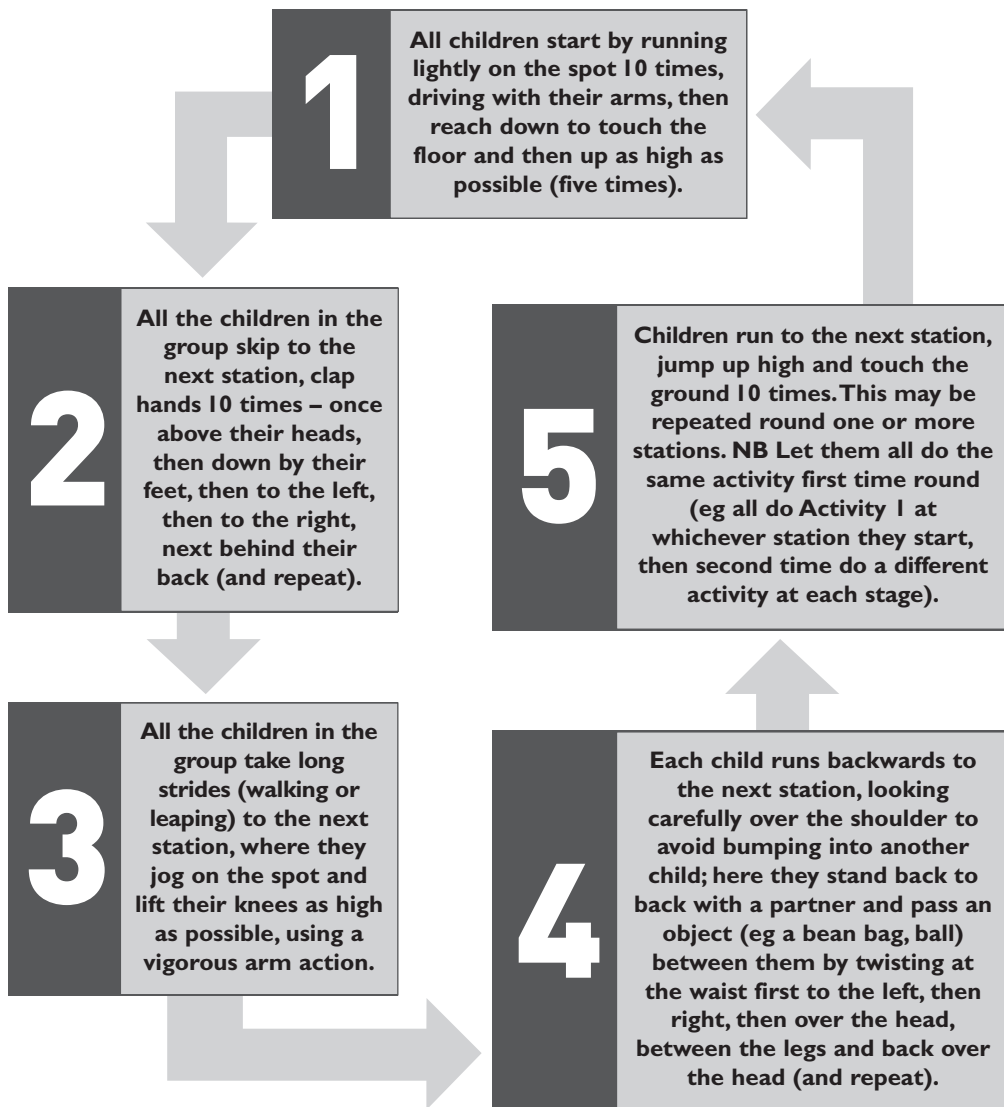


3 Keeping Children Safe

It may also be possible to put each stage of the warm-up into one activity game.

For example: mark out five activity stations (enough stations for three to five children to start at each one) and indicate the order in which they move from one to the next.



During the session

While you are helping out, ensure the children practise their skills and techniques safely.

- Make sure the techniques are appropriate for the age and experience of the children.
- Remember they are not mini adults – their minds and bodies are still developing.
- Group children according to age, height, skill or physical maturity, as appropriate. Remember children of the same age may be several years apart in physical development, so be fair.
- Keep an eye on the children's progress. You will often have to practise some stages of an activity several times and repeat something you did with them last week. Be patient and let children learn at their own pace.
- Keep a lookout for anyone looking tired or ill – that way you may avoid accidents and keep children from becoming discouraged.
- If it is hot, encourage children to drink regularly – they tend to dehydrate more quickly than adults. Don't wait until they are thirsty.
- If a child is injured, he/she should not continue. It may appear brave to limp on but this is not sensible and can cause further damage.

- Always maintain discipline. Fooling around can cause injuries. Make sure you model the behaviour you expect from the children.
- Keep activity times quite short. Base the duration and the scheduling of practices and competitions on the age, capability and maturity of the children.

Finishing the session

It is useful to cool down after exercise as well as warm up beforehand. Choose a slower-paced activity to calm the children, give the body a chance to recover and reduce the likelihood of muscle stiffness. Ensure they put on extra clothing to avoid getting cold.

Children first

First and foremost, sport should be fun, so it is important to place the well-being and interests of the children above everything else. If you follow this advice, you will not go far wrong.

- Children first, winning second. Too much emphasis is often placed simply on winning rather than on effort or improvement. Those who lose – the majority – are too often wrongly regarded as failures.
- Avoid giving extra attention and playing time to the more talented children. Average and less talented children need and deserve equal time. Be sensitive to those who are less talented.

3 Keeping Children Safe

- Be reasonable in your demands on young people's time, energy and enthusiasm – children need other interests. For some, sport may not be their greatest interest and you should accept this.
- Always follow the advice of a doctor when deciding when an injured child is ready to take part again.
- Encourage and develop respect for the abilities of opponents, as well as for the judgement of officials and opposing helpers. Develop a sense of fair play and the importance of doing your best.

If you are concerned about a child, talk to:

- the parents or carers first – unless you are concerned about sexual abuse or violence at home
- someone you can trust – the person in charge of the session or the venue
- the social services or the police.

OR phone the NSPCC Helpline on 0808-800 5000.

Think safe

Sport should be fun and children should be and feel safe. As a parent, coach or leader, you have a responsibility to do everything you can to protect children from all forms of abuse (page 31). It is not up to you to decide whether or not abuse is taking place but it is your responsibility to act if you are concerned. You should ensure that children also know what to do if they are concerned¹.

Summary

Remember you must ensure children's safety by:

- thinking safe – always check facilities, equipment and surfaces and ensure the activity is appropriate for the developmental age and ability of the child
- putting the welfare of the child first
- acting on any concern you may have about the welfare of the child
- knowing about first aid and how to cope in an emergency.

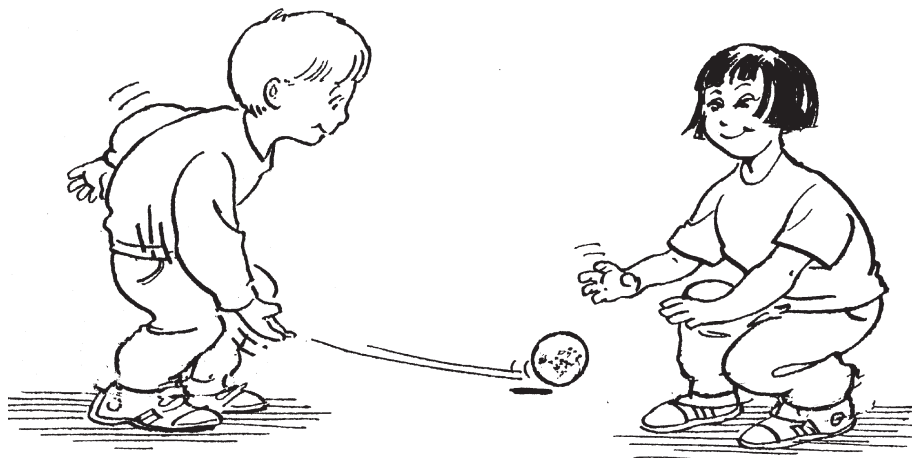
¹ Child Protection Posters by sports coach UK and the NSPCC are available from Coachwise (tel: 0113-201 5555 or visit the website: www.1st4sport.com)

Your contribution to the children's enjoyment will be much greater if you take the trouble to plan in advance and organise yourself and the children. Many of the problems you may have when you first start helping may have nothing to do with personality, control or knowledge – they are probably due simply to a lack of preparation and organisation.

Planning

Planning need not be elaborate – just a little forethought before the session will make all the difference.

- Find out the ability, previous experience and interests of the children.
- Decide what you want to achieve with the children – be challenging but not too ambitious.
- Always keep in mind the age and developmental stage of the child.
- Always think about the possible danger areas. Anticipate problems – think safe.
- Plan in advance how you will divide the children into groups or teams (eg by size/ability or their choice).
- Allow a little time for the warm-up and cool-down but ensure most of the time is allocated to the main activity.
- Keep activities varied but simple. Do not include too many new activities – children can only take in so much. One thing learned well is better than several things learned badly.
- Ask experienced coaches for advice on planning.



Keep in mind the developmental stage of each child