

26 Ways to Improve your Age Group Coaching

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1. Learn about your athletes as people. How? "What's Your Story?"
2. Make time to talk to parents after practice and give instant reports ... examples.
3. Begin practice and end practice with a **routine** ... allows mastery, which allows **comfort**.
4. Be entertaining, within your own personality. Are you grandpa, grandma? Are you Dad, Mum? Older Brother, Older Sister? What are you? Develop a persona and be consistent with it. (You can be consistently **moody** and it will still work.)
5. Use each child's name at least three times in each half hour ... count them.
6. Insist on the best behaviour and the best performance. Being demanding but fair is what children want. If you are not demanding, it means you don't think very highly of the children.
7. Talk at eye level ... not them looking at your shoes.
8. Use a parent to video tape practice, then show them (three minutes or less) what they are doing in practice that is good, and bad ... do it on deck.
9. Do most of your kicking without a board ... kick with a board for social time.
10. A drill done 99% correctly is done 100% wrong (Bill Sweetenham).
11. Use **slightly** older children to demonstrate ... 11 year olds for 8 year olds, etc. ... NOT teenagers or elite swimmers ... everyone wants to be like the **big kids**.
12. Use your teenagers and slightly older athletes to teach skills, (like a Backstroke turn) to your Age Groupers. The value goes far beyond improved attention ratios ... it's magic.
13. Consider providing athletes with different names in practice. THINK about what the names say. Names let you be different people. Some athletes respond to this, some don't.
14. Little people want someone to take them seriously. Are you the one who will?
15. Teenage girls want someone to take them seriously. Are you the one who will?
16. Pre-adolescent boys and pre-adolescent girls are very different ... want different things out of swim practice. Do you know what each one wants? Do you provide it?
17. Teenage boys want someone to admire. Are you the one? Are they admiring the right qualities?
18. Learn how to sell. Learn how to sell. Learn how to sell. Go to the bookstore. Learn about sales techniques. Every day, in everything you do while coaching, you are selling. Don't you think you ought to be good at it if you want to coach? EVERY good coach is a good salesman. What techniques do they know that you don't?
19. Speak less ... show more ... do more.
20. Speak more. At the right time. Have three-minute meetings and teach a concept, then go back to work before they are bored. "Who knows what self-image is? OK, now who can tell me how that relates to swimming? OK, if we act in accordance with our self-image, how do we change our self-image?" Three minutes. It takes more effort to plan a good three-minute talk than an hour talk. Work on it ... be good.
21. Praise in public ... correct in private. (Sometimes that's wrong. When?)
22. Learn to criticise an act, not a person. And use "*that's not like you*".
23. Listen to parents. MOST of them know their child better than you do. They know their child ... you know swimming. Use them to help you succeed. Give them a lot of credit.
24. Seek first to understand, then to be understood (Mr. Covey ... Habits...).
25. Go watch someone else's Workout. Critique it for them ... have them do it for you ... ask questions ... question ... ask why, then how.
26. Learn to do a 5-10 minute dry-land program for your Age Group swimmers to start each session. Those who show up on time to do it will improve faster than anyone else through confidence and strength both.