



CANADIAN HOCKEY ASSOCIATION
Minor Hockey Development Guide

MODULE: Coaching – Communications Plan



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Coaching Program

Communications Plan



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A COMMUNICATION ACTION PLAN

What Is Your Communication Style?

How do you exchange information when you are coaching? To a large extent, your communication style depends on how you see yourself as a leader. In your mind, are you the boss and/or CEO? Successful coaches see themselves as team leaders. They are willing to take control and make decisions, but they realize that they are in a partnership role. Their team consists of players in addition to assistants, parents, officials and hockey administrators. There will be times throughout the season when each of these partners will need to take control and make decisions. No coach can do it by himself. Successful coaches see the larger team picture and will share the leadership. When we see our role this way, effective communication skills become one of our most important assets.

Communication – a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behavior. An exchange of information.
From *communēn* – to converse, talk over, discuss

Sometimes when you need to inspire people, all you have to do is listen.

Pat Riley

Communication Principles:

- **Communication is an exchange of information**
- **Communication is always and only one to one**
- **There are two processes when communicating – sending and receiving**
- **As a sender, we can use tools and skills to LINK with another person**
- **As a receiver, we can use tools and skills to understand what is being conveyed**
- **Information can be exchanged directly through words (verbal) or emotions (non-verbal)**
- **Information can be exchanged indirectly through posters, signs, videos, e-mail or voice mail**



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The Process

The **process** of communication involves establishing a link with another person either directly (verbal or non-verbal) or indirectly. There are many strategies that can help us send out information and read feedback effectively. We can teach our athletes and parents some of these strategies.



The Universal Communication Problem

Our experiences in life create a set of values and beliefs within us that is unique to each individual. Values are the basis of our beliefs and our beliefs lead us to act. Words are labels for our experiences. Since no two of us will have the same experiences, no two of us will have the same definition for the same word. The Universal Communication Problem is to find a channel that will form a link of understanding between the sender and receiver. Both people will need to work at establishing this link. We can neither prejudge nor make assumptions. Good communication tools can help us find some common ground.

What do you think? “Attend to the 99%”

Never lose sight of the fact that, as volunteers at the amateur level, we’re not in the business of producing professional hockey players. We should never, ever, lose sight of the fact that of some 500 000 children who lace on skates across Canada each year, far less than 1% ever reach the point of earning a living from the game. Your contribution then, is not really to this 1% who become career players, who likely would have made it on natural ability alone without your help, but to the 99% who are able to learn a few necessary life skills in a peer setting. These are the skills, which become very valuable in making them better adults, better people, better citizens and simply better Canadians.

J. Murray Costello, Past President, CAHA – 1989 Advanced II Seminar



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Habits of Effective Communicators

The “Be List” .What the “Be List” means to me as a coach:

- Be A Teacher
- Be Enthusiastic
- Be Positive
- Be Consistent
- Be Demanding but Considerate
- Be Courteous

Effective Use of Verbal Communication:

1. BE VISABLE TO ALL PLAYERS,
AVOID TURNING YOUR BACK TO
PLAYERS
2. SCAN ROOM BEFORE SPEAKING TO BE SURE GROUP IS QUIET
3. SPEAK CLEARLY AND MAKE EYE
CONTACT WITH ALL PLAYERS
4. USE CHANGES IN YOUR TONE OF
VOICE TO COMMUNICATE
VARYING MOODS
5. USE LANGUAGE THAT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND APPROPRIATE FOR
THE AGE LEVEL

Effective Use of Non-Verbal Communication:

1. MAKE EYE CONTACT
2. GREET PLAYERS WITH A SMILE
3. BE VISABLE TO ALL PLAYERS
4. BE AWARE OF BODY LANGUAGE SIGNALS



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Roles and Responsibilities

No man is an island. Coaches need to provide leadership for their staff. Roles should be clearly defined prior to the beginning of the season. Shared leadership means that support staff must play meaningful roles.

Complete the chart below by checking which roles you feel should be the responsibility of each respective partner.

Task	Head Coach	Assistant Coach	Manager	Trainer	Parent
Registration Fees					
Carding, paperwork					
Ice Booking, scheduling					
On-ice equipment					
Team jerseys and equipment					
Off-ice equipment					
Stats and game sheets					
Accommodations					
Off-ice programs					
On-ice drills and practice plans					
Team rules					
Goaltenders					
Tournaments					
Dressing Room Supervision					
Risk Management					
Fund Raising					
Game Officials					
Game dispute mechanism					
Seasonal Plan					
Skills to be taught					
Systems to be taught					



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Fair Play, Values and Ethics

The Professor

“Values form the basis of our coaching philosophy. We all have a set of values by which we live our lives. Values underlie our beliefs about things and beliefs are the engines that drive our actions and attitudes. We are not born with values. We learn these through our experiences. This is a significant statement since it means that values and beliefs can be changed. This is true for us as coaches but it is also true for the players and parents. Changing our values and beliefs can change our actions and attitudes. The opposite is also true. Changing our actions and taking a different attitude can alter our beliefs and values.”

Conflicting Values:

“We have different opinions about things because we base our thinking on different beliefs and values. Each individual is unique. No two people have the same set of values. No two people rank values in the same order. We will not even have the same definition for our values. Thus, when we share opinions or information, it will reflect our own values. Information garnered from others will reflect their values. The result may be conflict, unless we understand that we are all working from different sets of values.”

Resolving Value Conflicts

When there is a conflict of beliefs among players, parents, coaches or administration, how should you react? The Fair Play Codes provide a set of values where everyone wins. Make these Codes available to your team. Make them a part of your communications plan. If there is a conflict between the values of someone on your team and the values in the Fair Play Codes, choose to follow the Codes. Everyone will win.

Coaching Philosophy

Clearly outline your current coaching philosophy. Insert a copy of the Fair Play Codes into your philosophy, making sure that you clearly state how your program will uphold and follow the fair play codes. A sample copy of the fair play codes can be found below.



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FAIR PLAY CODES FOR PLAYERS

I will play hockey because I want to, not just because others or coaches want me to.

I will play by the rules of hockey, and in the spirit of the game.

I will control my temper - fighting and "mouthing off" can spoil the activity for everybody.

I will respect my opponents.

I will do my best to be a true team player.

I will remember that winning isn't everything - that having fun, improving skills, making friends and doing my best are also important.

I will acknowledge all good plays/performances - those of my team and of my opponents.

I will remember that coaches and officials are there to help me. I will accept their decisions and show them respect.

FAIR PLAY CODES FOR COACHES

I will be reasonable when scheduling games and practices, remembering that players have other interests and obligations.

I will teach my players to play fairly and to respect the rules, officials and opponents.

I will ensure that all players get equal instruction, support and playing time.

I will not ridicule or yell at my players for making mistakes or for performing poorly.

I will remember that players play to have fun and must be encouraged to have confidence in themselves.

I will make sure that equipment and facilities are safe and match the players' ages and abilities.

I will remember that participants need a coach they can respect. I will be generous with praise and set a good example.

I will obtain proper training and continue to upgrade my coaching skills.

I will work in cooperation with officials for the benefit of the game.



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TEAM MEETINGS

Team meetings are necessary to keep the channels of communication open. They provide an opportunity for coaches to share their leadership. It is essential that all stakeholders are aware of your coaching philosophy and plans. This not only makes you accountable, but it creates a solid process that will reinforce key team issues to parents over the course of the season.

When Should You Meet?

Meetings should occur as often as necessary but as a general rule, the pre-season, mid-season, end of season and special circumstances are good times for meetings.

Pre-Season Meeting

Purpose:

- introduce coaching staff and outline their qualifications and responsibilities,
- outline coaching philosophy,
- provide an overview of the seasonal plan along with skills to be taught,
- enlist the support of parents to handle a number of team duties,
- outline basic team rules and expectations of players, parents, and coaches.

Mid- Season Meeting

Purpose:

- touch base with parents,
- reinforce the key points of your program,
- introduce new ideas for the second part of the season,
- allow opportunity to discuss player development,
- seek parent involvement for any specific projects that may have arisen.

End of Season Meeting

Purpose:

- allow parents and players to evaluate the year, specifically program and player development,
- provide feedback to coaches about the season and share plans for upcoming season,
- provide opportunities for the players to seek further development in the off-season,
- celebrate the season with an end of year party
- give out ribbons and trophies, end the year on a positive note

Special Meetings

Purpose:

- organizing tournaments,
- fundraising projects,
- special events like a team building activity or Valentine Dance.



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Conducting the First Parent/Coach Meeting

(After Player Selection)

Getting Started (5 – 10 minutes)

- Introduce yourself, assistant coaches, manager and trainer
- Give a brief explanation of the importance and purpose of the meeting

Coaching Philosophy (10 – 15 minutes)

- Provide information on the goals and objectives of the program and discuss your expectations of the players
- Explain your coaching approach and coaching outcomes

Details of Your Program (10 – 20 minutes)

- Present specific information on the operation of your hockey program
- Discuss your expectations of the players and parents with respect to the details of the program.

Your Expectation of the Parents (15 – 20 minutes)

- Organize a parents' committee to coordinate their roles and responsibilities within your program
- Let the parents participate, along with you and your staff, in deciding on the rules of parent conduct at the games and team functions
- Parents, as well as coaches, should be positive role models for the athletes

Wrapping up (20 –25 minutes)

- Facilitate a discussion with the parents on any further questions/comments they may have
- Listen to suggestions from the parents

Failing to prepare is preparing to fail



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Tips For Team Meetings:

- Set a date and stick to it.
- Set a time frame a stick to it.
- Use clear concise language.
- Keep it interactive and open.
- Have some discussion or communication ground rules.
- “Park” problems or issues that are not on the agenda or need further work.

A Communication Action Plan

Here is a Communication Action Plan Guide: Check each as you complete them.

- Identify Your Communication Style
- Use Strategies to Communicate Effectively
- Use Strategies to Actively Listen
- Use the “Be” List
- Identify Roles for Your Staff
- Copy, Read and Distribute Fair Play Codes
- Plan Parent Meetings
- Create a Parent Communication Handbook