

SOUTH GALWAY STORMERS

CORE COACHING GUIDE

Purpose, philosophy, coaching practice and player pathway

One club. One coaching philosophy. Different expectations at each stage.

For Stormers coaches from Cubs through U18

Version 2

0. How to Use This Guide

This guide gives every Stormers coach the same foundation. It explains what we are trying to achieve, how we coach, and how coaching should change as players progress through the club.

The guide answers: How should I coach? The curriculum guides answer: What should I teach, and in what order? Practice packs answer: What do I run today?

- Read Chapters 1–3 before coaching any Stormers team.
- Use the player-pathway chapters to understand what is appropriate for your age group.
- Look one stage backward and one stage forward so you understand what players should already know and what you are preparing them for.
- Use the age-group comparison tables as guidance, not as rigid limits. Players develop at different rates.
- Return to the reflection questions after practices and games.
- Use the safeguarding, injury and emergency section as a courtside summary, alongside the club policies and venue procedures.

1. Coach's Purpose

Our Ultimate Goal

Our goal is to develop young people who love basketball, excel at the game and grow into better adults.

Every Session Should Develop

Area	What it means
Attitude	Enjoy basketball, respect others, support teammates and approach challenges positively.
Effort	Try hard, keep going when things are difficult and understand that improvement comes through practice.
Ability	Improve movement, basketball skills, decision-making and understanding of the game.

Every Stormers Coach Is Expected To

- Put the child before the result.
- Create a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment.
- Encourage positive attitudes, great effort and resilience.
- Help every child feel valued, included and involved.
- Challenge players appropriately for their stage of development.
- Prepare players for the next stage of the Stormers pathway.
- Represent the club with integrity, respect and enthusiasm.

Reflect After Every Practice

- Did they have fun?
- Did they feel they belonged?
- Did they leave with better attitude, effort or ability than when they arrived?

If the answer is yes, you have delivered a successful Stormers practice.

2. The Stormers Way

The Stormers Way is the coaching philosophy that unites every team in our club. It is not about making every coach the same. It is about ensuring every player experiences the same values, encouragement and approach to learning as they progress through Stormers.

1. Inspire a Love of Basketball

Children who enjoy basketball are more likely to keep playing, practising and improving.

What this looks like: Keep sessions energetic and enjoyable; repeat favourite activities; celebrate progress; finish positively.

Avoid: Avoid fear, embarrassment, over-testing and allowing results to define the experience.

The greatest success is seeing players excited to come back.

2. Learn Through Play

Players learn when they are active, engaged and making decisions.

What this looks like: Use purposeful games, short challenges, small-sided play and time to explore.

Avoid: Avoid long explanations, long queues and stopping play too often.

Players learn most when they move most.

3. Reinforce the Behaviours You Want

Players repeat behaviours that receive positive attention.

What this looks like: Notice effort, resilience, encouragement, listening, movement, teamwork and recovery after mistakes.

Avoid: Avoid praising only scoring, winning, speed or natural talent.

We coach behaviours. Outcomes take care of themselves.

4. Include Everyone

Players contribute more when they feel welcome, safe and valued.

What this looks like: Learn names, rotate groups, adapt activities and create meaningful participation.

Avoid: Avoid allowing a few players to dominate, comparing players or leaving anyone isolated.

Every player should leave feeling they belong.

5. Build Strong Foundations

Teach what players need now so they can succeed later.

What this looks like: Build movement, skill, confidence, decisions and game understanding progressively.

Avoid: Avoid rushing development, teaching systems too early or fixing players into positions.

Teach what players need next, not what helps win today.

6. Put Children Before Outcomes

Basketball outcomes matter, but children matter more.

What this looks like: Prioritise safety, confidence, participation and long-term development.

Avoid: Avoid sacrificing opportunity, wellbeing or learning for a result.

The child is always more important than the scoreboard.

The Stormers Way: Inspire players to love basketball, help them learn through play, reinforce the behaviours that matter, include everyone, build strong foundations and always put children before outcomes.

3. Coaching Techniques

The Stormers Way explains how we think. These techniques are the practical habits that help us put those principles into action at every age level.

Show More. Talk Less.

Demonstrate quickly, give one or two instructions and let players begin. Add guidance while they play.

Get them moving quickly. Coach while they play.

Coach One Thing at a Time

Choose the most important cue. Once it is understood, add the next point.

Clear coaching creates confident players.

Ask Before You Tell

Use short questions to help players notice space, teammates, defenders and choices.

Help players find the answer, then let them play.

Reinforce Specifically

Name the behaviour or decision you want repeated.

Name the behaviour you want to see again.

Correct Calmly and Briefly

Recognise effort, give one adjustment and provide another immediate attempt.

Correct the action without discouraging the player.

Adjust the Challenge

Increase or reduce space, time, pressure, distance, numbers or complexity.

Keep every player appropriately challenged.

Use Names and Notice Everyone

Deliberately notice quiet players, frustrated players, those without partners and those rarely receiving the ball.

Every player should know their coach noticed them.

Keep Feedback Positive and Honest

Be encouraging, clear and consistent. Positive coaching does not mean praising everything.

Be encouraging, clear and consistent.

4. The Stormers Player Pathway

The same philosophy applies across Stormers, but the coaching emphasis changes as players grow. Each stage has a different primary purpose.

Stage	Primary purpose	Main development emphasis
Cubs	Learn to love basketball	Movement, ball confidence, belonging and simple cooperation.
Academy	Learn to play	Core skills, simple decisions, spacing and confidence in small-sided play.
U12	Learn to think	Technical ability linked to decisions, advantage and team principles.
U14	Learn to adapt	Skills under pressure, tactical reads, transitions and changing game situations.
U16	Perform under pressure	Consistency, role clarity, team systems and competitive execution.
U18	Manage and lead	Advanced decisions, game management, leadership and preparation for adult basketball.

Players do not move through the pathway at identical speeds. Coach the player in front of you while preserving the direction of the pathway.

What Progression Means

- Earlier skills are not abandoned; they are applied with greater speed, pressure and complexity.
- Decision-making increases gradually. Coaches give fewer answers as players become more capable.
- Competition becomes more realistic, but development remains more important than short-term results.
- Team concepts are introduced after players have enough individual skill and understanding to use them.
- Leadership and ownership increase as players mature.

5. How Coaching Changes by Age Group

The following comparisons show how the same Stormers philosophy should look different at each stage.

Practice Character

Stage	Practice should feel like
Cubs	Playful, active, familiar and highly successful.
Academy	Skill-rich, energetic and exploratory.
U12	Structured, challenging and decision-based.
U14	Competitive, adaptable and strongly connected to game situations.
U16	Intense, purposeful and performance-oriented.
U18	Player-owned, tactical and accountable.

Coach Communication

Stage	Communication approach
Cubs	Show, simplify and encourage. One cue at a time.
Academy	Demonstrate, question and repeat.
U12	Explain briefly, ask questions and challenge decisions.
U14	Guide reads, adaptations and tactical choices.
U16	Demand clarity, execution and accountability.
U18	Collaborate, delegate and develop leadership.

Skill and Decision Development

Stage	Development emphasis
Cubs	Movement, ball familiarity, confidence and simple choices.
Academy	Core skills and simple decisions in small-sided games.
U12	Technical ability linked to when and why a skill is used.
U14	Skill execution under pressure and in tactical context.
U16	Consistent execution within team roles and systems.
U18	Advanced execution, adaptability and player-led problem solving.

Competition and Game Play

Stage	Role of competition
Cubs	Fun challenges; no pressure from outcomes.
Academy	Controlled competition used to build confidence and

Stage	Role of competition
	decisions.
U12	Small-sided competition and learning how to compete.
U14	Game preparation, tactical competition and adaptation.
U16	Performance under realistic pressure.
U18	Match management, responsibility and leadership.

Rules and Tactics

Stage	Appropriate depth
Cubs	Safety, boundaries, direction and very basic violations.
Academy	Core rules, court language and simple spacing.
U12	Full basic rules, advantage concepts and team principles.
U14	Help concepts, transitions, screening reads and tactical choices.
U16	Systems, roles, opponent preparation and situational play.
U18	Game planning, adjustments, clock management and leadership.

A concept can be valid but still be mistimed. Coaches should ask not only “Can I teach this?” but “Is this the most useful thing for players at this stage?”

6. Running a Good Stormers Practice

Practice structures change by age, but the operational standards below apply across the club.

Standard	What it means
Start Ready	Have equipment, space, groups and the first activity prepared before players arrive.
Start on Time	Players should begin moving quickly. Do not use the opening minutes for a long team talk.
Use a Clear Purpose	Every session should have one main theme and a small number of learning objectives.
Keep Players Active	Reduce queues, use small groups and ensure meaningful repetitions.
Protect Transitions	Reuse equipment and space, prepare the next activity and keep explanations short.
Build from Simple to Game-Like	Introduce or revisit the skill, add a decision, then apply it in play.
Adjust the Challenge	Change space, pressure, numbers, rules, time or targets without labelling players.
Finish Positively	Reinforce attitude and effort, reflect briefly and end on time.

Practice Team Responsibilities

Responsibility	Main job
Lead Coach	Owns the session, communicates the theme and keeps the group progressing.
Timekeeper	Protects the planned blocks and warns when an activity is close to finishing.
Equipment / Setup	Prepares equipment and arranges the next activity while play continues.
Group Coach	Supports a group using the same cues as the lead coach.
Inclusion and Safety	Watches for players being left out, unsafe spacing, frustration or unsuitable challenge.

Two-Minute Coaches' Huddle

- Confirm the session theme and learning objectives.
- Agree the behaviour to reinforce.
- Assign responsibilities.
- Agree groups and transitions.
- Identify any player-specific safety or inclusion needs.

When an Activity Is Not Working

- Stop only long enough to identify the problem.
- Simplify one element: space, numbers, equipment, rules or pressure.
- Demonstrate again if players do not understand the movement.

- Change the activity if engagement has dropped or safety is compromised.
- Preserve the learning objective even when you change the activity.

A good coach is not loyal to a failing activity. A good coach is loyal to the learning objective and the players.

7. Safeguarding, Safety and Emergency Responsibilities

Every coach has a responsibility to protect the welfare of players and to respond appropriately when a concern, injury or emergency occurs. This section is a practical courtside summary. It does not replace the club Safeguarding Policy, Child Protection procedures, Emergency Action Plan, First Aid guidance or reporting forms.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

The welfare of the child comes first. Coaches must maintain appropriate boundaries, follow club communication and supervision rules, and report concerns through the club safeguarding process.

- If a child shares a concern, listen calmly and take them seriously.
- Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that you may need to tell the person responsible for helping keep them safe.
- Ask only enough to understand what the child is telling you. Do not investigate, challenge or repeatedly question them.
- Record what was said as soon as possible, using the child's own words where practical. Keep the record factual.
- Report the concern promptly to the club Designated Liaison Person (DLP), or follow the club escalation procedure if the DLP is unavailable.
- Do not discuss the concern with other coaches, parents or players except through the authorised safeguarding process.

Remember: Listen. Reassure. Record. Report. Do not investigate.

Safe Coaching Environment

- Record attendance and know which players are present.
- Check the playing area, baskets and equipment before activity begins.
- Maintain appropriate adult supervision and avoid being alone with a child where this can reasonably be prevented.
- Follow the club arrangements for arrival, collection, toilets and changing areas.
- Know about relevant medical needs or reasonable activity adjustments that have been communicated through the club.
- Stop unsafe behaviour, bullying, intimidation or inappropriate language promptly and calmly.
- Keep physical contact appropriate, necessary and related to coaching, safety or first aid.

Injury and Medical Response

Before practice, coaches should know who is responsible for first aid, where the first-aid kit and AED are located, how to contact emergency services and who will contact the parent or guardian.

- Stop the activity and make the area safe.
- Assess the situation within the limits of your training and obtain qualified first-aid help.
- Call emergency services when the injury or illness is serious, potentially life-threatening or beyond the available first-aid response.
- Do not move a player with a suspected serious head, neck, back or limb injury unless remaining in place creates greater danger.
- A player with a suspected concussion or significant head injury must not return to play that day and should receive appropriate medical assessment.
- Contact the parent or guardian and ensure the player is handed over appropriately.
- Complete the required injury or incident report and notify the appropriate club officer.

Remember: Stop. Assess. Protect. Get help. Contact. Record.

Emergency Situations

Every venue may have different exits, assembly points, access arrangements and emergency equipment. The lead coach must know the venue procedure before the session begins.

Situation	Immediate coaching response
Serious injury or medical emergency	Stop play, protect the area, obtain first aid, call 112 or 999 when required, contact the parent or guardian and record the incident.
Fire or evacuation	Stop the session, take the attendance record, follow the venue route to the assembly point and account for every player.
Missing child	Stop normal activity, alert the lead coach and venue, check agreed safe areas without leaving other children unsupervised, contact the parent or guardian and follow the club escalation procedure.
Severe allergic reaction, asthma or known medical emergency	Follow the player's communicated emergency plan, obtain the prescribed emergency medication where authorised, call emergency services when required and contact the parent or guardian.
Aggressive or threatening behaviour	Move children away from danger, avoid escalating confrontation, obtain venue or emergency assistance and report the incident.

Reporting and Follow-Up

- Safeguarding concerns must be reported through the safeguarding procedure.
- Injuries, accidents, near misses and significant behavioural incidents must be recorded using the appropriate club form.
- Records should be factual, timely and stored only through the approved club process.
- The lead coach should confirm that the relevant club officer has been informed and that any required follow-up has been assigned.
- Coaches should not post or discuss incidents in team messaging groups.

When in doubt, protect the child, obtain help and report through the appropriate club channel.

Know Before You Start

- The name and contact route for the club DLP and relevant safeguarding officer.
- The first-aid lead for the session and the location of the first-aid kit and AED.
- The venue address, emergency access point, exits and assembly point.
- How emergency services will be contacted and who will meet them.
- How parents or guardians will be contacted.
- Where the club safeguarding, injury and incident forms are found.

8. Curriculum Pathway Summary

Each age-group curriculum will be published separately. This summary shows the intended phases, coaching approach and broad outcomes across the Stormers pathway. It helps coaches understand where current work fits and what comes next.

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Age group	Curriculum phase	Phase approach	Broad outcomes
Cubs	1. Welcome, Movement and Ball Confidence	Introduce belonging, movement and ball handling from day one.	Players feel safe, enjoy practice, move with confidence and begin controlling the ball.
Cubs	2. Moving with the Ball	Develop dribbling, stopping, passing, catching and close shooting through play.	Players move with the ball, share it and shoot from successful distances.
Cubs	3. Playing Together	Introduce teammates, space, direction and cooperation.	Players pass and move, spread out and understand attack and defence.
Cubs	4. Using Skills in Games	Gradually introduce 1v1, 2v1, 2v2 and simple 3v3.	Players make basic pass-dribble-shoot decisions and defend safely.
Cubs	5. Celebrate and Prepare	Review favourite activities and combine skills with confidence.	Players recognise progress and are ready for Academy.
Academy	1. Ready to Learn and Control	Establish routines, balance, footwork, ball control and readiness.	Players stop, pivot, handle the ball and receive ready to play.
Academy	2. Build Core Skills	Develop reliable dribbling, passing, finishing and on-ball defence.	Players use core skills with increasing confidence and control.
Academy	3. Create and Use Space	Teach cutting, spacing, driving lanes and movement after passing.	Players recognise space and help teammates create options.
Academy	4. Play with Advantage	Use 1v1, 2v1, transition and simple numerical advantages.	Players recognise when to attack, pass, finish or recover.
Academy	5. Connect Skills in Games	Combine skills and decisions in increasingly independent small-sided play.	Players are prepared for U12 practice and competition.
U12	1. Establish Core Skills and Habits	Refine footwork, ball control, passing, shooting, finishing and defence.	Players execute fundamentals with better balance and consistency.
U12	2. Develop Skill Combinations	Connect skills into actions such as catch-read-attack, pass-cut and finish.	Players use more than one skill without stopping the play.
U12	3. Create and Use Advantage	Use spacing, screens, transition and numerical advantage.	Players recognise and exploit simple advantages.
U12	4. Apply Team Concepts	Introduce team offence, team defence, restarts and press-break principles.	Players understand shared team responsibilities and game flow.
U12	5. Perform, Review and Prepare	Apply learning under pressure and prepare for U14.	Players compete with discipline and increasing independence.
U14	1. Rebuild and Align	Confirm fundamentals, terminology, standards and team habits.	Players share a common technical and tactical base.
U14	2. Execute Under Pressure	Increase speed, contact, defensive pressure and decision load.	Players retain skill quality under realistic pressure.
U14	3. Read and Adapt	Develop screening reads, help reactions, transition choices and second actions.	Players adjust when the first option is removed.
U14	4. Build Team Identity	Establish offensive and defensive principles suited to the team.	Players understand roles without becoming fixed into positions.
U14	5. Compete and Reflect	Prepare for opponents, review performance and adapt.	Players connect practice learning to competitive games.
U16	1. Establish Performance Standards	Set expectations for execution, effort, communication and preparation.	Players understand the standards required to perform.
U16	2. Role Clarity and System Execution	Develop team systems and responsibilities while preserving	Players execute within roles and understand how roles connect.

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Age group	Curriculum phase	Phase approach	Broad outcomes
		all-round skill.	
U16	3. Pressure and Situational Play	Use score, time, fouls, possession and opponent-specific problems.	Players perform and decide under realistic game pressure.
U16	4. Adaptation and Accountability	Review film or game evidence, correct patterns and demand ownership.	Players identify and address performance gaps.
U16	5. Competitive Performance	Prepare, execute and recover across the competitive season.	Players sustain performance and team standards.
U18	1. Ownership and Standards	Shift increasing responsibility to players and team leaders.	Players lead preparation and maintain standards.
U18	2. Advanced Skill and Tactical Detail	Refine role-specific skills, reads and tactical execution.	Players execute advanced actions with consistency.
U18	3. Game Planning and Adjustment	Prepare for opponents and adjust during games.	Players understand game plans and respond to changing conditions.
U18	4. Leadership and Team Management	Develop communication, mentoring and accountability.	Players positively influence teammates and team culture.
U18	5. Transition to Adult Basketball	Prepare physically, technically and mentally for senior basketball.	Players leave youth basketball capable of competing, learning and leading.

The phase names for U14, U16 and U18 are pathway design guidance and should be confirmed when those detailed curricula are developed.

9. Preparing Players for the Next Stage

The final responsibility of each age group is to prepare players for what comes next without rushing them into the next stage too early.

Transition	Players should broadly bring forward
Cubs → Academy	Comfort with the ball, basic movement, simple passing and shooting, belonging and willingness to try.
Academy → U12	Core skills, balanced receiving, simple spacing, small-sided decisions and basic rules.
U12 → U14	Reliable fundamentals, advantage decisions, team principles, competition habits and increasing independence.
U14 → U16	Skills under pressure, tactical adaptability, transition understanding, role awareness and accountability.
U16 → U18	Consistent performance, system understanding, game management, preparation habits and leadership.
U18 → Adult	Technical and tactical readiness, physical responsibility, resilience, communication and continued learning.

What Readiness Is Not

- A pass/fail test.
- A requirement that every player develops at the same rate.
- Permission to exclude a player who needs more time.
- A reason to teach older-team systems before players are ready.

Readiness means the player can enter the next stage with confidence and enough foundation to keep learning.

10. Stormers Coaching Checklist

- ☐ I know the purpose of today's session.
- ☐ I know the one or two behaviours I want to reinforce.
- ☐ The first activity is ready before players arrive.
- ☐ Players will spend more time moving than listening.
- ☐ Activities provide enough repetitions and decisions.
- ☐ I have an easier and harder version available.
- ☐ Every player will receive attention and meaningful involvement.
- ☐ Competition will support learning rather than replace it.
- ☐ The session connects to the age-group pathway.
- ☐ We will finish positively and on time.
- ☐ Attendance will be recorded and collection arrangements are understood.
- ☐ The coaching team knows the first-aid lead, first-aid kit, AED and venue emergency procedure.
- ☐ Relevant medical, safeguarding and inclusion considerations have been discussed appropriately.
- ☐ Any injury, incident or concern will be reported using the correct club process.

Coach the player. Teach the game. Build the person.