

What makes
YOUR
session
UNMISSABLE
for young people?

Young people want unmissable experiences when they take part in sport. For more young people to take part in sport regularly, they need coaches to understand and engage them. Here are some suggestions and ideas based on the Youth Insights from Sport England to inspire you to make your sessions unmissable for young people.

Personalised

Young people want experiences that are tailored to them and that they are able to make their own. Their sporting experiences need to fit into their lives.

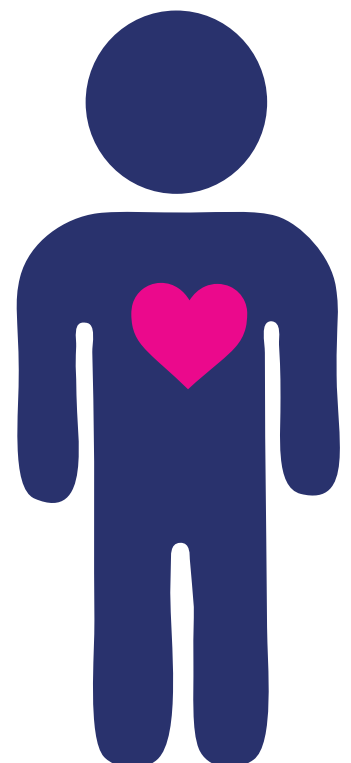
- Talk to young people about their family and friends as they could be a big influence on their attendance.
- Find out about young people's interests and dreams. Can you help them see how sport or physical activity can help?
- Regularly seek feedback from the young people to find out what they enjoy most, would benefit from and would like to get better at.
- Goals and motivations will be different for young people. Take time to understand these. For example, their motivation might be to look good, but their goal could be to do a charity fun run with friends.
- Keep any goal setting simple. Provide regular individual feedback that is specifically linked to their goals.
- Recognise:
 - how confident each young person is to be able to act on their intentions
 - each young person's stage of physical and emotional maturity, rather than age
 - the other commitments and pressures in young people's lives (eg homework, exams, family circumstances, caring roles, relationships) and how they influence participation in sport.
- Involve the young people in the planning and delivery of your session to ensure it meets their needs.
- Allow young people to choose to what extent they wish to participate.



Inspiring

Young people are seeking experiences that are unique, different, something they can be proud of or that helps them stand out.

- Talk to the group, and find out what experiences they are after – help them create something they can be proud of.
- Always end your session on a high! Young people will remember the experience based on how it was at the peak (ie the most intense point) and at the end.
- Don't be afraid to show your passion for sport. Can you help a young person change a preconception they may already have about sport?
- Use the **'C' system** in your sessions to engage young people and help them develop personal and social skills (competence, confidence, connection, character and caring, creativity).
- Keep variety in your sessions.
- Find out the reasons young people attend. Remind them regularly of the steps they are taking towards their goals.
- Celebrate successes, no matter how small!



Creative

Young people are seeking creative sessions that allow them to make decisions, go further and create their version of the sport.

- Use more game play, with less instructional coaching.
- Encourage young people to problem solve within your sessions.
- Encourage young people to develop their own skills, games and rules.
- Set open tasks.
- Reward innovative thinking.
- Show that being creative is about trying new things and that it is OK to fail and then try again. Praise young people when they try something new, even if they fail.
- Show creativity when planning and delivering your sessions. For example, use a different setting for the session – a beach, car park or green space. Or deliver a different version of the sport or activity – make up new rules!
- Consider free play time where young people can practise and play what they choose.
- Include music that young people like to listen to. Put them in charge of the playlist.
- Use the **STEPS** principles to adapt and change games and activities, and ensure they are inclusive as well as creative (**s**pace, **t**ask, **e**quipment, **p**eople, **s**peed).

change things

Social

Young people are seeking experiences that allow them to maintain their social lives and connect with like-minded people. Here are some ideas to help young people connect before, during and after your session.

Before and after the session

- Where possible, encourage young people to arrive early or stay later if there is somewhere they can break out and chat.
- Encourage the young people to connect on social media outside the session.
- Help the group to organise social events.

During the session

- Allow groups of friends to stick together for some or all of the session.
- Allow time for chat and catch-ups within your session.
- Buddy up new people who have come to the session on their own.
- Get down to their level – find out their interests so you can encourage young people to form new friendships.

- Involve other key social groups that might be important to each of the young people (eg their family, wider friendship groups).
- Let them choose their own groups or teams for activities.
- Provide opportunities for collaborative play.
- Encourage the use of social media during breaks to keep young people connecting with their friends. It might encourage their friends to come next week.
- Celebrate birthdays or other special occasions in the session.
- Recognise and manage any social tensions between young people.
- Create situations in your sessions where people can develop leadership skills.

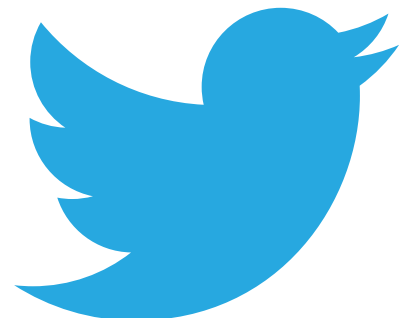


Interactive

Sessions that involve technology and/or gaming are most likely to appeal to young people. Here are some ideas of how you can use technology more.

- Use social media to promote your sessions. Involve the young people in this. Find out what platforms they are most likely to use (Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp etc).
- Help young people connect outside the session through technology or social media.
- Encourage the use of relevant apps within your sessions. These might be sport-specific or general fitness-related apps.
- Use technology between sessions. Can you set the group a challenge to learn a game or skill from YouTube before the next session? Or can you set up a place for the young people to share questions or thoughts about the session?
- Allow and encourage social media to be used on breaks.
- Use vlogging (video blogging) or blogging to shout about the sessions. Get young people to take ownership of this.
- Encourage young people to film improvements they make during the session themselves.

For more guidance on online safety and social media with young people, visit the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) website [here](#). There is also a further eLearning module that covers Safe Communication with Digital Kids available through sports coach UK [here](#).



Rewarding

Young people are seeking experiences that give them something back, including financially. Making a choice to take part is not always at the front of their mind. By making the sessions rewarding, you can encourage young people to choose your session and keep them coming back.

- Talk to the young people to find out what ideas they have for rewards. Rewards may need to be different depending on the age group you are working with.
- Use a mix of incentives, recognition and rewards.
- Incentives may encourage them to get started or bring others along (eg taster sessions, first three sessions for free).
- Recognise effort and attendance. This could be in the form of a certificate, loyalty card, prizes for attendance etc.
- Reward the behaviour of the majority. Make it seem the norm to be taking part each week.
- Help the young people feel valued and appreciated through recognition.
- When providing feedback, keep it positive and make it personal to individual goals – ‘You did well because...’
- Look for unselfish acts among the group and praise accordingly.
- Help young people celebrate their personal achievements, for example, when they have reached their own goal. This could be with certificates, awards, points scoring systems etc.
- Use social media to announce player of the week and competitions, or for saying thank you. For example, ‘Thanks for turning up,’ ‘Thanks for your effort this week,’ ‘Great job tonight,’ ‘Thanks for welcoming the newbies!’
- Encourage the group to have peer rewards and recognition. Could they all nominate a player of the week?
- Prompts or rewards may need to be repeated as the weeks of activity go on.
- Help them identify their own **internal** motivators/rewards over time – this can help them build their sporting habit and prevent lapsing.

This list is just a starting point of some ideas! If you have other ideas on how to make your sessions **unmissable** for young people, we would love to hear from you at @sportscoachuk #UnmissableSport

To view the full Youth Insights research report from Sport England, **click here**

Better supported coaches

