

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR COACHES OF ADULT SPORT

Based on adult athletes' preferences, this guide offers practical tips to refine your coaching approach, fostering stronger coach-athlete relationships and more effective adult coaching.



PRACTICE 1: RESPECTING PREFERENCES

Adapt your approach by considering how each of your adult athletes wish to be held accountable for working hard and giving effort, and how they wish to receive feedback at practice.

	TIME OF SEASON				
	PRE	START	MID	END	POST
1. Considers how I wish to be pushed during practice	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
2. Considers my preferences for being held responsible for working hard	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
3. Takes measures to better understand what I want in terms of coaching feedback	↑	—	—	—	—

Coaching Tips & Tricks

- Use item #1 often and throughout the season; it is the most consistently preferred practice.
- Discuss feedback and accountability early; build on this understanding during the season.
- Adults take ownership of their effort but appreciate regular check-ins and a collaborative approach.

PRACTICE 2: CONSIDERING INDIVIDUALITY

Consider and tailor your approach to each adult athlete's experiences and motives when you are planning, organizing, and delivering practices.

	TIME OF SEASON				
	PRE	START	MID	END	POST
1. Individualize their coaching based on what I have been able to do in past experiences	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
2. Listens to my comments about my past experiences to inform how they setup my training	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
3. Asks about my past experiences when planning my training	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
4. Considers what I want to accomplish when organizing my training	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑

Coaching Tips & Tricks

- Use item #4 often; regularly consider your athletes' personal goals throughout the season.
- Ask about past experiences (#3) mainly with new athletes, not with familiar ones.
- Goal set early by individualizing and listening; check in on goals occasionally during the season.

PRACTICE 3: IMPARTING COACHING KNOWLEDGE

Enrich the learning environment by sharing your own relevant athletic experience, coaching knowledge, and professional coaching development to relate to, empathize with, and/or inspire your adult athletes.

	TIME OF SEASON				
	PRE	START	MID	END	POST
1. Identifies how their own sport experience bears on the info that they share with me	↓	—	—	—	—
2. Shares information from their professional coaching development with me	↓	↓	—	—	↓
3. Brings information to me that they have picked up in their sport experiences elsewhere	↑	↑	—	↑	↑

Coaching Tips & Tricks

- Share your experiences and education when it's relevant and applicable to what adults are learning.
- Mentioning your qualifications builds trust and shows you value your own continued learning.

↓ Adult athletes want you do this *less* often (low)

↑ Adult athletes want you do this *more* often (high)

— Adult athletes want you do this sometimes (moderate/mixed)

PRACTICE 4: CREATING PERSONALIZE PROGRAMMING

Consider and tailor scheduling (practices & competitions), season-long programming, and coaching support at competitions, to your adult athletes' needs and abilities.

	TIME OF SEASON				
	PRE	START	MID	END	POST
1. Pays attention to where I am in terms of my progress relative to season-long plans	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
2. Considers how to accommodate me when they set up practice/competitive schedules	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
3. Points out aspects of long-term programming that they have tailored to me	↑	↑	↑	—	↓
4. Considers how to accommodate programming (practice/competitive schedules)	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
5. Tailors their support to me at competitions	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓

Coaching Tips & Tricks

- Use these practices mainly during the season; preferences drop sharply in the off-season.
- Increase support for competition readiness (e.g., confidence, stress) as key events get closer.
- Create the main plan but expect adult athletes to adapt it and take ownership to make it work for them.

PRACTICE 5: FRAMING LEARNING SITUATIONS

Frame learning situations for your adult athletes by using self-discovery, problem-based scenarios, modelling, and assessments.

	TIME OF SEASON				
	PRE	START	MID	END	POST
1. Creates situations wherein I discover for myself why I am learning a skill/tactic	↓	—	—	—	↓
2. Uses performance assessments to help me understand why I need to learn a skill/tactic	—	—	—	—	↓
3. Readies me to learn by exposing me to higher skilled peers, competitors, or role models	↓	—	↑	—	↓
4. Asks me to do drills in which I need to resolve a challenge	—	↑	—	—	—
5. Asks me to relate drills/exercises to problems I am facing in sport	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
6. Asks me to relate my training to concerns I am facing outside of sport	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
7. Sets up opportunities for competitive activities for me during practice	↓	—	—	—	↓

Coaching Tips & Tricks

- Even if MAs don't need these situations often, they still consider them important.
- Recognize that adults vary greatly; some want direction, some want to collaborate, and others prefer to lead. Personalize your approach.
- Be thoughtful about timing: use self-discovery (#1) or peer models (#3) early in the season or off-season to avoid potential frustration.
- Use connections to outside life (#6) rarely, and only if clearly useful (e.g., linking a strength exercise to a practical life task, such as lifting a grandchild).

↓ Adult athletes want you do this *less* often (low) ↑ Adult athletes want you do this *more* often (high)
— Adult athletes want you do this sometimes (moderate/mixed)

ENHANCE THE ADULT SPORT EXPERIENCE

Understanding and respecting the unique preferences of adult (Masters) athletes is important for effective coaching. This andragogic guide provides a starting point based on key findings from Motz et al. (2026). For coaches interested in using the AOSCS-P with their athletes, the full instrument is available in the original publication (Motz et al., 2026). **Use this knowledge to identify key 'coachable moments,' refine your approach, and foster positive, quality sport experiences for athletes.**

Motz, D., Callary, B., Belalcazar, C., Rathwell, S., & Young, B.W. (2026). Masters athletes' preferences for adult-oriented coaching practices. *International Sport Coaching Journal*.