

STORY TIME ACTIVITY:

PART 1: Either a) write your own story OR b) read the story below about a coach setting out on a child-first coaching journey.

PART 2: Think about/answer the reflection questions..

PART 1 (a): Create a story about a coach embarking on a child-first coaching journey. You can write a story, draw a picture which represents your story or even write a song. Get creative! Before creating your story, you may want to consider the following points:

How does the coach feel?

- What is the coach's intention? How do they want to go about it?
- How does it play out in reality in the first steps?
- What challenges (emotional, behavioural, external) does the coach come across?
- How can the coach overcome these challenges?

PART 1 (b): Emma's child-first coaching journey

Emma had always believed that sports should be a source of fun and personal growth for children. As the new coach of the Greenfield Tigers, a local children's hockey team, she was determined to implement a child-first approach, focusing on voice, choice, and journey.

Emma gathered the children and their parents for an introductory meeting. Among the team were Mina, an enthusiastic girl who loved sport; Rohan, a shy boy who struggled with self-confidence; and twins Alex and Sam, who had a competitive streak.

"Hi, everyone," Emma began with a warm smile. "I'm Emma. Before we start playing, I want to hear from you. What do you love about hockey? What do you hope to get out of this season?"

The children looked at each other, surprised by the question. Mina raised her hand. "I love thinking about how to score goals. It's like a puzzle!"

Rohan hesitated, then whispered, "I want to make friends."

Alex and Sam chimed in together, "We love skilling each other!"

Emma nodded, taking notes. "Great! This season, we'll focus on a bit of what everyone said. Let's make sure we all enjoy playing and improve together."

Emma went away and planned her session. She wanted to create a good impression, so she planned it out with great detail.

For the first coaching session, Emma was nervous. She arrived early, setting up cones and goals with military precision. As the children arrived, she noticed their excitement and energy. She also felt under pressure as all the parents were stood watching. Emma felt like she needed to show her authority.

"Listen up!" Emma shouted, blowing her whistle. "I want to see 100% effort from all of you. If you are good, we'll have a game at the end"

The kids looked at each other, a mix of nervousness and confusion on their faces. Emma didn't notice; she was too focused on her plan. She wanted to look like she knew what she was doing, so tried to show she was sticking to her plan and was organised.

Emma divided the children into groups, placing the more skilled players together, so they could push each other. Mina excelled, showing off her skills, while in another group, Rohan and Alex struggled. They had never played hockey before. Emma noticed they didn't seem to engage in the session as much as others, so she decided to do a fun game that wasn't on her plan. Smiles returned to Rohan and Alex's faces and Emma felt much better.

Reflecting on the session, Emma decided to try a different approach next time. She set up a variety of stations: dribbling, shooting, and fun games. She explained that they would rotate through the stations, giving everyone a chance to explore different aspects of the

game.

“Remember, this is about trying new things and supporting each other,” Emma said. “If you would like to focus on one area, you can – you choose!”

Rohan enjoyed the smaller, skill-focused practices, where Emma paired him with supportive teammates who helped boost his confidence. Alex and Sam relished the games where Emma talked about the value of teamwork and cooperation.

Happy with this new approach, Emma felt confident to introduce a new tradition: A welcome huddle where everyone could voice their thoughts. She asked the children for their input on activities and games.

During the first huddle, Mina suggested a new game. “It’s the best game ever!” she explained.

Emma beamed. “Let’s try it now! Great idea, Mina.”

PART 2: Reflective questions activity:

Think about the coach's first steps into coaching and how they got on with adopting a child-first approach.

**Identify the best examples of child-first coaching from the story.
What do you like? Which of these ideas could you adopt?**

What were the challenges for the coach?

How would you try to avoid or overcome some of the challenges the coach faced?