' anxiety or fear of failure?

- *Use positive encouragement rather than negative comments or criticism.*
- *Give feedback that is high in information rather than high in judgment.*
- *Coach the athletes to learn rather than coaching them to perform.*
- *Fit the level of the skills to be learned with the ability of the athletes.*
- *Help athletes set goals related to personal performance.*

Coaches Code of Ethics

Coaches must read, understand, and annually sign a copy of this Coaches Code of Ethics.

- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my players ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will treat each player as an individual, remembering the large range of emotional and physical development for the same age group.
- I will do my best to provide a safe playing situation for my players.
- I will promise to review and practice the basic first aid principles needed to treat injuries of my players.
- I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players.
- I will provide a sports environment for my team that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all youth sports events. I will forfeit the privilege to serve as coach if convicted of any drug/alcohol related criminal charges.
- I will refrain from behavior that will provoke, harass, intimidate, or otherwise publicly embarrass or denigrate game officials, my players, parents, spectators and fellow coaches.
- I will be knowledgeable in the rules of each sport that I coach, and I will teach these rules to my players.
- I will remember that I am a youth sports coach, and that the game is for children and not adults.

I understand that coaching is a privilege granted by the City of Rocky Mount Parks and Recreation Department. I also understand that part of my responsibility as a coach is to be familiar with this “Code of Ethics”. I hereby pledge to live up to my approval as a youth sports coach, by following the Athletic Division “Coaches Code of Ethics”.

Athletes First, Winning Second

Athletes first, winning second is a simple, straightforward philosophy, and few coaches disagree with it when asked. On the other hand, few coaches consistently put this philosophy into practice. When confronted with the question of prioritizing winning and development, many coaches contend that they want both and that they coach to achieve both. They rightfully point out that winning can help athletes develop by giving them self-confidence and that it's often easier for athletes and coaches alike to feel that they're having fun when they're winning. On the other hand, at times you will have to choose one over the other. Discerning which action places the athlete before winning, or vice versa, is not always easy. Here are a few examples:

Scenario 1: Playing With an Injury

It's the final game of your basketball league tournament. Brenda, your star center, has sprained her knee. She can only function at about 65 percent. However, if she plays, your chances of winning are much better. Being a competitor, Brenda desperately wants to play because it's the final game of the tournament. Knowing that she could hurt herself even more seriously if she continues to play, what would you do?

a. Let Brenda play for as long as she can bear the pain.

Your response shows an emphasis on winning. This could put the athlete at risk of a greater injury to have a better shot at winning the game.

b. If her parents approve, let Brenda play as much as she can.

You're most likely thinking about winning more than what's best for Brenda. Parental approval might seem like a good reason to play her, but it shouldn't replace your responsibility as her coach to make a safe decision.

c. Let Brenda play, but only briefly, and late in the game if the outcome of the game is in question.

You're trying to minimize Brenda's risk of injuring herself, but you are still willing to risk it if it could mean winning the game.

d. Would not let Brenda play under any circumstances.

Keeping Brenda out of the action for the rest of the game will be tough on you and on her. In addition, your chances of winning the game will be lessened. However, this choice eliminates the risk of further injury and thereby focuses on Brenda's long-term development and well-being.

Scenario 2: Problem Athlete

Carlton is a problem athlete with great potential and an awful attitude. He's also one of the stars on your team. You've counseled Carlton a few times about the rules and the consequences of breaking them, but so far nothing has changed. He disrupts practice, and his negative attitude is adversely affecting some of his teammates. As you are contemplating how to discipline Carlton, you run across his mother. She tells you that Carlton really wants to be a part of the team, and that his involvement is making a positive difference in his life. How will you discipline Carlton?

a. Tell Carlton what he needs to do to improve his attitude and that you care about him and his future.

Discuss the discipline options with him and make him aware of the consequences of his behavior.

Talking to Carlton about the problem is a good step, and letting him know you're interested in his welfare could help him to change. Setting up an "Athletics Division Approved" discipline plan for Carlton shows him you plan to carry out your actions and that there are consequences for breaking the rules. This choice shows that you place Athletes first and winning second.

b. Try to let the problem iron itself out and do your best to ignore Carlton's attitude and behavior problems.

With this choice you seem to be saying that winning is more important than dealing with Carlton's problem. Letting him continue to break the rules and disrupt the team will hurt your team in the long run.

c. Tell Carlton he will not be allowed to play until his attitude and behavior at practice improves.

You've got the right start here, but you need to do more than just benching him. Make sure Carlton understands that you are there to help him make better choices and improve his attitude and behavior.

Carlton may respond much better when he knows you really do care about him and not just about winning.

d. Cut Carlton from your team, or see if he can be placed on a different team.

In most youth athletic programs, this is not an option. You might not make any strides toward winning or Carlton's development with this choice even if it were a possibility. You won't have much of a chance to influence Carlton and his potential to contribute will obviously be lost. Disciplining an athlete is certainly necessary at times, but cutting Carlton at this point or moving him to another team isn't likely to do him much good.

Coaching With Character

A coach demonstrates good character by not trying to be perfect or like someone else, but rather by being the best person she or he can be.

Scenario 1: Parent Coaching From the Stands

You are coaching your game when you hear a parent coaching from the sideline. He is telling your players to do almost the opposite of what you have been coaching the kids to do. He continues to do this through the first half of the game. What do you do?

a. Turn to the parent and announce that you are the coach and you don't need any help from parents or spectators.

This really won't help the situation at all. In fact, once you acknowledge the parent that is coaching from the stands it could easily turn into a shouting match, and that's not a good situation.

b. Instruct the child of this parent to quickly go and tell him that his coaching from the stands isn't helping and needs to stop before the second half of the game begins.

It's not a good idea to get the child in the middle of the situation. There's a good chance that the child is already embarrassed because his or her parent is yelling from the stands, and this will only add fuel to the fire.

c. Ignore the parent during the game and continue to coach the kids as you have been. Consider speaking with the parent privately after the game.

This is the best choice. Don't let the parents take control of the game and override what you have been teaching the kids. It may be a good idea to talk to this parent after the game or at a later date, such as after practice or via a quick phone call. You need to let the parent know that you are doing a good job with the team and that it's hard for the kids when they are hearing conflicting instructions from the stands.

d. Sit quietly for the rest of the game, telling the players that there is a parent who seems to have some different ideas and you want them to listen to him instead.

Don't give up!! It's your job to coach these kids and you can't let a parent get to you like this.

Scenario 2: Young, Timid, or Inexperienced Official

The referee or official is young, inexperienced, and is a little timid when making calls. He misses an easy call, and the parents go crazy yelling at the official. This only serves to cause the official to make fewer and fewer calls. What do you do?

a. Complain loudly from the sideline so that the official knows that the team disagrees with the calls.

This is not the best choice. This reaction is disrespectful and sends the wrong message to the athletes and spectators.

b. Encourage your athletes to concentrate on their play rather than on the calls. Tell them that you're going to concentrate on coaching and let the official worry about officiating.

Yes! With this response, you model the principle of respect and help your athletes to keep their focus in the right place. Your job is to coach; the official's job is to officiate. Officials have a tough job to do, and they deserve respect, even when they're not performing as well as some people think they should. Coaches who expend a lot of energy complaining to the officials send the message that it's OK to be disrespectful in certain circumstances.

c. Tell the team that this is a rookie official who shouldn't be taken too seriously.

This is not the best choice. This reaction is disrespectful and sends the wrong message to your athletes.

d. When there's a break in the game, privately tell the official that he's doing a lousy job and that you expect him to give your team a break.

Talking privately with the official is a good step. However, this conversation seems disrespectful. Even if you're going to talk privately with an official, you should still be polite about it.

Scenario 3: Unsporting Player Behavior

You are watching your players shake hands with the opposing team after a tough game. You see one of the players spit on his hand before shaking hands with the other team. You look around and see that no one else saw your player do this. What do you do?

a. Pull your player out of the line immediately and tell him, in no uncertain terms, that this behavior is unacceptable and he is off the team.

Embarrassing the player is probably not the best choice here and kicking him off the team is typically not an option..

b. Ignore what you saw, knowing that no one else saw it.

Is this really the message you want to send? If you compromise your values in this situation, you will probably do the same in other situations as well.

c. When other team members aren't around, talk to your player and tell him not to worry about it, but not to do it again.

This player will probably feel like he just got by with doing something he shouldn't and won't hesitate to make poor decisions again because he knows it will just be swept under the rug.

d. During the team meeting following the game and handshake, tell the team what you saw and that this behavior is unacceptable.

The entire team needs to know where you stand on this type of behavior and the character and values you expect from your team. You should not humiliate this player; instead the message should be one of constructive criticism and reinforcement of the team's philosophy.

Scenario 4: Disgruntled Opposing Coach

During a close game, the coach from the other team starts yelling at you because he believes that your players are taking cheap shots at his players. You try to ignore him, but he starts to come over to where you are sitting. What do you do?

a. Yell right back and let him know that you're not going to let him talk about your players that way.

This won't help the situation at all. You must maintain your composure and set an example for your players.

b. Get up and walk away as quickly as you can to avoid a confrontation.

Running away from this upset coach isn't going to solve anything. In fact, the other coach will probably just follow you and become angrier.

c. Let the coach say what he needs to and then calmly tell him that your players are not intentionally taking cheap shots and that at the next opportunity you will talk to them and reinforce that they are to play fairly.

That's exactly right. The biggest trick here is to stay calm. Let him know that you do not condone the play he is describing and that you will make sure your players are reminded of the proper play techniques and are playing fairly.

d. Totally ignore this coach, pretending he's not there, and continue with your own players.

If he's come over to confront you about the situation, ignoring him probably won't work very well.

Communicating With Parents

Many coaches find that the most challenging relationship to manage is their relationship with the parents of their athletes. If you've been coaching for a while, you might find this an understatement. Give parents clear guidelines about their roles and your expectations of them. Parent meetings are a great way to introduce yourself to parents and to set the tone for the season. Another possibility is to make phone calls to each parent. You could also send letters so that everyone is aware of the rules and expectations. After practices begin, it's important to keep your parents informed. You can send e-mails with practice information and progress updates on the team or individuals. You can also send handouts explaining specific drills done in practice or articles about youth sports. In turn, remember that parents are ultimately responsible for their children and desire only the best for them. Just remember that there will always be some interesting situations to deal with.

Scenario 1: Parent With New Plays

Mr. Driver, a parent, corners you after practice and says, "Hey, Coach, I've noticed that our offense has been having lots of problems lately. I've designed some plays that I think will produce more baskets than the team is scoring now with your plays." How should you respond?

a. Rip them up. What makes him think he can design a better offense? He hasn't even been to any of our practices!

One of the most important rules of communicating is to be calm and respectful. Insulting Mr. Driver for making a suggestion will only cause problems.

b. Thank Mr. Driver and look over the plays, but tell him that our offensive plan is set up around the abilities of our players and changing things now might be a disruption.

This is your best choice! You can respectfully accept the ideas, but clearly state that you don't plan to veer from your game plan and may not use the additional plays. This shows a clear plan for the team while still addressing the parent's concern. After you take a look at the suggestions you may find some valid points and might even want to ask Mr. Driver to be your assistant coach.

c. Tell him I can use all the help I can get. Take the plays, thank him, and make the changes.

This choice will just set you up for a bad situation. You're admitting that you're not sure about the offensive game plan you're using. Mr. Driver will really start giving suggestions now!

Scenario 2: Parent Yelling at Officials

Mrs. Bullock is constantly yelling at the officials. You hear her say, "What? Are you kidding me? How is that not a walk? Come on, ref! Get it right! You shouldn't be on the court! Get out of there and let somebody who knows the rules and has half a brain call the game!"

a. Ignore Mrs. Bullock. Criticizing the refs is part of the game. Fans are going to complain about calls. That's the nature of the sport.

Criticizing the refs shouldn't be part of the game. You're also ignoring the negative effect that Mrs. Bullock yelling can have on her child.

b. Tell Mrs. Bullock that the league is always looking for officials and if she thinks she can do such a great job she should get out there on the court.

Although this is what you might WANT to say to Mrs. Bullock, it's probably not a good idea. It won't stop her from verbally attacking the refs and will probably just make a bad situation worse!

c. In a private conversation, remind Mrs. Bullock that the refs in our league are doing the best that they can to be fair and accurate. Mention that her constant yelling can have an adverse effect on her own child.

This is your best choice. You should also point out that you look for consistency in calls, but you don't need anyone—coach, player, or parent—to yell at the refs.

Scenario 3: Parent Concerned With Playing Time

Mr. Toler comes to you after the game and says, "Hey, Coach, I've got a question. Why is Sam sitting the bench when he's one of the best players on the team? He's got a great shot and could help you win a few games. But he sure can't make baskets if he's not in the game."

a. Tell Mr. Toler that you'll take another look at Sam's shot and if it really is that good, you'll play him more.

It's probably not a good idea to give into Mr. Toler like this. It puts you in a bad situation and now Mr. Toler is expecting Sam to get more playing time and more shots. If he doesn't, you'll be hearing from Mr. Toler again.

b. Let Mr. Toler know right away that he is overstepping his bounds. Parents don't decide on playing time; coaches do. Make the conversation as brief as possible and do not give in.

You're just adding fuel to the fire with this response. Parents should be allowed to voice their concerns if they do so reasonably. You don't need to give in, but you need to listen and communicate a little better than this.

c. Listen to Mr. Toler and briefly address the situation. Point out that I have a plan for my players in terms of their playing time and where they play, and that City Rules require all players to play in at least half of every game, and that I do all I can to be fair. Thank him and let him know I heard his concerns.

This is your best response. It's important to listen to parental concerns but you haven't given in or apologized. Remember when talking to a parent, to strip the emotions away from the message. Most parents will be biased about their kids' playing ability.

Keys to Becoming a Successful Coach and Developing a Positive Coaching Outlook

There are many responsibilities of a youth coach, including, but not limited to, providing a safe environment, teaching tactics and skills, making it fun, and developing character in your athletes. Examining who you are and what you believe will help you understand your coaching responsibilities and develop your coaching philosophy. Understanding the importance of a positive outlook in coaching will clarify your coaching objectives. Keeping *Athletes first, winning second* at the forefront will ensure the best long-term outcome for athletes. Providing a good character example for your athletes is imperative and will affect your athletes, parents, and community. The final key to being a successful youth coach is communication and using positive feedback and reinforcement. Communicating effectively with athletes and parents will build positive relationships. You can continually improve your communication skills, and doing so will help your athletes communicate appropriately as well.

Managing Risk and Creating a Safe Environment

Coaching safety begins with a safe environment. As a coach, you must make sure the playing area and the equipment being used by your athletes are safe. Proper groundwork can make a crisis situation go smoothly and will be best for all involved. This begins with talking to parents and athletes about the dangers associated with the sport and having the proper paperwork and supplies ready at all times.

SAFETY DUTIES PRIOR TO EACH PRACTICE OR GAME:

- Plan practices with players' physical condition, skill level, and tactical understanding in mind.
- Inspect the field or court for safety hazards; remove hazards and report conditions you can not remedy.
- Have a well-stocked first aid kit on hand. Be prepared to respond to minor injuries.
- Have an emergency plan in place and be prepared to enact it.

SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES DURING PRACTICE AND AFTER PRACTICE:

- Use warm-ups and cool-downs.
- Use appropriate practice plans; adjust them as necessary, especially in terms of players' conditioning and high heat or humidity. Take water breaks every 20 minutes.
- Match athletes appropriately & supervise athletes closely.
- Keep adequate records.

By now it should be obvious that all coaches need to put the needs of the children first. There are still a couple of areas that we need to touch on to cover all the bases. Over-zealous coaches, vicarious parents, and win-at-all-cost attitudes have some child psychologist arguing that youth sports can be the greatest source of legalized child abuse in the country. Whether you agree or not with that particular view, abuse can be present in Youth Sports. Child abuse of any type will not be tolerated in a Youth Coaching environment. Here are the 4 types of child abuse in sports:

1. Verbal Abuse - This is the most frequent occurring form of abuse. Name calling, hurtful comments, swearing at players or game officials or comments directed to demean a child's integrity are forms of verbal abuse.
2. Physical Abuse – Physical abuse is the easiest identifiable form of child abuse. Some examples include slapping a child, grabbing a child, shoving or hitting a child, and also excessive forms of exercise as punishment.
3. Emotional Abuse – Emotional abuse takes place when demands are placed upon a child that are out of that child's reach, and this affects their self-concept and self-esteem. Emotional abuse can result in a youngster being chronically unhappy with life because they could never live up to adult expectations. Expecting them to win every game, to score the most points, to be the best player on the team, to play without errors, are expectations that no one can consistently achieve.
4. Sexual Abuse – Sexual abuse is any form of sexual contact or implied sexual contact between an adult and a child, including implicit or explicit sexual comments to boys and girls, and any type of sexual harassment. Patting a child's backside as a form of compliment is a common practice in sports, but adults have no business touching areas on children's bodies that may be construed as sexually inappropriate. There are other things that we can do as coaches: high fives, special handshakes, and hugging with children's permission are all appropriate to use as coaches.

Just to be sure that there is no chance for you to be unjustly accused of inappropriate behavior, here are a couple of suggestions:

- Always have another adult present.
- Never be alone in a car with someone else's child.
- Never plan team activities that involve sleepovers.
- Refrain from giving gifts to individual players and never use alcohol before or during practices, games, team events or parties.
- It is also a good idea to maintain close control of your team roster and other personal information which contains player names and phone numbers.

Coaching Aides - Practice Plans

Using the games approach rather than traditional drills is a good way to keep your players motivated. They will have fun and learn tactics and skills together. The I.D.E.A. method is an excellent tool to use in teaching your athletes new skills. (I.D.E.A. - Introduce/Demonstrate/Explain/Attend to athletes during training). Written practice plans will not only keep your practices organized but will also help keep your players focused. As a youth coach, you are modeling the behavior you want to see in your athletes. It's important to always set a good example.

Checklist for Game Day (*Pre-Game Day Coaching*)

- Players should be aware of what to wear for the games—color of jersey, etc.
- Arrival time for the game should be at least 20 minutes before the start of the game so the players can get warmed up.
- Getting input from your players is a good way to help them grow through the sport experience. If they have a say in the game plan, they will most likely be more enthusiastic and motivated. Your game tactics should be simple and should focus on the basics.
- In determining starting lineups and substitutions, try to factor in balanced total playing time as much as possible

Checklist for Game Day (*In-Game Coaching*)

- During the game, coaches can help players who are making performance errors by giving them encouragement.
- When correcting a player, do so in a quiet and controlled voice during a break or when the player is on the bench.
- Be supportive and encourage players often.
- Avoid too many instructions; let your players concentrate on their performance during the game.
- Try not to place too much emphasis on the outcome of the game or your players can become anxious and tight during the game.
- Use humor to lighten the moment if possible.
- Set realistic performance goals for the team.
- If you find that the officials are not calling the rules that affect the safety of your players, discuss your concerns calmly in the appropriate manner. Show respect for officials even if they miss a call.

Checklist for Game Day (*Coaching After the Game*)

- Thank the officials
- Acknowledge the performance of the other team and coach.
- Keep winning in perspective.
- After a loss your first concern should be the players attitudes and mental well-being. Remember—your team will be mirroring your behavior.

Guidelines For Parents

- Remain in the spectator area.
- Let the coach be the coach.
- Provide only supportive comments to coaches, officials, and players of both teams. Avoid any derogatory comments.
- Do not coach your son or daughter during the contest.
- Do not drink alcohol at practices or contests or come having drunk too much.
- Cheer for your team.
- Show interest, enthusiasm, and support for you child.
- Be in control of your emotions.
- Help when asked by coaches or officials.

**Click [HERE](#) to proceed to
[Youth Coach Certification Test Instructions](#)**