



## **Getting your coaching career off the ground**

**1.) Don't be set in your ways** - I cannot even begin to tell you how much I have learned since I knew it all as a 23 year old head coach. The greatest thing I have learned as a coach is that I don't know everything.

Obviously, I have certain convictions that I have held since I was a young coach, but many of my philosophies on coaching, leading young men, techniques and tactics have evolved over time. If you're looking to get a head start on your coaching career, being a know-it-all is a sure fire way to run into several dead ends.

Instead, question everything you do. A great question to ask yourself is, "if we were starting from scratch, is the way we would do it?" It can give you perspective on why you do what you do, and can keep you out of the "because we have always done it that way" rut.

**2.) Be a selective sponge** - Listen to everyone who will talk about baseball, but don't take it all as the gospel. You will hear so many different philosophies on every aspect of baseball it will make your head spin. Looking online for info will make your head spin even more (says the online baseball coaching guy!!!).

So you need to be a sponge, but you need to filter the info that you find valid, and that matches your philosophy and goals, and the info that you don't. As someone who has been a head coach for 12 years, trust me, you cannot install EVERYTHING you learn in a single season.

So prioritize what you want to accomplish each year, and find the best information you can that matches your coaching philosophy and your program's needs.

**3.) Volunteer** - There is NOTHING more valuable to a head coach than a great volunteer. It may seem obvious that early in your career as you are beginning to build your resume, volunteering is a great idea, but it is not so obvious that volunteering may be better for your career in the long term than taking a paid position in your first few years.

I realize that volunteering over taking a paid position as a young coach can be very tough because money is probably at a premium for you, and it is not the right thing to do in every situation. But in the right situation, being a volunteer could be worse for your short term, but could be exponentially better for your long term career.

So why could it be better to be a volunteer than a paid coach in your first few years? The answer is simple, you get to choose who work for. If you are volunteering, you can seek out the best staff, the best head coach, and the best program for you to work with and learn from.

If you are seeking a paid position, it is possible you are able to land one on a great staff where you will learn a lot, but it is more likely those jobs are already taken. If you want to get on one of those staffs, you may need to be a volunteer.

In addition to volunteering to coach with a staff that you think highly of, you should also volunteer to work camps and clinics for coaches who are highly established. Running camps and giving individual lessons is often a huge part of developing a program at almost any level, so seeing how it is done from the inside can be very beneficial.

Another great opportunity to volunteer is on summer teams. Find the local American Legion team, or college summer league team to build your experience, knowledge, and resume.

**4.) Grad assistant** - I have learned this one... the hard way. If you think you'd like to coach in college, start there by volunteering or getting a graduate assistant position. If you aren't playing in college, many colleges will offer a student volunteer position on their staff that you can get while you are still in college.

To the outsider, it seems as though you would start in high school and work your way up to college, but that's not the way it works. Once you are in high school two things happen, you get the stigma of a high school coach and it is very difficult even get interviews for college jobs, and you start making money (assuming you are teaching at the school or have another job) that makes it difficult to transition to a lower paying, entry level college job.

Many entry level college coaching positions pay very poorly if at all (see #3), so start there when you are young, don't have a family, and don't mind living on your buddy's couch and eating ramen noodles for every meal. Once you have a mortgage, a car payment, and a family, taking a low paying job will be very difficult.

So, if you think you may want to coach in college at some point, start there because high school athletic directors will always be looking for coaches with college experience, but college athletic directors are almost never looking for coaches with only high school experience.

**5.) Make connections** - The baseball world is so small now with social media and the internet. Follow influencers in the baseball world on Twitter and other social media outlets (although most coaches like to hang out on Twitter).

The great thing about twitter and other social media platforms is that many coaches will get back to you and have a conversation with you over these platforms as long as you aren't too pushy.

**6.) Go to clinics** - Obviously the internet isn't the only way to make connections. More meaningful connections can be made at good old fashion coaching clinics. Most state high school coaches associations hold a clinic every year and there are several other regional clinics, along with national clinics such as the BCA and ABCA clinics.

Obviously go to these clinics as a means of learning from some of the best coaches in the world, but also don't forget about your ability to make connections with other coaches there. If you are able, attend the Hall of Fame dinners, awards luncheons, or other socials after the

clinic. These are great ways to get to know other coaches in your region and make long lasting connections.

**7.) Find a mentor** - This one can be difficult to achieve quickly, but it is very important. Many new or young coaches find mentors in the head coaches they work with or their high school or college coach.

It doesn't need to be a formal mentorship, but you should find someone who you trust, and who you can rely on when you struggle, and you will struggle. Ideally, this person will have a lot of experience, and will have "been there and done that," but you can also find a younger, less experienced coach who may be going through many of the same things that you are who you can bounce ideas off and work through issues together.

Since I became a head coach at age 23, I didn't have any baseball coach mentors at that point (12 years later, I have many, many more baseball mentors), so I was able to use our head football coach to bounce ideas off of. Coaching is coaching, and many of the same issues come up in every sport.

**8.) Develop your coaching philosophy** - This is probably the most important tip I can give as you try to get your coaching career off the ground because it will mold everything else you do. It will determine who you work with, what jobs you accept, how you interact with parents, players, coaches, officials, and administrators.

It reminds you why you do what you do. Plus, it will be one of the first few questions you are asked in an interview, and most coaches haven't thought about it, and don't answer that question very well.

Check out this exercise to help you develop your philosophy [HERE](#).

**9.) Write it down!** - Perhaps the 2015 version of this is "type it out." When you find something at a clinic, online, after you have a great conversation with a veteran coach, when you develop something on your own, make sure you have it where you can access it quickly and easily.

My suggestion would be to get a digital storage space where you can compile and organize all of the philosophies, drills, practice organization techniques, and program documents in one place. Organize them into folders where you can easily find them.

This will come in HUGE!! when it is time for interviews. It is very impressive for the interviewer to see you walk in with a binder full of what you plan on doing when they hire you, and when they ask you specific questions, you can refer to your plan.

It will surprise you to know that many interviews are more about your program building philosophy and plans than what you know about baseball (stay tuned for our interview specials coming out for Cornerstone Subscribers!!)

That should get you off and running on your coaching career. Be sure to check out all of our great resources on our [blog](#), [podcast](#), and in our free [Bronze Library](#).