

Thank you for volunteering your time for Thetford Recreation. This handbook is intended to cover many of the issues that might arise during your coaching experience. Thetford Recreation programs are focused on providing enrichment opportunities to the youth in our community. We are committed to offering quality programs where all participants are given the opportunity to have fun while learning and participating in sports and other activities.

It is with your time and effort we are able to make such a commitment to our programs' participants. If you have any questions please feel free to contact us. Thank you again for committing yourself to the growth and development of not only our programs, but more importantly, our program participants. Make this season and each season thereafter a great experience for yourself, participants and spectators.

Thetford Recreation Department Mission Statement

The mission of the Thetford Recreation Department is to provide activities to our community, while encouraging participation in programs which enhance one's education, promote sportsmanship and physical fitness while also developing good citizenship.

Thetford Recreation Philosophy

Thetford Recreation's philosophy is to provide a safe and fun environment for the youth of our community to learn the importance of teamwork, fair play and skill development. Our objectives include developing positive social skills, encouraging lifetime participation in sports while involving entire families in our programs to develop social capital for our community.

Principles for Coaches and Parents

General Youth Coaching Principles

Coaching is an extremely important responsibility. A good coach always places the best interest of the player before winning. The players and their parents have placed you in a position of leadership, and you have a responsibility to give everyone your best effort. This athletic experience will play a significant factor in determining whether the players continue participating in sports in the future. Following the list of coaching principles, the players and their parents will be better served.

Ten Coaching Guidelines

1. A coach should be enthusiastic without being intimidating. He/she should be sensitive to the player's feelings and genuinely enjoy spending time with them. He/she should be dedicated to serving children and understand sports provide physical and emotional growth for its participants.
2. A coach needs to realize he/she is a teacher. He/she should help children learn and work to improve their skills. The job does not depend on winning. The best interest of the player transforms into the best interest of the game. Each coach will have their own style but consideration must be made to the athletes based on their age, their skill level and developmental level. Remember, children are NOT small adults and often do not understand the vocabulary often used by coaches.
3. The safety and welfare of the players can never be compromised. A coach will consider these factors above all others.
4. A coach needs a tremendous amount of patience. Don't push players beyond their limits in regards to practice. Children have many daily pressures and the athletic experience should not be one of them. Playing sports is supposed to be fun.
5. A coach should care more about the players as people than athletes.
6. A coach should encourage his/her players to dream and set lofty goals. It is important to remain positive and refrain from making discouraging remarks. Negative comments are remembered far more often than positive affirmations.
7. A coach needs to remember the rules of the game are designed to protect the players, as well as to set a standard of competition. He/she should not circumvent or take advantage of the rules by teaching deliberate misconduct. A coach who puts his/her opponent's team at risk should not be involved with children.
8. A coach should be the first person to demonstrate good sportsmanship. He/she should take a low profile during the game and allow the kids to be the center of attention.
9. Parents and players place a lot of trust and confidence in the coach. The coach has an important role in molding the athletic experience of the child.
10. A coach can measure success by the respect he/she gets from his or her players, regardless of victories or defeat. Children who mature socially and physically while participating in sports are the best indications of good coaching.

Additional Coaching Tips:

- Take time to introduce yourself to parents on the first day and set "team rules" so everybody hears them and knows what to expect.
- Keep up with all your players during your scheduled practice time.
- Use mistakes as positive opportunities to learn rather than negative outcomes to dwell on.
- Encourage your player's parents and family to attend games.

- Make sure you are creating a fun and pleasant atmosphere for your players during practices and games.
- Play ALL of your players.
- Motivate your players to work toward achievable goals.
- HAVE FUN!!

**Always Remember: You are doing this for fun and to help the players. Be a "nice" coach who your players will remember fondly.

Dealing with Parents

The success of your team involves everyone's participation. The key to keeping parents involved and happy is communication. Encourage parents to talk to you and ask questions and give input. If a parent offers their services or help, let them be part of the experience. We encourage coaches to meet with their team parents early; explain to them what you hope to accomplish and reassure them it is your wish their child has an enjoyable experience. Call parents if you need help and have not heard from anyone. More often than not, people want to help, but think if they do not know the sport then there is nothing they can do.

Depending on the circumstances, ask your Recreation Director for advice and support. During your meeting with the team parents encourage them to do the following:

- "Positive encouragement is good; negative comments are bad."
- "Cheering is good, but do not yell at your child or anyone else's child during the game. It can be distracting and what you tell them may be different from what the coaches are saying. If you would like to be an assistant coach, please call me, I would love your help."
- "Be careful not to say anything that might be taken the wrong way or hurt someone's feelings. Remember: this is for fun and these are children."
- "Be a good role model and a good sport."
- "Do not yell at the referees or say anything bad to or about the other team. Never 'boo' the other team or cheer when they make a mistake."

Good Sportsmanship

What is good sportsmanship?

Good sportsmanship occurs when teammates, opponents, coaches and officials treat each other with respect. Kids learn the basics of sportsmanship from the adults in their lives, especially parents and coaches. Kids who see adults behaving in a sportsmanlike way gradually come to understand the real winners in sports are those who know how to persevere and behave with dignity – whether they win or lose a game. Parents and coaches can help kids understand good sportsmanship through small gestures and heroic efforts. It starts with something as simple as shaking hands with opponents before/after a game and includes acknowledging good plays made by others and accepting bad calls gracefully. Displaying good sportsmanship is not always easy; it can be tough to congratulate the opposing team after losing a close or important game, but the kids who learn how to do it will benefit in many ways. A child who practices good sportsmanship is likely to carry the respect and appreciation of other people into every other aspect of life.

Some suggestions for building sportsmanship on your team:

- Keep your comments positive. Don't bad mouth other coaches, players or game officials. If you have a serious concern about a parents' behavior, discuss it privately with the child's parent or with a league official.

- When you're talking to your team after a competition, it is important not to dwell on who won or lost; instead ask your team how they felt during the game. If a child mentions he or she didn't do well at a particular skill, offer to work on these skills with the child before the next game.
- Applaud good plays no matter who makes them.
- Set a good example with your courteous behavior toward the parents of kids on the other team. Congratulate them when their kids win.
- Remember it's the child, not you, who is playing.
- Keep your perspective, it's just a game. Even if your team loses every game of the season, it is unlikely to ruin the child's life or chances of success.
- **DON'T FORGET TO HAVE FUN!!**

Coach's Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct

1. I will place the emotional and physical well being of my players ahead of any personal desire to win and remember the game is for the youth, not adults.

Expected Behavior:

- Allow and encourage players to listen, learn and play hard within the rules.
- Fulfill the expected role of a youth coach to adopt a "children first" philosophy.
- Place emphasis on fun, participation and team.

2. I will remember to treat each player as an individual, remembering the large spread of emotional and physical development for the same.

Expected Behavior:

- Recognize the differences of each child while treating each player as an individual and demonstrating concern for their individual needs and well being.
- Encourage all players, regardless of skill level.
- Recognize some physical tasks, drills and demands are not appropriate for all youth.

3. I will do my best to provide a safe playing situation for my players.

Expected Behavior:

- Maintain a high level of awareness of potentially unsafe conditions.
- Correct or avoid unsafe practice or playing conditions.
- Use appropriate safety equipment necessary to protect all players.
- Report unsafe conditions to Recreation Director

4. I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players.

Expected Behavior:

- Establish practice plans that are interesting, varied, and productive which are aimed at improving all players' skills and individual abilities.
- Devote appropriate time to the improvement of each individual player.
- Conduct practices of reasonable length and intensity appropriate for the age and conditioning of the players.

5. I will lead, by example, in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship by supporting all players and officials.

Expected Behavior:

- Abide by and support the rules of the game as well as the spirit of the rules.
- Provide an environment conducive to fair and equitable competition.
- Use the influential position of a youth coach as an opportunity to promote, teach and expect sportsmanship and fair play.
- Use appropriate language at all times. At no time is profanity acceptable.

6. I will use appropriate coaching techniques for each of the skills I teach.

Expected Behavior:

- Study and learn the rules of the game for the appropriate age group.
- Review all coaching material provided to coaches.
- Attend all coaches' meetings/clinics

7. I will not use alcohol and tobacco products during league sponsored events.

Expected Behavior:

- Be alcohol and drug free during all league sponsored events.
- Refrain from the use of any type of tobacco products at all team activities or in the presence of players.

8. I will remember that children play, referees call, fans cheer and coaches TEACH.

Expected Behavior:

- Exercise your authority/influence to control behavior of fans and spectators.
- Treat parents and coaches of other teams with respect.
- Treat officials and league administrators with respect.

9. As the coach, I will respect and support the decisions of the contest officials.

Expected Behavior:

- I will back and support the decisions of league officials and assist in enforcing all league rules.
- If I have concerns or questions, I will direct them to the league administrator at an appropriate time. I will not criticize another coach, game or league official.
- I will cooperate and offer assistance whenever I can.

10. I am aware I have a tremendous influence on my players and I will not place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character into each and every child I coach.

Coach's signature

date

Printed name

PLAYERS AND PARENTS:

- **Players will come prepared for practice and games with all proper attire and equipment**
- **Players will be expected to give full attention during practice sessions and games**
- **Players are expected to always work hard to help improve their skills and understanding of the game.**
- **Players and parents should always be courteous of other players, teammates and opponents.**
- **It is expected that all players and parents exemplify and demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times.**
- **Players and parents are expected to be respectful of the coaches, officials and opponents.**

Respectfulness

Respect is enshrined in the golden rule: treating others as you wish to be treated by them. Respect applies to oneself as well as to others. Respectful athletes and coaches accept decisions by officials or superiors without arguing, avoid violence in and out of sport, act considerately toward all people, and seek to resolve differences without anger and insults.

Examples of respectful behavior in sport include using considerate language and nonverbal body language even when you are angry or disappointed, walking away from confrontation during a game, speaking respectfully (e.g., without sarcasm or profanity) even when you are provoked, accepting victory and defeat without disparaging your opponents, and accepting officials' decisions without argument.

Responsibility

Responsibility involves perseverance and doing the right thing. Responsible athletes and coaches are reliable, self-disciplined, and considerate; they do not act impulsively without first considering the consequences of their actions.

Examples of responsible behavior in sport include always trying your hardest, even against a much better opponent or when the outcome doesn't matter; showing up regularly for practice, even when you are preoccupied or don't feel like training; and accepting responsibility for actions that lead to unexpected consequences.

Caring

Being caring involves compassion, gratitude, and empathy (the ability to experience the feelings of others). Athletes and coaches who are caring are gracious in both victory and defeat; they readily acknowledge the contributions of others to their success. Caring athletes play for their team rather than just for themselves. Caring also involves promoting the health and safety of everyone involved in sport, particularly athletes.

Examples of caring behavior in sport involve complimenting your opponent's efforts, win or lose; thanking your teammates, coaches, and supporters after a game; encouraging an injured teammate; and helping an opponent up after a fall or tackle.

Honesty

Honesty involves being truthful and forthright (i.e., not hiding important information) and acting with integrity and loyalty. Athletes and coaches show their honesty by speaking and acting consistently and by always doing the right thing. The motives and actions of honest coaches and athletes are rarely questioned because their actions are backed up by a personal sense of integrity.

Examples of honest behavior in sport include being a team player (loyalty), dealing honestly and openly with other athletes and coaches (honesty, loyalty), and playing fairly within the spirit and rules of the game (honesty).

Fairness

Fairness—playing by the rules and the spirit of the game whether you are winning or losing—is one of the key elements of sportsmanship. Athletes and coaches who play fairly will always play by the rules, regardless of how doing so may affect the outcome of the game. Athletes and coaches display a sense of fairness by not taking unfair advantage by bending or circumventing the rules.

Participation

If a child chooses to not enter a game the coach will make a reasonable effort to encourage the player to join. If the child is still tentative about participating, the coach and child will discuss this with the parent/guardian following the game. The goal of this conversation will be to work with the child and parents/guardians to ensure the best experience possible going forward.

Parent concerns

Please always remember that your coaches are volunteers!

We recognize that concerns regarding your child's coach might arise. Please make an attempt to speak with your child's coach before approaching the Recreation Director with your issue. We respectfully request that parents do not discuss a game, a play, a strategy, etc. with a coach for at least 24 hours after the contest. (Please NEVER approach a coach during a game.) Allowing for 24 hours moves the discussion away from the players and gives parents a chance to calm their emotions and resolve a disagreement rationally. The 24-Hour Rule is a good way for parents to take a breath and decide whether their concern really is a matter of fairness or if it is an intense emotional reaction to the situation. HOWEVER, if there is a concern of alarming nature regarding a coach or player's actions you should immediately bring them to the attention of the coach and/or Recreation Director. This would include any form of physical or emotional abuse or aggression.

After 24 hours, if you feel as though the issue still needs to be addressed find an appropriate time to talk to the coach. Calling or emailing the coach prior to a face to face meeting is good practice. Allow for a reasonable amount of time for the coach to respond to your request before you approach the Recreation Director (remember these coaches are volunteers and have other life responsibilities to attend to).

I have read the above information provided to me by the Thetford Recreation Department and have reviewed it with my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature

date

Printed Name

Thetford Vermont Recreation Conduct Policy

Thetford Recreation seeks to serve children and families in the best possible way. Positive discipline and consistency of consequences is necessary for the safety and enjoyment of the children. The following policies will guide the Recreation Department in dealing with behavior. While misbehavior can be expected from time to time from all children, misbehavior will be handled in a consistent fashion so as to help the child learn and grow.

Examples of conduct issues include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. Disruptive or malicious behavior, or
- b. Harassment of participants or officials, or
- c. Profane language and/or gestures, or
- d. Public threat or physical violence.

Misbehavior has varying degrees so in order to remain consistent the coach and/or Recreation Director will handle each situation according to the following steps:

STEP ONE: CONFLICT RESOLUTION WITHIN THE PROGRAM

A child who shows physical or verbal aggression or other concerning behavior will be asked to sit out of practice and/or the game for a period of time to be determined by the coach. They will also be spoken to about why they are being asked to sit out. The coach will explain to them how they are expected to behave in order to join back in with others. Parents will be notified as soon as possible (ie: just following practice or in a phone call that evening) about the incident and the details regarding the coach's action. Coaches should also follow up in writing to the Recreation Director.

STEP TWO: MEETING WITH PARENTS

Should a parent be given 2 or more notifications by the coach, the coach, parent, player, and Recreation Director will meet in order to discuss the behavior.

STEP THREE: PROBATION/WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM :

If the behavior continues and puts self or others at risk the child may be asked to take a suspension or asked to withdraw from program

Before the child can return to the program, or a subsequent program (ie: if the incident (s) take place toward the end of one season and needs to be addressed prior to the beginning of the next) a Parent-Coach- Recreation Director meeting is required, to review and devise a specific plan for helping the child modify behavior so that they can continue to participate in recreation activities. The appropriateness of the program for the child will also be discussed

PLEASE NOTE: For incidents which are more serious, we may need to move through these steps more quickly than outlined depending on the situation.

Parent/Guardian signature

date

Printed name