

# Coaches Guide to Parent Communication

1. Have a parent meeting before the first practice to discuss your plans and expectations for the season. Encourage questions from the parents and let them know that you have given a lot of thought to the upcoming season.
2. Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease with you.
3. Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement.
4. Know what your objectives are and do what you believe to be of value to the team, not to the parents. No coach can please everyone!
5. Know the club and game rules. Be prepared to abide by them and to explain them to parents.
6. Handle any confrontation one-on-one and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Let the parent talk while you listen. Often a parent will vent their frustrations just by talking. Listen to their viewpoint, then thank them for it.
7. Resist unfair pressure. It is your responsibility as coach to make the final decision. This doesn't mean that you can't still listen to parents.
8. Don't discuss individual players with other parents. The grapevine will hang you every time. Show the same respect for each player on the team that you want the parents to show toward you.
9. Ask the parents not to criticize their children during practice or a game. Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
10. Don't blame the players for their parents' actions.
11. Be consistent! If you change a rule or philosophy during the season, you may be in for trouble. At the very least, inform players and parents of any change as soon as possible.
12. Most importantly, be fair! If you treat all players equally and with respect, you will gain their respect, and that of their parents as well.

## Parent Orientation Meeting

All coaches are encouraged to establish effective lines of communication with team parents early in the season by holding a parent orientation meeting. This may take the form of a casual discussion in your living room, could be combined with a team picnic, or the first practice. Whatever the format, the time you invest will pay benefits for all concerned throughout the season. If a meeting is impossible, the following information could be put into a letter to parents/players, but a face-to-face meeting is preferable.

Prepare any handouts you would like to distribute!

For Example:

- Team roster (with names of parents and players, telephone numbers)
- Schedule of practices and games
- League rules
- Team goals/rules
- Summary or outline of the meeting

Coaching philosophy:

- Discuss what you consider to be the value of this sport.
- Discuss your methods for teaching skills (describe a typical practice).
- State the importance you assign to having fun and developing skills.
- State the importance you assign to winning and losing.
- Discuss any team rules and guidelines, disciplinary procedures.
- Discuss your philosophy regarding player rotation, substitution, playing time.

Specifics of the program:

- Practice schedule (how many per week? how long?)
- Game schedule (how many? when do they begin?).
- Minimum playing time (what is the rule in your local club?).
- Equipment required (e.g. shirts, socks, shorts, shin guards, ball, soccer shoes, water bottle).
- Inherent risks (soccer is a contact sport, although a relatively safe one).
- Medical insurance.
- Team management.
- Ask for volunteers as assistant coaches
- Ask for volunteers as team parents (snack schedule, help with nets/flags).
- Set up telephone tree and/or car pooling system.

Discuss COACH'S responsibilities for example:

- Demonstrate leadership and good sportsmanship.
- Treat each player fairly.
- Have organized practices and teach soccer fundamentals appropriate to the age group.
- Provide a safe environment (e.g. arrive at practice on time and remain after practice until every child is picked up by an authorized adult, ensure that the players equipment conforms to the club guidelines).
- Contribute positively to the development of each player's self-esteem.
- Help each player set individual and team goals that are realistic.
- Give parents a schedule of practices and games in a timely fashion.
- Allow each player to play half of every game at a minimum.

Important points to cover in your meeting:

#### Coach Introduction

- Introduce yourself and assistant coaches (or ask for volunteers at this time).
- Give some background information about yourself (why you are coaching, experience).

Things to consider when organizing a parent orientation meeting:

- Hold it early in the season; preferably before the first team practice.
- Having the players present is optional.

Purposes of a parent orientation meeting include the following: Enables parents to understand the objectives and goals of the program.

- Enables parents to become acquainted with you, the coach.
- Informs parents about the nature (and inherent risks) of the sport.
- Informs parents of your expectations of them and of their child.
- Enables you to address any concerns of the parents.
- Establishes clear lines of communication between you, parents, and players.
- Allows you to obtain parental support (assistant coaches, team parents, etc.).

***Remember that you will be dealing with all types of children, and with parents having different backgrounds and ideals. The challenge for you as a coach is to address these differences in a positive manner so the season will be enjoyable for everyone involved!***