



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

## QUALITIES OF A GREAT SPORTS COACH

A good coach is positive, enthusiastic, supportive, trusting, focused, goal-oriented, knowledgeable, observant, respectful, patient and a clear communicator.

### 10 Key Qualities

#### 1. **Understands the Sport and Leads by Example**

To be able to teach effectively, the coach must have in-depth understanding of the sport from the fundamental skills to advanced tactics and strategy. Coaches may have experience playing, but not all former athletes make good coaches. Coaches must plan for the season, know the progressive nature of training adaptation, know the rules, and provide a simple, structured environment for athletes to succeed. Plan – Prepare – Rehearse – Perform – Compete are the essence of good coaching. A good coach should have a recognised qualification from the governing body for their sport. Not every great coach will have the top level qualification, but every coach should have some qualification.

#### 2. **Sponge for Knowledge / Profound Thinker / Visionary**

While a good coach knows a great deal about a sport (s) he/she must continue to learn and develop new training techniques. Staying up-to-date and informed of new research, training and everything which supports the coaching process, attending coaching clinics and camps, and seeking out tips from other coaches and athletes are a sign of a great coach. Watching videos, reading books and studying periodicals can also be helpful. Attending classes in a range of subjects such as sport psychology, nutrition and exercise physiology is a great idea and is readily accessible for any coach who wants to grow and improve.

#### 3. **Shares the Knowledge / Educates Others**

Obtaining knowledge is important, but having the confidence to share and seek others' views, especially those outside of your sport, is a key quality. Being happy to try new things and different ideas in the quest to improve performance. The best coaches clearly understand they are there to educate the athletes. Most athletes spend most of the time training on their own, so the more they really understand what they are doing and why they are doing it the better they will train and practise.

#### 4. **Highly Energised and a Motivator**

The successful coach is a motivator with a positive attitude and enthusiasm for the sport and the athletes. The ability to motivate and inspire is part of the formula for success. Getting athletes to believe in themselves and achieve come far easier from some coaches than others. The coach who can motivate is able to generate the desire to excel in their athletes. Motivation may mean keeping the practice fun, fresh and challenging. When motivating a player, a good coach stresses trying to reach



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

performance goals, not outcome goals. A coach should make sure that athletes understand that you can completely control your own effort and training, but can't control what your opponent does or the outcome of every match. Fun and enjoyment are the cornerstones to successful coaching.

**5. Knows the Athlete, Values and Respects that Relationship**

being aware of individual differences in athletes is an important ingredient in coaching excellence. Yelling, screaming and other emotional displays may work for some athletes but could have a devastating effect on others. Individualising communication and motivation to specific athletes is vital to successful coaching. Paying attention to the athlete's emotions, strengths and weaknesses are the responsibility of a good coach. Understanding every athlete is different, and have different ways of receiving coaching information is key to good coaching, especially in a team game.

**6. Is an Effective Communicator & Teacher**

The effective coach is a coach who communicates well and exudes credibility, competence, respect and authority. A coach should be able to explain ideas clearly. Clear communication means setting defined goals, giving direct feedback and reinforcing the key messages. Acknowledging success is also essential for good communication. Language is a key part of coaching, and keeping everything simple and easily understood is a sign of a successful coach.

**7. Is a Good Listener**

Part of communicating effectively is listening. A coach should be a compassionate ear and should welcome the athletes comments, questions and input. The effective coach will actively seek out information from athletes, and work in an environment where athletes are encouraged to present ideas and thoughts to the coach. Finally, the good coach will be flexible and will use player feedback to modify the training plan if necessary.

**8. Is Disciplined, Strong in Character and Integrity**

Athletes need to adhere to a reasonable set of rules both on and off the field and if these are ignored the coach is responsible for discipline. Trust between athlete and coach is of paramount importance at all times and essential for successful coaching – trust comes from the quality of the actions from both coach and player alike. The effective coach clearly states a code of conduct up front and adheres to it. When violations do occur, discipline should follow. Evidence supports that for discipline to effectively change behaviour, it must be mild, prompt and consistent. Committed to individual integrity, values and personal growth.

**9. Leads by Example with very High Attitude to Hard Work**

The effective coach also leads by example. A good coach adheres to the same rules he/she expects of athletes. A coach who wants respect should also show respect. A



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

coach who expects athletes to remain positive needs to display a positive attitude. A coach who wants athletes to listen should also listen to athletes.

**10. Displays Commitment and Clear Passion for the Sport**

The best coaches are in the profession because they love it. Besides being strongly committed to the sports and success, the best coaches display a clear commitment to looking out for the best interest of the individual athletes. Coaching in many ways is a 24/7 365-days-a-year job as top coaches live and sleep the art of coaching. Able to think of every possible scenario and allow the athlete and coach to perform at their best when the pressure is at its greatest.