



SPORT INTEGRITY
AUSTRALIA

Safe sport together

Promoting positive peer behaviour

A practical guide for clubs and sporting organisations to promote positive behaviour and respond effectively to inappropriate or harmful behaviour between children and young people in sport.

SPORTING ORGANISATIONS SHOULD

Be clear about:

- Their standards, values and expectations for behaviour.
- The role everyone plays in creating a safe and respectful environment — including children, parents, coaches, officials and administrators.
- Which behaviours are encouraged and which behaviours are not acceptable.
- How concerns can be raised and addressed.

Be consistent:

- Actively reinforce positive behaviour.
- Address inappropriate behaviour early and consistently.
- Support parents to actively lead and take responsibility for their child's behaviour.
- Provide clear, accessible and safe ways for children and young people to raise concerns.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Children and young people need clear guidance on how they are expected to behave in sport. A [Code of Conduct](#) is critical for setting expectations and for driving the culture of the club. It provides consistent standards for behaviour, supports positive participation and reinforces your sport's commitment to creating a safe and respectful environment.

HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERSTAND YOUR CODE OF CONDUCT

- **Get children and young people involved:** Engage children and young people in discussions and activities that promote and reinforce the Code of Conduct. Explain why the code is important and ask them what behaviours help them feel safer and happier in sport.
- **Use their language:** Consider developing a child-friendly resource explaining the Code of Conduct. Use simple, clear and age-appropriate language.
- **Communicate often:** Talk about expected behaviours regularly e.g. at inductions, meetings, training sessions, in newsletters /communication channels.
- **Break it down:** Promote specific behaviours from the Code of Conduct throughout the season. Focus on one or two key messages at a time and use different avenues to promote the message e.g. celebrating days of significance, such as Safe Sport Day, at events, through communication channels.
- **Celebrate positivity:** Recognise and acknowledge children and young people who demonstrate positive behaviours. This can be through verbal praise, newsletters and awards.
- **Engage parents:** Inform families of expected behaviours. Encourage them to role model and reinforce positive behaviours. Work with parents to take primary responsibility for shaping and addressing their child's behaviour.
- **Create safe reporting channels:** Make it easy for children and young people, and others, to raise concerns and ask for support. Clearly identify who they can speak to and what they can expect. There are posters you can use or adapt in the [resources section](#) of the SIA website.
- **Be accountable:** Help children and young people to understand that everyone, including adults, are expected to follow the rules and that there are consequences when they do not.

RESPOND CONSISTENTLY TO BEHAVIOUR

Proactively support and reward positive behaviour to shape safe, respectful environments.

Being consistent in how you reinforce positive behaviour and how you address inappropriate behaviours demonstrates a clear commitment to creating a safe sporting environment for all. Consistency helps children and young people understand expectations and ensures that responses to behaviour are fair, predictable and aligned with your sport's values.

Actively encouraging positive behaviour is essential. Reinforcing good behaviour helps children and young people learn what is expected and reduces the likelihood of harm. The goal is to create an environment where positive behaviours are the norm, and inappropriate behaviour is addressed early and proactively.

When **addressing poor behaviour**, involving the parent or carer is essential. Their engagement helps the child and their family understand what is acceptable, reinforces consistent expectations, and supports the development of positive behaviours within the sporting environment. If a child is displaying behaviour that is not age-appropriate, this may suggest underlying concerns and may need further monitoring and escalation.

IMPORTANT: If the behaviour between two young people includes one who is in a position of authority over the other young person (e.g. a coach), the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is the appropriate process to follow. This guide helps with peer-to-peer behaviour.

Examples of behaviour that require a response by the sport

	Examples	Possible responses/action
Appropriate	- Listening and following instructions - Being willing to participate - Encouraging and including others - Showing respect	- Reinforce and praise positive behaviour - Provide specific positive feedback - Share positive feedback with parents/carers
Inappropriate	- Refusing instruction - Swearing, sexualised language/gestures or inappropriate language - Disruptive behaviour - Teasing or negative comments - Disrespectful behaviour - Leaving an activity without permission	- Address the behaviour calmly and promptly - Explain why the behaviour is unacceptable and remind of expected behaviour - Redirect focus - Encourage an apology where appropriate - Make a record of the incident and response
Problematic	- Repeated or persistent sexualised language/gestures or inappropriate behaviour - Intentional physical contact - Sharing images without consent - Threatening harm (in person or online) - Coercing or pressuring others	- Removal from activity - Temporary suspension - Support parent/carers to seek specialist advice - Implement reasonable adjustments - Develop and implement an Individual Participation Agreement - Notify the Board and gain approval for actions
Abusive	- Behaviour putting themselves or others at risk - Bullying - Racism - Discrimination - Hazing or harmful initiation - Physical violence - Sexually Abusive Behaviour - Sexual behaviour where consent is not provided - Sharing harmful or sexual images - Exploiting others to provide sexualised images	- Follow your sport's reporting procedures and any safeguarding or legal obligations, which may include reporting to police and/or child protection. - Remove the participant immediately if safety is a concern - Support parent/carers to seek specialist support if required - Implement reasonable adjustments - Implement an Participation Agreement - Consider exclusion to protect others - Notify the Board and gain approval for actions

TIPS ON RESPONDING TO INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

- Address and correct the behaviour as soon as practical, removing any ongoing or immediate risk.
- Work with the parent or carer. It is their role to support their child to behave appropriately.
- Make a record of the incident.
- If necessary, involve the MPIO or child safety officer at your sport.
- Ensure any action is fair, proportionate and in line with the policies and codes of the sport.
- Apply consequences consistently regardless of the participant's status or ability.
- Explain the decisions and consequences to the child/young person (and/or their parent/carer) so they understand.
- Keep the Board or management informed.
- If the behaviour appears problematic or sexually abusive, it may be appropriate to consult child protection services prior to involving parents.
- Manage suspected criminal behaviour in line with reporting obligations and legal requirements.

Never respond to inappropriate behaviour by:

- Using physical punishment or threats, including excessive training or physical exertion.
- Shaming, humiliating or verbally abusing a child or young person.
- Ignoring or isolating a child/young person as punishment.
- Withholding basic things like food, water, rest or toilet access.

ONGOING AND PROGRESSIVE BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES

If behaviour does not change or improve, the sport may need to work with the family to support the child or young person through more formal arrangements.

This could include:

- Reasonable adjustments: additional support or modification to help ongoing participation and safety.
- An Individual Participation Agreement: a written agreement between the sport, the participant and parent/carer outlining expected behaviours, any support to be provided and consequences if the behaviour does not improve or if others are put at risk.

REPORTING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

It is essential to create a culture where children and young people feel safe to speak up about harm and abuse from adults and other children. Your sport should clearly communicate in simple, age-appropriate language, information about:

- The behaviours children and young people should speak up about, including behaviour by adults and other children/young people.
- Who they can speak to – the person's name at the club.
- How to report concerns to the sport, SIA or law enforcement.
- What will happen after a report is made.

Your sport and Sport Integrity Australia can help you address concerns.

Visit your sport's website to see how to report or visit SIA's website for more information
[What you can report | Sport Integrity Australia](#)



When sports provide safe spaces, children and young people say...

People in my sport know to treat each other with respect

I know who to speak to if I was upset

The people in my sport care about my safety



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**Safeguarding
in Sport**