

## COACH OBSERVATION & SELF-REFLECTION TOOL Foundations of Coaching | Developing Youth Through Sport

### Introduction:

Developed by the Center for Leadership in Athletics at the University of Washington as a coach observation and self-reflection tool specifically connected to the *Foundations of Coaching: Developing Youth Through Sport* course available online through the WIAA and NFHS Learn.

The observation tool is designed for coaches and administrators as a resource for reflection, discourse, and evaluating progress related to specific coaching practices connected to the *Foundations of Coaching: Developing Youth through Sport* course content.

*Developing Youth Through Sport* covers fundamental coaching strategies to promote safe spaces and positive experiences in sport. The curriculum is derived from research findings of the Center’s Ambitious Coaching™ project, our nationally recognized graduate program, and years of training youth sport organizations at the local and national levels.

The course and this tool are based upon the Center’s core belief that: ***There is power within sport.***

### Overview:

This Coach Observation & Self-Reflection Tool is designed for observing and reflecting on coaching behaviors. It is structured around four key modules, each focusing on critical aspects of youth coaching:

- **Module 1:** Building Skills through Sport
- **Module 2:** Fostering Physical and Emotional Safety
- **Module 3:** Creating an Environment for Learning
- **Module 4:** Modeling Positive Behavior

### Forms:

There are two variations of the observation tool for coaches/observers to use based on preference.

- **Short Version:** an abbreviated version of the full observation tool formatted as a single-sided one-pager for portability and ease of use in the field during observations. Available as a downloadable hard-copy form and electronically as a fillable PDF.
- **Long Version:** full-length, four-page self-reflection/observation tool with space for self-reflection/observation notes, feedback, and questions for more thorough comments to guide post-observation dialogue and use as a final draft/copy of the observation. Also available as a downloadable hard-copy form and electronically as a fillable PDF.

Coach: _____	Sport: _____	Level: _____	Date: _____
Observer: _____	Observation: (select one)		Other: _____
Location: _____	Observation Details:		
OBSERVATION KEY - Observable: Y / N (Y=Yes, N=No)      Ratings: 1-5 (1-Minimal, 2-Emerging, 3-Developing, 4-Proficient, 5-Exemplary)			
Module 1: Building Skills through Sport	Observable (Y/N)	Rating (1-5)	Quick Notes (Examples/Details)
1.1 - Uses language or examples to connect sport to activities or life skills outside of sports			
1.2 - Coach supports athletes' holistic needs in public ways			
<i>*Examples of athlete's holistic needs include rest, recovery, nutrition, physical health, mental wellness, social and/or emotional wellbeing</i>			
Module 2: Fostering Physical and Emotional Safety	Observable (Y/N)	Rating (1-5)	Quick Notes (Examples/Details)
2.1 - Appropriately utilizes facilities and equipment to ensure physical safety			
2.2 - Gives instructional feedback emphasizing fundamental technique and mechanics for safety			
2.3 - Uses inclusive and respectful language with athletes			
2.4 - Communicates in ways facilitative of relationship-building with athletes and between athletes			
2.5 - Utilizes routines and organizes activities to promote safety and learning			
Module 3: Creating an Environment for Learning	Observable (Y/N)	Rating (1-5)	Quick Notes (Examples/Details)
3.1 - Demonstrates moments of levity and use of appropriate humor			
3.2 - Balances silence and observation with verbal cues and feedback to promote learning			
3.3 - Offers constructive feedback that is specific and aimed to promote learning			
3.4 - Uses verbal and non-verbal cues to demonstrate enthusiasm and excitement			
3.5 - Responds to mistakes in a growth-oriented manner (verbally & non-verbally)			
3.6 - Encourages and facilitates athlete reflection and self-assessment			
Module 4: Modeling Positive Behavior	Observable (Y/N)	Rating (1-5)	Quick Notes (Examples/Details)
4.1 - Demonstrates ability to regulate emotions and displays self-control			
4.2 - Interactions* are conducted in a regulated tone and manner			
4.3 - Is prepared, on time, present and engaged; effectively runs practice within allotted space/time			
4.4 - Provides opportunities for athlete leadership and shared decision-making			
<i>*Interactions may include those with officials, opponents, parents, staff, players, administrators, spectators, and community members</i>			

- Rating Rubric:** provides detailed descriptions and examples of each rating level (1-Minimal to 5-Exemplary) for every specific look-for formatted as a one-pager for use in the field and a two-pager for larger font size and readability.

COACH OBSERVATION | RATING RUBRIC

Foundations of Coaching: Developing Youth Through Sport

LOOK-FOR #1: Specific Look-Fors	1-Minimal	2-Emerging	3-Developing	4-Proficient	5-Exemplary
<b>1.1 - Use language of observation to report sport to coaches or the staff outside of sport</b> 1.1.1 - Use language of observation to report sport to coaches or the staff outside of sport 1.1.2 - Coach reports athletes' health needs in public ways	<b>1-Minimal</b> Coach uses no language of observation to report sport to coaches or the staff outside of sport.	<b>2-Emerging</b> Coach uses minimal language to report sport to coaches or the staff outside of sport.	<b>3-Developing</b> Coach uses developing language to report sport to coaches or the staff outside of sport.	<b>4-Proficient</b> Coach uses proficient language to report sport to coaches or the staff outside of sport.	<b>5-Exemplary</b> Coach uses exemplary language to report sport to coaches or the staff outside of sport.

## Instructions for Use:

### 1. Fill in the Observation Details (Cover Page/Header)

Before beginning the observation/self-reflection, complete the following fields:

- Coach:** Name of the coach being observed
- Sport:** Sport being observed (e.g., Basketball, Soccer)
- Level:** Level of participation/participants (e.g. High School Varsity)
- Date:** Date of the observation
- Observer:** Observer's name or person completing the form
- Observation:** (Circle one) Select appropriate option from the drop-down menu
  - Practice/Training Session
  - Competition/Game
  - Team Meeting/ Activity
  - Other (indicate other activity)
- Location:** Where the observation took place
- Observation Details:** Any additional context about the observation

### 2. Understanding the Observation Key

This observation tool uses a two-part rating system. The key below guides how to use the rating system, and document your observations:

- Observable: YES / NO**  
 Observers indicate whether the behavior/practice is observable in that context (see below)
  - YES:** Indicates the behavior/practice was observable during observation and that there was an opportunity for the behavior/practice in that context, regardless of whether the coaching behavior/practice was actually observed.
  - NO:** indicates the behavior/practice was not observable during observation and that there was no opportunity for the behavior/practice in that context (e.g. collegial interactions with opponents/referees during a practice or team meeting observation rather than a competition)

- **Rating: 1-5**
  - Assign a numerical rating based on the coach's performance for each observable behavior.
    - 1-Minimal
    - 2-Emerging
    - 3-Developing
    - 4-Proficient
    - 5-Exemplary
- **Quick Notes: (Examples/Details)**
  - Use "Quick Notes (Examples/Details)" to provide specific, factual examples or details to support your 'Y/N' observation and assigned rating. These notes are vital for providing constructive feedback.
- **Rating Rubric:** Refer to the accompanying "Coach Observation Rating Rubric" (separate document)
  - The rubric provides detailed descriptions and examples of each rating level (1-Minimal to 5-Exemplary) for every specific look-for, and outlines the criteria needed to accurately assess performance.

### 3. Using the Observation Tool

The observation tool is designed for coaches and administrators as a resource for reflection/observation, discourse, and evaluating coaching practices connected to the *Foundations of Coaching: Developing Youth through Sport* course.

- **Single Observation: Full-Length Observation**
  - The observation tool is designed for observation or self-reflection of a full-length practice/training session, competition/game, or team meeting/activity.
  - Most, if not all of the specific look-fors outlined in the observation should be observable in a single, full-length observation.
- **Multiple Observations: Short Observations (not full-length)**
  - For observers, it may not be feasible to observe a full-length practice or competition in a single session, so a series of shorter observations or "walk throughs" equivalent to a full-length session may be compiled using the following guidelines:
    - **Full-Length Equivalent:** observe different portions including the opening/beginning, middle, and ending/closing equivalent to a full-length practice/training session, competition/game, or team meeting/activity.
    - **Short Version:** using the short version, one-pager in the field during observations
      - Use separate forms/files for each observation to distinguish events
      - Use a compilation of several short observations on single form/file noting or color-coding the different events
    - **Full Version:** use a compilation of short observations (one-pagers) with additional details, notes, feedback, questions, and discussion prompts to facilitate dialogue.

## **Course Overview:**

*Developing Youth Through Sport* covers fundamental coaching strategies to promote safe spaces and positive experiences in sport. The observation tool is organized into four sections with a set of "Specific Look-Fors" detailing observable coach behaviors corresponding with each of the four modules.

The following overview outlines key ideas, practices, coach behaviors, and specific look-fors tied to each module from the course.

**MODULE 1: Building Skills through Sport** – Emphasizing sport as a space for youth development and skill-building, balancing performance and well-being outcomes.

## Key Ideas:

1. Sport is an optimal vehicle for building skills in youth.
2. Positive youth development via sport is well documented in research.
3. High quality athletic experiences produce positive physical, social, and emotional outcomes for student athletes.
4. If coaches want ALL athletes to have the opportunity to flourish on their teams, coaches must attend to physical performance and competitive success while simultaneously centering holistic well-being (Ambitious Coaching™).

Key Practice: Sport is a powerful space for youth development and skill building.

Coach Behavior: Coach demonstrates an understanding of “*holism*”: balancing of performance and well-being outcomes through verbal communication and on-field decision making.

## Specific Look-Fors:

**1.1** - Coach uses language or examples to **connect sport to activities or life skills** outside of sports

**1.2** - Coach supports athletes’ **\*holistic needs** in public ways

*\*Examples of athlete’s holistic needs include: rest, recovery, nutrition, physical health, mental wellness, social and/or emotional wellbeing*

**Module 2: Fostering Physical and Emotional Safety** – Recognizing that physical and emotional safety are intertwined and crucial for youth development.

## Key Ideas:

1. Physical and emotional safety is the starting point for developing youth in an out of sport.
2. Coaches must create physically safe spaces characterized by injury prevention, proper use of equipment, teaching of foundational technical skills, and space/facility management.
3. Physical safety includes knowledge of adolescent development and coaches should take into account what is happening with athletes’ brains and bodies.
4. Coaches must create emotionally safe spaces characterized by trust, belonging, and connection.
5. Emotional safety includes knowledge of the social and psychological needs of athletes.
6. Relationships and communication are a great place to focus your energy if you are trying to create an emotionally safe space for the athletes on your team.
7. The mind-body connection is central to sport performance, so it’s important that coaches recognize how physical and emotional safety are intertwined and reinforce one another.

**Key Practice:** Physical and emotional safety are critical for developing youth in and out of sport. Coach recognizes that physical and emotional safety are intertwined and reinforce one another.

**Coach Behavior:** Coach is attuned to physical and emotional safety; creates structures, routines, and cultures that are integrate physical and emotional needs of all athletes.

**Specific Look-Fors:**

- 2.1** - Appropriately utilizes **facilities and equipment** to ensure physical safety
- 2.2** - Gives instructional **feedback** emphasizing fundamental technique and mechanics
- 2.3** - Uses inclusive and respectful **language** with athletes
- 2.4** - **Communicates** in ways facilitative of **relationship-building** with athletes and between athletes
- 2.5** - Utilizes **routines and organizes** activities to promote safety and learning

**Module 3: Creating an Environment for Learning** – Focusing on pedagogical tools coaches can use to support athlete learning, growth, and intrinsic motivation.

**Key ideas**

1. Effective coaches create a mastery climate which is a learning environment that places emphasis on effort, personal improvement, and self-referenced goals.
2. Facilitating a mastery climate takes skill, experience, and knowledge to execute.
3. Another important idea from research is giving athletes space to try things out and learn on their own which is called autonomy supportive coaching.
4. Sports should have a healthy balance of fun and intensity.

**Key Practice:** Coaching is ultimately about teaching and learning and there are certain pedagogical tools coaches can use to support athlete learning and growth including creating a mastery climate, using autonomy supportive practices, and balancing fun with intensity.

**Coach Behavior:** Coach creates a positive learning environment characterized by an emphasis on taking risks for learning, growth-orientation, and developing intrinsic motivation to improve.

**Specific Look-Fors:**

- 3.1** - Demonstrates moments of **levity** and use of appropriate **humor**
- 3.2** - Balances **silence and observation** with verbal engagement
- 3.3** - Offers **constructive feedback** that is **specific and targeted**
- 3.4** - Uses verbal and non-verbal cues to demonstrate **enthusiasm and excitement**
- 3.5** - Responds to mistakes in a **growth-oriented** manner (verbally & non-verbally)
- 3.6** – Encourages and facilitates athlete **reflection and self-assessment**

**Module 4: Modeling Positive Behavior** – Highlighting the coach's behavior as a teaching tool and an opportunity to be a positive role model.

**Key ideas**

1. One of the best teaching tools you have as a coach is your own behavior and coaching is full of opportunities to be a positive role model.

2. Reflection is a useful tool for examining your own behavior.
3. When you do misstep, it is important to recognize it and address it with your athletes.

Key Practice: One of the best teaching tools you have as a coach is your own behavior and coaching is full of opportunities to be a positive role model.

Coach Behavior: Coach demonstrates professional conduct, utilizes reflection as a useful tool for examining their own behavior, and recognizes and addresses missteps with their athletes.

Specific Look-Fors:

**4.1 - Demonstrates ability to regulate emotions** and displays self-control

**4.2 - Interactions\*** are conducted in a **regulated tone and manner**

**4.3 - Participates in and encourages collegial interactions** with opponents and referees

**4.4 - Is prepared, on time, present and engaged;** effectively runs practice within allotted space/time

**4.5 - Provides opportunities for athlete leadership and shared decision-making**

*\*Interactions include with officials, opponents, parents, staff, players, administrators, spectators, and community members*

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