

## Competitive Playing Time Policy

*U13 to U19 competitive coaches have discretion over playing time, but any player who shows commitment, respect and effort should get meaningful minutes per game, on average. Coaches may limit their roster to 11 (or even 10) players in order to do that.*

Competitive coaches at the U13 to U19 level have discretion over playing time, but also have player development as a top priority. Players learn the game, and have fun, by playing. Over the course of a season every player should get at least meaningful playing time per game, on average, subject to practice attendance, full effort, a positive attitude, and respect for coaches, teammates, and the game. Playing time is still earned, not guaranteed, and some players will get even more playing time based on skill and performance.

How does a coach win games without sacrificing the development of the weaker players? Good coaches have strategies for getting all their players into games for meaningful minutes, not just “garbage time” of a blowout (see [Jr. NBA on Playing Time](#), [Good Coaches Get Players into Games](#)). For example,

- if you anticipate a blow-out, start some players who normally don't start
- front-load minutes for non-starters, as contestable games are rarely lost in the first half
- if you are planning to play someone in the second half, get them some playing time in the first half
- even if they aren't an offensive threat, look for subs who get after it on defence, or contribute on offence by spacing, passing, cutting, rebounding
- use a longer bench when the other team is not pressing
- use two-minute shifts to cycle players in and out
- create and rotate two balanced units of 5 players plus subs (great for practice scrimmage too), finish a close game with the 5 best players
- give a weaker player a chance to succeed by playing with four starters
- if a sub is really working hard, leave them in
- play everyone until the final 8 or 4 minutes of a game, then shorten the bench in a close game.

Starters will be fresher at the end of the game, and everyone gets to develop. There may be exceptions, e.g., in year-end championships. Over time, the team will be better, win more games, and likely keep some players who would otherwise stop playing.

As a final thought, coaches should not necessarily select a full roster after tryouts just to have 12 players; limit the roster to 11 (or even 10) players if player quality goes way down after that. Playing time for 12 players is a challenge at the best of times, let alone with a weak player.

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