

How to Become a Coach

You have probably heard leading sportspeople talking about the influence their coach has had on their careers. Have you ever thought that it could be you who is that influence? Have you ever thought about assisting a coach but have been put off by lots of different things? Do any of these statements sound familiar?

I wouldn't know where to start.

I don't know any of the rules or technicalities of the sport.

I was never good at sport in school.

I don't want to take any exams to be a coach.

I just don't have the free time to commit.

The UK needs dedicated people to coach sport. Whether they just want to play for fun or become a high level performer, everyone needs to start somewhere – this is where you can help.

What is Sports Coaching?

Coaches help people of different ages and abilities to develop and improve within sport. They can have a positive influence on people's lifelong involvement in

sport, and can be seen as role models, not only by the players and athletes, but also by their families. A coach can help develop the following life skills:

- working with and being part of a team
- respect
- confidence
- control.

It is therefore essential that the coach is trained, and committed to providing a fun, high quality learning experience for them.

Why Would You Get into Coaching?

There are many reasons people get into coaching. Here are a few quotes from existing coaches. Could they apply to you?

I suffered a couple of injuries to my back and knees so I wasn't able to play hockey any more. I really wanted to stay involved with the game so I decided I'd look into coaching. I found that I loved it and have not looked back since.

I was bored of just standing on the sidelines and just shouting encouragement - I wanted to get involved and put my enthusiasm to good use!



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I enjoyed seeing the joy in people's faces when they achieved/did something they enjoyed doing.

Do you want to make a difference and give something back to your community?



Where Can You Coach?

You must ensure that the environment in which you coach suits the time you can commit. Coaching does not have to be all about spending your evenings and weekends at the club. The following environments might be more suitable to your availability:

- community centres and social clubs
- schools: primary or secondary, schools for disabled children or 'mainstream' schools (depending on the school, you could coach at an after-school club, or over lunch breaks)
- holiday sports 'camps'
- 'affiliated' clubs (ones that are linked in with the sport's governing body)
- youth organisations such as Guides, Scouts or youth clubs.

Who Can You Coach?

Although this is the most common group to coach when first starting out, you don't just have to coach children. Assisting an adults' coaching session can initially be daunting but will teach you many new skills. Coaching disabled people of all abilities and ages brings great rewards and satisfaction and requires no initial qualification or prior knowledge. See below for the relevant contact details.

Your Involvement as a Coach

Without any prior experience, you should start as an assistant to the coach. You may wish to stay at this level, which is great; the 'grass roots' or entry level of sport is where most coaches are needed. These coaches are usually volunteers and therefore do not get paid for their time, effort and commitment.

Further down the line, you may wish to develop your coaching skills and experience by working with different age ranges and perhaps even coach your own team or an individual at competition or high-performance level. Your experience as an assistant to the coach should help you recognise what you want from coaching: from supporting your local club or group to being a full-time coach. With the appropriate training and qualifications, the world is your oyster!

What Can You Get Out of Coaching?

Coaching benefits everyone. But what about you? Have you thought about what you can get from assisting a coach? Here are a few quotes from some coaches who explain what they get out of coaching:

Seeing players develop and improve. I get a thrill out of passing on my passion for the sport to others.

The pleasure of being able to help the performance of others. Irrespective of who I coach, internationals to children, I ensure people get enjoyment out of it.

It is great to work with disabled young people and watch the enjoyment as they learn new skills. As a coach, the rewards you get are fantastic!

When a swimmer achieves a goal you have both been working towards, like breaking the 30-second mark in 50m freestyle, and comes over to thank you, it is a great feeling, there are not many situations where you can affect people's lives in such a positive way.

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What Knowledge do You Need to Assist a Coach?

Coaching is about supporting the participants and bringing the best out of them. Therefore, you can coach a sport that you have no previous knowledge about. **The best coaches coach people, not the sport.** If you become passionate about coaching, you will learn the rules and pick up the essential knowledge as you go along.

I never was the best player in the world, but I've found that I make a really good coach. I'm now coaching the game I love to people who are much better players than I ever was! I've even started coaching sports I have only ever watched, as I've found that I can apply my coaching skills to all sorts of different sports.

After about a year of sitting on the balcony and watching my son swim up and down, I realised that I wanted to get involved so I wandered down to poolside and they welcomed me as an additional volunteer and it went on from there.

Do You Need Qualifications to Assist a Coach?

As an assistant to a coach, it is not essential for you to have qualifications. However, to provide a high quality experience for the people you are coaching, it is recommended that you gain some introductory knowledge in key areas:

- 1 sport-specific technical knowledge (either from experience, further reading or governing body introductory level qualifications, for example)
- 2 how to establish a safe coaching environment
- 3 the welfare of your participants
- 4 awareness of working with the appropriate participants (eg children or disabled people).

Wherever you are assisting, they should be able to help you access appropriate training courses and maybe fully or part fund your attendance at them. It is also useful to have the support of a more experienced, qualified coach, or mentor, to help guide your progression and answer any questions you may have. Speak to the coach or the club's association or board.

As you spend more time as a coach's assistant, you should look to gain some structured training in areas such as safeguarding children and sport-specific coaching. This will enable you to provide a safer coaching environment and a better quality of coaching to the participants. The more involved you are with the coaching sessions you attend, the more responsibility you will have. It is therefore appropriate that you speak with your coach or club to see what their minimum standards of training are for your level of coaching.

Once you have gained some experience around the coaching environment, you may choose to progress and coach your own sessions. Most governing bodies require a minimum standard of training from their coaches, including a Level 1 qualification, safeguarding children training and, potentially, training appropriate to the participants you are coaching. Coach qualification courses, run by the sport's governing body, generally take place throughout the year. Check out their website for further information relating to dates, duration of course, costs and contents. (Links can be found on the ['Become A Coach'](#) section of the sports coach UK website: www.sportscoachuk.org)

What Will Your Responsibilities be?

Don't worry about not knowing everything from the start. The more experienced and qualified coaches will advise you of your responsibilities for each coaching session. It is part of their role to develop a session plan for each coaching session and include activities for anyone assisting.

Some of the duties involved may be:

- carrying, setting out and clearing up the equipment for each activity
- supporting a participant to practise a particular skill
- helping maintain enthusiasm among the participants through positive behaviour.

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When you first start, you should **never** be required to:

- provide your own coaching advice, but you will be required to reinforce the advice from the coach
- plan or coach a session by yourself
- be left on your own to coach the participants
- take a child to the toilet or help him or her get changed.

As mentioned above, as a coach, or assistant to a coach, you will be a role model. Therefore, it is important to be aware of how you:

- talk to participants and other people
- dress
- conduct yourself generally both within and out of the coaching session.

Will You Need a CRB Check?

You will also be asked to complete a CRB check application when you first join. This check looks at any criminal record you may have and allows the club to make an informed decision on your appropriateness to either coach children or vulnerable adults or be in an environment where children or vulnerable adults are present. Legally, this process must be treated with the greatest of discretion, and you should still be able to support the coach while you are awaiting the check being processed. As a volunteer, this should not cost you anything to complete.

Who Can Help You in Your Next Steps to Assist a Coach?

There are three potential approaches to starting on your path into coaching:

- 1 Speak to someone at the local club or group you are interested in assisting at.
- 2 If you don't know where to find your nearest club:
 - in England, contact your nearest **county sports partnership** (CSP – a partnership of local and regional sports organisations)
 - if you are living in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland contact your national sports council (**sportscotland**, **Sport Wales** or **Sport Northern Ireland** respectively) for local and regional information (see contact details on the sports coach UK website: www.sportscoachuk.org).

- 3 Most sports have their own **governing bodies** that oversee all matters relating to their sport's participants, clubs and coaches at all levels. They will have their own coaching pathway and run their own coach training qualifications. For example, the Football Association (FA) is the governing body for football, the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) for tennis and so on. All governing bodies of sport now have their own websites, which hold relevant information and contact details relating to coaching courses and qualifications. (See links on the '[Become a Coach](#)' section of the sports coach UK website for further information: www.sportscoachuk.org)

The UK needs more coaches to support the ever-increasing participation rates in sport. This level is only going to rise after The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond so demand for good quality coaches will be at an all-time high. Your enthusiasm and willingness to support people in sport will develop into an incredibly worthwhile and fulfilling passion!

Good luck!

Useful Links

Go to the '[Become a Coach](#)' section of the sports coach UK website (www.sportscoach.org) and click on 'Coach Zone', then '[Become a Coach](#)' to:

- locate a club by contacting your **CSP**
- find out where the nearest club of your chosen sport train by contacting the relevant **governing body of sport**
- find your nearest disability club by contacting the **English Federation of Disability Sport, Scottish Disability Sport, Disability Sport Wales** or **Disability Sport Northern Ireland**
- find out about being a volunteer coach with the **Youth Sport Trust**.

Useful Workshops

Full details relating to what workshops may be useful for you to attend can be found on the '[Become a Coach](#)' section of the sports coach UK website (go to www.sportscoach.org and click on 'Coach Zone', then '[Become a Coach](#)').