

National Standards for Sport Coaches July 2018 Revision Draft

Role and Purpose of the Standards

The National Standards for Sport Coaches (NSSC) provide direction for coach educators and developers, sport administrators, coaches, athletes and their families, and the public regarding the core responsibilities that coaches should possess along with the supporting task-related competencies. The standards identify the knowledge and skills to support a quality amateur sport experience for athletes and provide those working with sport coaches the resources to develop their coaching staff.

These standards have multiple purposes.

- Sport coaches may use them to better understand their coaching role and identify areas to gain further competence.
- Athletes and their families may use them to determine the quality of the coaching experience received.
- Sport administrators and coach developers may use them to direct professional development opportunities for coaches.
- Sport administrators may use them to determine expectations or construct assessment of coaches (e.g., competency checklists or evaluative tools).
- Sport administrators may use them to further clarify the role of support staff in assisting coaches.
- Coach educators and developers may use the standards to construct curriculum for the training of sport coaches.
- The standards may spark debate about the responsibilities, knowledge, skills, and competencies of sport coaches.
- The standards may encourage research into the applicability of the standards for sport coaches, the effectiveness of the standards in providing quality sport experiences, and/or effectively training sport coaches on the responsibilities, knowledge, skills, and competencies.

While the standards reflect the fundamental actions that administrators, athletes, and the public can expect of sport coaches within their sport context, differences in depth and breadth of

knowledge and skills can be expected based on the level of coach expertise (e.g., volunteer beginning coach versus high school coach) and the sport coaching context (e.g., youth sport versus intercollegiate sport). Thus, the standards provide a broadly focused framework that sport organizations can adjust and adapt to work within their context. For example, some youth recreation programs may delegate some of the standards to the recreation director given the volunteer nature of their coaching staff. Further, these programs may place greater emphasis on developing some standards compared to others (e.g., emphasizing an athlete-centered philosophy and having knowledge of sport skills and how to teach them and only briefly cover tactical decision making in contests). However, sport organizations are encouraged to consider how all of the standards work within the context rather than whether or not they apply to the context.

Explanation of the Standards

This revision of NSSC is organized into seven core responsibilities of coaching to more closely align with the International Sport Coaching Framework (ICCE, ASOIF, and Leeds Metropolitan University, 2013). Under each of the core responsibilities are corresponding standards that identify task-related competencies. Each standard is briefly described providing insight into knowledge and skills that could be developed to help coaches achieve the competency. In parentheses at the end of each standard, you will find the current version of the NSSC standard that correlates with it. Both the core responsibilities and standards are based on the most recent scientific research in coaching and the final revision will include a comprehensive list of references and resources.

Reference

International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE), the Association of Summer Olympic Federations (ASOIF) and Leeds Metropolitan University (2013). *International sport coaching framework*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Set Vision, Goals, and Standards for Sport Program

Sport coaches establish a clearly defined coaching philosophy and vision for their program. They develop, implement, and manage the goals for the program, in collaboration with sport program directors. To meet this responsibility sport coaches:

Standard 1: Develop and enact an athlete-centered coaching philosophy. (Standard 1)

Focusing on the development of the whole athlete, sport coaches prioritize teachable moments and athlete development over winning at all costs. Sport coaches provide opportunities for athletes to reach their full potential within the sport and help athletes take responsibility for practicing behaviors that will enable their athletic success.

Standard 2: Use the American Development Model with the intent to develop athletic potential, enhance physical literacy, and encourage lifelong physical activity. (Standard 16)

Sport coaches understand and implement developmentally appropriate principles associated with the American Development Model, specifically, and long-term athlete development, in general.

Standard 3: Create a unified vision that corresponds to strategic planning and goal-setting principles and in alignment with the appropriate stage(s) of a long-term athlete development model. (Standard 20)

Sport coaches create and implement goals important to the physical, behavioral, and social development of the athlete. The goals are aligned with the program vision, coaching philosophy, and long-term athlete development.

Standard 4: Align program with national, regional, and local policies and/or needs of the community and individual athletes.

Sport coaches follow the applicable national, regional, and local rules and regulations to ensure the program is in compliance and eligible to compete.

Standard 5: Manage program resources in a responsible manner. (Standards 32, 33, & 35)

Sport coaches manage program documents. They have a basic understanding of fiscal and facility management specific to their program.

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Engage In and Support Ethical Practices

Sport coaches understand the importance of ethical behavior, engage in ethical behavior, abide by codes of conduct affiliated with their sport and coaching context, and teach ethical behavior in their sport program. To meet this responsibility sport coaches:

Standard 6: Abide by the code of conduct within their coaching context. (Standard 3)

Sport coaches follow the code of conduct established by their national, regional, and/or local sport organization.

Standard 7: Model, teach, and reinforce ethical behavior with program participants. (Standards 2, 3, 4)

Sport coaches identify appropriate ethical behavior for their sport context and model it for their athletes. They make a deliberate attempt to teach and reinforce ethical behavior among their athletes.

Standard 8: Develop an ethical decision-making process based on ethical standards. (Standard 3)

Sport coaches recognize the role of ethics in making decisions. They evaluate decision making options using varied ethical approaches, determine the best course of action, and reflect upon their action to improve ethical decision-making in the future.

Build Relationships

Sport coaches develop competencies to effectively communicate, collaborate, educate, and support all stakeholders associated with the sport program (e.g., athletes, administrators, assistant coaches, support staff, referees, sports medicine professionals, program supporters, parents, media). To meet this responsibility the sport coaches:

Standard 9: Acquire and utilize interpersonal and communication skills. (Standards 25 & 31)

Sport coaches develop their interpersonal skills to build positive relationships with all stakeholders. These interpersonal skills include learning to engage in conversation, actively listening, understanding another's perspective, navigate personality styles, negotiating, maintaining self-control, and resolving conflicts. Sport coaches also make concerted efforts to develop positive coach-athlete relationships that are based on trust, commitment, clear expectations, appropriate interactions, constructive feedback, and support. Sport coaches work to develop their oral and written communication skills to concisely and clearly communicate information, elicit community support, and advocate for the program.

Standard 10: Develop competencies to work with a diverse group of individuals. (Standard 19)

Sport coaches develop sociocultural competencies to work with diverse individuals (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, culture, socioeconomic status, etc.). These competencies include understanding how one's own background may affect how one interacts with others, understanding and appreciating others different from oneself, and appreciating how sociocultural norms, practices, and hierarchies in sport may influence stakeholders in positive and negative ways.

Standard 11: Demonstrate professionalism and leadership with all stakeholders. (Standard 4 & 25)

Sport coaches cultivate their leadership skills in demonstrating professionalism with all stakeholders. They use leadership and management principles to help all stakeholders adopt the program vision, core values, and mission as well as encourage appropriate involvement. **Develop a**

Safe Sport Environment

Sport coaches create an emotionally and physically safe sport environment by following the practices outlined by sport organizations, coaching science, and state and federal laws. To meet this responsibility sport coaches:

Standard 12: Create a respectful and safe environment which is free from harassment and abuse. (Standard 2, 3, 4, & 19)

Sport coaches treat athletes and all program personnel with respect. They also use their personal and official power in a responsible manner to reduce the potential for abuse and sexual harassment. Sport coaches are proactive in preventing bullying and/or hazing behavior on the part of the athletes, staff or spectators.

Standard 13: Collaborate with program directors to fulfill all legal responsibilities and risk management procedures associated with coaching. (Standard 36)

Sport coaches understand the legal responsibilities of their position. Sport coaches identify and minimize potential risks based on sound risk management practices.

Standard 14: Identify and mitigate physical, psychological, and sociocultural conditions that predispose athletes to injuries. (Standards 8 & 13)

Sport coaches are aware of how health status, body structure, physical conditions, and periods of growth can predispose athletes to common injuries specific to the sport. Sport coaches are aware that an athlete's lack of sleep, fatigue, poor nutrition, and/or emotional state could warrant a change in practice plans to avoid injury.

Standard 15: Monitor environmental conditions and modify participation as needed to ensure the health and safety of participants. (Standard 7)

Sport coaches follow standards set forth by National Athletic Trainers' Association or local or state laws in regards to monitoring environmental conditions (i.e. facilitation of hydration) to modify or stop play. Sport coaches work with qualified sport medicine professionals to monitor environmental conditions such as heat, cold, or lightening.

Standard 16: Reduce potential injuries by instituting safe and proper training principles and procedures. (Standards 5, 6, & 17)

Sport coaches implement safe training procedures. They ensure safe facilities and equipment, institute safe practice procedures, and supervise athletes during practice. Sport coaches recognize the biomechanical factors that underlie the causes of acute and chronic injuries relative to their sport and following proper physiological training principles to avoid overtraining or injury.

Standard 17: Develop awareness of common injuries in sport and provide immediate and appropriate care within scope of practice. (Standards 9, 10, & 34)

Sport coaches are trained in CPR/First Aid. In response to an injury, sport coaches activate the emergency action plan. They also respond to the injury and/or refer an athlete to proper healthcare professionals.

Standard 18: Support the decisions of sports medicine professionals to help athletes have a healthy return to participation following an injury. (Standard 11 & 15)

Sport coaches work with Athletic Trainers or other medical professionals to ensure a successful return to full participation following injury. Sport coaches will provide a supportive environment that helps the injured athlete maintain social interactions during rehabilitation, and addressing psychological issues with return to participation (e.g., self-confidence, motivation, fear of injury, etc.).

Standard 19: Model and encourage nutritional practices that ensure the health and safety of athletes. (Standard 13)

Sport coaches use sound nutritional practices (i.e., research-based, proven safe and effective) with their athletes and in their own lives to promote a healthy lifestyle. They will promote a diet that fuels the athlete in a safe and healthy manner and encourage a healthy body image. Sport coaches are proactive in identifying potential eating disorders and referring athletes for appropriate professional assistance.

Standard 20: Provide accurate information about drugs and supplements to athletes and advocate for drug-free sport participation. (Standard 14)

Sport coaches are a reliable source of information about specific supplements/drugs by obtaining current, research-based information related to supplements/drugs and their potential impact on performance and health. Sport coaches will intervene and/or refer athletes to appropriate experts when significant changes in body composition, physical appearance, personality and uncharacteristic behaviors that may be drug-related are observed.

Create a Positive and Inclusive Sport Environment

Sport coaches develop practices to maximize positive outcomes for their athletes by building season plans that promote physical, psychological, and social benefits for their athletes and encourage participation in sport. Sport coaches implement strategies to promote participation of all athletes. To meet this responsibility sport coaches:

Standard 21: Implement a positive and enjoyable sport climate based on best practices for psychosocial and motivational principles to maximize athlete and team well-being and performance. (Standards 17, 19, 20, & 26)

Sport coaches create a positive sport climate by emphasizing effort and learning, encouraging athletes to keep winning in perspective, and promoting lifelong physical activity as an enjoyable endeavor. They help athletes learn from mistakes, improve their skills, and challenge their capabilities in an inviting and supportive environment. Sport coaches encourage athletes' personal responsibility and decision making, build confidence, and create an environment where collectively the team can grow and work together toward a positive outcome for the team. Sport coaches promote athlete well-being and provide appropriate assistance and referral for mental health issues.

Standard 22: Build inclusive practices into the program for all groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender/gender identity/gender expression, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, nationality, etc.) which are aligned with current legal and ethical guidelines. (Standard 19 & 36)

Sport coaches welcome all eligible athletes and implement strategies to encourage the participation and value the contribution of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. To effectively promote inclusivity, sport coaches follow legal (e.g., ADA, Title IX, etc.) and ethical guidelines to ensure that all athletes have equal opportunity to participate in athletics.

Standard 23: Understand the importance of including athletes with disabilities in meaningful participation in established sport programs and consider options for athletes who cannot participate in traditional sport opportunities. (Standard 36)

Sport coaches include athletes with disabilities with necessary accommodations that do not interfere with the integrity of the game or equal opportunities for all athletes, with and without disabilities, to be competitive. Sport coaches will work with administrators to provide appropriate alternatives if athletes with disabilities cannot participate in a traditional version of the sport.

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Conduct Practices and Prepare for Competition

Sport coaches draw upon current coaching science, sport-specific knowledge, and best practices to conduct quality sport practices, prepare athletes for competition, and effectively manage contests. This practice can be framed around how coaches plan, teach, assess, and adapt in practices and competition. To meet this responsibility sport coaches:

Plan

Standard 24: Create seasonal and/or annual plans that incorporate developmentally appropriate progressions for instructing sport-specific skills based on best practices in motor development, biomechanics, and motor learning. (Standard 12, 16, & 21)

Sport coaches structure plans that consider anticipated individual variability in physical, behavioral, and social maturity over the course of the season/year. Sport coaches plan for appropriate skill progressions based on the type of sport-specific skill and athletes' stages of learning, memory and attentional capabilities, motivation, etc.

Standard 25: Design appropriate progressions for improving sport-specific physiological systems throughout all phases of the sport season using essential principles of exercise physiology and nutritional knowledge. (Standards 12, 13, & 21)

Sport coaches understand the basic principles and applications of training and program design. They are responsible for the physical training and conditioning that facilitates athlete development and performance. Although important to know these principles in relation to sport, it's also necessary to consider the principles holistically since many athletes are multi-sport athletes. Sport coaches design training programs and periodization plans that properly utilize physiological and biomechanical principles and implement nutritional guidelines for healthy eating to ensure optimal performance.

Standard 26: Plan practices to incorporate appropriate competition strategies, tactics, and scouting information. (Standard 28)

Sport coaches identify, develop and apply competitive sport strategies and specific tactics appropriate for the age and skill levels of the participating athletes, unique characteristics of the competitive situation, and scouting information. Sport coaches involve athletes in selecting

competitive strategies and seek to facilitate the strategic decision-making capabilities of all athletes.

Standard 27: Incorporate mental skills into practice and competition to enhance performance and athlete well-being. (Standard 24)

Sport coaches incorporate mental skills training at all age levels as a means to increase learning and performance, but also as part of the holistic development of the athlete. They train mental skills (e.g., goal-setting, arousal regulation, attentional control, imagery/visualization, self-talk) through a periodized model that will allow athletes to progress in their development of these skills and peak at appropriate times during the season. Sport coaches help athletes develop a mental competition plan that includes pre-competition preparation, contingency plan for errors during competition, and managing stress.

Standard 28: Create intentional strategies to develop life skills and promote their transfer to other life domains. (Standards 2, 3, 17, & 18)

Sport coaches plan strategies to teach important life skills (e.g., teamwork, leadership, persistence, social and emotional skills). Sport coaches show athletes how life skills can be useful in life domains outside of sport to increase the likelihood that they will be learned, practiced, and developed.

Standard 29: Understand components of effective contest management. (Standard 30)

Sport coaches understand the importance of preparing facilities for competition, securing licensed officials, and promoting and demonstrating positive behavior to all officials, coaches and spectators.

Teach

Standard 30: Know the skills, elements of skill combinations and techniques, competition strategies and tactics, and the rules associated with the sport being coached. (Standard 27)
Sport coaches possess a deep understanding of all aspects of their particular sport and are aware of the rules, techniques, and competitions strategies and tactics of their sport.

Standard 31: Develop and utilize pedagogical strategies in daily practices. (Standards 23 & 27)

Sport coaches know and use a variety of pedagogical approaches and instructional methods to help athletes learn techniques and tactics (e.g., accurate and timely demonstrations, games-based learning, problem-solving activities). Sport coaches also diversify these instructional strategies based on the needs of their athletes.

Standard 32: Craft daily practice plans based on sound teaching and learning principles to promote athlete development and optimize competitive performance. (Standards 22 & 25)

Sport coaches create daily practice plans using practice plan guidelines (e.g., opening comments, warm-up, practice objectives, appropriate progression of skills and conditioning, cool down, closing comments, post-practice reflections) and teaching and learning principles (e.g., enhancing time on task, planning for complexity to appropriately challenge athletes, simulating competition situations, instituting behavioral management practices, pacing instructional cues, providing feedback contingent upon performance, checking for athlete understanding and comprehension, etc.).

Standard 33: Use appropriate motivational techniques to enhance performance and athlete engagement during practices and competitions. (Standards 17, 19, 23, & 26)

Sport coaches follow best practices in motivating athletes. They consider individual differences in motivation and the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Sport coaches communicate in ways that maximize motivation by focusing on positive corrective instruction, using encouragement, emphasizing effort and improvement and other factors athletes can control.

Assess

Standard 34: Implement appropriate strategies for evaluating athlete training, development, and performance. (Standards 23, 38, & 39)

Sport coaches evaluate athlete progress and performance to assist in making decisions about athlete training, development, and performance. Sport coaches will use evidence-based strategies and tools as well as athlete input to make decisions regarding: athlete selection, assignment of team roles, goal-setting and training plan development, daily evaluation of progress, and incorporation of technology in training.

Standard 35: Engage athletes in a process of continuous self-assessment and reflection to foster responsibility for their own learning and development. (Standards 18, 38, & 39)

Sport coaches provide athletes with the tools to evaluate their progress and encourage them to take initiative to make improvements in their own development. Sport coaches teach athletes to self-assess in order to nurture autonomy, decision-making skills, and to learn from mistakes.

Adapt

Standard 36: Adjust training and competition plans based on athlete needs and assessment practices. (Standards 12, 13, 16, & 27)

Sport coaches adjust periodization/season plans based on athlete progression, physical and mental health, modification of goals, etc. Sport coaches also adjust skills and tactics based on success and areas needing improvement throughout the season.

Standard 37: Use strategic decision-making skills to make adjustments, improvements, or change course throughout a competition. (Standards 28 & 29)

Sport coaches make adjustments during competition considering factors like the underlying principles of strategy and tactics within the sport and the skills and patterns of play of the

opponent. Sport coaches also maintain self-control and monitor stress levels to facilitate effective decision making.

Strive for Continuous Improvement

Sport coaches continually improve through self-reflection, mentorship, professional development, evaluation, and self-care. To meet this responsibility sport coaches:

Standard 38: Regularly engage in self-reflection or peer-reflection to deeply examine situations, generate potential solutions, and think through those solutions. (Standard 40)

Sport coaches take time to examine situations in greater depth by gathering insight from peer coaches and players, and use these insights to improve coaching practice. Sport coaches will evaluate decision making throughout the process and recognize that ambiguity exists which makes regular reflection as well as systematic observations and guided trial and error important endeavors to improving coach practice.

Standard 39: Develop an evaluation strategy to monitor and improve staff and team performance. (Standards 37 & 40)

Sport coaches develop an evaluation strategy that fits with their seasonal demands, focus on continual improvement, and involve a range of stakeholders, such as players, coaching staff, administrators, support staff, and parents.

Standard 40: Improve coaching effectiveness by seeking to learn the latest information on coaching through various avenues of coach development.

Sport coaches become continual learners. They take inventory of what they know and what they need to learn through performance improvement plans and needs analyses. They seek to improve through a variety of professional development and continuing education activities. Sport coaches search for the latest information on coaching, including sport science research and practical coaching information.

Standard 41: Engage in mentoring and communities of practice to promote a learning culture and continual improvement.

Sport coaches serve as mentors and continually seek new mentors in their ongoing development. Sport coaches seek communities of practice (circles of coaches discussing coaching issues and means for improvement) to help promote a learning culture and continual improvement.

Standard 42: Maintain work-life harmony and practice self-care to manage stress and burnout.

Sport coaches develop strategies to manage the stress experienced in coaching and develop strategies to preserve work-life harmony. By being physically and mentally healthy, coaches can be the best for themselves, their athletes, and their social communities.

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