

Communication

Soccer is a fluid game with non- stop play, communication with players can be challenging.

If there is too much direction from the sidelines a player may focus his/her attention on the coach and not the game. This could also lead to players waiting for instructions before making decisions.

Too little communication and key coaching points may be lost.

Here are a few suggestions which may help:

- 1) During play keep directions simple and brief.
- 2) Communicate during natural stoppages such as throw- ins, substitutions, goal kicks, etc.
- 3) Communicate with players that are not in the flow of play: i.e. the goalie when the ball is up field or the outside midfielder when the ball is on the far side.
- 4) If detailed communication is necessary, substitute the player and talk with him/her on the sideline. Keep the player by your side and point out examples in the play for the points you are trying to make. Remind the player of what you talked about before returning him/her to the game.
- 5) Try to keep mental or written notes on the play of each player. As they are substituted from the field, comment on what they did well (reinforce good play). This can be done with one or two words as well as a short conversation. If necessary, make suggestions on how play could be improved but always end with positive comments.

Pre-game and halftime are excellent opportunities to convey information to the entire team.

Before the game remind players of what they have been working on in practice. Set a game plan and be specific. For younger players the plan may be geared more towards the technical aspects. For example good first touches, getting your head up when dribbling, or even heading the ball. For older players the plan may be more tactical. For example, playing the ball wide, switching the field when the ball is played to the middle, or the covering defender communicating with the player pressuring the ball. Limit your plan to just a few items, don't overwhelm your players, and give them goals they can achieve.

Halftime is the time to review your game plan. Were you successful or not with what you were trying to achieve? Reinforce what has been working, and if necessary, change the plan by adding one or two new items to work on.