

## **Guidelines for Coach and Official Interaction**

**(version 2 – January 2013 final)**

It is recognized that both coaches and officials play an integral part in the development of the game and its players. Coaches and officials are expected to be role models to the players and ambassadors of the game to all. It is understood that basketball is a competitive environment and that people will have emotional reactions. However, there is an expectation that all participants model acceptable behaviour during competition. There is concern with the effect inappropriate responses, reactions and communications have on the game and its players.

These guidelines for interaction were developed as a co-operation of Canada Basketball, the Canadian Association of Basketball Officials, Ontario Basketball and the Ontario Association of Basketball Officials. They were adopted by Ontario Basketball and the Ontario Association of Basketball Officials in early 2012. There have been some minor edits (additions and deletions), re-ordering of points and some commentary added from version 1 that was published last year. As well this version addresses the fact that either coach can stand, but not concurrently, to coach.

### **General**

1. Communication between coaches and officials and officials and coaches should be done in a respectful and professional manner
2. Communication should not be confrontational nor directed negatively on a personal level
3. Communication to officials should be done in order to gain information and for coaching purposes
4. Communication should not delay the game
5. Coaches and officials should strive for quality, not quantity when communicating with each other

### **Communication should be done in a respectful and professional manner**

- Communication should be done respectfully and professionally. Coaches and officials are reminded that it is both what you say and how you say it that delivers a message. Be mindful of:
  - language
  - tone
  - body language and gestures
- It is a good practice for the officials to introduce themselves to the coaches before the game. Both coaches and officials should look to create and maintain a positive working rapport.

### **Communication should not be confrontational nor directed negatively on a personal level**

- Coaches and officials should not 'let their emotions get the best of them'
- It is not acceptable for coaches nor officials to be yelling across the court at each other
- Treat each other as professionals and adults. Communicate in the manner that you want to be communicated in
- What both coaches and officials say to each other should not be aggressive in wording, tone or with aggressive body language and/or gestures

## **Communication should be done in order gain information**

- Communication should be for clarification so that the coach can help his/her team; improve or maximize their performance
- Communication should not be used in order to 1) influence the official in future calls or 2) direct the officials
- Coaches should strive to ask questions rather than make statements. Statements are not appropriate communication, especially when directive i.e. “You must...” or “Call the...”
- Rhetorical questions are not considered acceptable and will not be answered. i.e. “What are you looking at?” and may result in a warning or technical foul
- Questions that are really statements are not considered appropriate. i.e. “Do you know the fouls are 6 – 0?” and may result in a warning or technical foul
- Both officials and coaches should understand that communication is to exchange information in a respectful and meaningful way but that does not/nor should it be expected to always result in a common acceptance
- Officials should work at being both efficient and effective in their communications. Officials should answer appropriate questions in a professional manner and to the point i.e. “Coach, the defender obtained legal guarding position and contact was in the front of the torso”

## **Communication should not delay the game**

- Communication should be efficient in manner
- Communication should not be prolonged such that it delays the game
- Officials and coaches should develop their abilities such that they can express their point of view in an accurate and concise manner
- Coaches should respect that after making their point and getting the official’s perspective that it may be a case of “agree to disagree” and move on
- Communication should deal with the present not the past or future. Efforts should be made to stay in the here and now. For example, interventions such as: “Okay fine but what about the play....” Should be avoided. That said, communication is expected to occur as the opportunity presents itself and thus may present itself ‘after the fact’ and should be acknowledged by the officials.

## **Coaches should strive for quality, not quantity when communicating with officials**

- Communication should not be a running commentary from the bench i.e. “three seconds ref, he’s in there all day” or counting a loud “1...2...3...4...”
- Coaches should look to gain information and expect that the officials will consider their perspective as opposed to convince/influence the officials in a prolonged point counter-point discussion
- Coaches should look to get clarification on one point at a time

## **Commentary on Technical Fouls**

Note that a warning is not a pre-requisite to a technical foul. Warnings may be given and are recommended as the circumstances dictate. That said, if the behaviour or communication warrants it, no warning will be given and a technical foul assessed.

## **Coaches can and should receive technical fouls when:**

- Swearing at the officials
- Making comments that attack the integrity of the official(s)
- Making it personal i.e. "You have to do better" "You're terrible"
- Using consistent negativity towards the officials
- Consistently trying to interrupt the flow of the game through his/her communications
- Behaviour such as posturing or holding the ball to make a point
- Being aggressive towards the officials in language and/or tone
- Trying to intimidate the officials
- Gesturing to influence the crowd or to express displeasure
- Throwing an object

## **When Communication May and May Not Occur**

### **While clock is running**

- Communication should be minimized when the clock is running
- Appropriate comments can be made during live ball, but there should be no expectation on the coaches' part for the official to turn his/her attention to the coach when there is play on the floor
- Communication during live ball distracts the officials from the game and coaches should not expect to be answered by the officials during it
- During live ball it is expected that the coach is coaching his/her players and officials are officiating the game. If play or situation allows, there may be a quick response or acknowledgment.

### **During a clock stoppage**

- The head coach may communicate with the officials
- In a three-person officiating crew, the head coach may talk to an official during the first of two or the first and second of three free throws, but the official should not be expected to come over to stand beside the coach and give eye contact. The official should maintain coverage of the court
- In a two-person crew the head coach can communicate with an official prior to the administering of the free throws such that all communication is finished with the table and the communication does not create delay in the game administration
- During timeouts, quarter and half time intervals, the officials should not go over and talk to the coach until the end of the time out or interval. The communication should not delay the game
- Coaches are not allowed to come out onto the court to communicate with the officials
- When coaches/team personnel come out onto the floor to tend to an injured player, they shall not take this as an opportunity to voice their displeasure with the officials

## Reminders on Bench Decorum

- By rule, either but not both, the head coach or an assistant coach can stand to coach their team while play is in progress.
- With the above said, only the head coach, by rule, can communicate with the officials
- Assistant coaches should not be communicating with the officials or involving themselves in communications between the head coach and officials
- The coaches are expected to coach within the team bench area and refrain from coming out onto the court to coach or communicate with officials
- The head coach is responsible for the decorum of all players and team personnel on his/her bench
- Behaviour that works to incite the spectators shall not be tolerated and will warrant a warning or a technical foul
- During time outs both coaches and officials should use the time most effectively; the coaches to coach their players and the officiating crew to verify the game administration and get together to effectively review what has transpired and move forward. There can be communication between an official and a head coach for clarification. The goal should be effectiveness and efficiency. Coaches and officials should respect this. Situations to be avoided include 1) a head coach communicating with one official while other bench personnel occupy another official. Or 2) officials interrupting the time-out to be communicating information that could be communicated after the time out has ended.
- Unsportsmanlike behaviour and communication to the table officials and Commissionaire (if present) are subject to the same guidelines as interaction with the court officials.

## A final comment

Both officials and coaches should strive for quality communication that supports the development of the game and the players. Both officials and coaches are expected to be effective, efficient and respectful in their communications.

Although expected at all levels of the game, there are increased expectations to be positive role models in the younger age groups.



I would like to thank all who have participated in this process and development of the guidelines. I offer a special acknowledgment of Mike MacKay, Consultant for Coach Education and Development for Canada Basketball, for his work in the foundation of the guidelines. I can be contacted at [tlaurain@basketball.on.ca](mailto:tlaurain@basketball.on.ca)

## **Appendix 1 – Commentary on the Guidelines**

The ultimate goals of these guidelines are:

- consistency in the effectiveness and efficiency of interaction between coaches and officials
- the modeling of positive interaction and display of sportsmanship within the competitive environment by coaches and officials

The rules have always been in place to deal with inappropriate behavior and communications by players, coaches and bench personnel. These guidelines provide some specifics in identifying inappropriate actions to both coaches and officials for more consistency in expectations and adjudication.

The intent is to promote early recognition, proactivity and more efficient communication by the officials and self-realization by the coaches such that acceptable behavior and communication is established without the need for penalization as possible. That said, although not all inclusive, they do clarify what is inappropriate behavior, interaction and communication.

Officials are expected to understand that the game is emotional for those playing and coaching and that some reaction on the part of the participants in the ‘heat of the moment’ can be expected. That said, some reactions, actions and interactions warrant immediate penalization. If the behaviour doesn’t warrant immediate penalization but is inappropriate, has the potential to be so if continued or escalates, it is intended that it is proactively addressed in a professional manner by the officials. Depending on the actions and circumstances, this may include simply ‘lending an ear’ and then reiterating/re-establishing what is appropriate and inappropriate or it could involve an informal or formal warning.

Coaches are expected to interact and communicate within the guidelines. Coaches have to understand the impact and ramifications of their actions and work within the guidelines to ensure that their communication is effective, efficient and within the guidelines.

Officials should understand that the guidelines are inclusive to them. Officials should look to and work at being effective and efficient communicators and game managers. Officials are expected to maintain their composure, neutrality and professionalism. Officials are expected to ‘lend an ear’ and offer explanations within the outlined guidelines. That said, this should not be expected to be on a continual basis throughout the game.

Good communication tools we should all be modeling include: listening and acknowledging , not directing personal comments or being aggressive, understanding that the parties have different perspectives (and probably looks at a play or plays) and that the outcome of an interaction may be ‘agree to disagree’ and not looking to ‘get the last word in’.

The guidelines are about the game. They are about making the game better by maximizing effective and efficient communication between coaches and officials and minimizing inappropriate interactions that reflect negatively on the game and prevent its smooth running.