



# University Sport Volunteering and Coaching Guide



# Getting Started

A man wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt with a 'COACH' logo, a white cap, and glasses is throwing a white ball with both hands. He is smiling and looking towards a group of children in the foreground. The children are wearing orange shirts, some with 'FESTIVAL OF RUGBY 2015' printed on the back. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a red fence.

British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) and Sports Coach UK have created this guide to provide information to help you take your first steps into coaching and sports volunteering. Whether you are a student thinking about getting into coaching or a student who has a coaching qualification but is not currently coaching, this guide will help you to identify what type and level may appeal to you.

There are many ways in which you can get involved, whether through sports volunteering or offering more general support.

It's worth noting that the benefits of being involved in sports volunteering are most valuable through the time spent getting out there and gaining experience, not just through attending courses and gaining qualifications.

To see the full menu of what is available in this document, click [here](#).

# Contents

Click on a heading to find out more.

WHAT IS COACHING?

HOW COULD YOU BENEFIT?

WHO WOULD YOU ENJOY COACHING?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

TYPES OF COACHING ROLES

WHERE DO YOU START?

SPORT VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

GETTING INVOLVED – HINTS AND TIPS

USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS

HOW YOU CAN STAY IN TOUCH

3

4

6

8

10

11

12

13

14

16

Navigate forwards  
or backwards



Click this symbol  
to return to this menu

# What is coaching?

Coaching has evolved a lot in recent years. Today, it is so varied that it can include anything from facilitating a beginners' recreational session in an activator role to a Level 3 coach supporting athletes to win Olympic medals.

The term 'coach' used throughout this guide refers to all those involved in helping and inspiring all people to achieve their sport and activity goals whatever their ability, ambition or motivation. This may be under the title of activator, coach, instructor, teacher or leader.

Coaching is about helping people of different ages and abilities enjoy taking part in sport and physical activity. Becoming a coach can be life changing for you and those you coach – improving health and confidence, learning new skills, building respectful relationships and creating cohesive communities.

University is a great time to start coaching, not only because it's a good time in your life to pick up new skills, but it is also likely your university will have provisions to support you in getting started.



**'Coaching strongly applies to aspects of working life. I have developed excellent time management and organisational skills, as well as how to conduct myself in a professional and friendly manner. I have also improved my own game!'**

**Steff Milne, Tennis Coach  
Royal Holloway, University of London**

Read Steff's story of why she got into coaching [here](#).

## Did you know?

Research shows us that the peak age to start coaching is 18–24 years old.

# How could you benefit?

You may not have thought about coaching or sports volunteering when you think about how to spend your spare time at university. There are many benefits you can gain by becoming a coach that are worth considering.

- 1 Build your confidence.** Being in a position of leadership like a coach or activator can take you out of your comfort zone and challenge you in ways that other activities aren't able to.
- 2 Enhance your career prospects.** Taking on more responsibility at university makes you stand out from the crowd! Research has identified those that take part in sport and volunteering are more employable than those that do not.

Check out the research [here](#).



**‘As a quiet and shy girl, coaching has primarily allowed me to build on my confidence and many other skills such as communication, organisation and planning.’**

**Lizzie Hodgkinson,  
Football Coach,  
Leeds Trinity University**

Read Lizzie's story to see how coaching helped build her confidence [here](#).

## Did you know?

Employability research revealed the average salary of graduates who engaged with sport at university is around £6000 more than those who did not take part in sport.

# How could you benefit? (continued)

- 3 Build new friendships.** Involving yourself in sport gives you the chance to meet new people and build friendships with others who share a common interest.
- 4 Have fun and extend your social life.** Becoming a coach or activator for student teams or clubs guarantees that everyone in the session is going to get to know you, further building the circle of friends you have.
- 5 Give something back to a sport that has given you so much.** Volunteering is good for your well-being, providing a great feel-good factor, and it helps make a difference to other people's lives.
- 6 Build new skills that can be transferable to other parts of your life.** Whether you choose to take on an activator role or gain qualifications to become a Level 2 coach, you will develop core skills such as communication, leadership and time management to help you in your degree and also later in life.



- 7 Have the opportunity for paid work.** How do you earn money over the summer and Easter break? You could look for coaching roles within your community or even look to set up a summer camp in your local area.

If you're still not sure coaching is for you, have a read of some case studies of students who are currently coaching within their university and hear what they have to say about it [here](#).

## Did you know?

More than half (51%) of graduates said sporting involvement has helped them develop teamwork skills and leadership qualities in the workplace.

To find out more, click [here](#).



# Who would you enjoy coaching?

If you are looking into coaching for the first time, you may not have thought about the different groups of people you could coach. For example, you could be a children's coach in after-school clubs, coach disabled people in the community or even coach students within your own university.

There are also different abilities you could coach within each group, ranging from complete beginners to coaching teams in competitions.

Below is a list of questions to consider and some suggestions of options that could be available to you.

## Who would you like to coach?

- Children and young people
- Sixth-form/college students
- University students
- Disabled people
- Adults
- Vulnerable groups
- Talented performers

## What level of ability would you like to work with?

- Complete beginners
- Recreational players
- People returning to sport
- Competitive players

## What role do you want to play?

- Facilitate a 'turn up and play'-based session
- Help another coach with their session
- Be in charge of a session
- Help out in different ways (perhaps at a club you're already involved with)

## Where do you want to coach?

- University facilities
- Local community centres
- Youth centres, social clubs, sports clubs, schools (breakfast, lunch or after-school clubs)
- Outdoor spaces (parks, country parks, leisure centres)

# Who would you enjoy coaching? (continued)

The qualifications, skills and experience you need for your coaching role will depend on your answers to those questions, and the needs of the people you are working with.

If you don't know which group you want to coach, then you could ask to shadow a number of different coaches first before making a decision.

To see the roles and qualifications that are required at each coaching level, click [here](#).

## Please note

If you regularly coach children, young people under the age of 18 or vulnerable groups, or have intensive contact with them for a period of time, you will need a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. If you are a **lead coach**, you will be able to work without supervision and are therefore also required to have a barred list check. Your university may offer this service. For more general information, click [here](#).

## Did you know?

Anyone can coach – you don't have to be an expert or excel at sport.



# What do you want to achieve?

Below are examples of different groups of people you could coach, and the type of coaching qualifications, training and experience you will need. These are good starting points when new to coaching, and you can work towards a higher level role as you gain more experience.

Who do you want to work with?	What ability level are they?	What do they want from you?	What role could you play?	What qualification is needed?
<b>Students within a recreational session</b>	Beginner looking to get involved in a fun and social environment – they are likely to either be new to the sport or returning after trying it earlier in life	Motivate them and facilitate the session to keep everyone actively involved – they are likely to want the session to focus on being fun and social, rather than being based on technical skills and drills	Organise and promote activities, take a lead on facilitating the session	An activator qualification or training course may be suitable to fill that role
<b>Children and young people</b>	Competitive	Better competitive results for the team	Lead coach (eg responsible for the team for the season)	A lead coach qualification for the sport you are coaching in*
<b>Community group</b>	Encouraging people to introduce activity into their lives	Support, encouragement and easy tips for how to gradually increase activity in their everyday routines.	Support sessions being led by a coach	An activator qualification or training course may be suitable to fill that role

\* Requirements may differ depending on the sport and environment you are coaching in. It will be worth checking with the governing body of sport what qualification would be recommended. You will need to work your way through the relevant qualifications pathway of the governing body of sport to be a lead coach.

# What do you want to achieve? (continued)



## Top tip

It is really important that you get some practical experience through observing and working with other qualified coaches as soon as you decide you know you want to get involved in coaching. This will help you decide who you want to coach (and at what level), and therefore what you need to aim for in terms of qualifications and training along the way. For more information about the qualifications that are required at each level, click [here](#).

With disabled people accounting for around 20% of the population, it is likely that at some time you could be coaching a disabled person. Whatever your approach to coaching is, you will need an understanding of how to adapt your coaching to ensure people of all abilities are able to reach their true potential and achieving their personal goals. Check out Sports Coach UK's 'Including Everyone in Your Sessions' guide [here](#).

# Types of coaching roles

		Level of Coach		
		Activator*	Assistant or Session Coach	Lead Coach
What does this coaching role involve?	Level of responsibility	You can organise, promote and deliver fun, active events or sessions for individuals and small groups. The focus is on creating an enjoyable session that's appropriate for every individual, not coaching technique and tactical knowledge in a drill-like method.	You can assist a lead coach in delivering parts of sessions, such as warm-ups and cool-downs, and deliver activities to small groups under supervision. This is a good opportunity to shadow a Level 2 coach to gain practical experience of what is required to be a coach at that level.	You can prepare, deliver and review coaching sessions independently.
	Type of qualification or training required	You do not necessarily need to have a qualification. However, there may be training that your university puts on for you, or training required through a governing body of sport if your role is linked to a sport-specific initiative.	You will need to go on a Level 1 course. Course requirements will vary depending on the sport you are interested in.	You will need to have gained a Level 2 qualification in your sport of choice. In a few sports, it is now possible to deliver coaching sessions without supervision with a Level 1 qualification. There are several boundaries on the Level 1 coach leading sessions so you are advised to check with the governing body of sport what these limitations are.
	Any prior experience needed to coach at this level	The best activators are those who are engaging with participants, enthusiastic and good at motivating people to give something a try. No experience is really necessary, just good people skills. You'll gain the experience by taking on the role.	Once you have gained your Level 1 coaching qualification, you are good to go. It is recommended that you try to put the qualification into practice as soon as possible.	Use search engines to find out more about a specific sport's current requirements. In most cases, you will need to have achieved your Level 1 and have experience of coaching sessions under the supervision of a Level 2 coach. Ideally, you should complete the development plan from your Level 1 course before signing up to the Level 2.

\*Many governing body of sport and university programme roles may fit in this category, but may be referred to as ambassador, leader or officer.



# Where do you start?

**So, you want to get out there and get going – here are some places that can help.**

**Speak to staff at your university** to see what opportunities they may offer internally or be aware of in the local area. This could be through a sport development department, or athletic or **students' union**. This will vary depending on which university you are from.

Share with them what you are interested in. It would be useful to know or consider where you would want to coach before you speak to them (eg a university session or community club).

## **County sports partnership (CSP)**

– county organisations have dedicated coaching officers/managers who will have opportunities with different groups and in a broad range of environments. Go along to a 'First Steps into Coaching' introductory session run by a CSP. Find your local CSP **here**.

**Governing bodies of sport** – if you know you want to coach a specific sport, have a look at the relevant sports pages **here**.

If you have any problems accessing help, please email **info@bucs.org.uk**



# Sport volunteering opportunities

**Sport volunteering** can be very rewarding, and there are lots of opportunities out there where you can give as much or as little time as you are able to.

There are so many reasons why people volunteer. You may have skills you'd like to share, or want to give something back to your community. Perhaps you want to fill your spare time, or hope to meet new people. Whatever the reason, people who volunteer find it very satisfying.

Join In is the nation's charity for local sport volunteering and has a hub of information on how you can get involved in sport volunteering. Take a look [here](#).

The **Join In Quiz** will help you to see what you can do in sport.

## Did you know?

Most young people who want to volunteer in sport don't know who to ask to get involved – so don't be afraid to ask!

**Sport volunteering** can also take many different forms, from being a committee member to linking with local events.

Have you ever thought of taking on roles that could utilise your learning from your degree programme? Here are some examples:

- Studying marketing – work with a club to write match reports to submit to local papers and promote on the club/university website.
- Studying business management – work with a sports club to create a five-year development plan.
- Studying finance – support a sports club to manage its finances through the role of club treasurer.
- General skills – offer to complete bid applications, manage meetings or provide admin support.

## Did you know?

The number one volunteering need for clubs is fundraising support.

# Getting involved – hints and tips

'I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT COACHING THIS SPORT OR ITS RULES.'

- Consider being an assistant first to learn the ropes.
- You will pick up coaching tips, rules and techniques through training and experiences.

'I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO FOR ANY QUALIFICATIONS.'

- Ask your sport development department, or athletic or students' union what might be offered on campus.
- Ask the governing body of the sport you're interested in coaching for further information.

'I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT COACHING.'

- Enthusiasm and a 'can do' attitude are all you need to begin with.
- More experienced coaches will provide support.

'I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO COMMIT DUE TO UNIVERSITY STUDIES.'

- Coaching does require a time commitment.
- Know how much time you are willing to give.
- Be upfront and honest about the time you can commit to so you don't overcommit.

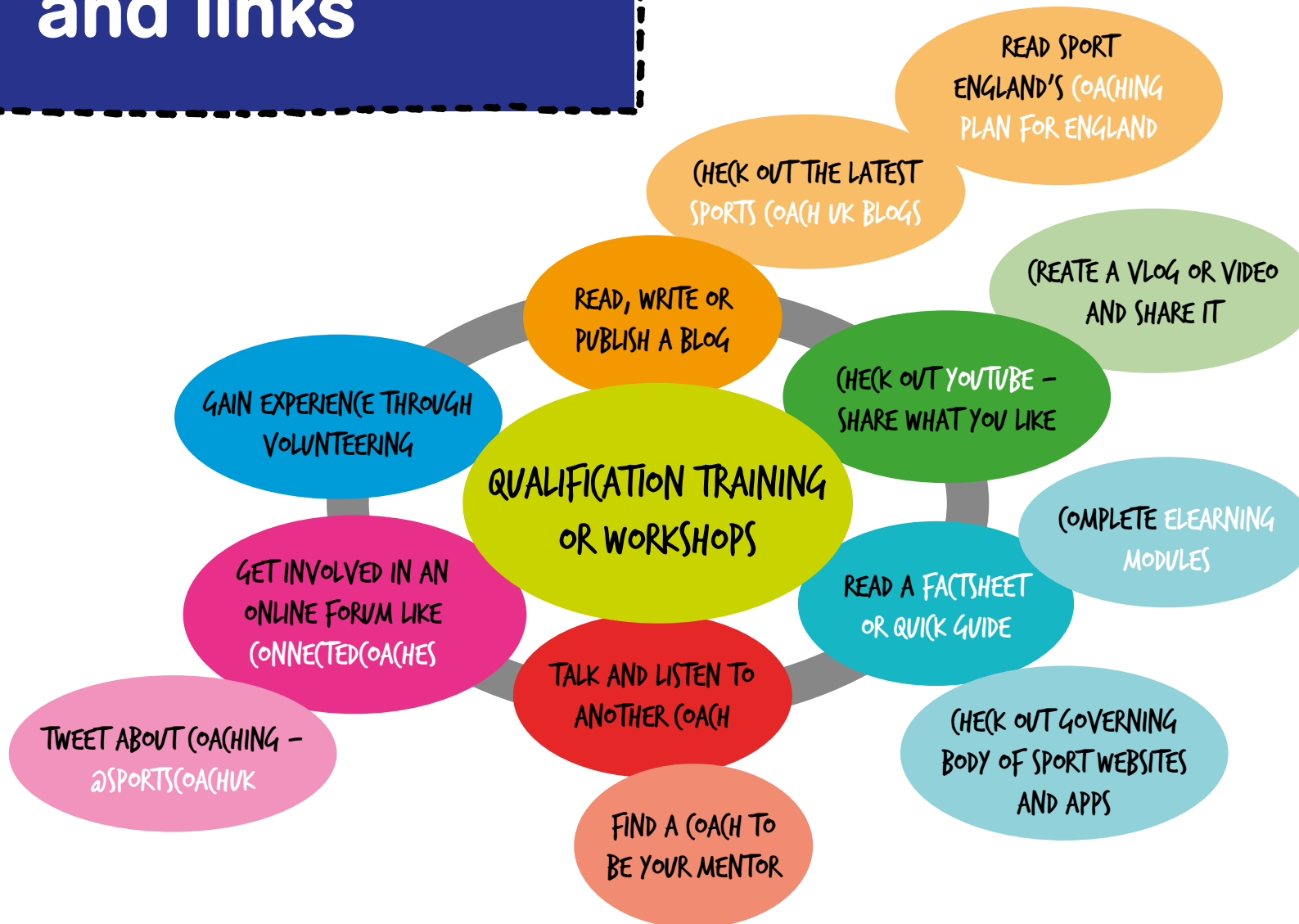
'I CAN'T AFFORD THE TRAINING ON MY STUDENT BUDGET.'

- Your local CSP may have a bursary available.
- Your university or governing body of sport may have some discounts.
- Check out some training like first aid that is offered free in some volunteer centres.



# Useful information and links

There are many supporting resources to help you start and develop as a coach. Learning opportunities come in a variety of formats – check out the following examples.



## Funding to support your training

To gain qualifications costs money, but there are a number of funding opportunities and bursaries that you could take advantage of. For more information, check out the latest edition of the Sports Coach UK 'Funding Opportunities for Coaching in the UK' guide [here](#).

Make sure when you are signed up to the course that you are aware of any commitments linked to it. For example, you may be able to get discount in return for committing to a number of hours of volunteering.

# Useful information and links (continued)

## eLearning

The eLearning module How to Coach: Plan, Do, Review is a good introductory course as you'll get a good idea of what's involved in coaching. It will help you to understand the principles behind well organised coaching sessions. Learn about the principles of planning, delivering and evaluating coaching sessions, and download useful tools like session plans. Click [here](#).

Inspiring Positive Behaviour – develop your skills and confidence in managing challenging behaviour with this 30-minute eLearning module. Click [here](#).

## Face-to-face practical sessions

You can continuously develop and build on the skills and qualities you need to be an effective coach by attending workshops. There are a number that cover a broad range of skills. Click [here](#).

To find out which workshops are on offer, check out the [Workshop Finder](#).

For help finding your local provider, click [here](#).

For sport-specific development, click [here](#).

To find some really interesting reads in Sports Coach UK's research summaries, click [here](#).



# How you can stay in touch

Share your stories with us at:



See what's happening in the coaching world by accessing Sports Coach UK blogs [here](#).

Join the online community of coaches at ConnectedCoaches [here](#). Read tips and interesting articles from coaches, or join in discussions.

Joining your local CSP database means you'll hear about voluntary and paid opportunities, further learning and courses. Click [here](#).

To access essential coaching information, register for free with Sports Coach UK [here](#).

Ask for advice from [info@bucs.org.uk](mailto:info@bucs.org.uk)





## **Sports Coach UK**

Chelsea Close

Armley

Leeds LS12 4HP

Tel: 0113-274 4802

[www.sportscoachuk.org](http://www.sportscoachuk.org)