

COOMERA RESORT COLTS F.C.
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BEGINNERS HANDBOOK
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THE PLAY LEADER AND 6/7 YEAR OLDS
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COACH OR PLAY LEADER?

An Introduction for Beginners.

Do six year olds need a coach? A debatable question but we suggest that the title 'coach' has connotations that are not appropriate for 6/7 year olds. The coaching role for older players includes responsibilities and knowledge of the game that are not necessary at this stage in the players' development. For example, devising a tactical plan or making substitutions to change the course of the game.

Knowledge of the game, other than the rules of roo ball, is less important than the ability to provide play activities that will help the child to master the ball. In this early stage it is *the development of individual skill to master the ball that counts rather than team skills*. Of great importance is an understanding of how to keep children at play safely organized, motivated and challenged. These are supervisory and parental skills rather than a dedicated sport skill. For these reasons we prefer parents to see themselves as play leaders rather than as coaches. Put another way this means simply playing with your child as you would at home.

Not that we discourage any one from wanting to become a coach but the play leader concept is a good base from which to develop the wider knowledge and practice needed to become a coach. The club wants to develop coaches. The play leader concept is a first step for you to find out if this is for you or not. Your Director of Coaching is always available to assist you and the club will fund any accredited coaching courses that you wish to attend.

Now let's look at what it means to be a successful play leader. Can we come up with a set of guidelines that will ensure that playing/training sessions are efficiently managed, tailored to the player needs and provide maximum enjoyment.

First of all we need to have an understanding of the child and therefore what we can expect from the child at play. Below is a list of things about the child that have a strong influence on what we can expect children of this age to achieve.

- **Low strength compared to body weight**
- **Head 'large' compared to body size**
- **Poor balance and co-ordination**
- **Little quality in basic movements**
- **Visual perception of depth and of speed of moving objects is poor**
- **Ball sense undeveloped**
- **Frustration in play with moving ball – needs own ball**
- **Concentration limited to short span of time**
- **Starts to like tests of own ability**
- **'Games' are any kind of loosely organized play**
- **Simple rules are easily understood**
- **Enjoys big muscle activity rather than small and fine movements**
- **Kicking and running are the best techniques**
- **Soccer fitness is natural**

Perhaps the most significant point is that children in this age group are still egocentric (a nice way of saying self centred). This is not a fault but is a social

process all children go through as their world expands to include friends outside the immediate family. Some will be more egocentric than others. The calendar is not a reliable barometer of child development but is useful as a rough guide. What this means is that some of the children will find co-operative play easier than others of the same age group and may be ready to pass (share) the ball. Nevertheless you can expect that all will have egocentric tendencies. Expecting the group to share one ball in passing or any other type of game is not the best way to motivate them or provide a fun experience. So now we have the first guideline:

GUIDELINE 1: For the most part of any session the players must have one ball each. In circumstances where a single exercise requires the players to form queues (to rest between attempts at the exercise), the queue should not be more than 3 per line. This is a very important play leader management point. Longer queues for the short attention span of this age group will create wandering behaviour problems as those at the back of the queue lose interest through waiting.

GUIDELINE 2. The play leader must demonstrate clearly what the player is required to do. This means that the players should be **SHOWN** not told where to run and when to kick (for example) in any given exercise. If the exercise is considered complex have the players walk through the exercise slowly until they are ready for the real thing. Do not assume that they can quickly understand directional instructions such as “turn left”. The odds are they will go the wrong way. “Show and do” not “tell”.

GUIDELINE 3: Challenge them to achieve appropriate targets. ‘Appropriate’ means a target for that player rather than a contest against other players. Remember that the calendar is a rough guide of where they are at developmentally. Some will be ahead of the crowd and some will be behind. So (for example) one player may be asked to reach 3 repetitions of a given skill whilst another will be asked to perform 5 repetitions. This requires you to observe and know the child. Set new targets to provide them with success. Sometimes this might mean a lesser target but hopefully the targets will increase as they become more proficient. The real essence of competition at this stage is the determination to succeed by acquiring new skills. Success is a great motivator.

GUIDELINE 4. Plan every session to include non soccer games that are seemingly just for fun but have elements of co-operative play. This booklet contains a number of examples of this type of game.

GUIDELINE 5. Plan your session before hand or choose from the plans included in this booklet.

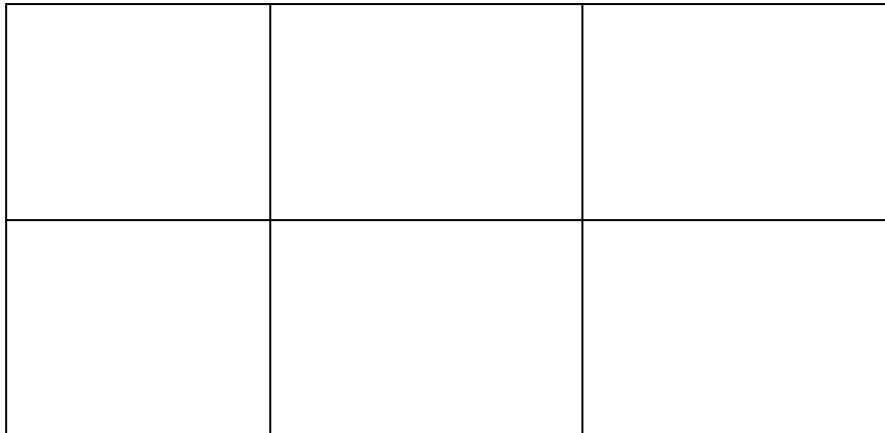
GUIDELINE 6. Lead with a smile, keep them active and you will have few disciplinary problems. Be loud with praise and soft with criticism.

GUIDELINE 7. For the Saturday match, apart from prompting them to be in the right place when the game starts or is re-started (for goals, goalkicks, throws etc.) try not to direct them whilst they are playing. The only advice you might give is to run hard towards the opponents goal when attacking and run hard towards their own goal when defending. This fits with their main strengths of big muscle ability (running and kicking). Try not to tell the player with the ball what to do. He or she plays, you cheer. Now that you have some idea of the play

leader role lets look in more detail at training sessions and those parts than can be used at home.

EFFICIENT USE OF TIME

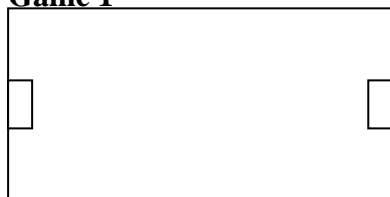
Time spent organising and re-organising between each practice is wasteful and also loses the attention of the players. Be early for your session and set up a 30 x 20 metre grid using cone discs as shown below.



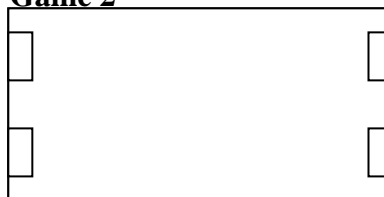
All the tasks described in this booklet can be performed in this area. The end of practice game requires you to move the two central cones and you have a playing pitch 30 x 20 metres, sufficient space for two teams of 4/5 to play the game.

This training set up mirrors the field organisation used on Saturday game days. The 4/5 aside games can be designed to provide different problems for the players to solve. Coaching by guided discovery will assist the players to think for themselves. Guided discovery is a question and answer technique. The players will retain THEIR answers to questions much more easily than directions because they have supplied the answers themselves. Your praise will further re-inforce their answers. Here are some alternative ways of using the 30 x 20 field.

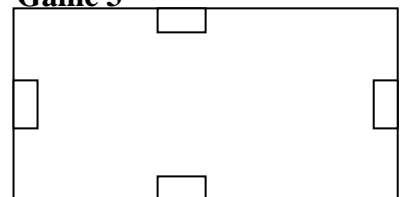
Game 1



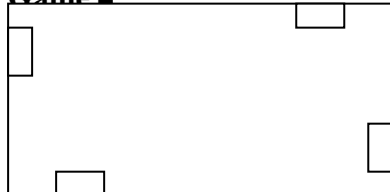
Game 2



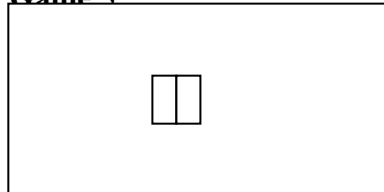
Game 3



Game 4



Game 5



Game 6



How often have you shouted “Spread out” and been ignored. The natural tendency of uyoung is to be ball oriented. As a matter of fact the bunch is good defensive play mirroring the defensive principle – concentration (of numbers).

Game 1. A normal soccer game.

Game 2. The teams must defend two goals at one end OR defend one goal and attack the other AT THE SAME END.

Game 3. Use any combination. One team attacks the goals at the ends and defends the side goals OR attacks one end and one side and defends the other two goals.

Game 4. Use any combination. I think you get the idea by now.

Game 5. Two goals back to back and both teams can score in either one goal or both goals.

Game 6. No goals. (Say) 3 passes makes one goal.

Each game provides a different defending and attacking problem. Your role is simply to let them play and solve each problem. You will need patience. Some will realize quickly that following the ball is not the best answer. Give the slow learners time. Watch for those who “get it” and start telling the others. This is a good sign that some are developing leadership skills.

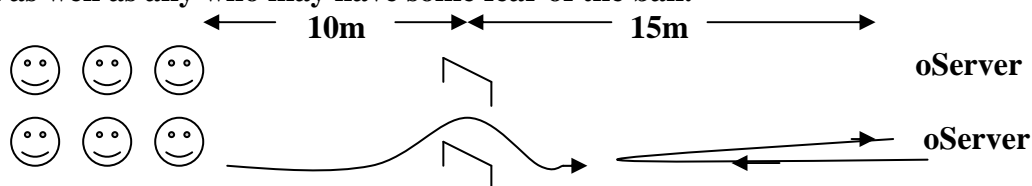
GAMES TO GET THEM STARTED

The very first time these children arrive for practice their parents will have an expectation that they are joining a group who will be learning about team play. Learning to cooperate is an important developmental step for the child but soccer teams cannot be effective until the ball has been mastered. It is essential that parents come to understand this and work with the players to develop the ball mastery that will enable teamwork to emerge over time.

The child’s expectations will be unknown but certainly will be self centered. Creating an environment in which they will join in with enthusiasm is essential to stimulate immediate interest and ongoing participation.

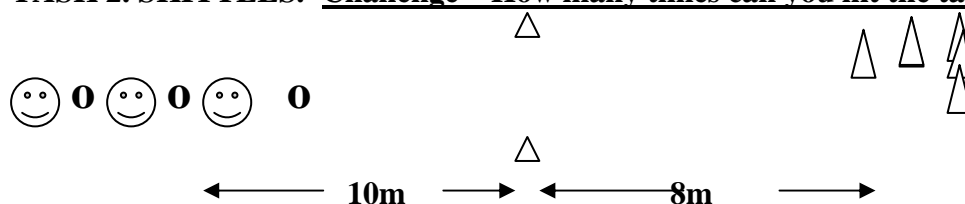
TASK 1. MOBILITY and BALANCE. Challenge – A relay race.

This exercise goes immediately to the big muscle activity that these youngsters enjoy. It also provides a means of observing each child’s mobility and agility level as well as any who may have some fear of the ball.



First player from each line runs, jumps the min-hurdle (or soccer ball) and kicks a ground ball rolled towards them by the Server. The player returns to the end of the line. After three or four runs each the players are now required to run, jump and pick up the ball on the run and hand it to the server before returning to the end of the line. A third variation is for the server to throw the ball so that the runner can attempt to catch it on the run after one bounce, stopping and performing a two handed throw in with both feet remaining on the ground.

TASK 2. SKITTLES. Challenge – How many times can you hit the target?



Set up as shown with as many lines of players as necessary remembering to keep the lines short. Each player has a ball and dribbles to the first cone line and shoots at the cone skittles. A parent play leader retrieves the ball, returns it to the player and resets the cones. As a progression the players must propel the ball to the line with no less than three touches and count each touch aloud.

TASK 3. BOUNCE, KICK, CATCH. Challenge –How many times can you repeat the sequence?

Each player bounces the ball, kicks it after one bounce and tries to catch it before it bounces again. This skill developer is a step towards learning to juggle the ball without bouncing and is a good first game for homework. When kicking the ball, the players should try to keep the kick below head height. Progression is to ‘bounce, kick, bounce kick etc and then to juggling with no bounces.

TASK 4. AROUND THE LEGS. Challenge – See if you can use both your left and right foot alternately to propel the ball through the play leader’s legs

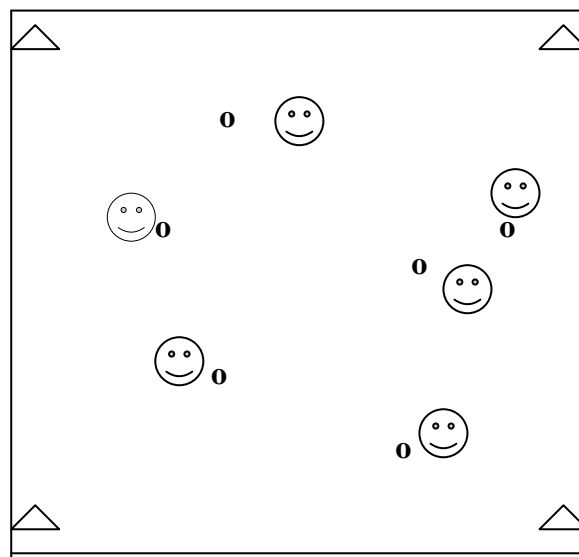
The play leader stands with legs astride. At close quarters, the player passes the ball between the play leader’s legs and runs around the play leader and repeats the pass from the opposite side.

TASK 5. LEG GOALS . Challenge – Who can score the most goals?

The play leader stands with legs astride approximately 7 metres from the player. The player tries to score by shooting a goal between the play leader’s legs. This game can be organized with one player on each side of the play leader and taking turns to score.

TASK 6. DRIBBLING IN A CROWD. Challenge- Avoid other players.

The work area is 10 metres square



Coaching points.

Dribble the ball freely inside the square avoiding other players.

On coaches command turn left, right or drag the ball backwards using the sole of the boot and change direction.

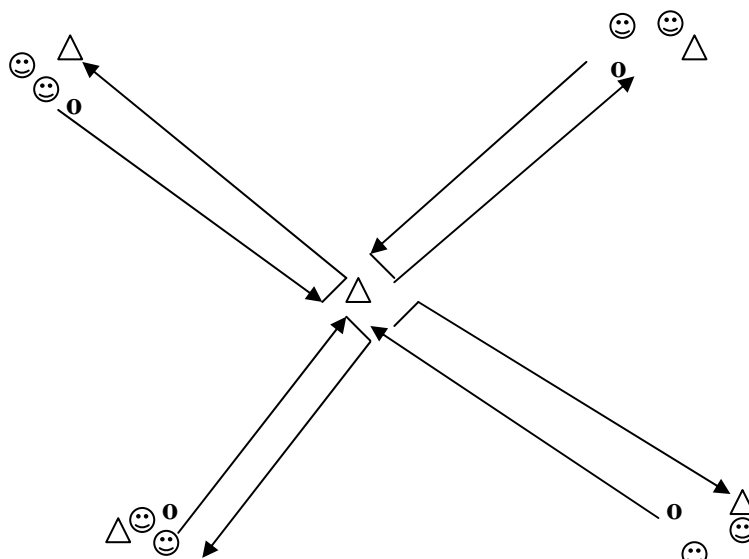
Keep the ball close and try to propel it with either the left foot only or the right foot only.

Look as far ahead as you can to avoid other players without losing sight of the ball.

TASK 7. RUNNING AND TURNING Challenge- Keep control of the ball.

The work area is 20 metres square.

One player from each corner dribbles to the centre cone, turns and passes to the next player before returning to the start cone.



Coaching points;

Do not rush the approach to the centre cone.

‘Wrap’ the foot around the back of the ball to change direction.

Make contact with the middle of the ball not the ground level.

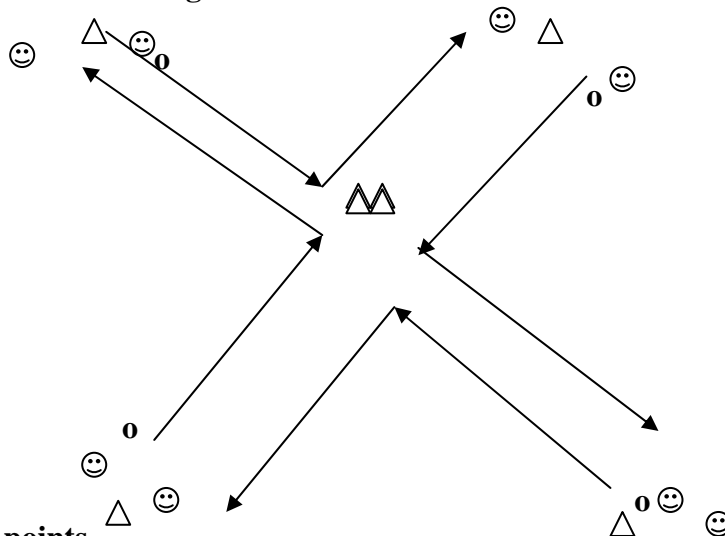
Push off the standing foot to turn quickly.

TASK 8. RUNNING AND CUTTING. Challenge – Keep control of the ball

‘Cutting’ the ball is applying the inside of the foot to the side of the ball to change direction. Children this age tend to run in straight lines and find changing direction difficult.

The work area is 20 metres square

One player from each corner runs and cuts the ball to avoid the centre cones and the opposite player. The player continues to run with the ball to the next outside cone and stops the ball by placing his foot on top of it. The next player then repeats the drill running in the same clockwise direction.



Coaching points.

Propel the ball with the same foot for each touch.

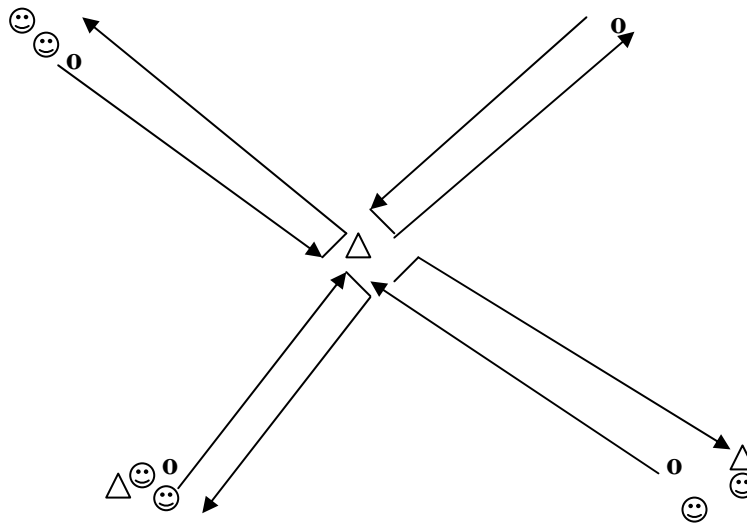
Head up and look ahead of the ball after each touch.

Cut the ball as square to the running line as possible.

Change the direction of the exercise (anti-clockwise) to practice left foot cuts.

TASK 9. DRAG AND PASS. Challenge – Turn and pass accurately

On reaching the centre cone, the player drags the ball backwards with the sole of the foot whilst turning to face the way he came before passing to a team mate next in line.



Coaching points.

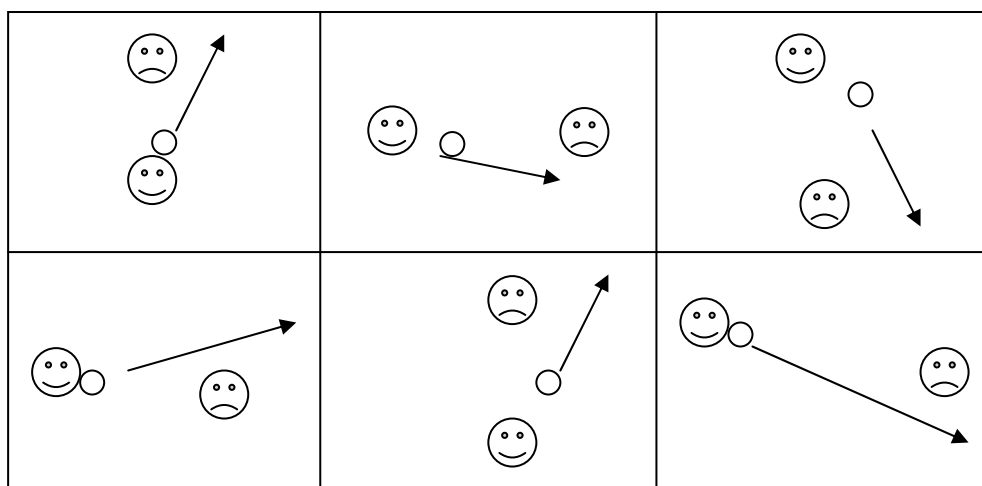
Keep your weight on the standing foot (not on the ball) whilst dragging.

If dragging with the right foot, turn to your right so that the ball is always in view.

Try to pass to your team mate so that he has to move to the ball. (Don't kick it hard.)

TASK 10. One v One. Challenge – Beat that defender.

Play one v one in the 10 m squares. The players should start to use cuts and drags to keep the ball. Players dribble against each other and score by getting the ball over the opponents line and stopping with the foot on top of the ball. No shooting, they must dribble over the opponent's line.



FUN GAMES

These games assist the development of basic movements such as running, dodging, jumping etc. and are suitable for 6 to 9 year olds.

F1. Free and Caught

Two or three catchers each carry a ball. They chase the rest inside a suitable working area. The ball should not be thrown. It is used to touch the other players. Players that are caught are 'out'. The last player remaining is the winner.

F2. Continuous Free and Caught

As above except that a player caught becomes a catcher with a ball to carry.

F3. Release

As above but all players caught go into a marked area or 'prison'. They may be released by free players on being touched. Catchers try to guard the prisoners.

F4. Tails

All players tuck a bib inside their shorts at the back. Players move around inside a working area try to catch each others 'tails'. When a tail is lost the player is out. The winner is the player with the most tails captured.

F5. Pairs

Two, Four or Six players join hands in pairs and chase the rest to touch them. A player touched changes with the player that touches him.

F6. Join the Line

One player chases to touch a player. A player touched joins hands to form a line and so on. When the line reaches say, four, another player new line starts until all are caught.

F7. Team Chase

Players are grouped into three or four equal teams. One team chases the other teams to see how many can be caught in a set time. Players caught must sit down.

F8. Chinese Wall

The wall is a marked space. Two or three defenders try to catch the rest as they cross the wall. When touched they join the defenders. A player can only be caught within the wall space.

F9. Circle Chase

All stand in a circle and number off in threes. When a number is called players run in a predetermined direction (clockwise or anti-clockwise). The trailing player tries to catch the front-runner before he gets back to his place.

F10. Touch and Run

In pairs, players take turns to stand behind their own line with one hand outstretched. The other player touches his partner's hand and turns to run back to his own line before his partner catches him.

F11. Dodge Ball

One player tries to hit the others below the knees with a thrown ball. When hit a player joins the throwers

F12. Hopping Charge

In pairs, hopping and trying to shoulder charge the partner and force him to put two feet on the ground.

A TEN WEEK PLAN

Guideline 5 for Play Leaders states that training should be planned before hand. The plan below is only half completed. You can either repeat the 5 week program shown for the remaining 5 weeks or review what you have read and put your own ideas into the missing weeks. Allowing for drink breaks, each session should be completed within a 55 to 60 minute time span.

Week	Early Birds	Warm up	Practice 1	Practice 2	Practice 3	Game
	On arrival	5 minutes	10 minutes	10 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes
One	Bounce, Kick, Catch	Free and Caught F2	Task 6	Task 2	Task 5	4 v 4 or 5 v 5
Two	Bounce, Kick Catch	Join the line F6	Task 1	Task 8	Task 10	4 v 4 or 5 v 5
Three	Bounce, Kick, Catch	Release F3	Task 6	Task 4	Task 9	4 v 4 or 5 v 5
Four	Bounce, Kick	Touch and run F10	Task 1	Task 7	Task 2	4 v 4 or 5 v 5
Five	Bounce, Kick	Circle Chase F9	Task 8	Task 5	Task 10	4 v 4 or 5 v 5
Six						
Seven						
Eight						
Nine						
Ten						

POSTSCRIPT.

We hope you can see that knowledge of soccer is not as important at this stage as your willingness to be involved and help the players to learn new skills. Much of their development will be a result of the repetition of the games they play rather than the expertise of a coach. The play leader motivates and maintains a disciplined but cheerful approach through good planning. Children need the stable environment that a disciplined (planned) environment provides.

Your Director of Coaching (Mario Collavino) is available for any assistance you may need and can be contacted on 0412 942 095

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