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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.
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- 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** Depending on the severity of the misbehaviour, it may be appropriate to address the behaviour in front of the group, to demonstrate the standards expected.	> 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...**	> 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**	> 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	> If the problem is not rectified, refer the matter to an appropriate person.	



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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

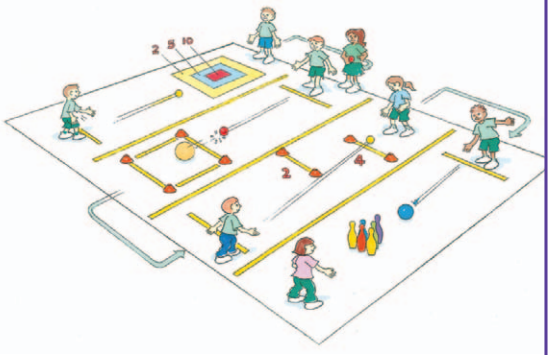
Simple changes to activities may help to address over competitive behaviours. Remember to address a child's behaviour and not their character, and be a good role model at all times.

- 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.

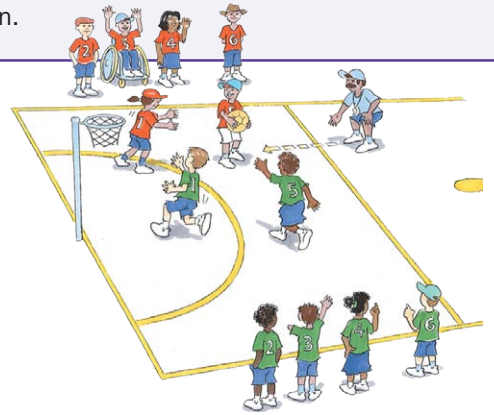


Example:

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.



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Domineering Behaviour

All groups will include children of varying skill levels, abilities and experience, who may intentionally or unintentionally dominate sessions. This can become disruptive to the coach and affect the involvement of others.

Identifying behaviours

Children may:

- Assume team leader roles and direct other children
- Dominate discussions and questions by the coach
- Continually influence the pace and direction of activities
- Intentionally or unintentionally ignore those less skilled in the group
- Dominate the games or activities

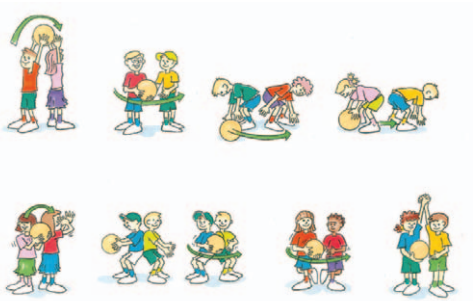
What you can do

Simple changes to activities may help to address domineering behaviour in group activities. Remember to address a child's behaviour and not their character, and be a good role model at all times.

- Use smaller groups and evenly space out more experienced children between teams.
- Allow more experienced children to demonstrate a skill.



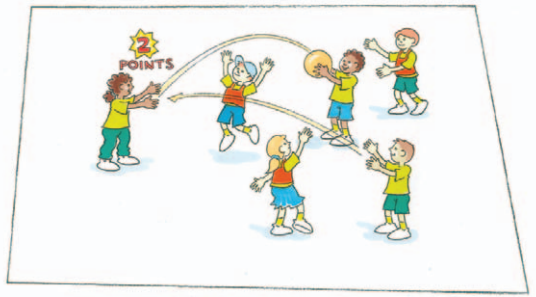
- Highlight examples of cooperative play and issue bonus points to reward desirable behaviours.



- Score in a way that allows children to individually challenge themselves to achieve success.



- When questioning children about changing an element of an activity, use responses such as: 'That was a very valuable suggestion, does anybody else have another idea that we could use?'. Recognising comments in this manner will help to increase esteem and create an environment in which others feel comfortable contributing.
- Delegate extra roles to more experienced children as part of an activity, such as keeping count of the number of passes, to provide more of a challenge.



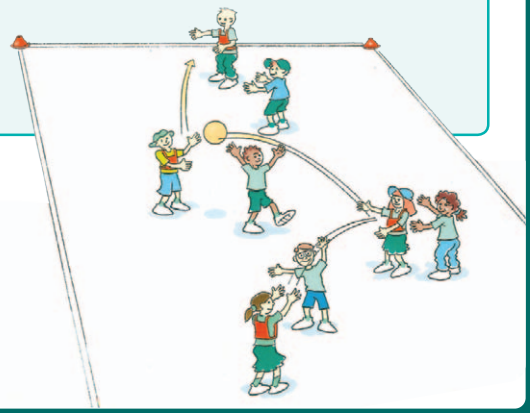
Example:

Susie decided that the children would play a game of hockey as part of the day's session. She knew that a couple of the children, Jodie and Ryan, had played for the school team and had a greater skill level than the others. Susie broke the group into two teams, with Jodie in one and Ryan in the other.

As the session progressed, Susie observed children losing interest and getting frustrated as Jodie and Ryan were dominating the game. Susie paused the game and asked the group what changes could be made, to ensure every player got to touch the ball. They decided if the ball was passed to three different team-mates before scoring, that team should receive bonus points.

Once the game started again Susie saw a big change: Jodie and Ryan were doing their best to include their team-mates in order to get those bonus points.





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Non-participation

Children may not participate in activities for a number of reasons. As these reasons may not be obvious, understanding and patience are essential, to ensure all children feel they have an opportunity to get involved.

Identifying behaviours

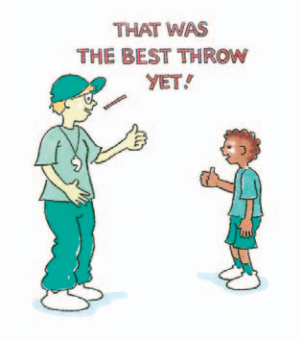
Children may:

- Refuse to participate in activities
- Not agree to play certain roles as part of games
- Make no effort or attempt to engage with other children

What you can do

Once illness or injury or cultural considerations have been ruled out, simple changes to activities may help to encourage participation. Remember to address a child's behaviour and not their character, and be a good role model at all times.

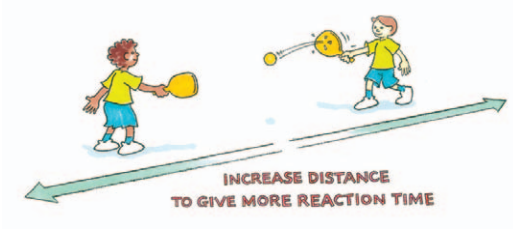
- Partner with the child to encourage their involvement in the activities.



- Ask one of their friends, or a more experienced child from the group, to encourage their participation in the activities.
- Think of new and varied roles that can be played: for example, scorer or umpire.



- Look for signs of interest during the activities, to invite participation.
- Use changes that increase or decrease complexity of the activity to provide more opportunities for success.



- Ensure the fun element is emphasised.
- Create ownership by asking the child for a suggestion on how to improve or change the activity.
- Provide encouragement once the child is involved.





Example:

After a five minute warm up, Sarah brought her group of children together to introduce the next activity: volleyball. Peter immediately tensed up and said, 'I don't want to play this game, I don't like volleyball'. The last time Peter played volleyball he was unable to serve the ball over the net, but the other children could. Peter wanted to avoid further embarrassment and so sat out.

After a quick one-on-one discussion with Peter, Sarah changed one of the game rules to allow children to serve from different spots around the court. Sarah made the rule for the whole group, not just Peter, so all of the children could choose the spot they felt most comfortable with to make a serve. After watching the game with this new rule in play, Peter decided to join in, and Sarah provided encouragement throughout the session.

