

How to Work with Recreational Players to Make Practice Fun and Challenging

1. **Belong**

Children need to feel like they belong. As coaches it is vital that the players regardless of age and ability feel as though they are part of a group. Besides food and water the next basic need is a sense of belonging. So instead of starting your practice with laps or a warm-up, try having them greet each other in unique ways. A variety of models will be demonstrated on how to make children feel like they belong!

2. **Develop**

After greeting each child and the “Belong” phase of practice, it is time for you to develop their soccer abilities. Besides the desire to be a part of a group, children also enjoy learning and being challenged. The myth of recreation soccer is that it is not competitive, however, one would argue that children should learn how to compete. Challenge and competition is healthy as long as it is “bridled”. It is unbridled competition that often proves detrimental which leads to children quitting sports altogether. In my session, I will model how you can challenge children and create a healthy competitive environment regardless of age or ability.

3. **Fun**

The final part of the hat trick is to have fun! Children to play sports to have fun. While they do enjoy challenge and competition, if the element of fun is not present then motivation to continue to play soccer will not endure. In my session, the element of fun will be presented by allowing them to discover the game without the fear of making mistakes. My main objective is to want my players regardless of age or ability to play the game without anyone around!

