

The 5Cs:

Five essential mental skills
for young footballers



Loughborough
University



Describes a player's self-belief in their skills and ability to achieve goals

A confident player:

- wants the ball when the team are losing or under pressure
- maintains positive body language at all times, even after mistakes
- displays inventive or creative play, rather than playing cautiously
- is opportunity-focused and uses positive self-talk to lead themselves forward through setbacks and challenges

Describes how motivated a player is

A committed player:

- consistently gives high effort at training sessions and in games
- feels a sense of achievement from learning new skills and mastering tasks
- believes that practice and hard work leads to improvement
- takes on difficult challenges
- is not afraid to make mistakes

Describes how well a player can control and manage their emotions

A player with excellent control:

- feels engaged with energy yet composed before games
- keeps calm under pressure and helps to keep teammates focused
- recovers quickly from mistakes or setbacks in a game, by putting energy into the next important task
- does not dwell on disappointing performances

How do you think parents can help players improve their 5Cs performance?

Describes how effectively a player listens, acknowledges and talks to coaches and teammates (verbally and non-verbally)

A player with excellent communication:

- encourages, motivates and composes teammates
- listens to coaches and teammates' instructions
- shows respectful body language to coach, teammates and officials

Describes a player's ability to focus their attention on the right thing at the right time

A player with excellent concentration:

- is not easily distracted from their identified roles on the pitch and never lets complacency set in
- stays focused on what is relevant to their position
- is aware of movements of teammates and use of space
- refocuses with their 'head up' after mistakes, goals and setbacks

Can you recognise your child's 5C strengths and development areas from reading the player descriptions?

Can you think of any professional footballers who are 5C role models?

Confidence

Commitment

Control

Concentration

Communication

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Top 10 tips for parents to help players improve their 5Cs

1. To keep players' **commitment** high, praise your child's effort levels and progress rather than results. Avoid **ONLY** giving praise after good performances. Let your child know that you will be proud of them for trying their best.



2. Talk to your child to understand what support they would like from you before and after games. Are you able to help your child feel relaxed and **controlled** on match days?



3. Reassure your child that it is ok to make mistakes. Explain that mistakes are part of learning new skills and that everyone makes them. Encourage players to try and learn from errors, 'move on' bravely, and keep their **concentration**.



4. Talk to your child to understand their expectations of themselves. Are they realistic? Help your child to set goals that they can achieve through practice and effort. Realistic goals will help to keep young players **committed**.



5. Ask your child to consider how they encourage, support and listen to their teammates in games to help them think about becoming an excellent **communicator**.



6. Encourage your child to have other interests and keep football in perspective. Help players to feel competent in other areas so their self-worth and **confidence** does not depend on football.



7. Make sure you are not a distraction to your child on the side line. Players who tend to look over to parents a lot during games may find it harder to **concentrate** and play freely.



8. Show respect for coaches, referees and opposition in order to role model good **communication** to your child. Being a composed communicator to others will help your child to **control** their emotions too.



9. Think about how you communicate with your child after games. Asking players what they enjoyed and what they thought they did well on the drive home can grow players' **confidence**.



10. Avoid over-analysing your child's performances. Players will learn more and stay **confident** if they can reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses and decide what to focus on next time.

