

# POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE PRACTICE MODEL

**1. PREPARATION**

**6. GAME**

**2. SET-UP**

**7. SCRIMMAGE**

**3. OPENING CIRCLE**

**8. COOL DOWN**

**4. WARM-UP**

**9. CLOSING CIRCLE**

**5. DRILL**

**10. COACH REFLECTION**

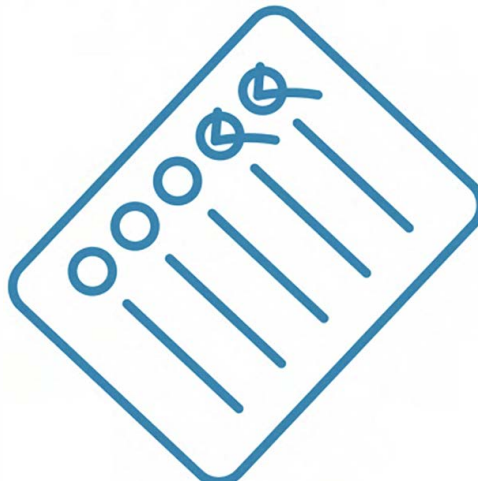
The Positive Coaching Alliance Practice Model gives coaches a set structure to design consistent dynamic sessions that build upon both sports and social-emotional skills (SEL). A thoughtful practice plan includes transitions to support movement from one activity to the next and emphasizes safety and connection to maximize learning. Using a set routine prepares kids so they know what to expect, which is a critical component of helping them feel secure and comfortable.

# POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE PRACTICE MODEL

## THE MODEL

### 1. PREPARATION

- Plan practice before you arrive at the field using the same structure throughout the season
- Design a practice which focuses on one skill/theme



### 2. SET-UP

- Arrive at least 15 minutes early to set up equipment
- Be available to talk to players as they arrive



# POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE PRACTICE MODEL

## 3. OPENING CIRCLE

- Welcome players to practice and thank them for showing up
- Check-in (e.g., Ask players to put their thumb up for a great day, thumb sideways for an okay day, or thumb down for a rough day. Pay attention to whose thumb is down.)
- Review team agreements (e.g., 1. Have fun 2. Try your best 3. Respect each other)
- Introduce the skill/theme of the day

## POSITIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENT EXAMPLES:

### Safety

**Physical** - Make sure the opening circle is a safe space free from distraction

**Emotional** - Ensure all players are equally in the circle (e.g., no one has their back to anyone else)

### Youth Engagement

**Voice** - Invite a few players to share something about their day

**Choice** - Have a player select a team agreement to focus on during practice

**Leadership** - Ask a few players to help you gather the team in for the opening circle

### Team Building

**Caring Adults** - Welcome everyone to practice, be warm and friendly

**Supportive Peers** - Encourage players to look at everyone else's thumb to see how their teammates are doing

### Physical Activity

No physical activity examples for the opening circle



### Skill Building

**Sports Skills** - Introduce the skill of the day

**Life Skills** - If some thumbs are down during check-in, give players support (e.g., "If you're having a rough day, ask for help. If you see a teammate having a bad day, you can help them.")

### SEL Skills

Remind players they need to take care of each other

Model empathy by letting players know that even if they are having a thumbs down day, you are available to support them

# POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE PRACTICE MODEL

## 4. WARM-UP

- Play an energizer game instead of running laps
- Players should be a little out of breath and starting to sweat
- Include stretching - this is a great place for players to choose the stretches

## POSITIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENT EXAMPLES:

### Safety

**Physical** - Make sure players don't start too fast (e.g., sprinting before jogging and stretching)

**Emotional** - Make sure everyone is equally involved (e.g., if you warm up with a tag game, make sure the same person isn't always "it")

### Youth Engagement

**Voice** - Have the players count to 10 together when stretching

**Choice** - Ask players to recommend stretches

**Leadership** - Have two captains of the day lead the team stretches

### Team Building

● **Caring Adults** - Give individual feedback, use names, participate in warm-up with players

● **Supportive Peers** - Use partner stretches and have pairs answer a get-to-know-you question while stretching (e.g., "What do you like about school? What do you like to eat?")

### Physical Activity

● **Consistent** - Make sure players move throughout warm-ups (e.g., use dynamic stretching instead of static)

● **Challenging** - Ensure players feel loose and have started to get a little out of breath, preparing their bodies for practice

● **Fun** - Use fun warm-up games instead of running laps

### Skill Building

● **Sports Skills** - Make sure players are stretching with the proper technique

● **Life Skills** - Players can lose focus during stretching; talk to the team about the importance of staying focused during a task

### SEL Skills

● Be positive during this activity, set the tone for practice

● Find opportunities to acknowledge players for being supportive and kind to each other



# POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE PRACTICE MODEL

## 5. DRILL

- Break the sports skill down into smaller, teachable components (e.g. "I want to see you 1. Keeping your head up 2. Using both feet 3. Keeping the soccer ball close to you")
- Use a visual demonstration instead of only telling players what you want them to do
- Get players moving quickly
- Avoid long lines

## POSITIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENT EXAMPLES:

### Safety

**Physical** - Make sure players are using correct technique

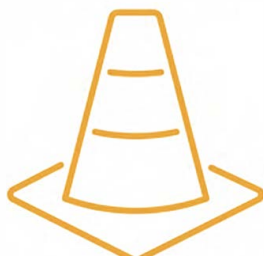
**Emotional** - Give all players the chance to practice the skill at their own pace

### Youth Engagement

**Voice** - Have players give each other feedback

**Choice** - Offer players an opt-out option to help them manage difficulties

**Leadership** - Have a player or two demonstrate the skill



### Team Building

● **Caring Adults** - Use positive body language and tone when giving feedback

● **Supportive Peers** - Have players work in small groups to practice the skill of the day

### Physical Activity

● **Consistent** - Use all your equipment and limit the time players are standing in lines

● **Challenging** - Incorporate progression in activities (e.g., 1. Start dribbling inside the half court 2. Dribble only with your left hand 3. Dribble only with your right hand 4. Pair up and dribble vs. a defender)

● **Fun** - Incorporate activities that don't result in elimination (e.g., "If your ball gets knocked out of the grid, do 10 toe taps and re-enter.")

### Skill Building

● **Sports Skills** - Focus on progress not performance; make sure players focus on their own growth; give specific improvement feedback in addition to encouragement

● **Life Skills** - If players struggle, help them find new strategies and encourage them to stay positive and stick with it

### SEL Skills

● As players learn new skills, focus on reinforcing their positive outlook, effort, and mastery

● Help players manage their frustration by using strategies to calm themselves (e.g., encourage them to take deep breaths)

● Remind them it's ok to make mistakes as they're part of learning

# POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE

## PRACTICE MODEL

### 6. GAME

- Practice the skill of the day in a fun way with lots of peer-to-peer interaction and a little competition

### POSITIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENT EXAMPLES:

#### Safety

**Physical** - Create a safe space with boundary markers and mark any field hazards with cones

**Emotional** - When you start to introduce competition, make sure the players still focus on individual improvement

#### Youth Engagement

**Voice** - Have players give each other positive feedback (e.g., guide players to state things they saw teammates doing well, such as trying hard and dribbling well)

**Choice** - Let players pick a progression in the activity (e.g., in relay races, let a player pick a specific way the teams must dribble the ball through the cones)

**Leadership** - Have players take turns identifying the team's strengths and areas of growth

#### Team Building

**Caring Adults** - Use names and acknowledge effort

**Supportive Peers** - Have small groups come up with team names and cheer for each other

#### Physical Activity

**Consistent** - Limit games that cause players or teams to be eliminated which leads to inactivity

**Challenging** - Layer in additional variations of the skill so it becomes increasingly challenging

**Fun** - Include a little competition that doesn't focus only on winning and losing (e.g., add up completed passes or how many times the entire team can touch the basketball before scoring a basket)

#### Skill Building

**Sports Skills** - If players are becoming more focused on outcome remind them success is more likely with practice

**Life Skills** - Talk to the team about supporting each other and how that skill is important in other areas like school and family

#### SEL Skills

Help players manage stress by creating a 'Chill Out Zone'

Use a 1-10 scale indicator to help players identify their own emotions and help them self-regulate

Use reflection questions to help players find different ways to respond to challenges

Help players identify their strengths and ways they have developed their competencies

# POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE PRACTICE MODEL

## 7. SCRIMMAGE

- Include a scrimmage at each practice
- Keep coaching points to a minimum
- Let the team play and try out the skills they just learned

## POSITIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENT EXAMPLES:

### Safety

**Physical** - Make sure the rules are followed and proper equipment is used

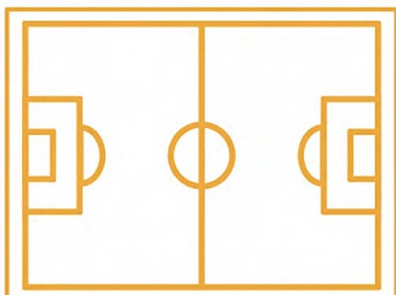
**Emotional** - Referee the scrimmage to keep things fair

### Youth Engagement

**Voice** - At halftime, ask players to evaluate their own performance

**Choice** - Let players choose their team name

**Leadership** - Assign different team captains each week



### Team Building

● **Caring Adults** - Use positive coaching techniques (e.g., give lots of encouragement, acknowledge effort, use encouraging body language)

● **Supportive Peers** - Award extra points for sportsmanship towards own team and opposition

### Physical Activity

● **Consistent** - Have substitutes rotate in regularly

● **Challenging** - Increase the size of the playing space (e.g., play full court instead of half court)

● **Fun** - Don't stop the game and coach a lot; let the team play versus have players stand and listen to you

### Skill Building

● **Sports Skills** - Acknowledge players who are applying the skill of the day to the scrimmage

● **Life Skills** - Acknowledge players who are willing to be flexible and play out of their preferred position, connect this to life and not always getting what we want and how we can positively respond to these situations

### SEL Skills

● If players struggle praise their efforts

● Remind players that even in competition it's important to show kindness to others, including the opponent

● Take note of the examples of kindness you see and highlight a few of them at the end of practice

# POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE PRACTICE MODEL

## 8. COOL DOWN

- At the end of practice, have the players lightly jog
- Gradually bring their heart rate down
- Include stretching

## POSITIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENT EXAMPLES:

### Safety

**Physical** - Gradually bring the intensity down

**Emotional** - Rotate leaders so all players know they are equally valued

### Youth Engagement

**Voice** - Have players count aloud during the team stretches

**Choice** - Have players select stretches

**Leadership** - Have players lead stretching



### Team Building

● **Caring Adults** - Casually go around individually checking in with players and acknowledge something positive you saw them do during practice

● **Supportive Peers** - Group players into partners during stretches and have each pair share something they enjoyed about practice

### Physical Activity

● **Consistent** - Incorporate a cool down at every practice so players expect it as part of the team's routine

● **Challenging** - N/A

● **Fun** - Incorporate a variety of ways to gradually bring player's physical and emotional state down

### Skill Building

● **Sports Skills** - Demonstrate proper stretching techniques

● **Life Skills** - Connect for players that physically cooling down after practice is great practice for also cooling down emotionally

### SEL Skills

● Reinforce where you saw players being positive with each other

● Instead of telling players they did a good job, say "great effort" to let the team know it's about the action of trying that is most important



# POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE PRACTICE MODEL

## 9. CLOSING CIRCLE

- Ask players how they improved the skill/theme of the day
- Ask players to recognize a teammate for doing well
- Ask players for suggestions on other skills to work on at practice
- Use the thumb check to see how your players are doing at the end of practice
- Follow up with any players who seem to be having a bad day

## POSITIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENT EXAMPLES:

### Safety

**Physical** - Make sure everyone is part of the circle and no one leaves early without proper supervision

**Emotional** - Include everyone in the circle; pay extra attention to players' emotions and how they might have changed during the course of practice

### Youth Engagement

**Voice** - Ask the players what they liked or want to be different about practice next time

**Choice** - Ask the players what other skills they want to work on

**Leadership** - Have the team captains help you with equipment

### Team Building

**Caring Adults** - Tell players you noticed their effort

**Supportive Peers** - Have players recognize each other (e.g., "Who saw a teammate trying hard today?")

### Physical Activity

**No physical activity examples for the closing circle**

### Skill Building

**Sports Skills** - Provide players with feedback on how they improved on the skill of the day

**Life Skills** - Discuss any teachable moments

### SEL Skills

Highlight something you felt the team did well and ask players to provide examples (e.g., "Today I felt like everyone was really positive and taking care of each other. Can anyone give me some examples?")



# POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE PRACTICE MODEL

## 10. COACH REFLECTION

*An important step to improve your coaching is to reflect on your practices and games*

- Determine if you need support and make a commitment to seek that support
- Identify areas for improvement and adjust accordingly
- Identify any judgements or biases you have that impacted your interactions with your players

### POSITIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENT EXAMPLES:

Think about how you integrated the **Positive Sport Environment Examples** into your practice.



Make a note of the **Positive Sport Environment Examples** you did well bringing to life and ones you might improve next time.

- SEL Skills
- Reflect on how well you modeled empathy
- Identify different ways you can reinforce life skills with your players

