

Building Trust with Kids

How to create a positive connection from day one

Trust is the foundation of every successful Nippers group. When children feel safe, supported, and understood, they're more likely to participate, try new things, and come back week after week. As an Age Manager, building trust doesn't require perfection—it just takes consistency, kindness, and being present.

1. Why Trust Matters

- Helps kids feel safe and settled in the group
- Encourages participation, especially for shy or anxious children
- Reduces behavioural challenges
- Makes learning more effective and enjoyable
- Creates a positive culture that kids want to return to

2. Simple Ways to Build Trust

- **Learn and use their names**
 - Names matter—especially for younger kids. Make a point of learning and using names early, and use them warmly during activities.
- **Be consistent and calm**
 - Kids feel safer when they know what to expect from you. Stay calm, even when things go wrong, and be consistent with your tone and approach.
- **Follow through on what you say**
 - If you promise a game, play it. If you say something will only take 5 minutes, keep it short. Reliability builds confidence in your leadership.
- **Avoid sarcasm or teasing**
 - Even light jokes can be misunderstood by younger children. Keep your language positive and clear—especially when giving feedback or correcting behaviour.
- **Stay present and engaged**
 - Put your phone away, make eye contact, and be an active part of the session. Kids notice when you're really “with them.”

3. Creating a Safe and Welcoming Group Environment

- **Start each session with a welcome**
 - Greet each child as they arrive, even with a simple “Great to see you, Sam!”
- **Set shared group expectations**
 - “We listen to each other.” “We wait our turn.” “We try our best.” Revisit these often.
- **Recognise feelings, not just actions**
 - “It looked like that wave surprised you—good on you for giving it a go anyway.”
- **Celebrate small wins**
 - “You put your hand up today—that was really brave.”

Final Thought: You Don’t Need to Be a Teacher or a Coach

You just need to show you care. Every smile, every moment of listening, and every small conversation adds up to something bigger—a place where kids feel they belong.

