



WBA Coaching Strategies

At the heart of the Wodonga Basketball Association, is an extensive community of committed volunteers, who are the foundation of our community. We deeply value the incredible efforts of coaches, organisers and parents who give their time to offer children opportunities to participate in community sports, especially basketball.

There may be times when you are either asked or decide to volunteer as a coach for a season or specific games. If stepping into this role for the first time, the experience can seem daunting or overwhelming.

To assist you in this journey, we aim to provide guidance and resources that help create a safe and enjoyable environment for the kids, along with strategies to enhance your coaching experience.

At the Wodonga Basketball Association, we prioritise the development, enjoyment, safety and skill improvement of children playing basketball. We believe that fun, learning, playing safe and progress are more important than the outcomes of winning, or losing, which we see as secondary concerns for coaches. With this mindset, we have curated a collection of strategies from past volunteer coaches to simplify your responsibilities and make your coaching experience as rewarding as possible.

SUBSTITUTIONS

All players are expected to have equal game time regardless of their abilities. This can be challenging to manage whilst also focusing on the games.

- **How do I keep track of players time on the court?**
Singlet number method: Simply make substitution based on what number is next highest on the court compared to who is on the bench.
- **How often do I call a sub?**
4 minute Sub: Make subs roughly every 4 minutes to allow players continuity on the court and adequate rest time on the bench.
- **What do I tell the players when they come off?**
When a player comes to the bench, give them a high 5, tell them something that they did well and give them a challenge for when they go back onto the court: eg. "I want you to try and drive it to the ring" or "I want you to trust yourself to take a shot".

TIMEOUTS

Time-outs are an option for coaches. You are allowed 1 per half, but be mindful that they take up 1 minute at a time- the clock doesn't stop unless it's the last minute of the second half. If both teams use all 4, this is 4 minutes that players lose of their playing time.

- **When do I call a time-out?** Let the kids play as much as possible, unless there is a team wide message that you need to get across if you can't wait for half-time or after the game.
- **Low player numbers?** If you have 5 or less players, you might want to discuss with the other coach that you will call a timeout half-way through each half to allow players to have a break.



OFFENSE

It's important to not overcomplicate your instructions. Keep things simple and only focus on one thing at a time. Some common team themes can be:

- **“Be a good teammate”- Pass the ball to others.** Try and get players to pass to others that are ahead of them or are in a better position on the court.
- **What if a player struggles to pass to others?** If a player continues to possess the ball for too long, make it a team rule that you must first pass the ball before you can take a shot.
- **“Choose your shots”- Only take a shot if you have no one on you, or you are close to the ring:** Encourage players to only take a shot when they are open, or if they are in the “key” (Large rectangle under and around the ring). If they have someone on them, tell them to pass it or drive closer to the ring.
- **What if a player keeps on shooting from too far out, or won't pass the ball?** Instruct the player that they cannot shoot the ball unless they are in the key: this will encourage them to drive it closer to the ring to have a better shot or pass it.
- **What if a player is not following instructions?** It is normal for young players to not be able to implement instructions when they are learning. This can be hard as a coach but understand that they may not be ignoring you, they may just need more time and instructions: Keep a consistent message: “be a good teammate” or “don't shoot unless you are in the key”. You may even need to call a sub to get their attention, re-enforce your instruction, and then get them back on the court, then reaffirm positive plays.

DEFENCE

WBA By-Laws state that all teams should be playing player-on-player defence. This can be hard at younger year levels but the consistent message is the key.

- **Defend the ball carrier:** Regardless of whose player they are on, someone should always try and stop the player with the ball. Encourage only a maximum of two players to defend the player with the ball. Other players should pick up players
- **Try and stay on one player:** When the ball is being passed in, try and get players to pick up the same player each time. This encourages players to be aware of where their player is
- **No zone:** DO NOT allow players to stand in the key (often a habit of taller players) - this is not good for their development as at older age groups, this will not be an effective strategy. Get players to actively defend their players.
- **What if a player continues to not pick up their player?** When they are on the bench, you can show them what happens when players don't play on a player - point them to examples on the court in front of them for a visual cue.

CONCERNING BEHAVIOUR

Young people will always have times when they make poor decisions. This is just how 8 - 18 year-old people are! It is our role as a coach to help highlight when players are getting frustrated and give them strategies to overcome this.

- **Be a role model:** It's important that we, as adults, are always showing respectful behaviour. Like any refereed sports, we will not always agree with calls - but it is important that we respect them and do not display poor behaviour ourselves.



- **Be aware of players behaviour-** If you notice a player getting continually frustrated, check in with them. Tell them that they may need to change the way that they are playing to working within the referees rules - "The referee is calling a foul any time you reach in, maybe try and keep your hands out".
- **Some players need a break:** If a player is becoming overly aggressive, or their behaviour on court is risking others safety around them, take them off. They may need a moment to check themselves before getting back out there. Let them know that their behaviour needs to improve or they will be taken off again.
- **What if you feel a player from another team is playing dangerously towards your team?** Call a time-out and raise your concerns with the referees. Player safety is our top priority so if you are concerned, make it known to the referees, in a mature manner. A lot of our refs are kids, too. If you need a ref supervisor, there is always one on the courts while games are in progress. Ask a parent to seek support - head to the WBA office between courts 2 & 3.

REFEREES

As mentioned above, we need to ALWAYS respect the referee's decision. There are times that you may want to ask for clarification about why there was a decision- after all we need to teach the players how to play.

Which referee do I ask? Always speak with the senior referee on court. "Green shirts" are referees who are learning and still mastering the complexities of watching for fouls, infringements and dealing with players and their reaction. It's not that easy, and if it was, we would have lots of referees! Speak with a striped referee. Keep in mind that if your referee is has a green lanyard, they are children. If you are still unsure, seek help from the refereeing supervisor at the stadium at the time. You might get the answers you are after, or it could be a teaching moment between the supervisor and the referee.

Zero Tolerance

We /and you do not accept or allow any poor behaviour towards the referee. Attempt to back up the referees call by reinforcing the rules and making it a teaching moment. If players are still focusing on the call, or you feel like they may have got it wrong, remind players that everyone make mistakes.

More sections?

For more advice please contact Tim Lamb, wodongabasketball@gmail.com or pop in and see Madi or one of the team at the Basketball office at the stadium.

If you are enjoying coaching and would like to further your understanding and knowledge, WBA can support you to seek further programs or buddy you up with some other coaches to see how they approach the game.

We hope you enjoy the experience of supporting our young people play the great game of basketball! Thank you!

WBA