

Dear Coach Fantastic,



**As a coach, when should I start giving feedback to players and how often should I speak to them?**

**(Mary, Tyrone)**

Hi Mary

It is important that coaches provide relevant, quality information to players after training or matches and this will in turn accelerate learning and performance. The extent of this feedback will depend on the age group you are working with. A greater level of information is required for players when they are first learning skills as it is important that they have the correct techniques from the beginning. The majority of feedback given at this younger age is skill specific. Feedback should be constant at this stage.

The art of coaching is then knowing when to begin to reduce the amount of feedback you are giving to players to allow them to think for themselves and encourage them to problem solve and develop their own decision making abilities. Players have built in mechanisms that tell them how well they performed but it is important for you, as the coach, to give them more detail on their play and narrow the gap between how they perceived they performed and what actually happened so they can all improve. Do not provide too much information as this will cause the player to over analyse and will disrupt concentration. You should be providing them with key words and statements. Feedback for adult players will mainly focus on performance and what they need to improve in this area. E.g. Mary, over the last few weeks I have noticed that 90 percent of the time you give the ball into the forwards on the left hand side. Over the next few weeks I want you to try and vary your distribution into the forwards as your kicking is very accurate and will really benefit the team.

All coaches should aim to motivate your players through feedback and if giving advice use the 'feedback sandwich' - positive - advice - positive. (e.g. Mary you played a very good game today. You just need to come off your line a bit quicker to narrow the angle but keep up that attitude as I've seen huge improvements.) The player will take your advice from the middle but will not leave feeling negative.

As stated at the beginning, the age group you are working with will determine the level of feedback you are providing to players. When you decide to reduce your feedback, this should be a progressive as if you stop too quickly it can be perceived as the coach not caring. At this stage you should be confident that your players can problem solve for themselves with your support. Remember even a short chat during or after training can provide much needed information for a player.

I hope you find this useful.

Coach Fantastic