

The 10 Golden Rules

The [iCoachKids](#) website is a great tool for coaches; they provide vast resources for coaches to truly understand the HOW and WHY we coach. iCoachKids focuses less on the specific; anyone can find drills, skills, and small area game resources on a variety of websites or apps. Creating the positive environment for learning is as important, if not more, than the tactics. If the environment does not exist, players will never learn the intricacies of the game of hockey. Please see my notes in blue on how to relate the **iCoachKids Pledge** to the game of hockey. – *Jim Clare, AHAI Coach-In-Chief*



The iCoachKids Pledge



- 1 Be CHILD-CENTRED
- 2 Be HOLISTIC
- 3 Be INCLUSIVE
- 4 Make it FUN and SAFE
- 5 Prioritise the LOVE for sport above LEARNING sport
- 6 Focus on FOUNDATIONAL skills
- 7 Engage PARENTS positively
- 8 Plan PROGRESSIVE programmes
- 9 Use different methods to ENHANCE LEARNING
- 10 Use COMPETITION in a developmental way

1. **Be CHILD-CENTRED:** always have the best interest children at heart and listen to them. It is about what children want and what they need, not about the adults!

This is another way of saying “player-centered”. Are your practices focused on the player or just a collection of drills you like?

2. **Be HOLISTIC:** develop children in your sessions as people first and foremost, not only as athletes. Aim to develop their psychosocial skills and capabilities not just their physical ones.

This piece of the Pledge requires no clarification; it should be obvious to all hockey coaches, develop good humans first.

3. **Be INCLUSIVE:** cater for all levels of abilities and motivations. Coaching is far from a one-size-fits-all. Get to know the kids you coach and dare to coach them differently.

Have you taken the time to learn about each skater, what makes them tick, understand what each one needs?

4. **Make It FUN and SAFE:** children want to have fun and to learn they need to feel safe. Build positive relationships and enjoyable and caring climates that allow them to thrive and that keep them coming back.

This is part of the 5 Elements of a good hockey practice. Is it FUN? If not, why would they want to keep coming back to your practices?

5. **Prioritize the LOVE for Sport Above LEARNING Sport:** a very small proportion of kids will become elite athletes, yet all of them have the potential to become healthy active adults. Creating that fantastic legacy is part of your job.

Are you creating skaters who love the game and will give back to it when they are done playing?

6. **Focus on FOUNDATIONAL Skills:** do not be overconcerned with the specific skills of your sport. At a younger age kids need to gain essential motor skills and learn the basics of how to play games using generic tactical principles to give yourself the best chance of success.

Are your practices game like? Do they involve lots of puck touches?

7. **Engage PARENTS Positively:** parents are not the enemy, but the biggest resource at your disposal. They want the best for their kids and so do you. Partnership is the key word. You will never know what parents can offer if you don't talk to them.

Communication with parents is vital. Get them involved in their child's hockey development.

8. **Plan PROGRESSIVE Programmes:** we are taking kids on a learning journey. We must have a good idea of the destination point and develop short, mid and long-term goals and plans that will help the kids get there. It's not peak-by-Saturday nor improvising a session 'off the cuff'. Failing to plan is planning to fail!

Back to being player-centered. Are your practices focused on a progression of drills and concepts that will make the player and team better, or are they just a random collection of drills?

9. **Use different methods to enhance LEARNING:** learning is a complex process, and it doesn't happen overnight. Different coaching and teaching strategies can serve different purposes at different stages of learning and development, complement each other, and help us achieve the desired results.

Are you using a variety of techniques to teach your skaters a concept - demonstrations, observation, doing the demonstration in silence so the skaters can observe, sending out practice plans ahead of time, posting them on the locker room door, etc. These all enhance the learning environment.

10. **Use COMPETITION in a developmental way:** there is nothing wrong with competition. When the format and the atmosphere around competition is built around the developmental stage of the kids and considerate of their needs, competition is an amazing motivator and a lot of fun. A win-at-all-cost mentality can really spoil the party though.

Use competition in practice, small area games, station-based practices, all create competition for your skaters; not just games.

Create the best learning environment you can by following the pledge. Incorporate the 5 Elements of practice: Fun, Puck Touches, Game Like, Challenging, and Decision Making into every practice design. Visit the [iCoachKids](http://iCoachKids.com) website to learn more.