

C&A: SAFE PRACTICES: CONTACT

This resource provides references to and examples Prohibited Behaviour as addressed in [BBNZ's Safeguarding Policy](#).

For the purpose of this resource, the term Young Athletes refers to children and young people under the age of 18 who are involved in our sport.

Physical contact with young athletes in basketball.

Physical contact with young athletes in basketball is often a necessary part of the coaching / learning approach. However, it must always be safe, appropriate and relevant to the lesson or program based on the needs of the individual young athlete.

This can vary depending on the young athlete's age, ability and experience.

Safe, appropriate and relevant physical contact in basketball may include:

- Assisting with the use of equipment (shooting a ball)
- Demonstrating a position or technique (feet or shoulder position on the court)
- Treatment by a medical practitioner (team physio or doctor) or administering first aid.

It is important to avoid hugs, as even with the best of intentions, hugs can be interpreted in many ways by the person being hugged or someone else observing. Alternatively, you can:

- Use a fist bump, a high five or pat on the back when celebrating success.
- A consoling hand on the shoulder when supporting a young athlete through a loss or a disappointing moment.

Another example of appropriate physical contact is when it is used to prevent an injury to a young athlete or to others (e.g. grabbing a young athlete by the arm and pushing them out of the way of an oncoming basketball that is likely to hit them). If this happens, physical contact and/or restraint must be a last resort, and the level of force used must be appropriate to the specific circumstances.

Always record and report these incidents immediately.

There are some types of contact that are never ok.

Some abuse of children and young people can take place through physical contact. Examples of physical contact that is considered abuse, prohibited conduct or a breach of the Safety Practices and Procedures in the BBNZ Safeguarding Policy includes any physical contact that:

- is sexual or might appear sexual to someone else
- involves touching of genitals, buttocks, or the breast area (unless required by medical practitioner)
- involves undressing, exposing genitals or asking a young athlete to engage in sexual activity is intended to frighten, cause pain or distress
- is overly physical (e.g. tickling, sparring or wrestling)
- is aggressive, dangerous or causes physical harm or injury
- is unnecessary (e.g. assisting with toileting when a young athlete does not require assistance); or
- is contact that the young athlete has not initiated or has specifically asked not to engage in.

If any of these examples of physical contact occur it must be reported to the club or Association and BBNZ immediately so the appropriate actions can be taken to ensure the safety of the young athlete and others involved.

WHAT IS PHYSICAL HARM?

Physical harm includes harm to a child or young person's body such as welts, bruises or other physical injury caused by actions such as hitting, shoving, pushing, punching, or slapping.

It can also over-training or using physical punishment at training to the point of exhaustion, vomiting or passing out.

Not all physical harm is the result of physical abuse, it may be the result of actions intended to be fun or playful like wrestling or sparring. However, sometimes these behaviours are still not appropriate in the context of basketball. They are considered unprofessional when between an adult and young athlete.

Additionally, a young athlete does not need to be physically hurt for these behaviours to be harmful. These behaviours have the potential to cause harm and can be interpreted by those involved or even those observing, as aggressive, controlling, and an unreasonable exertion of power.

Even when no physical harm is caused, they can result in feelings of shame, humiliation, embarrassment, and fear and are not acceptable.

WHAT IS SEXUAL MISCONDUCT?

Sexual misconduct refers to behaviours of a sexual nature towards a child or young person and is always inappropriate, illegal and a breach of child safeguarding policies, procedures and codes of conduct.

You must not under any circumstances, engage in behaviour of a sexual nature with or in the presence of a child or young person.

Sexual misconduct includes physical contact (touching, caressing, holding) and non-physical contact behaviour (including verbal or online communication, exposure to pornography)

Tips for safe physical contact with young athletes in basketball.

Consent

It is important that a young athlete understands the requirement of physical contact and can therefore provide informed consent. The best way to do this is to ask!

- *I am going to show you how to shoot the ball to get more accuracy. Are you ok if I move your / hand arm into position?*
- *Today we are going to work on your defensive stance. I might need to move you around a bit, mostly your back, shoulders and feet until we get you in the perfect spot. Are you ok with that? Let me know if it's uncomfortable, or if you need a break. We can always go on to something else.*

Line of sight

If you have nothing to hide don't hide it. Wherever possible it is important to ensure physical contact with a young athlete happens in an open space where other people can see it. That way, a parent can observe, or other people from the club or association personnel can see what is happening and see that it is relevant and appropriate. Avoid small, confined spaces or areas with no line of sight for lessons where physical contact is required.

However, if you are working in an enclosed or private space in an indoor facility or venue, invite a parent or another young athlete to come and watch, even demonstrate it (feet or elbow positions, angles of back bend etc.) to them at the same time. This shows openness and transparency and may make the young athlete feel a little more comfortable with physical contact too.



Safe Physical Contact Checklist

- ✓ Is it relevant to basketball and my role?
- ✓ Is the young athlete aware of what I am doing, and why?
- ✓ Do I have their consent?
- ✓ How can I be sure I have their consent?
- ✓ Could they easily explain what you are doing to someone else? This is a good indicator of whether they understand what you are doing and therefore able to give informed consent.
- ✓ Is the child or young person showing any signs of distress or discomfort? If so, stop.
- ✓ Is it happening in an open space, where other people can easily see?
- ✓ Would I continue to do this if their parent were watching?
- ✓ Can I justify it (explain how it is relevant and appropriate) if I had to?
- ✓ Would I be comfortable with someone using the same contact with my own child or a child close to me (niece or nephew)?
- ✓ Is there someone else who would be more appropriate to make this contact (The first aid officer / a physio or the young athlete's parent)?

Familiarise yourself with the [Safe Boundaries Resource](#) for advice and ideas regarding avoiding unnecessary physical contact and the [Recognising and Responding Resource](#) for the steps to take if you are concerned about a young athlete experiencing inappropriate physical contact, physical harm, sexual misconduct.