

Preface - Welcome to Coaching School**Section 1 - The Marketer (You?)****Chapter 1 - The Job You Didn't Know You Had**

Starting From Scratch

School Recruitment

Organizational Recruitment

Your Turn - Where Are The Parents?

Section 2 - The Coach (You)**Chapter 2 - Your Why**

Why Is Why Important?

Your Turn - Why Do You Coach?

The Four Whys

Your Turn - Find Your True Why

Chapter 3 - Coaching Philosophy

What Is a Coaching Philosophy and Why Do You Need One?

Your Turn - What Is Your Coaching Philosophy?

Section 3 - The Kids (Them)**Chapter 4 - Your Audience**

Stages of Development

FUNDamentals (6 to 9 years)

Learn to Play (8 to 12 years)

Train to Play (11 to 16 years)

Train to Compete (15 to 19 years)

Your Turn - Who is Your Audience?

Chapter 5 - The Kids

The Starting Seven - Archetypes of Kids We've Come Across

Elevate Ultimate's Five Truths about Kids

Your Turn - What Are Your Truths about Kids and Coaching?

Chapter 6 - Behaviour Management

Proactive Strategies

Reactive Strategies

Retroactive Strategies

Section 4 - Pre Practice**Chapter 7 - Skill Acquisition**

Acquisition Phase

Consolidation Phase

Refinement Phase

Key Tips and Reminders

Chapter 8 - Season Planning

Triage

Your Season

Key Tips and Reminders

Chapter 9 - Practice Planning

The Reverse Engineer Method (Our Magic Formula for Amazing Practices)

Example Individual Cutting Lesson for Beginner Grade 6-8

Your Turn - Create a Practice Plan

10 Tips for the Perfect Practice Plan

Chapter 10 - How to Make Your Practice Engaging

Achieving Learning and Engagement

Your Turn - Transform Boring to Engaging

Chapter 11 - Indoor Practice Adaptations

Your Turn - What Can You Teach in a Small Gym?

Tips and Tricks for Practicing in a Small Space

Chapter 12 - Team Culture

Tuckman's Stages of Group Development

Your Turn - Self Reflection Time

Chapter 13 - Goal Setting

Best Practices for Team Goal Setting

Your Turn - Set Some Goals

Section 5 - The Practice**Chapter 14 - How to Explain a Drill**

Focus on the Why

Keep It Simple With Three Cues

Your Turn - Generate Three Cues

Demonstrate While Explaining

Check For Understanding

Your Turn - Generate Checking for Understanding Questions

Set the Scene

Stop the Drill

Chapter 15 - Effective Feedback

Five Keys to Giving Good Feedback

How to Structure Feedback

Your Turn - Give Feedback

Chapter 16 - Warm-Ups

Assessment

Injury Prevention

Set the Tone

Warm-up Ideas

Section 6 - Individual Skills**Chapter 17 - Backhand**

Basics of the Backhand

Common Errors and Corrections

Making it More Difficult

Chapter 18 - Forehand

Basics of the Forehand

Common Errors and Corrections

Chapter 19 - Faking

Traits of an Effective Fake

Three Types of Fakes

Chapter 20 - Hucking (Distance Throwing)

Components of a Huck (Regardless of Forehand or Backhand)

Chapter 21 - Catching

Catching Styles

Common Errors and Corrections

Your Turn - Improve Your Team's Catching

Chapter 22 - Individual Cutting

The Mindset of 1v1 Cutting

Chapter 23 - Other Styles of Throws

Hammer

Push Pass

Chicken Wing

Scoober

Thumber

Off-Hand Throwing

High Release

Your Turn - Incorporate Other Throws into Your Practice

Chapter 24 - Mindset

Benefits of Meditation for Kids

Meditation Exercises for Kids

Section 7 - Team Skills**Chapter 25 - Offensive Cutting Systems**

Create Space, Attack Space

Vertical Stack Pros and Cons

Horizontal Stack Pros and Cons

Vertical System Explained

How to Practice Vertical

Horizontal System Explained

How to Practice Horizontal

Chapter 26 - Handler Resets

The Golden Reset Rule

Resets With the Disc on the Sideline

How to Practice Resets

Chapter 27 - Endzone

Basic Principles

How to Practice Endzone

Chapter 28 - Offensive Plays

Your Turn - Create Your Own Creative Play

Chapter 29 - Defensive Systems

Your Turn - Defensive Triage

Deciding on Checks

Open Side vs Break Side

Triangulation

Marking

Conclusion

Section 8 - The “Secret Sauce” of Ultimate

Chapter 30: The Rules and How to Teach Them

Social-Emotional Learning

Teach Certain Rules When It Makes Sense

Teaching “Disc Space” in Practice

The 10 Basics Rules of Ultimate

Ultimate Adaptations to Help Teach Rules

How We Got Grade 2s to Play Ultimate

Key Tips and Reminders

Your Turn - How Would You Teach Picks?

Chapter 31 - Spirit of the Game

What Spirit Can Look Like

Teaching Spirit

Are Spirit Games and Circles Really Necessary?

Chapter 32 - Gender Equity

How to Promote Gender Equity at Your Practice

Your Turn - Create a Gender Equity Season Plan

Conclusion + Funny Story**Section 9 - Other Ultimate Experts**

An Open Mind - John McNaughton

Team Culture and Charters - Heather Ann Brauer

Intersectionality in Youth Ultimate - Chip Chang

Games, Drills, and Spirit Games

Games

Disc Tag

Drills

Spirit Games

Glossary

Appendix A - Stages of Development

Appendix B - Practice Template

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Video Instructions

We have created over 20 videos explaining the various drills and games included in this book to compliment your reading. With a huge thanks to Sion Scone and Flik Ultimate, you will have free access to all this content. All you have to do is create a free account by following the link below.

<https://www.flikulti.com/elevate-portal/>

Preface - Welcome to Coaching School

Alright, everyone, we're about to start class so please find your seat and settle in. Great, thanks for doing that so quickly and quietly. We're always surprised how many people enroll in our ultimate coaching class, especially since the ultimate industry is probably going to die one day...unlike the boomerang industry, they will always come back...

Now that our terrible joke is out of the way, we'll make our introductions quick so we can get right into today's lesson.

My name is Ari and I'm a co-founder of Elevate Ultimate. I'm a half-Chinese, half-caucasian, straight, cisgender male with the pronouns he/him. I was born and raised in Vancouver, Canada, and started playing ultimate in grade 6. Since then, I have represented U24 Team Canada mixed and open, earning a bronze and silver medal respectively. As of 2020, I am in my fifth season with the top club team in Vancouver called Furious George. Over to you, Danie!

Howdy folks, it's great to meet you all. My name is Danie and I'm also a co-founder of Elevate Ultimate. I'm a caucasian, straight, cisgender female with the pronouns she/her. I grew up in a small town called Gibsons which is about a two-hour commute from Vancouver. I started playing ultimate when I was 21 at the University of Victoria where I went on to captain and lead us to qualify for College Nationals for the first time ever. I was named as an Assistant Coach for the U20 Team Canada Women's team in 2020 and was also on Team Canada Mixed Masters. I have a degree in physical education and was a teacher for a few years before I decided to fully commit to growing the sport that we all love.

Before we dive into the content, we want you to be mindful of a few things.

1. Please remember that all the information you learn from us today is coming from our own limited perspectives. We don't have all the answers nor do we claim we do. Our aim is to share our experience and learnings from having coached ultimate to over 10,000 kids the past four years. We hope that you can take away a few nuggets of gold that can be applied to your own context.

2. We might use the word “kids” or “youth” or “young athletes” interchangeably throughout today’s lesson. Elevate Ultimate focuses on coaching athletes in Grades K - 12 so if you coach 16-year-olds and think a certain section doesn’t apply because “kids” have a younger connotation...well, now you know it does apply.
3. While it may be cliché, what you get out of today’s lesson is directly correlated with what you put in. We have designed this program to be as interactive as possible. When we get to the **“Your Turn”** sections, we encourage you to really sit down, think, and write down some thoughtful answers.

One last thing before we start, we promise.

We want to thank you for choosing to learn with us today. You’re here because you’re either an ultimate coach or you’re looking to become one, and we thank you for this. You’re here because you want to learn and become a better coach and leader, and therefore a better role model for young ultimate athletes: We thank you for this. You probably don’t get thanked enough by your players and parents so just in case, THANK YOU for all that you do. You’re awesome.

We started Elevate Ultimate in the fall of 2016 because we knew how big an impact the sport and community had on us personally. Our mission every day is to share our love for the sport with as many kids as possible. Almost every day, we’ll get an email or call from a parent saying how their child had never found a home with any sport until they found ultimate. You have no idea how much this fuels our fire to continue to grow, and we hope that we can help you receive that same email one day.

Our saying when we first started Elevate Ultimate was #BreakTheForce. You’ll learn more about what this technically means in the Defence section, but it was basically our mantra to always focus on improving and creating; to always take the harder path because it would lead to greater gains. This meant going beyond the drills and games we already knew and creating new and exciting ones. This meant actually diving into the science behind how young athletes learn and develop, and then incorporating that into our season and practice plans. This meant really thinking through the best ways to teach Spirit, Rules, and Gender Equity to young athletes.

We are excited and proud to share everything we've learned with you today. More than that, we are excited that you too are "BreakingTheForce." You're not settling for what you know currently, but striving to learn and be better.

Thank you. #BreakTheForce

Section 1 - The Marketer (You?)

Chapter 1 - The Job You Didn't Know You Had

If you already have hundreds of kids waiting to be coached by you, please feel free to move onto the next section that covers actual coaching topics. However, for many coaches, the biggest challenge may not be their coaching skills, but that they have no one to coach! In this case, we have a few tips on how to start programs both in schools and outside of them.

Starting From Scratch

I walked into the doors of the school I was teaching at that year, full of hopes and dreams of coaching the school's ultimate team. I marched straight to the athletic director's office, proclaimed my existence, and asked him to take me to the ultimate players. To my surprise, there were none.

At first, I was saddened by the news but this quickly turned into motivation. "Well, then I'll start one," I told him.

I put a memo into the school announcements, put posters around the gymnasiums, and I told all the PE teachers in the department. I asked the other PE teachers if I could teach ultimate to their classes and I taught ultimate to the teachers. I would find young people with potential and I would tap them on the shoulder, informing them that there's an ultimate practice after school. The other teachers would do the same.

Before I knew it, the first practice was fast approaching. I gathered my cones, discs, clipboard, and whistle, and I headed out to the school field full of determination. I waited...

A couple of kids started trickling out to the field. I awkwardly told them to start throwing while I continued to sweat. I felt like a failure. How could I run a practice with four kids?

Well, it was practice time and I needed to get started. One more student ended up joining us for the grand total of five kids. I brought everyone in and introduced myself. I told them what I wanted from this team and that it would take time. The group was dead silent. After my

incredible and inspiring speech, we warmed up and got the first drill going.

We ran a bunch of drills and played three vs. three at the end. I asked them afterward when they wanted to meet again and they said, “how about tomorrow?”

We practiced again the next day and five kids became seven, then 10, and then 15. We had a team.

School Recruitment

The school I worked at was not unique. This exact scenario happened at the next school I worked at as well. Below are a few key tips for recruiting players for your school team.

1. Offer to teach ultimate in PE class

This is where all the students already are, so you might as well go to them! Ask the athletic director if you can guest coach a PE class or two on ultimate. Introduce the basics and make sure to focus mostly on small-sided games to keep everyone engaged. At the end, mention that there are other opportunities to play such as intramurals (see next point) and the ultimate team.

2. Lunchtime intramurals

All year round, ultimate intramurals, whether it was outside on the field or inside the gym, was a huge success both in terms of getting people playing, and converting people to the team. Not only do you get tons of students playing, but it also raises awareness for the sport as other people can help but watch. Ask the athletic director if you can help organize and run an ultimate intramural league, and run it even if each team only has a few players. Other students will see them playing on the field and the teams will grow in size. Make sure to convert these players to play for your actual team!

3. Identify people, tap them on the shoulder, and tell them they should play

I know a lot of young people that never would have started playing without a coach or someone telling them they should try it (especially girls). A simple nudge in the right direction can go a long way. I build all my teams by telling people they should join, that it would be fun, and to bring a friend.

The best part of the story of those two schools is that even though I am no longer there, the teams are still going strong and they've now even added junior teams (and one of them won the district championship!). Building a strong program takes work but it can payoff so far into the future. You get out what you put in.

Organizational Recruitment

This is for the coaches that are trying to get more players for their club teams or summer camps, for example. A key concept to remember is that unless the kids you are trying to recruit are in Grades 10-12, you are selling the sport of ultimate to the parents, not the kids.

This concept may sound obvious and yet, even though we thought we understood this concept, our marketing actions did not reflect it which is why our programs had low enrollment in the first two years of business. For example, in 2017 and 2018, we ran school-wide PE programs for over 20 elementary schools which got discs into the hands of 5,000 students. Amazing, right? Even if only one out of every twenty students enjoyed ultimate, we'd be sold out in minutes!

The kids were loving the sport and discs were flying everywhere at recess. Students begged us to come back the following week. We smiled and told them that while we couldn't come back the following week, they could play more ultimate with us at an Elevate camp. They nodded excitedly and promised to bring the brochure to their parents. We likely never saw them again.

Where did we go wrong? How did we convert so few of the 5,000 students we saw? The answer is that we never got in front of the true customers: the parents. Even if little Timmy managed to bring the brochure home in one piece, the parents did not have an emotional connection with us yet.

What really changed the game for us marketing-wise is when we truly focused on getting our programs in front of parents' eyes. Instead of handing out brochures with camp information, we handed out brochures advertising a free demo where the parents could actually watch us coach their kids. We also began to advertise in popular parenting blogs with great success. We even had some of our coaches go door-to-door talking to parents about our upcoming programs. While you don't have to copy our methods exactly, the main concept to remember is that you

need to get your message in front of as many parents as possible!

Your Turn - Where Are The Parents?

Think to yourself, where are parents already congregating? Parent groups on social media, blogs, community centres? Write out answers that work for your context.

Well done, you actually have a group of players to coach now! Read on to learn how to make each child's experience as amazing as possible. It all starts with you.

Section 2 - The Coach (You)

Chapter 2 - Your Why

Why Is Why Important?

It's the Canadian Junior National Championships in 2017. I am one of four coaches of Vortex (W), the top team out of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia. We have just won a Bronze medal in a hard-fought game against MOFO out of Winnipeg and yet, I feel a bit empty.

What is that empty feeling when you achieve great success? Why don't we feel as fulfilled as we think we should?

As I reflect back on 2017, I realize that I wasn't fully invested in the team. I was away for half the summer and I viewed coaching the team more as a resume builder than an opportunity to make these athletes the best possible versions of themselves. In other words, my **why** wasn't strong enough. No wonder I felt disconnected from our team's huge success!

You know your **why** isn't strong enough when it doesn't get you out of bed in the morning. In an ultimate coach's case, this probably means you aren't motivated to leave early from your job to volunteer your time to teach a bunch of middle-school rascals.

Your **why** is your foundation for all the goals and dreams you have for yourself and the athletes you coach. Before we dive into the process of figuring out your true **why**, give it a shot now! Set a timer for two minutes and answer the following question either in full sentences or bullet points.

Your Turn - Why Do You Coach?

Good. Now that you've got your initial ideas on paper, let's learn a bit more about the **why** and see if your answers change.

The Four Whys

After years of coaching and meeting other coaches, I've discovered that most people fall into at least one of these four categories describing why they coach.

1. The Altruist

Altruists are people who know of a group of kids that wants to make a team but can't because they don't have a coach. Their why involves giving athletes the opportunity for things such as friendship, physical activity, and fun; opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have without their coaching support.

2. The Visionary

The visionary can see greatness in the future, whether it's for a certain group of athletes, a school program, an entire city, or even a country. They see the potential and truly believe that if they do the coaching part right, success for the team and its athletes will follow. Their why is focused on the achievement of the team and the athletes.

3. Selfless Selfishness

These coaches' why is rooted in the best type of selfishness. They coach because they love the way the kids make them feel. The kids' smiles give them energy and joy, and seeing the kids have that "aha" moment makes these types of coaches smile. Their why is simply that coaching kids makes them happy.

4. The Character Builder

This person's why is rooted in being an inspirational figure in young athletes' lives. They want to empower the next generation and teach them skills and values that can be transferred to other aspects of life. Their why involves being a strong role model that their athletes can look up to.

Which of these types resonates with you? One of them? All of them? A combination? None at all? Email us at ElevateUltimateAcademy@gmail.com if you know of a different archetype!

A simple process for you to find your **TRUE WHY** (also a great activity when you want your athletes to find their why for playing ultimate) is to ask the question three to five times. For example:

1. Why do I coach?

It's a fun job.

2. Why?

I like kids and ultimate.

3. Why?

Because their energy makes me happy.

4. Why?

Because they remind me that life does not need to be taken so seriously and to have fun.

Now that's a much more powerful reason to get up and coach than "It's a fun job."

There are no wrong answers when it comes to your why, as long as you put some real thought into it.

Your Turn - Find Your True Why

1. Why do you coach?

2. Why?

3. Why?

4. Why?

5. Why?

Remember that your **WHY** is your foundation, not just for coaching but for your life. Spend time thinking and connecting to your why to make everything in your life more powerful. When you've found your **TRUE WHY**, you can turn it into a coaching philosophy.

Chapter 3 - Coaching Philosophy

What Is a Coaching Philosophy and Why Do You Need One?

Having a coaching philosophy is important because it helps clarify what's important to you, and is a great communication tool for your athletes and their parents. Throughout your coaching career, you may question why you are putting yourself through the pain, stress, and effort of continuing what sometimes can be a thankless job. Looking back on your philosophy can right your ship and help you navigate the trickier times with more ease.

You've probably heard about coaching philosophies and have thought, "Yeah, I'll make that one day" or "I already know what is important to me." But how often have you actually sat down and created something meaningful?

My answer used to be never.

I was asked by a parent what my coaching philosophy was and I became embarrassed as I did not have a rehearsed answer to give her. I stumbled through a list of mushy values and I could tell she wasn't buying what I was selling. The impostor syndrome started to rise in me and I beat myself up, thinking, "What kind of coach doesn't have a coaching philosophy?" It turns out a lot of us don't!

I went home that night and searched tirelessly online for resources and activities to help me craft my coaching philosophy. I found reading over other coaches' philosophies helpful, so here are a few examples:

1. "My coaching philosophy is: I am a firm believer that if you have knowledge pass it on to those who do not. I also believe that playing sports as a child not only builds character and confidence but also gives a sense of accomplishment. It also prepares children for

life, teaching them about working as a team or as a team player, not as an individual. I also feel it can bring a child out of his/her shell or shyness.”

2. “Here is my philosophy: I am a Coach because of my passion for my work. I am able to foster the growth of my players through the numerous opportunities I am fortunate to provide. I will mold a group of individuals to communicate, to be responsible, and to hold themselves accountable. I believe in nurturing their dreams to be the best on and off the court. I developed this into words when I attended the Women’s Coaches Academy a few years ago. I look at it often and keep a journal for my own use during the season to help me grow and develop as a Coach.”

After reading these examples, I recognized that there’s no “right way” to write one. It’s a completely personal activity that’s meant to bring your “why” into a personal manifesto. The way I started was I first wrote down a list of things that were important to me. Do any of these resonate with you?

I love:

- Working with passionate people that are working towards a goal
- Helping people find something that they enjoy
- Witnessing people make friends and become comfortable in a new environment
- The feeling when a kid runs to the field because they are excited to see you and play sports together
- That moment where you see something ‘click’ with your athlete
- How the disc flies through the air and watching people run after it with the joy of a golden retriever

I believe:

- Everyone should be able to participate in sports in a way that is meaningful for them
- Kids need strong role models that care about them on and off the field
- Sports can be transformative
- Ultimate is a special sport that draws in people from all walks of life

- People make mistakes and we must work intentionally to learn from those mistakes
- Failure is key to learning and facing adversity

I promise to:

- Always stay curious and continuously seeking opportunities to learn and be better
- Continue playing sports myself until I physically cannot
- Smile every time I coach
- Laugh every time I coach
- Treat every athlete like they deserve my attention
- Constantly reflect on my own practice and how I'm designing my programs
- Help my athletes achieve their goals
- Help my athletes set higher goals than they thought possible

When things get hard I will:

- Remind myself of the struggles of the past and how we overcame them
- Do things that I love
- Reflect upon all the good memories
- Buckle down and learn from the experience

I will keep:

- Trusting my instincts
- Making decisions based on my values
- Loving what I do
- Asking for feedback/growing
- Taking care of myself (put my own mask on first)
- Innovating and asking questions

I ended up coming up with the following coaching philosophy that I always keep close by in a journal:

“It is an absolute privilege to be able to work with young people. The energy and joy they bring to people’s lives is incredible and I am very lucky to have a career that gives me back all the energy I put into it and more.

Playing sports has changed my life, and I can witness the same in countless others. I understand the power of belonging to a team, and it is my duty to share that blessing with as many young people as I can.”

It is important to note that your coaching philosophy is not and should not be set in stone after you first write it down. Just as your athletes may change from year to year, so may your values and what’s important to you. You’ll constantly be learning and evolving, and your philosophy should reflect that.

Your Turn - What Is Your Coaching Philosophy?

Section 3 - The Kids (Them)

Chapter 4 - Your Audience

Congratulations! You've done some heavy mental lifting in order to create a solid foundation for your coaching career. It's now time to focus your energy on your audience.

The most effective people, whether they are business owners, teachers, doctors, or coaches, know their audience in detail. They know far beyond a name and age; they know their audience's hopes, dreams, and fears.

This isn't just because school taught us that having empathy and understanding is important. It is, of course, and deeply understanding your kids will likely make you feel more connected to your team and make everyone's experience more enjoyable.

From a completely practical point of view, understanding your audience will help you manage behaviour and plan your practices better. With this in mind, let's take a look at the stages of development of kids.

Stages of Development

A quick note that all of the information below is based on Ultimate Canada's Long Term Athlete Development model. It is a tremendous resource and we have only shared the bare bones of it below. For more information, go to <https://bit.ly/3i7FxWS>

Ultimate Canada's Long Term Athlete Development Stages		
	FUNDamentals: 6 to 9 years	Learn to Play: 8 to 12 years
Spirit of the Game (SOTG)	Participants develop a basic understanding of SOTG (being nice to others, cheering for teammates and opponents).	Encourage children to keep a positive attitude during play and experience the basic joy of playing.
Technical	Introduce basic throwing and catching skills.	Develop throwing and catching.

Tactical	Engage in small-sided games that emphasize the importance of playing as a team.	Engage in small-sided games that emphasize the importance of playing as a team.
Physical	Introduce flexibility exercises while also developing ABCs of athleticism (agility, balance, coordination & speed) and hand-eye coordination. Encourage children to participate in many sports that build the ABCs.	Get children running, jumping, twisting, and balancing through various activities Children should be encouraged to play at least three sports, with one being ultimate.
Psychological	Introduce teamwork & cooperation and basic decision-making. Emphasize the development of skill and confidence. De-emphasize winning.	Design activities that help the child feel competent and comfortable! Have fun and build the child's confidence to try new things.

Ultimate Canada's Long Term Athlete Development Stages		
	Train to Play: 11 to 16 years	Train to Compete: 15 to 19 years
SOTG	Athletes take responsibility for their actions, respect others, and practice conflict resolution.	Athletes/teams demonstrate a sophisticated understanding and application of SOTG and rules during training and competition.
Technical	Develop and consolidate skills learned in previous stages.	Players demonstrate a high degree of consistency completing throws and catches during competitive play and begin to consolidate cutting and defensive skills.
Tactical	Learn position-specific defensive strategies and basic zone offence (later in stage).	Introduce advanced zone offence and defence strategies
Physical	Team and/or individualized fitness programs (including exercise, nutrition,	Athletes are fit enough to train and compete without injuries or burnout. Athletes enter

	and rest) are provided. Introduce weight training using bodyweight and speed training. Athletes should be encouraged to participate in two sports, with one being ultimate.	this stage if they have chosen to specialize in one sport and excel at the highest level of competition possible.
Psychological	The coach provides personalized expectations based on the athlete's physical capacities and skill level.	Athletes should love the game and enjoy competing.

FUNdamentals (6 to 9 years)

This stage is all about FUN as the name suggests. If you are lucky enough to be able to get a group of kids this age, pump them full of energy, spirit games, and fun. We often do not play anything that looks like traditional “ultimate” in this stage but we get pretty darn close. The goal is to get these kids to develop their physical literacy skills, make friends, and to get comfortable throwing and catching a disc.

Learn to Play (8 to 12 years)

At this stage, we introduce more typical ultimate drills into the mix and introduce more complex throws. As we approach the older end of this category, we start seeing girls becoming heavier and taller than the boys because of their earlier onset of puberty. Boys and girls are typically able to compete evenly. Even though it’s tempting to treat this age group more like a typical team, it’s important to remember that they’re still kids and the emphasis should be on fun. You can have them work hard, learn, AND have fun all at the same time.

Train to Play (11 to 16 years)

Some people may be there to hang out with their friends, some may be forced by their parents, others may be obsessed with the sport and will eat, sleep, and breathe ultimate. How can you possibly give them all what they want?! Even though there's the word "train" in the stage title, do not forget the number 1 rule: it should still be fun. However, what "fun" looks like changes as people get older. We still mix in spirit games and silly competitions but we also recognize that at this age, it is important to emphasize work ethic and having a growth mindset. You'll get a wide range of athletes in this age group in terms of physical and mental maturity, as well as their individual motivations for playing. It's important to ask this group what they want to get out of playing and show them that they can advocate for their own needs and personal goals.

Train to Compete (15 to 19 years)

At this stage, the environment is everything. Typically, if a young person is playing a sport when they're 15 years old or older, it's because THEY want to. This means you'll likely be set up to push their technical, tactical, and psychological skills a bit more. Coaching this age group is incredibly fun and they'll feed off of a combination of competition and praise. It is important to keep rewarding the athletes for trying to implement what you're teaching. If you can provide an atmosphere where athletes work hard, push themselves outside their comfort zones, all while they're having fun with other young people, then you've got them hooked for life.

Ultimate Canada has created a skills, tactics, and training matrix for the specific developmental periods of young athletes. Take a look at the matrices in Appendix A and see if they line up with what you thought you should be teaching at each age. Do you disagree with any of the recommendations below? These are all general guidelines and you will of course have to make adjustments depending on the skill level of the athletes you're working with.

Your Turn - Who is Your Audience?

What is your context? School team? Club Team? Summer Camp?

What ages and skill levels are you coaching? All the same or wide range?

What are their general backgrounds? All same gender and demographic? Or a variety of gender, ethnicity, culture, income, and religious beliefs?

Why are they there? Forced by parents? Voluntary? To win something? To be a part of a team? To stay fit?

Awesome. Now that you've given your audience some thought, it's time to dive into some truths and archetypes of kids we've come across, and strategies on how to manage their behaviour.

Chapter 5 - The Kids

Before you read any further, let us be clear: We love hanging out with kids. We think they're hilarious, goofy, cute little munchkins, and we're so grateful that we get to teach thousands of kids both ultimate and life skills. However, if you've ever worked with kids before, you KNOW they can be a pain in the rear end... just like we were when we were kids.

Below are some of the more common and funny characters we've come across in our time as coaches. While they are supposed to be entertaining, we also hope to convey that in each situation lies a great opportunity for you as a coach to help a young person grow.

The Starting Seven - Archetypes of Kids We've Come Across

1. Silly Billy

It's Thursday night in the winter of 2017. From 6-8 pm, we'll be running our first elementary program ever as Elevate Ultimate, and we have no idea what to expect. We have a new group of eight athletes and surprisingly, everyone is pretty good...well everyone except one. We'll call this person Billy. Billy had many talents but it seemed ultimate wasn't one of them, at least at the start. Every time he would catch the disc, he'd spin and randomly throw it against a wall. If he wasn't doing that, he was pulling out cards and doing magic tricks...in the middle of drills! As you may know, these types of actions are pretty clear signs that the athlete feels uncomfortable and out of their element, shielding their insecurities with silliness. Billy is one of our favourite stories because at a camp later that summer, kids were begging to be on his team for the games because of how good his throws were! You could practically see the confidence radiating off him that week. Billy is a great reminder to all of us to never give up on our kids regardless of their ability when they show up. It's your job to encourage and build their confidence.

2. Lost and Found

These are some of our favourite kids. These are the ones that never quite found a home with mainstream sports like soccer, dance, or hockey, and are looking for a new sport to try (or their parents are looking for a new sport for their kids!). These kids are typically a little less “conventionally” athletic (basic physical literacy is low), but seem to fall in love with the constant feeling of success when they complete catches and throws. These athletes are typically quite nervous at the beginning because they already have a narrative in their mind that they are bad at sports. It is your job as a coach to not only ensure they are finding success at the beginning, but also praise their success in front of them, all the other kids, and maybe even some proud parents.

3. My Mom Signed Me Up

These kids are either SUPER shy and/or SUPER reluctant to participate. I never liked doing anything my parents forced me to do, and I think we can all understand that. These are some of the more difficult kids to work with because they literally do not want to be there, at least at the beginning. Nonetheless, the feeling of winning them over and seeing them buy-in is one of the most rewarding feelings a coach can have. Make sure you frontload your first few lessons with fun games to get these kids on board.

4. The Loudmouth

How are kids so loud at such a young age? These kids live for attention. Whether it’s from their peers, coaches, or both, they just want to be heard and seen. We have a favourite loudmouth: let’s call them Stella. Stella was super athletic and made sure everyone knew it. But Stella had one of the worst forehands in the class and would throw a backhand every time a coach wasn’t looking.

These are the kids that mask their insecurities by talking and disrupting instead of working on improving themselves. One of our most effective strategies was to always pair Stella up with the

most experienced forehand throwers in the class. The effect was threefold: Stella had a role model to look up to, she became more driven to work on her skills to keep up with the best in the class, and let's just say the class was much quieter. Remember this when you meet your loudmouth, and meet their loudness with some empathy and understanding.

5. The Gamer

These kids are confident because they've thrown with their parents before. They're the ones that always interrupt your explanations with "I know this already," and they walk the line between competitive and overly competitive. Nonetheless, it's clear they only value one thing: Winning. These kids can be especially difficult to deal with if the rest of the team is there for a bit of fun and a good workout. Putting in the early work to turn these Gamers into leaders will make your job a lot easier. This could look like putting them in charge of leading warm-ups, or having a private conversation with them about the value of helping their teammates become better.

6. The "I Play Real Sports" Athlete (The basketball/soccer/hockey/football player)

"Ultimate isn't even a sport. Having no referees is dumb, I'm just going to cheat." These can sometimes be the Gamers, as well as the "My mom signed me up" kids. The toughest challenge for you will be to communicate what Spirit of the Game means and why it's important. However, these tough challenges often represent the biggest opportunities for you as an ultimate coach to inspire positive change. Be straight and firm with these kids when outlining your expectations of their participation. If you can turn this child into a believer of true Spirit and sportspersonship, they can then influence their peers in their other sports and make all sports a bit better.

7. The Quiet Soldier

Ah, your most diligent and quiet student. The one that picks up the cones without being asked, and looks you straight in the eyes with the most genuine "Thank you" when you give them any

piece of feedback. Your biggest challenge for these kids is to not take them for granted, and to not forget to praise them!

Elevate Ultimate's Five Truths about Kids:

An important thing to remember when reading through these archetypes is the reason why we categorize our athletes: to better understand and serve them. We as coaches have the important job of making these kids better humans after they've left practice, and we've found it helpful to be able to recognize different types of young athletes. Also, remember that there are some fundamental truths regardless of a person's archetype.

1. Kids want to feel that they can and have achieved something.
2. Kids need and thrive with structure and routines (part of that structure might be free play).
3. Kids want to create connections, have friends, and be part of a community.
4. Kids want to be seen, respected, and cared for.
5. Kids are kids, and kids like to have fun.

Your Turn - What Are Your Truths about Kids and Coaching?

Fantastic! You're doing a great job of learning and self-reflection. Now that you understand your audience better, let's learn some behaviour management strategies to ensure your practices run smoothly.

Chapter 6 - Behaviour Management

I look around and all my athletes are cleared five minutes before practice starts. They seem ready to learn and listen, and are being very supportive of one another... and then I jolted up out of bed. Why can't it be that easy? Oh right. It takes work and preparation.

This chapter is about creating the best possible environment for all of your athletes to learn. Not only will these behaviour management strategies lead to your athletes becoming better ultimate players, it's also going to save you some yelling and frustration too.

When it comes to behaviour management, there are three categories we put our strategies into:

1. Proactive (routines & set up to avoid the behaviour altogether)
2. Reactive (strategies used at practice in real-time)
3. Retroactive (things done after the session is over)

Proactive Strategies

Being proactive is ideal. It will require some setup, thought, and time, especially at the beginning of your season, but it is WORTH IT. Some strategies we have used with great success are:

1. Routines

- Greet your athletes as they arrive, even if it's from far away as you're setting up a field or a drill.
- Start with a circle to check in with the group about how they're feeling.
- Remind them of the rules you've set out (this is more powerful if you've set the rules with your players).
- Have the athletes put the discs on the ground when you are explaining a drill or game (we can't help spinning them around and dropping them either!).

2. Charters

- Create a list of actions that the team will take (facilitate this with the team).
- Create a list of consequences if people violate the team's rules (have the team create this).

3. Design Engaging Practices (More Detail in the Practice Section)

- Include some new content every few practices.
- Randomly start a practice with a scrimmage.
- Avoid too much standing around / keep the kids SUPER active.
- Put the "learning" closer to the beginning.

4. Be a Performer

- Change your tone and the pace of your voice, use expressions, etc.

5. Use Your Athletes

- For demonstrations.
- To lead warm-ups.
- To lead discussions / learn and teach rules.

6. Build Relationships With Your Athletes

- If they truly believe you CARE about them, their behaviour will be so much better!
- Find out what they like outside of practice and try to connect on that topic.
- Make REAL eye contact.
- Try to check in with each person as an individual.

7. Praise Positive Behaviours Right Away

- Catch the 'bad kid' doing something 'good' early on and publicly praise them for it.
- If they think you think they're good, they will want to be that for you.

We just threw a ton of strategies at you and we're only going to throw more. It's important to note that each team and coach is different and these strategies may work with varying degrees of success for different situations. Try a few and see how they go, and don't try to implement everything all at once.

Reactive Strategies

Reactive strategies are the next line of defence. The misbehaviours can range from slightly disruptive to completely disruptive, and your strategies should suit the seriousness of the infraction.

These are some behaviour strategy tools ranging from least disruptive to most disruptive:

1. Proximity Control

If you notice a couple of athletes having a quiet conversation during your explanation, just walk near them and see if that works. Remember when you were talking in class and the teacher would slowly walk over? You can also try separating people if they're too distracting for each other.

2. Wait Time

If some athletes are talking during an explanation, stop talking and wait until they tune into the fact that you're waiting for them. This strategy takes some time but dig in because if you don't follow through, they will learn that you will give up. Casually staring at your watch and pretending you are bored are also ways to emphasize your point. The other athletes will notice first and give the distracted ones a little bump or a "shh" - this is good.

3. Call and Response

This one is good if it's more than a few kids not paying attention, or if you need a quick way to get a big group to stop doing a drill. It helps if you've already established this, but kids are smart enough to follow along if you commit. For example, "Clap once if you can hear me," then you clap and wait for them to clap back. "Clap twice if you can hear me," then you clap twice and wait for them to clap twice. Usually by four everyone is tuned in.

4. Countdown of Doom

Young and old alike, as soon as someone starts a countdown, fear sinks in.

5. Individual Quiet Time

If one or two people are disrupting the group and you're the only coach, sending someone away may be a necessary strategy (in eyesight of course). Once you sit them out, get the game/drill going and then go have a conversation with that person. Most kids know they were in the wrong so you can ask leading questions such as, "Do you know why you're sitting out?" with great effect.

6. Group Quiet Time

You've lost total control of the group, oh no! It happens to the best of us. Use a sharp tone (it's way more effective if you rarely use it, so save it if you can) and have everyone come together and sit in the circle.

Ask them questions such as, "Why are you here? What is going on? What do you want?" Let the kids wallow in the silence until they actually start to say some productive answers. Commit to the discussion if you choose this route, you don't always need to be the "fun" coach. Follow through. Follow through. Follow through.

Retroactive Strategies

If possible, deal with behaviour issues that arise with the strategies we've already covered. However, a call home is sometimes necessary. Calling home is the final line of defence if everything else has failed and the behaviour is affecting the group negatively. Here is a quick template for that sometimes awkward call home.

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Ask whether "X" has had any issues lately that you need to be aware of, as their behaviour has been more disruptive than usual and you wanted to check-in.
3. Soften the impact by stressing their behaviour has not been a huge issue and that it was unusual.

Parents will have a variety of reactions to this call. We have found that the most important part is to show that you genuinely care about their child and want to support their learning.

Oftentimes, the parents know very well about their child's behaviour and are maybe embarrassed. Again, soften this moment for them. Work with them. Ask them for strategies that have worked for them. Express that you're excited to be coaching their child. It goes a long way.

Your Turn - Manage the Situation

Scenario #1

You're explaining the forehand to a group of athletes. There are some athletes that are proficient at throwing and some that are completely new to it. You're the only coach, and there are 25 athletes in front of you. 4-5 of the athletes that already know how to throw forehand are being disruptive. They're talking loudly and the other kids are super interested in what they're saying.

What kind of archetype could these disruptors be? What kind of athletes would be exhibiting this behaviour?

List 3 **proactive** strategies to avoid this issue in the first place:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List 2 **reactive** strategies to help the group:

- 1.
- 2.

Scenario #2

You're doing a drill that requires the athletes to run at full speed. You've reminded them of this a few times, but it is clear that they do not care about your request. They're all jogging, laughing, and making fun of the activity.

What kind of archetype could these kids be? What kind of athlete would be exhibiting this behaviour?

List 3 **proactive** strategies to avoid this issue in the first place:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List 2 **reactive** strategies to help the group:

- 1.
- 2.

Did your strategies differ in the different scenarios? Did you try to start with something less invasive first and then move towards more invasive?

Just like learning a new skill, you need to practice behaviour management. It's like each bad behaviour is a magical door that requires a different type of key to unlock it.

Scenario #3 - Come up with one that you've experienced!

List 3 **proactive** strategies to avoid this issue in the first place:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List 2 **reactive** strategies to help the group:

- 1.
- 2.

You've done very well so far, coach. You reflected on your coaching self and now have learned about your audience and how to manage them effectively. It's time to move onto the pre-season planning phase.

Section 4 - Pre Practice

Chapter 7 - Skill Acquisition

Before you even begin to work on planning the season, you must understand how your athletes learn. It's not as easy as introducing a new skill or tactic every single practice. You will find that learning will not occur as quickly as you like, and skill transfer can be low if you rush. Thankfully, there is research to help predict how long it will take a novice to master a skill, and tips and tricks to help accelerate that process.

In 2018, we formed Elevate's first middle school team training to compete at Spring Reign: the largest co-ed tournament for kids in the world. They were a great group of athletes and their throws were solid. We worked on faking, edges, and throwing from different heights. We wanted to make these young people into throwing superstars and they were! During practices, they would impress all the parents with their skills.

Then it was time for them to scrimmage. I was so excited to see all their awesome throws in the game and then SPLAT. Turfed. Almost every single throw was a turnover. There were no step-outs and they were trying to throw limp backhands over the heads of their marks into a pile of defenders.

Alas, we had not moved them from the acquisition of the skill to refinement yet.

We made some adjustments after that practice. Throwing with a 100% mark was added to each throwing warm-up, receivers had to run at 100% speed during drills, and we took away their ability to throw 'over the top' for a bit. We moved them through the drills slowly and emphasized what we were working on. In the scrimmage, we kept the 'no over the top' rule and had them focus on stepping out and throwing around the mark. Their throws in the scrimmage sometimes made it to the intended target. There was progress, but I was upset with myself that it wasn't going very quickly. I expected them to jump from just learning a skill to being proficient. I wasn't patient, and I was unaware that there was a process that they needed to move through with my careful guidance.

There are three stages of skill and tactical learning:

1. **Acquisition** - Athlete is able to throw a forehand to a stationary target (think partner throwing).
2. **Consolidation** - Athlete is able to complete a forehand to a moving target in a drill (think cutting drill).
3. **Refinement/Decision Making** - Athlete is able to complete forehand throws in a variety of contexts in game play (think scrimmage/game play).

Assuming you're practicing three times a week, acquisition can take anywhere from 4-6 weeks. To move into the consolidation stage, it can take another 3-4 weeks. Refining the skill can take months. How can you get through everything when your seasons are so short?

Let's give you a specific situation. There's a new athlete (Athlete X) that has started in your program. They've never thrown a forehand before, so you spend some time before the session getting them up to speed. You teach them the grip, you guide their hand to show them how to really 'flick' the disc off their fingers, you take a few steps back and they complete the pass to you. It's a bit wobbly, but it went to the right spot. Great! You move on because you have to start practice.

Athlete X's forehands are serviceable for the drills that you run. They are pretty shy so they don't get the disc much in the scrimmage, and you don't notice if they're trying the forehand or not. In fact, what you don't realize is that Athlete X is completely avoiding throwing a forehand in the game. They're too new and too afraid to look bad in front of their peers.

It's now the end of the season and you're in an important game. Athlete X is a goal-scoring machine but near the end of the game, they catch it just outside the endzone. Their reset handler runs up the line, but instead of an easy forehand, Athlete X throws their 'dad-pass-backhand' and it gets blocked. Athlete X deflates and all their teammates groan.

(Fun fact: Athlete X was me, but it was the backhand that I couldn't throw so it was easier to get away with.)

Creating an environment where athletes feel comfortable making mistakes and trying things that they're learning in game play is key to moving through these stages faster.

Let's rewind this scenario a bit and see what could have happened.

Acquisition Phase

Athlete X arrives for practice and you show them the basic grip for the throw.

1. Partner them up with a skilled peer that is a good leader and request that they work together.
2. Ask Athlete X to stay after practice a bit to work on the forehand.
3. Give Athlete X a bit of throwing homework to build their confidence when they get back to practice.
4. What else could you do?

Consolidation Phase

Athlete X tries to use the forehand in the drills but is not very good at it (this is where most athletes can get lost or stuck).

1. Praise them for trying and encourage them to keep it up.
2. Give them tips privately rather than calling them out in front of the entire group.
3. Include drills that allow them to practice throwing a few reps in a row to a moving target.
4. Give them cues and tools to be able to assess their own throw. For example, if the disc dives sharply to the ground, they need more IO edge on the disc.
5. What else could you do?

Refinement Phase

Athlete X is now able to perform the skill competently but it's not an unconscious act. They have to really think about the angle, the hand position, and the follow-through every time they throw. Since this new skill is not automatic, any distractions or change in environment may bring the skill back to the beginning when they were struggling to complete passes.

1. Make sure the athlete gets lots of touches in the scrimmage and is forced to use the forehand.
2. Design drills where the athlete has to complete forehands under pressure, usually in the form of an intense mark.
3. The athlete should explore all the different ways the disc can be thrown in the air and how to lead a receiver with each of them.
4. What else could you do?

Below is a table of what is typical of a young athlete.

Ability	Training Objective	# Weeks Recommended	Frequency / Week
Technique	Acquisition	4-6	3+
	Consolidation	3-4	2+
	Refinement	Many months	
Tactics	Acquisition	4-6	2
	Consolidation	3-4	2
	Decision-Making	Many months	2
Endurance / Stamina	Development	6	2-3
	Maintenance	Continue	1
Speed	Development	4	2-3
	Maintenance	Continue	1
Explosiveness	Development	4-5	4-5
	Maintenance	Continue	1

Now, you may look at that table and think, “If it takes that long, how will I ever get through all the wonderful things I wanted to teach this season?”

The answer is that you can layer the skills and tactics in when it makes sense, and you can focus on more than one at a time. Read the next chapter on season planning to learn more!

Key Tips and Reminders

- Start simple and layer in the challenge.
- Success rate of 80% or higher means they are ready for the next challenge in developing that skill.
- Blocked practice is better for acquiring a skill (throwing 20 flat forehands in a row).
- Random practice is better to move on to consolidation (changing the fakes, edges, and throws each rep).
- Random, varied, and high-intensity reps in practice help move the athletes into refinement / decision-making.
- Creating a perfection-free environment is vital to helping your athletes move from one phase to another. They must be comfortable trying things and making mistakes in practice.
- Just because it looks good in practice does not mean it will look good in a game.

Chapter 8 - Season Planning

It's the first practice of the season and I bring everyone in to introduce myself and explain some basic ground rules. We go right into a few drills that I know well because they were the only drills I did in college. There was no purpose or focus. I kept stopping the drills to explain...wrist snap, cutting angles, faking, marking, force...I felt like I was drowning. There was so much to cover! Maybe you've been in a similar situation where the weight of the work ahead was too daunting to bear.

Having a plan will ease your mind. You will have a roadmap and a way to get to where you want to go. Intentional planning is required if you want your athletes to get the most out of the season. Knowing your key dates, your athletes, and the goals are vital in helping everyone be successful.

After that first chaotic practice, I took out a pen and paper to write down all the things I wanted to cover that season. I was too overwhelmed and needed to wrap my head around it. I wrote out 10 skills and tactics I thought were important.

Write Your Top 10 Most Important Skills and Tactics You Need to Cover in a Season. Be specific. ("Throwing" is not specific enough).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Oh no! Winter stuck around a little longer than you would have liked. Take away three things from your list that you can no longer cover.

Things to Not Cover:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Field maintenance! You have to cut a bunch of practices. Take away another two things.

Things to Not Cover:

- 4.
- 5.

Was that difficult? It may be necessary. At what point are you looking at the quantity of things being taught over the quality?

Now rank those remaining skills in order of what needs to be covered first. Prioritize the things that are vital to making the game resemble ultimate. For example, throwing should be very high on the list, and defensive tactics should be lower.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Bonus (if you get to them):

- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Triage

The practice of prioritizing your skills, tactics, rules, and anything else you want to teach is called “triage.”

Triage: The assigning of priority order to projects on the basis of where funds and other resources can be best used, are most needed, or are most likely to achieve success.

The concept of triage is an understanding that not everything can be done right now, and that some things are more important than others.

When you look at your athletes stumble through a practice and it looks like everything is on fire, just take a breath and trust that those things will figure themselves out when it makes the most sense. You’ve got a plan. Focus on your goals for each phase of your season. Believe in yourself, and that if you do it right, by the end of the season, by golly, it may just resemble ultimate.

Your Season

The next thing to figure out are your important dates. Knowing the dates of events and how many practices you’re likely to have will be crucial to figuring out how many things you can cover. If you are not currently working with a specific team, you can do the activity with an imaginary team that makes sense for your situation.

Information to gather (if applicable):

1. Tryout Dates: _____
2. First Practice: _____
3. Dates of Practices: _____
4. Total # of Practices: _____
5. First Game: _____
6. Dates of Games: _____

7. Tournaments: _____

8. Team Wrap Up: _____

Now that you have this information, let's start inputting that into the wonderful spreadsheet of future success! Make sure to download the season planning excel spreadsheet that came with this book.

Start by inputting your important dates first and work from the end of the season until the beginning. Where do you want to be at the end? What do you need to have introduced by the first, second, and third tournaments?

Key Tips and Reminders

- Start with lots of fun games / mini-scrimmages at the beginning of the season that include lots of touches of the disc.
- Focus on fundamentals for the beginning phase (throwing, catching, individual cutting).
- At Elevate, we do not focus a lot on defence for kids in Grades K - 7. Often the offence is not strong enough to require a strong defence to play against it. We focus on basic principles of athleticism and effort, but do not introduce force or zone until all the other fundamentals are covered. We have found that a strong offence is the best defence.
- You will spend SOOOO much time on team cutting. It is shocking how long it takes for young athletes to pick this up. If you can have it click for a team in two practices, call us please and let us know what magic you're using.
- Keep revisiting your season plan, it's there to guide your practice planning.
- At the end of the season, reflect on your plan and revise - no need to reinvent the wheel next year if you critically assess this one.

Ok, I know that's a lot of work, but now you're done. You have a basic outline of your season, where you're starting, and when you're introducing new concepts: Are you a little more at ease? See, it will all be ok! You can do it all, you superhero you! Now let's break down your season into individual practices.

Chapter 9 - Practice Planning

You've gotten through a lot in this book so far! You've hopefully taken some time to reflect on your coaching style and think more deeply about who you are coaching. You've thought your season through, and now it's time for the next stage: the practice plan!

Throwing together a practice plan is extremely easy. A Grade 1 or 2 student could whip up a plan for you in 10 seconds, probably looking like:

1. Tag
2. Scrimmage

What's more difficult is creating a dynamic and fun practice for your athletes that will lead to them actually improving a skill or learning a tactic or strategy.

The Reverse Engineer Method (Our Magic Formula for Amazing Practices)

1. Warm-up

Warm-ups, much like any drill or game, should look different depending on the context you are coaching in. For our Travel Team, we would start with a typical dynamic warm-up (squats, high knees, side shuffles, etc.). For our summer camps or after-school clubs, I guarantee that you would never see us start the day with a dynamic warm-up, simply because it's pretty darn boring. Don't worry, we'll give you tons of fun warm-up ideas later in the book.

2. Game That Demands a Skill (this could also be the warm-up)

This is where the thinking on your end needs to start taking place. You need to think of a game or drill that demands a skill from the players, even if it's not a skill they have yet. This will create

a subconscious anticipation and desire to learn the skill you will be teaching them the rest of the practice.

3. Reflect on the Game

Bring your athletes in and ask them what worked well and what didn't work so well in that game or drill. Ask them what skill(s) they think could have made that game easier for them to win. Lead them to the answer you're looking for, which should be the skill that you're about to teach them. You know you're on the right track when you're getting responses like "Ohhhh, if I had had this skill, the previous game would have been way easier to win!"

4. Explanation of the Skill

This is where you're actually teaching them the skill you want them to learn, whether it's through a demonstration, on a whiteboard, verbally, etc. Try to keep this under five minutes so the athletes can get to practicing.

This part is purposefully near the beginning of the practice. Kids have especially short attention spans and fatigue only makes this worse. You want to frontload the learning for your players while they are fresh.

5. Drill / Game 2/3/4/5/6, etc. with Emphasis on Using That Skill

This is where we see coaches making the biggest mistake. They create a great setup with their first game and reflection, and proceed to lead their kids through random drills and scrimmages that have no focus or flow. Each drill and game must have a focus, and there must be only 1-2 points of focus per practice.

6. Spirit Game

Spirit games are fun. Play Spirit games with your kids.

Example Individual Cutting Lesson for Beginner Grade 6-8

Focus and desired outcome: You want the athletes to know the difference between an effective and ineffective cut. By the end of practice, they should know how to chop their feet and accelerate when they change direction which will lead to sharper and more explosive cuts.

1. Warm-up - Two Cone Challenge

1v1 with offence trying to touch the cone before defence can touch the corresponding cone. Make sure everyone gets four reps on O and D. We are trying to “demand” the skills of changing direction, faking, and accelerating.

2. Reflect on Game

What made it easier for offence to get away from the defence? What was not so effective? Hopefully the answers are “changing direction” or “fakes” or “changing speed.”

3. Explanation of Skill of Cutting

Have athletes practice running back and forth using proper footwork. Start at 50% speed, and increase appropriately. Emphasize chopping of feet, and accelerating after the change of direction.

4. Drill That Emphasizes Skill - 4 Line Cutting Drill

Put athletes in four lines and have them do an up-line cut with a jab step, a boulder cut, and a deep cut. All the emphasis is on cutting. Do not focus on people’s throws, only on whether they are chopping their feet and accelerating successfully.

This drill can get boring, so make sure you have a few challenges planned (let’s try to get 10 catches in a row as a team, or 20 in one minute).

5. Drill That Emphasizes Skill - 1v1

Offence tries to get open, defence tries to get a block. In 1v1, there is a lot of open space and kids can get the wrong idea of what “getting open is,” e.g., running horizontally. Use cones to

split up the field and show where athletes should ideally catch the disc.

6. Drill That Emphasizes Skill - 4v4 Scrimmage

Smaller field, stall count to 7. We love 4v4 scrimmages to keep the focus on cutting. Tons of open space downfield for players to practice their new cutting skills.

7. Spirit Game - Relay Race

Not really a Spirit game, but kids like to race and it sneakily still works on cutting :)

Hopefully this example illustrates how everything from the warm-up to the Spirit game can maintain the focus you want for the practice. Think about a practice like a trip to your local gym: Focusing on just your biceps and triceps are going to make your arms look huge, while focusing on every single body part will lead to few specific gains.

Now it's your turn. Below are a few situations we've come up with for you to fill out. Feel free to use the drills and games you know, or skip forward to the Games and Drills section to get some ideas. A practice planning template is also in Appendix B.

Your Turn - Create a Practice Plan

Situation #1: Forehand lesson for advanced Grade 8s on a Travel Team

Situation #2: Defence lesson for Grade 6 - 8s at Summer Camp

How was that? How did your lesson plan change from your advanced Grade 8s to your mix of athletes at a summer camp? Was it difficult to think of a game to play first that would demand a skill?

Planning an effective practice is a skill that can be practiced just like anything else! It'll become easier as you do more of it.

10 Tips for the Perfect Practice Plan

1. Establish a routine early in your season for your athletes. Whether this is a welcome and closing circle, or the same warm-up routine, or a fun call and response that gets all your athletes focused, make sure these are always built into your practice plan.
2. Include a warm-up, and not always a boring dynamic warm-up (we'll give you more fun warm-up ideas later that still target fundamental movements).
3. Avoid games/activities that have 'eliminations'.
4. Make partners for the group to avoid kids feeling "left out."
5. Don't try to change the world in one practice (i.e., have 1-2 points of focus).
6. Make the drills fun! They will try harder and learn faster when they are having fun.
7. Be creative and add new challenges, especially if your drills have lots of reps.
8. Take time for athletes to reflect on their learning throughout.
9. Name your activities in case you want to go back to them in another practice.
10. Ask your athletes what they have liked and what they haven't liked.

Chapter 10 - How to Make Your Practice Engaging

The first paid program we ever ran was an after-school club at my old high school, Stratford Hall. Ultimate is their main sport and while most of the parents were pretty chill, some parents expected their kids to be superstars at the end of our 10-week program. One mom even asked us why we hadn't covered defence yet because her child clearly wasn't staying on his check in the scrimmage. The child was only in Grade 4 and it was the third practice.

Because it was our first paid program, we felt a lot of pressure to please the paying parents so we were determined to turn their kids into superstars. We did tons of partner throwing and implemented all the drills we did as adult club players on our respective teams.

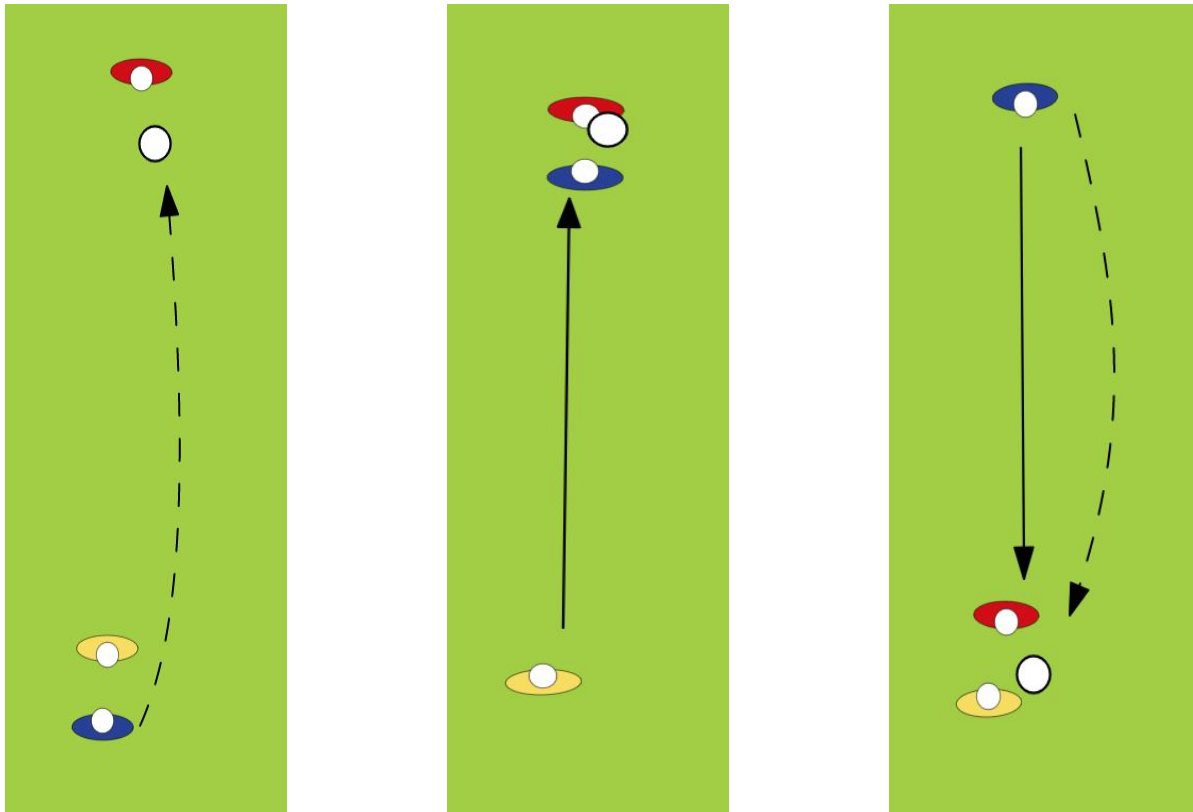
One day, as we were doing the two-line drill for the fifth week in a row to emphasize the importance of throwing in front of the receiver, a student got fed up and sat out. We asked what was wrong and they replied, "This is boring." That's all they had to say to stick a knife in our hearts.

How had we been so blind? Why did we think drills that bored us as adults would be engaging for kids? That day was a huge eye-opener for us and changed the way we thought about drills and games forever. It was a reminder about the importance of fun, and that if we truly wanted those kids to become superstars, we needed to keep them engaged so that they'd be excited to play and learn for the rest of their lives.

Achieving Learning and Engagement

The key question to ask yourself is, "How can I keep my athletes engaged the entire practice?" Part of the answer is in what you learned in the practice-planning section. By creating a lesson plan with a logical flow, athletes will understand what they are learning and why they are learning it which will keep them engaged. However, there are other tools that can help transform your most boring drills into your athletes' favourite games.

Let's take the Three Person Drill, for example. It's a simple and effective drill that most teams do across the world. It can also get super boring and repetitive after three minutes.



If you've never heard of this drill, here is what it is:

1. Thrower one (blue) attempts to throw to their receiver (red) while the defender (yellow) tries to block the pass.
2. Once the blue player makes the throw, they follow their throw and defend the red thrower.
3. This pattern continues for the rest of time.

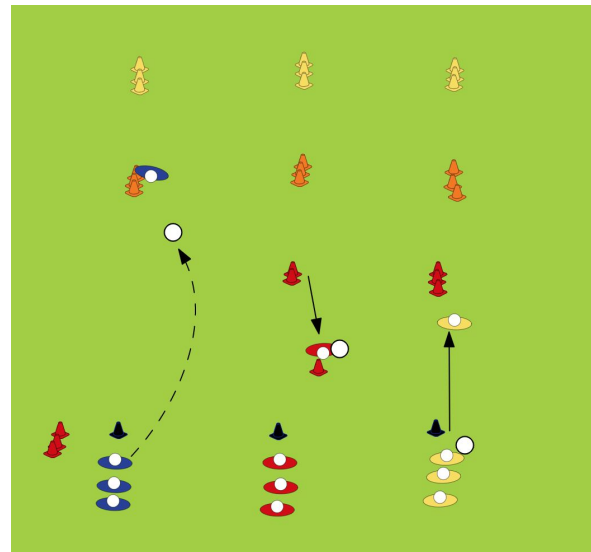
Write out a few of the goals of the Three Person Drill:

If you wrote something along the lines of working on throwing with a mark, faking, breaking a mark, marking, or holding the force, then you're on the right track.

The next question is, "How can we achieve these same goals in a more engaging and fun way for the athletes?"

In this case, we came up with a game called Gold Mining.

Teammates pass the disc to each other as they cut to cones, trying to collect all their cones first by completing the passes to each one. To make this harder, each team sends one defensive representative that tries to block another team's passes. Can you imagine how much more excited and motivated the kids are in this game than the Three Person Drill? The defence is super active and motivated to get a block, and the offence gets a small hit of dopamine when they collect a cone for their efforts. They are working on the exact same skills but having way more fun doing it.



Other general ways you can spice up even the most boring drills include:

- Adding timing challenges
- Adding different levels that players can unlock like a video game
- Adding multiple discs

- Adding ways players can earn points (like Gold Mining)
- Adding silly non-ultimate things (you better believe a rubber chicken somehow finds its way into our practices)

We want to make it clear that it is totally fine to do basic drills without adding any of these elements. We do not believe that every drill should be gamified for the sake of fun and engagement. However, doing the same thing every practice will make your kids want to stop playing ultimate, and this is not okay!

Your Turn - Transform Boring to Engaging

Drill: Go To (Two lines are facing each other. One player at the front has the disc while the other is going to be the cutter. The cutter runs to the back of their line, changes direction, then runs toward the thrower. The thrower throws the disc to the cutter.)

What are the goals of this drill?

How can you achieve these goals in a more fun or engaging way?

Drill: Partner Throwing

What are the goals of this drill?

How can you achieve these goals in a more fun or engaging way?

Nice work coach! You can do this process with whichever drills you think are getting stale. Now get out there and watch your athletes have the most fun they've ever had!

Chapter 11 - Indoor Practice Adaptations

It's a warm and sunny day here in Vancouver as I'm writing these words in early April, 2020. It only takes a few swipes of my social media to see that it's snowing in Eastern Canada.

Every coach has to adapt their practice plans based on their environment, and it can be especially tricky to run an effective practice in a small space such as a gym. Elevate runs programs year-round, and all of our Junior winter programs are in elementary school gyms that are only three-to-four-thousand square feet. It's not ideal, but in every challenge lies an opportunity.

Your Turn - What Can You Teach in a Small Gym?

Take a look at some of the listed individual and team skills below. Circle or highlight the top five skills you would focus on if you had to run practices in a small gymnasium.

warm-ups

Basic throwing (backhand, forehand)

Hucking

Catching

Individual cutting

Other throws (hammer, scoober, push pass)

Cutting systems (horizontal, vertical)

Handling resets

Endzone

Plays

Defence

Good. We don't know your context so there is no exact right answer. If all your practices are in a small indoors space leading up to an outdoor tournament, you'll probably have to work a bit on cutting systems even though it's not ideal. If you have only three or four weeks of indoor practices leading to your outdoor practices, we'd recommend using that indoor time to refine your athletes' throwing and individual cutting capabilities. Below are some tips and tricks for practicing inside a small space.

Tips and Tricks for Practicing in a Small Space

1. Fewer People if Possible

At Elevate, we cap all our winter programs at 15 people even though it is a bit of a financial hit. It improves safety most importantly, and it increases the number of touches everyone gets. Is there some way to split up your team and have some smaller, separate practices?

2. Emphasize Perfection During Partner Throwing (If skill level allows)

Did you know Newton had a 7th Law of Physics? It goes as follows: Everyone's throws are 10x more pretty indoors. This is why we implore our more intermediate / advanced athletes to strive for perfection when they are partner throwing. When we ask for flat backhands to the chest, we want them to aim for that every time. When we ask for an OI forehand, we want them to aim for the outside shoulder every single time. Indoor practices are the perfect time to strive for perfection so that their technique is solid when wind and other outdoor factors are introduced.

To be clear, this suggestion is only if you are coaching players that already have a good grasp of the throwing techniques. Even with this in mind, we are not suggesting that you or the players become negative if they don't throw perfectly every time. The point is that the players are focused on trying to execute the exact throw they have in their minds' eye.

3. Extend Throwers' Range

Following on the previous point, indoor practices are also a great opportunity to challenge every throwers' range through Kung Fu Throwing. Have athletes release the disc as far from their body as they can, as high as they can, as low as they can, and so on. It is also a great opportunity to have your athletes practice off-hand throws and upside down throws.

4. Modify Your Scrimmages

We love to play 3v3 or 4v4 indoors as everyone gets tons of touches. If you have a large roster, you can still play small-sided games, but make it a wave-game style.

5. Other Games and Drills We Like For Small Spaces

Number scrimmage, asteroids, gold mining, duck hunting (See Games and Drills Section).

We kept this chapter a bit more general as it's hard to know everyone's context. If you have specific questions, email us at ElevateUltimateAcademy@gmail.com

Chapter 12 - Team Culture

In 2016, I somehow found myself coaching two different high school teams that both competed in the same district. I have a bleeding heart and just wanted the kids to be able to play, but as you can imagine, it came with some complications.

One team was called the Panthers. They were brand new with most of their players never having played before, and they completely captured my heart. They were eager to learn and they were all hilarious. However, there were some interpersonal issues going on that I was not aware of, and it came out at the wrong time.

It was our final tournament of the season and I was running back and forth between two fields trying to make sure both teams were where they needed to be. When I arrived at the Panthers' field, two of the athletes were yelling at each other and a group of them ran off. These are grade 10s, 11s, and 12s, I might add.

I had no idea what was happening. This team was adorable and sweet: how could there be issues? I found one of the captains and she told me everything. The fight was over a girl...high schoolers, am I right?!

My first order of business was to find the people involved and have conversations with them about it. I then brought everyone back together and we did a team-building activity. Kids will be kids, and they were able to put aside their differences because they liked games. After that, we sat in a circle and I asked them some questions.

1. What do they like about this team?
2. What does it mean to be a Panther?
3. What does a good teammate play like?

Eventually the conversation just took off on its own. They were able to open up to one another and it turned around to a point where they all got up, started hugging, and saying that the team

meant more than anything. We got up and played a couple of truly stupid Spirit games and everyone was laughing and cheering. This was the fastest turnaround I had ever seen. They played their hearts out in their final game of the season. I can't for the life of me remember if we won or lost, but they played out of their minds.

To this day, what happened at that tournament has stuck with the team and is a part of their identity. Five years later, the school's ultimate jersey includes "Familia Primum," which is Latin for "Family First."

Tuckman's Stages of Group Development

The winningest teams out there all have one thing in common: a strong team culture. Many of the teams that fall apart or do not live up to their expectations fail because they do not have a strong sense of identity or culture. Having your athletes create a list of values and a team mission statement are great, but whether those nice words turn into actions for the group are on the coach's shoulders.

A common model on team development was crafted by psychologist Bruce Tuckman, and it's useful to use this framework when thinking about sports teams. He suggested that teams go through five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

First of all, understanding that conflict is often part of a team's journey to performing will help everyone be equipped to handle the ebbs and flows when they arise. The caterpillar must become goo before it becomes a butterfly.

Let's start at the beginning.

1. Forming: Preparing for the tunnel (Team identity)

Your team at this stage is typically just getting to know each other. Many will be trying to make friends and fit in, while others are feeling awkward and judged. This stage is where team-building activities are key to building connections between your athletes. Coaches are able

to watch the team in these activities and see who's being left out, who's alpha, and anything else.

We as coaches should also be very clear in this stage what our expectations are and what they should come to expect from us. Modeling openness with the athletes will also impact whether or not a team buys into what the coach is preaching. In this stage, coaches should pay particular attention to getting to know the athletes one on one. Building trust is so important.

This is also typically the stage where leaders are either selected as captains or are empowered in some other way.

Activity Ideas:

- Team Charter (signed by everyone)
- Mission statements
- Poem of values
- Skits / team song

Creating these team identifiers will give the athletes something to attach to. It will be theirs and they will be proud of whatever they come up with. It is also useful to have something tangible to reflect back on throughout the season whenever your team needs a reminder.

The issues that arise during this stage are typically interpersonal conflicts. This usually manifests as gossip where people make fun of others behind their backs or to their faces. This is what the kids these days call "toxic" behaviour. It is a cancer to every team and MUST be addressed.

We have found a variety of methods work, but the primary thing we focus on is having a leadership meeting with the captains. Captains are a wonderful bridge between the coaches and the team. They will typically give you all the details you need to address the issues. These problems do not usually go away on their own, so you must deal with them.

Another way of finding out where the cliques are is to have the athletes write down (or tell you privately) who they want to throw with or be on the same team with the next practice. You can also include who they do not want to be on the same team with. Your athletes will think that

you're being nice and wanting them to play with their friends, and that can be part of it, but it's also a surefire way to see who is being left out and where everyone stands on the team. If no one picks Bobby, there may be an issue there.

2. Storming: We are in the tunnel (Conflict and tension)

First of all, knowing that tension and conflict are normal should help coaches avoid feeling shame or guilt when it arises on their teams. It's natural and if you act intentionally, it can be a great power for your team's culture. The biggest goal for storming is for it to happen sooner rather than later. If this stage occurs closer to the beginning of your season, you are able to work through it and get to the other side. This is why addressing all the little issues early is super important. Do not ignore the issues: be happy that you're noticing and are aware of them! You can tell you're in this stage because there's an air of tension. It will be palpable. If this is not addressed properly, the team will often lose faith in the leadership and coaches. They will not buy into the systems and they will question everything.

A key to positive interactions in this stage is to put a lot of the ownership on the team. If they are involved in the process of working through it, then you've truly harnessed some great identity power. This includes any punishment or consequences; the team must take the lead in these decisions. At this time, you can have the team address your team charter, mantra, or mission statement to help guide their discussions. Your role is to facilitate, not dictate.

In terms of having tough conversations, the coach should set the tone of a 'safe space' for people to contribute their feelings. You may even let your team know that this type of conflict is normal and that you are all 'deciding what kind of team you want to be' when you come out of it. Tensions and conflict can be harnessed to build a team's strength and unity. We've all likely had experiences where this is true.

3. Norming: Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel (Coming together)

If you've made it through the storming phase, it's likely that your athletes have been able to share their experience and understand that others have different perspectives than they do.

They are putting aside their differences for the greater good of the team. There's a unified feeling among everyone.

You now have a set of rules and norms that the team created themselves. For example: if someone starts gossiping about someone else, we have agreed to politely ask them to stick to saying positive things. There will be a feeling of trust emerging, and the motivation will be high. Use this momentum to create more pieces of team culture such as cheers, handshakes, etc.

4. Performing: Full speed ahead

Getting through all the stages will look different for every team, and making it to the performing stage will take intentional practice. The performing stage is where your team will be playing and working together as a unit. Everyone will feel valued, including you, and there will often be an ease while they're playing. The team will be more focused and driven to be more inclusive and trusting of each other, on and off the field. Small issues may still arise, but your leadership will have the tools to tackle them right away.

5. Adjourning / Mourning: Nothing gold can stay

12 years after Tuckman published his paper on the four stages of team development, he added a 5th stage: Adjourning. Every team, or at least every version of every team, comes to an end at some point. Furious George used to win and thrive on a culture of anger and intensity. While the team name is still around, the culture and values the new players on the team have are actually more sided towards mindfulness. At the youth level, teams change every year as players come and go, change schools, graduate, take a break, or quit.

Making sure that players know that the team is going to end at some point should not be a sad point, but rather a point reminding them to value and maximize their time together as a team. A reminder to be as present as possible when experiencing a hardship or glorious victory as a team. Encouraging your players at the beginning of the season to at least be conscious of an ending will create urgency in the present.

Where I Went Wrong

Guiding a team through these five stages can be hard work, but it is incredibly rewarding. The faster you move through the stages, the faster you can focus your attention on teaching new skills and tactics, and really getting to know your athletes.

If we go back to the story at the beginning about the drama on the Panther's team, I went through a crash course on forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. It was lightning speed.

Where I went wrong was I did not create spaces or invest time into the forming stage. I was unaware of the energies of the team and didn't check in. We had no charters, values, or mission statement. We had nothing to fall back on and everything fell apart at the wrong moment.

Your Turn - Self Reflection Time

Can you think of an issue in your life where you went through these stages?

What did forming look like?

What about storming? What was happening? What did it feel like?

And how about norming? What norms were created, if any?

How did your team or group perform after? What was the feeling after the whole process was over?

If you take nothing else from this chapter, just remember that when things seem fine and then all of a sudden get really messy, that caterpillar goo turns into a beautiful butterfly.

Chapter 13 - Goal Setting

If you want to increase your team's focus, motivation, and buy-in, you've come to the right chapter: Goal setting! Get this piece right and you'll have everyone on the same page working towards the same goal, a beautiful thing regardless of the results.

We are not aiming to reinvent the wheel when it comes to goal setting. We hope to remind you of a few key concepts and best practices that you can bring to your team and your personal life.

Best Practices for Team Goal Setting

1. Team Meeting

Make sure you have a meeting or two about goals, not just before the season starts, but in the middle as well. This can be tied into your values and team-identity meeting as well. We like to have our athletes set a team goal and a personal goal either before or during the meeting, and then share it with the group. Either you or a captain can organize the goals into themes so that everyone is on the same page.

2. The Why

A common theme in this book is remembering the Why. In this case, it is important for you as a coach to explain why it is important to set goals as a team. One reason is that if half the team wants to have goofy fun and learn cool new throws, and the other half wants to run sprints to become national champions, there is going to be a bit of tension!

List two other reasons why goal setting is important for a team.

Another place where the why comes into play is when you're having your athletes set their goals. Whatever their goals may be, make sure you have them write their why beside each one. This helps them evaluate their goals and think more deeply, as most young athletes' goals look like "I want to win" or "I want to have fun."

3. Goal Buddy

Goals are way easier to achieve when you have someone you're accountable to. In this case, you could either set groups of two or three that stay the same all season, or pair people up differently every practice. Have them share their goals at the beginning of the practice and reflect as a group at the end. Did you achieve your goal? Why or why not? How can we help you in the next practice to achieve your goals? This gets your athletes on the same page and brings everyone closer together.

4. Work Backwards and Set Process Goals

So your team wants to win the championship? Great! So an athlete wants to be able to throw a 30+ yard flick? Awesome. How will this be accomplished?

Any number of process goals could be set to achieve these outcomes. To win a championship, for example, you may want to *gently* suggest goals such as 95% attendance to practice, a commitment to throwing outside of practice one day a week, or a mandatory five-minute stretch at the end of every practice. While winning the championship is an outcome goal that is out of a team's control (you cannot control how good other teams are), you can control all the small steps to give your team the best chance to win.

5. Set S.M.A.R.T. goals

You have probably seen this acronym before but if not, make sure all of your team's goals are: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Sensitive.

Specific - Is the goal narrow enough to be understood? Or is it a blanket statement like "I want to be a better thrower."

Measurable - How will we know when the goal has been achieved? A good example of this is "I want to be able to complete 10 forehands in a row at a distance of 20 metres."

Attainable - Is the goal realistic yet challenging? Is your team of Grade 6s going to win the high school championships?

Relevant - Do your players' goals align with the team's goals? Will achieving these goals actually help them get to where they want to go?

Time Sensitive - Creating a time frame for your players will create a sense of urgency. How many days will your players work on their reset throws? How long does someone want to improve their hammer?

Your Turn - Set Some Goals

Take some time now to practice setting some goals for either a real or fake team.

Desired End Result:

Process goals that will help achieve desired end result:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Section 5 - The Practice

Chapter 14 - How to Explain a Drill

Congratulations coach, you've made it to the actual practice! You put your blood, sweat, and tears into making the best season and practice plans for your athletes, and put in work to set solid goals and build team culture. Now it's time to execute.

In this chapter, the key question that should be going through your mind is: How do my explanations affect the quality of learning and engagement of my athletes? You can have the best practice plan in the world but if you can't communicate it effectively, it's as good as useless. Let's dive (layout) in!

Focus on the Why

Focusing on the why is an important but often missed first step when explaining a drill. Athletes young and old need to know the why behind what they are learning because if it's not important to them, why would they make the effort to listen? Don't you remember asking your parents and teachers why you were learning "this stupid math stuff?" How motivated were you to learn the math when their answer was, "because you never know when you'll need it"? Probably not very motivated, if I were to take a guess.

With this in mind, we always start with the why at Elevate. There isn't one right way to say it, but it could sound like:

"Today we'll be learning the forehand. This throw is difficult at first but super important to learn. If you don't know it, you'll only be able to throw well to one side of the field, and your defender will block you every time! That's not very fun, is it?"

Just like setting your why at the beginning of this book, having the athletes understand their why is equally important.

Keep It Simple With Three Cues

“It’s really important to remember to chop your feet when changing direction. But don’t forget to jab step at your defender before cutting, and use those shoulders to add to the fake! Also use your eyes to confuse your defender, and make sure you accelerate out of the turn. Most importantly, make sure you cut straight out and then cut straight back to your thrower to give yourself the best angle, and also chop your feet when you cut. Oh, did I say that already? I forgot, let me start my tips again...”

This explanation-rambling happens far too often. Young athletes have short attention spans and will not be able to focus on all of these tips when they are in the drill.

We recommend keeping explanations as short as possible, only including the most important two to three cues per drill. For example:

“For this cutting drill, I want everyone to focus on only changing direction when they see their thrower fake. Until then, keep running long as fast as you can. When you do see the fake, focus on chopping your feet to slow down.”

Your Turn - Generate Three Cues

What are your three favourite cues when teaching:

Forehand

Marking

Demonstrate While Explaining

The best way we've found to communicate drills with the least amount of questions and confusion is to demonstrate while explaining. This isn't always possible, but can be done for the majority of drills, skills, and games.

A quick note: kids love being used for demonstrations. Make sure you include everyone; don't always pick the most keen kids that raise their hand first!

Check For Understanding

You just finished the best explanation of your life. You explained the why in one sentence and used only two or three cues. You demonstrated while explaining, and when you asked if there were any questions, no one raised their hand.

The drill starts and it's complete chaos. Kids are acting as if they get points for doing the opposite of what you explained, and some of them are complaining that they don't understand. What happened?

For the most part, kids find it hard to be vulnerable and ask questions because they don't want to look stupid in front of their teammates.

This is why you should check for understanding at the end of every explanation. This looks like asking the group three or four key questions about the drill. The benefits to this are that the most important parts of the drill are restated. Moreover, any kids that missed something because they weren't paying attention get another chance to hear the key rules without feeling embarrassed.

For example:

1. How will you know when to change direction when you're cutting?

2. What should you do when you see the fake?

Your Turn - Generate Checking for Understanding Questions

Use the three cues for forehand and marking you wrote above and turn them into checking for understanding questions:

Forehand

Marking

Set the Scene

A great way to start moving your young athletes along from acquisition to refinement is by setting up your drills in a game context.

For example, take the Three Person drill. You could do this anywhere on the field but it's much more effective to use cones to create a sideline. The thrower can practice feeling what it's like to throw a reset off the sideline, and it helps the marker focus on not letting an easy throw get off the sideline.

Stop the Drill

Your job is far from over after you've explained the drill. Great coaches are constantly "reading the room" to see if they should be making the drill easier or harder, or if they need to stop the drill because they've noticed almost everyone is making the same mistake.

Moreover, you should be giving feedback constantly to help your athletes become the stars you know they can be! Giving feedback is an art form in itself, so read on to learn how to give effective feedback.

Chapter 15 - Effective Feedback

There's a group of 12-13 year-old girls at the session I'm coaching and they're all trying ultimate for the first time. We are working on backhands and taking them through all the steps. Half of them are stepping out awkwardly, resembling more of a pretzel than an athlete, yet I am too afraid to correct this because I want them to feel confident and stick with ultimate.

In retrospect, I was doing them a disservice. Ignoring the error was allowing these young athletes to practice improper movement patterns, quickly turning them into habits. Instead of waiting for the "right time," I should have made the correction right away. Kids want to learn, but their receptivity to the feedback has everything to do with my delivery.

Feedback: Providing meaningful information to athletes and teams during or after a performance.

There are three primary reasons for providing feedback:

1. To motivate them
2. To reinforce good performances or discourage poor ones
3. To speed up improvement

Five Keys to Giving Good Feedback

1. **Make it POSITIVE.** Catch people doing things right (especially if they generally struggle)!
2. **Make it SPECIFIC.** This will help them repeat the awesomeness.
3. **Make it SOON.** You'll get better results if they remember what it was/how it felt, etc.
4. **Make it SINCERE.** Kids can tell when you don't mean it. You want to build their trust so when you say something positive, it's really positive!
5. **Make it focused on EFFORT, not results.** Growth mindset feedback. "Sarah, I really love how you tried to run through that disc. That effort is exactly what we are looking for."

Now I'm going to go back to the scenario at the beginning of this section with the 12-13-year-old girls and rewrite my history.

The girls are partner-throwing and I notice that half of them are pivoting oddly when they step out (hint: more than three people doing the same error means you can give this feedback to the entire group rather than singling each person out every time).

"Hey everyone, let's pause for a moment. Great wrist snaps overall, and I love that everyone is stepping out. I just want to make a quick correction about the step outs. Can anyone tell me why I would want to step out like this... and not this...? Ok everyone, now follow along with what I'm doing... Ok, keep practicing that while I walk around. Feel free to give each other feedback on how your partner is doing as well... Ok, great. I really want to see THESE awesome step-outs when you're throwing for the next two minutes, ok?"

I pace around the group a little bit ensuring that I'm checking in with my pretzel people and positively affirming the change in the skill.

"Okay, that looks WAY better everyone. Great work."

How to Structure Feedback

Let's take a closer look at the structure of my feedback in my remade scenario.

1. **I start off with a positive.** "Great wrist snaps overall, and I love that everyone is stepping out."
2. **I proceed to the correction.** "Can anyone tell me why I would want to step out like this... and not this...?"
3. **I give them an example they can copy.** "Ok everyone, now follow along with what I'm doing... Ok, keep practicing that while I walk around."
4. **I encourage the action.** "I really want to see THESE awesome step-outs when you're throwing for the next two minutes, ok?"

One final tip for you. When your athletes APPLY what you've been working on in a game, you should LOSE YOUR MIND. Nothing solidifies learning for them more than seeing their coach get excited about something they were able to do. Being energetic and passionate when they achieve their goals and learn new skills can be incredibly motivating for your athletes.

Your Turn - Give Feedback

Scenario #1: Your athletes are scrimmaging and just scored a point using the endzone system you practiced.

Can you think of an example of feedback that's too general? ie. "I like that you all cut when you were supposed to!"

Now give feedback that's specific:

Scenario #2: Your athletes are working on 1v1 cutting. A few athletes aren't using the proper footwork but are still scoring because they are tall.

Can you think of an example of feedback that's too general?

Now give feedback that's specific:

Chapter 16 - Warm-Ups

The athletes trickle into practice and start to fling the discs around with a partner or by themselves. They're probably warm enough already, right? Grade 6s don't pull hamstrings when they don't warm-up, right?

I've definitely had these thoughts and have skipped doing a proper warm-up for my young athletes. Little did I know I was also skipping a great opportunity to check in with my athletes' readiness, their physical literacy, and their fundamental movement patterns. I do not usually get this opportunity in the actual meat of the practice. It's a gift.

Warm-ups are a fundamental part of the practice for three reasons:

1. It's a great time for you to assess (and fix) their athleticism, movement patterns, and fundamentals (you'd be surprised how many kids can't do high knees while doing proper arm swings).
2. It helps prevent injuries.
3. It gets them ready for the sport and sets the tone for the practice.

Assessment

More times than I would like to admit, we've had HIGH SCHOOL athletes come to our academy that are unable to do the most basic movement patterns. There they are, Grade 10s attempting to do high knees with their arms flopping beside them like wet noodles, legs jutting out left and right, and their lack of core making them look like ragdolls. Right. Back to basics. That evening, we spent a good 40 minutes on the warm-up to help everyone understand the purpose of the movements and how they should feel. The next practice it's 35 minutes, then 30, then 25, and finally 20 minutes. They don't look like those inflatable arm flailing tube people anymore, but actual athletes! This extra work helped us throughout our time with them. They were able to cut and defend better and throw farther... all from things we covered in the warm-up.

Injury Prevention

A sport like ultimate creates very specific demands on the body. There are countless full-speed cuts each point. There is throwing-side dominance from stepping out and lunging from the same pivot foot. There are imbalances everywhere. Because of this, injuries are lurking right around the corner. If athletes aren't able to figure out how to move properly, it may not hurt them when they're 11, but maybe when they're 14. Suzie may cave in her knees a bit when she lands, but she'll grow into it. Or maybe she'll tear her ACL when she's 16. It's never too early to be training your athletes into good movement patterns and habits. Invest in it. It's worth it.

Set the Tone

Warm-ups help the athletes leave the rest of their day behind them and focus on the present. Moreover, they are able to do a mental and physical check in. You as the coach should use the warm-up as an opportunity to set the tone and pace for the practice. If you're going to be doing a lot of lunging and throwing in the practice, you are able to focus on that to ensure they're ready for what's coming. If you're wanting to focus on team-building, you can include fun games to get their passing and moving minds ready to go. If you want to blast music, do it. If you want to do visualisations, do them. If you want to play tag after the dynamics and stretching, do it.

Warm-up Ideas

Stages of the warm-up:

1. Running - Gentle jog around the field (gradually increase heart rate/circulation, loosen joints, and increase blood flow to muscles)
2. Dynamic Stretches - Think of all the muscle groups that are used and hold those stretches for 3-5 seconds, e.g., quad hold, walk a few steps, quad hold or calf scoops.
3. Performance/Plyometric Actions - Think about more explosive movements: A's, B's, C's, cutting, jumping, shuffling.

Other warm-up Ideas to Mix It Up:

1. Follow the leader.
2. Everyone picks one exercise from your list and they're in charge of 'owning' that one each time.
3. Different people lead the warm-ups each week (give them a sheet to follow).
4. "Dance" routine you've set to music (lunging on certain words, quick feet during the chorus, etc.).
5. Athletes make five passes in between each exercise.

Warm-up Add-Ons:

1. Add a throwing routine to each practice.
2. A game such as Asteroids or Disc Tag (see Games and Drills Section).
3. 3 on 3 scrimmages

Section 6 - Individual Skills

Chapter 17 - Backhand

Well done coach. You've learned how to explain a drill effectively and give feedback to your athletes. Your team is warmed up and they're ready to learn. It's time to dive into the actual skills, tactics, and strategies you'll be teaching your athletes. We've broken this section up into individual skills (backhand, forehand, faking, hucking, catching, individual cutting, other styles of throws, mindset) and team skills (cutting, defence, endzone). Please remember that all the following tips and tricks are just what we've been taught or have found to be effective. Ultimate is such a young sport and there are infinite ways to teach these skills that we just haven't come across yet. Take our methods with an open mind, apply them as you see fit, and come up with your own methods.

Basics of the Backhand



1. Grip

Get your athletes to hold the disc in their dominant hand and curl all four fingers underneath the rim with their thumb on top. The grip should be firm to ensure power can be applied to the disc. Some athletes may want to have their index finger on the side of the rim, and this is fine, but you should mention that they will get less power.

An easy way to remember the backhand for younger athletes is that the back of their hand will be facing their target when they throw, unlike the forehand.

2. Step

If the athlete is throwing with their right hand, their right foot should be the one moving while their left foot is stuck in the ground. Vice versa for left handed throwers.

For the backhand, athletes must step across their body so that the outside of their throwing shoulder is facing their target.

When teaching newer athletes, we recommend getting them to practice just the step out 4-5 times while throwing an imaginary disc.

For more advanced athletes, get them to practice pointing their toe slightly towards their target when stepping out to achieve better balance.

There are two important reasons why throwers need to step out to the side. The first is that they will be able to throw past their mark. The second is that stepping out to the side allows athletes to twist and therefore generate power from their hips and core.

Snap

When teaching athletes the backhand for the first time, we normally ask them what they think we are referring to when we say snap. They almost always answer correctly with “wrist snap.”

It’s important to note here that sometimes, telling people to just “snap their wrist” doesn’t always translate to them doing the motion correctly. An alternative is to tell them the desired outcome, which is to generate a lot of spin on the disc. By focusing on the outcome,



athletes will make personal adjustments to achieve this, which usually involves them using a lot of wrist snap.

3. Point

An easy way to get a beginner to follow through correctly is to have them think about pointing to their target after they've released the disc.

If you are demonstrating while explaining (which you should be!), you can ask the audience where they think the disc will go if your follow through is super high, or super low, or at your target. They normally get the idea pretty quickly.



Common Errors and Corrections

Not enough spin on the disc

Common reasons for this are either because the athlete isn't holding the disc tightly enough, or they're using too much arm.

Some common strategies we use are:

1. Get them to hold the disc tighter.
2. Have athletes do some partner throwing without the step out or from their knees to isolate their wrist and engage their core.

Disc is blading OI downwards or IO away from the target

The athlete is releasing the disc at an angle instead of flat (this is of course assuming they're not practicing OI and IO throws!).



Some common strategies we use are:

1. Tell athletes that their favourite pizza toppings are on the disc and they have to make sure the toppings don't fall off when releasing the disc.
2. Have athletes go through the motion of the backhand two to three times slowly without releasing it. Have them notice the angle they would have released the disc at. Once they have practiced and made adjustments, have them throw again.

Stepping towards their target

This isn't the worst mistake for a beginner to have, but a common one nonetheless.

Some common strategies we use are:

1. Have them imagine they have a big scary defender in front of them. Stepping into them won't be useful, but stepping to the side will be.
2. Place a cone where you want the athlete to step towards or around.

Making it More Difficult

Once the athletes have the basics of the backhand down (Grip, Step, Snap, Point), here are some ways you can challenge them.

Step out farther: Hopefully pretty self explanatory. Use cones to help them set step out goals.

Different release points: Challenge your athletes to see how far they can release the disc away from their body. Have them release as low as they can, as high as they can, and whatever else you can think up.

Adding fakes: Have your athletes fake a forehand or hammer before throwing the backhand.

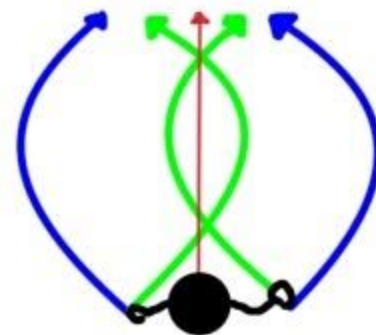
Adding edges:

OI - This stands for “outside in.” If there is an imaginary line from the thrower to their target, the path of the disc will never touch the line. It will go outside of it and come back in towards the target. To throw an OI, the disc needs to be tilted slightly towards the thrower’s torso (if water were to go on the disc, it would slide towards the thrower). This throw is generally released a bit earlier than a flat throw.

IO - This stands for inside out. If there is an imaginary line from the thrower to the target, the path of the disc will cross the line diagonally and then curve back to the target. To throw an IO, the disc needs to be tilted slightly away from the thrower’s torso when released, and is generally released a bit later than a flat throw.

Which colour in the diagram represents the OI throw and which represents the IO throw?

Adding distance: The specific steps to teaching this will be in the “Hucking” chapter.



Chapter 18 - Forehand

Before we get into the basics of the forehand, an important preamble is that the flick is usually one of the hardest skills for young athletes to acquire. It's so different from a baseball throw or tennis swing, and the only motion that's sort of similar is the badminton forehand.

With this in mind, the most common reaction you'll find (similar to any reaction to something out of an athlete's challenge zone) is "This is too hard" or "I give up" or "This is stupid."

The forehand presents a great opportunity for you as a coach to teach something more than just an ultimate skill; you have a chance to teach life skills. This is an opportunity for you to teach your athletes about a growth mindset, about resiliency, and about enjoying the challenge. This is an opportunity for you to help athletes achieve a skill they literally did not think was possible.

Enjoy this opportunity.

Basics of the Forehand

1. Grip

Have your athletes make an L (or a water pistol) with their dominant hand. Have them seek out the webbing between their thumb and index finger, and instruct that the disc must be touching this flesh for the throw to work (pretending the disc is deodorant and the webbing is an armpit usually gets a good laugh).

Have the athletes place the disc in that webbing so that the bottom of the disc is facing the two fingers of the L. Then have them slide the disc until their middle finger is flat against the side



of the inner rim (should be the side closest to their target). This is definitely a skill that you have to demonstrate while explaining! If you have enough discs for every athlete to be holding one while you explain, even better.

Some athletes may have been taught the “Peace or Split grip,” where their index and third finger are split. This is fine and may be necessary for athletes with smaller hands. Do keep in mind that as they grow older, they will find more power with their fingers together, which is typically called the “Power Grip.”

2. Step

If the athlete is throwing with their right hand, their right foot should be the one moving while their left foot is stuck in the ground. Vice versa for left handed throwers.

For the forehand, if athletes are right handed and moving their right foot, they should step out to the right. Vice versa for left handed throwers. Their shoulders should be square to their receiver.



An important note is that the thrower’s toe should be facing perpendicular to the target. This will rotate their hips outwards naturally, allowing for a longer and more balanced step out, as well as the ability to generate power from their hips (more on this later).

3. Snap

Similar to the backhand, telling your athletes to “snap their wrist” might not work. One option is to again have them focus on generating spin on the disc, or having them imagine the disc is spinning off their middle finger.

For more beginner athletes, a cue we use is for them to simply have their wrist move from back to front. Another fun analogy is getting the kids to pretend they are trying to snap a wet towel.

4. Point

The point is less obvious in the forehand compared to the backhand, but can still be a helpful cue for younger, more beginner athletes.

If your athlete's follow through has their index and third finger pointing towards their target, the disc will usually fly straight.



Common Errors and Corrections

Not enough spin on the disc

The most common reason for this is because the athlete isn't holding the disc properly. Either the disc isn't touching the webbing between the thumb and index finger, or the middle finger isn't flat against the inner rim. Teaching the forehand generally takes more hand-holding from the coach, and you will need to go athlete to athlete making sure their grip is correct.

Too much arm

This also usually leads to not enough spin on the disc, but this is a big one that should be on its own.

Some common strategies we use are:

1. Have your athletes throw from their knees to isolate their core and wrist.
2. Have them throw from a closer distance.
3. Have kids throw with their elbows tucked into their side like a T-Rex. This will limit their ability to follow through and will isolate their wrist. An important note is that you must explain that once they are able to generate spin with this technique, they need to practice achieving that with their elbow away from their torso. Otherwise, their forehand will be blocked easily in games.

Disc is blading OI downwards

This is the most common and prevalent mistake for new athletes learning the forehand, regardless if they're in middle school, high school, or even college. The athlete is likely trying to "throw" the disc like a baseball or football. This causes them to swing their arm too much and have their hand and wrist at a 45-90 degree angle above their elbow when they release.

Some common strategies we use are:

1. Having the athletes overcompensate and release with an IO edge, making sure their hand is below their elbow when they release.
2. Literal hand holding. We'll hold our athletes' arms and have them experience what the motion of the forehand should feel like.
3. Having our athletes think about keeping their palm up with imaginary sand in their hand.

Too much power

Some athletes may find that they are able to generate spin on the disc, but only when they are throwing the disc 100 mph. Receivers do not enjoy this in our experience.

Some common strategies we use are:

1. Have athletes practice throwing and landing a disc in a cone-box 10 - 15 metres downfield.

2. An easy cue to teach athletes how to put “touch” or “love” on the disc (good for backhands and forehands) is having them imagine they are opening their hand as they release the disc. This will cause them to follow through less, and will generally lead to softer throws.

All the ways we made the backhand more difficult can and should be used for the forehand.

Chapter 19 - Faking

So your athlete can throw a decent backhand and forehand, amazing! Well done coach. But here's the problem: Now they have a defender marking them and instead of a nice backhand or forehand, they throw a panic blade at stall one. Not exactly ideal.

Once your young athlete has learned the basic throws, we'd suggest introducing the concept of faking. Learning to fake effectively does so many things for young throwers: It forces them to pivot side to side, it helps them incorporate their whole body into their throws instead of just their arm, and it helps them complete more passes. Let's learn a bit more about what makes a fake an effective one.

Traits of an Effective Fake

Regardless of the type of fake you teach, the golden rule is this: A fake is just a throw not thrown at the last second. In other words, an effective fake must look exactly like a thrower's normal throw. This means the lunge, the wrist snap, heck, even the facial expressions, must look exactly like the actual throw, with the only difference being that the disc stays in the thrower's hand.

A great exercise to help make fakes look more realistic is the Switch Grip drill. Give every athlete a disc (or make them practice at home while watching TV) and have them try to switch from their forehand grip to their backhand grip and back again as many times as they can in a minute (with just their throwing hand). Not only will their fakes look more realistic because they are actually snapping their wrist, but they will also be instantly ready to throw a different throw.

Three Types of Fakes

Side to Side

Whether it's forehand to backhand or backhand to forehand, this type of fake has the thrower

pivoting from one side to the other. This is an important fake sequence for beginners because most beginner throwers forget they are allowed to pivot, especially in a game where lots of things are happening. A side to side fake will force the marker to move their feet and will hopefully open up a throwing option.

One caveat to the side to side fake is that it can become ineffective if a thrower is moving side to side every stall. This just confuses the cutters, makes the thrower off-balance, and amuses the marker.

Same-Side Fake

For this type of fake, a thrower may do a smaller step out than normal to say, their forehand side. They then do a shoulder fake towards the backhand side, only to actually step farther out to the forehand side and execute a throw. This is a great option for a fake because the thrower does not have to pivot to the other throw which can be a slow process.

Height Fake

This is typically a same side fake as well, but the thrower is faking high and throwing low or vice versa. This could also look like a hammer fake to a backhand throw or a forehand to a scoober.

Chapter 20 - Hucking (Distance Throwing)

The feeling of ripping a perfect huck to a sprinting receiver for a goal is one of the best feelings the game of ultimate has to offer. Accomplishing this takes so much technique and control, and seeing your athletes' reactions when they start to find success is just as rewarding as throwing one yourself.

When we introduce hucking to our athletes, we make sure to start by stating the goal.

The goal is never to learn how to throw it far: The goal is to learn how to throw it in front of their receiver running towards the endzone. This may *involve* throwing it far, but it changes the mindset of the athlete from "I'm going to rip this disc as hard as I can" to "I'm going to control this disc no matter where my receiver is."

Components of a Huck (Regardless of Forehand or Backhand)

I was never a big math or physics person, so please don't take this formula to a professor.

Distance = Power x Edge x Trajectory

At Elevate, we have our athletes focus on perfecting their power, edge, and trajectory, as opposed to the desired result of more distance. When athletes focus on distance, this usually leads them to "trying too hard," which ironically results in less distance.

Power

Throwers generate power from their hips and core, and transfer that power to the disc through the tightness in their grip.

For the backhand, this is another great reason to tell your athletes why it's important to step out to the side as opposed to forwards. To have them discover this for themselves, have them step forwards (in the direction of an endzone) and have them twist their hips. Then have them step perpendicular to the endzone and have them twist their hips. Ask which step out led their momentum in the direction of the endzone.

It is a bit more awkward to generate power from the hips in the forehand. The step out should be at about a 20-30 degree angle forwards as opposed to directly perpendicular to the endzone. Power also comes from elbow drive. Have the athletes think about the point of their elbow going from back to front, finishing with the snap of their wrist.

To help your athletes generate power from their core for their forehands, have them think about stomping their lunging foot as hard as they can into the ground just before they throw. This stomp should not be directly downwards but a little bit forwards: It should almost make the athletes fall backwards (Newton's 3rd law of physics, you can take this one to your professor). This will automatically cause athletes' core to tighten which will in turn help generate power.

Backhand Power Drill

Have your athletes get into partners and stand 8-10 metres apart from each other. Have them relax their arm and grip as much as possible. Have them complete passes with power generated solely from the twisting of their hips.

Forehand Power Drill

Have your athletes get into partners and stand 8-10 metres apart from each other. If they are able to complete two throws in a row, they can each take a step back. If they complete only one pass, they stay where they are. If they both drop it, they both take a step in.

Edge

The disc needs to be released at an IO edge to achieve maximum distance. Some effective ways we've found to teach this are:

1. Have your athletes overcompensate (throw with way too much IO edge) and then work backwards
2. Have your athletes practice the throwing motion 10-20 times while leaning over their throwing leg. This should lower their hand below their elbow which will lead to an IO edge

A little mindfulness activity for your athletes when hucking is to have them practice observing the flight path of the disc when they huck. How high does it go? When the disc is going towards the ground, is it OI or IO?

An easy way for athletes to self correct is that if they see their disc ending with an OI edge, that means they need more IO edge. If they see their disc ending with an IO edge, that means they can afford to throw with more power if they keep that same edge.

Trajectory

Once your athletes have better control over their power and edge, they can then start to focus more on the trajectory of the disc. The muscle memory at this stage should be doing the power and edge components for them.

The trajectory is important because it will affect how easy it is for the receiver to catch the disc and the distance of the disc. All you have to do is imagine two people throwing with the same power and edge but one disc is two feet off the ground and the other is seven feet off the ground. Which one is going to go farther and be easier to catch?

The best way we've found to teach this is having athletes set a target in the distance to throw to. The target is ideally two to four feet above their receiver's head (the tops of trees work well). Having athletes focus on hitting this target has multiple benefits: It gives them a visual for their desired trajectory, and it also helps them stop overthinking all the techniques involved in achieving the desired power and edge.

At the end of the day, just like any tough skill, it will take years for your athletes to fully master the art of hucking. Some days something will just “click” and some days an athlete won’t be able to complete a single huck. Your job as a coach is to constantly find the little things they are doing right to motivate them to continue their throwing journey.

Chapter 21 - Catching

Catching is often the first skill kids feel confident doing, which is likely why coaches often fail to explain why we catch a certain way. “Why do I need to catch with my left hand when I can catch really well on my left side with my right hand?” It’s a great question that you should be able to answer with ease to motivate your athletes to learn new skills.

Catching Styles

Below are the most common types of catches and their applications.

Pancake / Crocodile Catch

The most common style of catching. Using two hands, you ‘high five’ yourself with the disc in the middle.

Pros: Safest, easiest catch and typically the most familiar for people.

Cons: Needs to be in the right spot to be caught this way. Sometimes can be blocked because the disc is close to the catcher’s body.



Crab Catch

A great two-handed catch to attack the disc up high, down low, or out in front.

Pros: Harder to defend when the receiver is able to attack the disc they’re catching. Easier to catch high or low compared to the pancake.

Cons: More likely to drop this when the receiver is learning. Harder to catch in the wind.



One-Handed Catch

Thumbs high or low depending on where the disc is. You try to get your hand 'behind' where the disc is going rather than stabbing at it.

Pros: The athlete can stretch out farther when the disc is out to the side.

Cons: They are more likely to drop it at first. Athletes will avoid using their non-dominant hand at all costs. Break them of this habit.



Common Errors and Corrections

Athlete X keeps pancake-dropping the disc. They're cutting super well and getting open but as soon as the disc gets into their wheelhouse, PLOP, on the ground it goes. What is going on? What are some cues or things you can do to increase their likelihood of catching and not giving up or getting frustrated?

1. Often the athlete is legitimately not watching their hand or disc. They may be looking straight at the thrower and aren't properly tracking the disc. Tell them to make eye contact with the disc all the way into their hands.
2. They keep using their dominant hand even when it's on the other side. Tell them to hold their arms out wide, then have them reach with their opposite side to see how far they can go. Then have them do that with the correct side. They will see that the correct side will go way farther.



3. An athlete is 'in their own head'. Everyone is different, but often all they need is some supportive sideline chat focusing on the things they are doing well or the things that they can do in that moment. Once they are off the field, do not tell them they dropped it (spoiler alert: they know). Grab a disc, throw some passes to them, allow them the space and time to 'get it back', and then positively reinforce them in some way.

Your Turn - Improve Your Team's Catching

Scenario: Your team consistently gets blocked when they're trying to catch the disc. Whenever the athletes are running to catch a disc, they stop to ensure they can pancake it. It's the safest catch for them and the one they're most comfortable with. You note that this is something to work on for the next practice.

Next Practice: You are doing a pretty basic drill. There is throwing, a small out-and-under cut, and then a catch while running.

1. What would you focus on in this drill?
2. How would you communicate that when explaining the drill? What would you say to the athletes to ensure they understand the goal and are comfortable trying?
3. How would you give feedback to them during and after the drill?

Being able to answer the questions above will help you set your team up to learn the skill and transfer it into games.

This is how Elevate would run that drill (yours could be different, and even better!):

"Hey everyone, great game yesterday. I really loved how everyone was trying to use their safest catching style when trying to get the disc. That's very smart. Today I want to push us to step outside of our comfort zones a little bit. What's one way you think we could do that with regards

to catching?..... Great! Catching with our arms extended. Anything else? Awesome... running while we catch. Cool. I think that's a great place to start. In this next drill, I really want everyone to focus on running through the disc as fast as you can. I want you to try to see if you can actually run FASTER as you're trying to catch. I do not care at all if you drop it. I just want to see how FAST you can go! Sound good? Alright let's give it a go!"

Catching may be the most basic skill in ultimate, but it provides a world of opportunities to work on a growth mindset and resilience.

Chapter 22 - Individual Cutting

If you read the table of contents, you may have noticed that there are two chapters on cutting: individual and team. To make it clear, this individual cutting section will cover how to teach your athletes best practices in a 1v1 setting.

The Mindset of 1v1 Cutting

The following quote is from my coach in my first and second year playing with Furious George.

“Sprinting means running as fast as you can.”

Wise words.

We like to keep it as simple as possible at Elevate. When we teach 1v1 cutting, especially for beginner athletes (although older athletes need these reminders too), we start with this series of guiding questions:

1. How do you score in ultimate? (Catch it in the endzone.)
2. Which direction should cutters run to if they want to score? (The endzone.)
3. Should cutters run fast or slow? (Fast.)
4. If the cutters run toward the endzone but are covered, what should they do? (Change directions and run towards the thrower.)

In four questions, you have taught your athletes the most foundational yet often forgotten part of cutting: **You must commit to sprinting (that means running as fast as you can) towards the end zone first.** Everything else is secondary.

1v1 Cutting Broken Down

1. Footwork

There is no need to make the footwork too technical or complicated, especially for young kids. That being said, there are some fundamental habits that you need to be instilling in these young athletes that will not only improve their cutting, but protect them from injuries. The fundamentals include chopping their feet to slow down, staying low, and exploding out of the turn.

2. Timing

At least in Vancouver, most of our systems are based around the thrower. This is again a part of the book that you can take or leave as it is just one type of system.

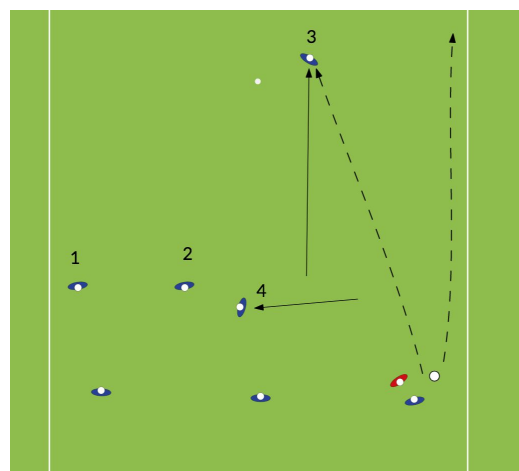
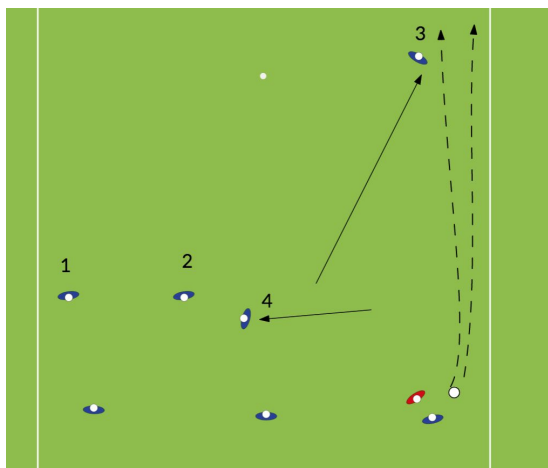
We teach our athletes to cut out towards the end zone while looking over their shoulder so that they can see the thrower. When the thrower fakes a throw, that is the signal for the cutter to change direction.

3. Angles and Spacing

We teach our cutters to run straight towards the endzone to maintain a nice lane for their throwers to throw into. This offers some great benefits:

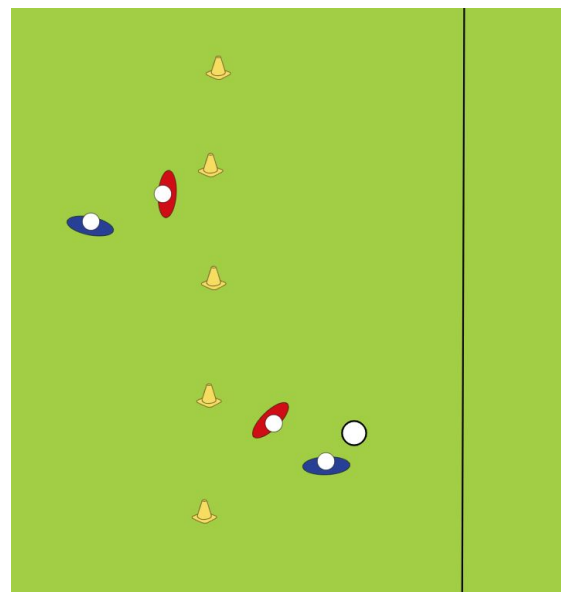
1. The thrower has more room for error and lets the cutter make adjustments.
2. The cutter is better able to see the trajectory of the disc from the side rather than from underneath the disc.
3. The cutter has space to cut under if the deep cut is covered.

In which picture does cutter 3 give a broader angle for the throw?



Quick Tip: Having a line of cones parallel to the length of the field that signifies lanes during your 1v1 drill may help your athletes better visualize their desired angles.

We also teach our cutters to start their cut about 10-15 yards away from the thrower. The reason for this is that if they start their sprint outwards from there, the thrower has a good chance of being able to throw it in front of the receiver, which would maybe be a 30-40 yard throw. If the cutter starts 30-40 yards away, this throw then turns into a 50-60 yard huck, which most young kids can't complete consistently.



4. Moves

Like the footwork, there is no need to get too technical or complicated about moves or dekes. At this level, we find that the quality of defence is low enough to have sprinting out-and-under usually work. That being said, the fundamental move (or mindset) that we teach our athletes is a jab step to get their defender off balance. This can look like the cutter taking a small step

towards their defender to get them on their heels, or a small jab step towards the disc to shift the defender's weight. These moves force the defender off balance, allowing the cutter to create an initial separation from their defender.

From here, one of two things will happen:

1. The cutter will maintain that separation and be open for the thrower.
2. The defender will catch up to the cutter. This means they are running faster than the cutter, allowing the cutter to cut back in the opposite direction faster than the defender, and again be open for the thrower.

Below is a basic example of how Elevate would teach the cutting process through a series of questions:

Q: Where should you start your cut from?

A: 10 - 15 yards away, giving a nice lane for my thrower.

Q: What is the first thing you should do as a cutter?

A: Jab step to get my defender off balance, then sprint towards the endzone and catch a goal.

Q: If the thrower sees you are covered long and fakes a throw, what should you do?

A: Change direction and sprint towards the thrower and catch an under.

There are so many difficult concepts in ultimate, especially when you start to introduce offensive systems, so we made effective individual cutting as simple as possible. Make sure your athletes have these building blocks so your team offensive systems can run smoothly.

Chapter 23 - Other Styles of Throws

Not all throws are completely practical when it comes to a serious game of ultimate. However, teaching your athletes cool tricks will help keep them intrigued about what the disc can do. It's important to fuel that curiosity without overwhelming your scrimmages with turnovers from poor choices. It's all about balance: if ultimate isn't fun, they'll stop playing. Give your athletes opportunities to try new things, and then re-emphasize valuing the disc when it's time to work.

Hammer

Elevate Usefulness Rating: 9/10

Elevate Coolness Rating: 8/10

Very useful when the time is right. The hammer can be thrown over the defence and directly on top of the intended teammate (think piggy in the middle). The grip is the same as the forehand grip, but the top of the disc is over the head. The pivot foot should be forward, with the weight transfer from back to front (like throwing a baseball or football). The release should be at 10 or 11 o'clock. Good for all ranges, but works best at medium-range.



Common Errors and Corrections:

1. Aiming towards the thrower instead of high and to the side.
 - Aiming a hammer is not intuitive as the flight is very different from a forehand or backhand. If a thrower is right handed, have them aim at a point in the sky that is high and to the left of their receiver. The disc will naturally land at their intended receiver.
 - We've used the analogy "Imagine you're in the front yard and your partner is in the backyard and you need to throw up and over the house."
2. Throwing it with too much edge (like a blade).
 - Have them flip the disc more upside down, as if they're shielding themselves from the rain.
 - Instruct them to move more towards 9 or 10 o'clock on their release.
3. Throwing it too flat so that it double helices.
 - Have them practice throwing the disc so that it flies completely vertically. Then tell them to adjust by a few degrees to throw the perfect hammer.

Push Pass

Elevate Usefulness Rating: 7/10

Elevate Coolness Rating: 7/10

Awesome throw for non-windy conditions when the receiver is close. The grip is like a loose backhand grip with the index finger on the side of the disc. The disc is pushed with the palm of the hand and spins off the middle finger.



Common Errors and Corrections:

1. They throw a normal backhand
 - Instruct them to give it backspin, sort of a 'spiderman web motion'.

Chicken Wing

Elevate Usefulness Rating: 2/10

Elevate Coolness Rating: 9/10

The easiest way to explain this throw is to start by explaining what a **Greatest** is. The kids will then automatically have the grip, which is just how they would catch the disc with one hand. Have them keep the disc as flat as possible and try to spin the disc off their thumb, which should be on the inside part of the rim.



Common Errors and Corrections

1. Inaccurate (Hence the 2/10 usefulness rating)
 - More practice needed...before the real practice starts

Scoober

Elevate Usefulness Rating: 9/10

Elevate Coolness Rating: 6/10

The scoober is similar to the hammer in that it flies upside down, but it's thrown in front of the chest on the backhand side instead of overhead. The grip is the same as the forehand, but the step out is like the backhand. Keeping the elbow low, the thrower should snap their wrist at the top of the motion. It's great for quick short range passes and for getting out of tricky spots.



Common Errors and Corrections

1. They throw super low.
 - Athletes will typically throw a scoober as if it's just an upside-down backhand.
 - Instruct them to keep the pit of their elbow up near their eyes and make sure their hand is in the sky after they release it.
2. The disc double helices.
 - The athlete needs to hold the edge more vertically.
 - Inside-out scoobers are another type of throw, but used a lot less frequently.
 - The throw should be outside-in while they are learning the basic scoober.

Thumber

Elevate Usefulness Rating: 5/10

Elevate Coolness Rating: 8/10

This throwing motion resembles a baseball throw. The disc is held with the thumb on the inside and four fingers on the outside, with the bottom of the disc facing the thrower. The disc should be spun off the thumb and released as vertically as possible. It will slowly work its way horizontally causing it to land upside down like a hammer. Mostly used for medium range.



Common Errors and Corrections

1. The disc fades away to the side.
 - The athlete needs more wrist snap and vertical edge.

Off-Hand Throwing

Elevate Usefulness Rating: 7/10

Elevate Coolness Rating: 8/10

Having young athletes learn how to throw with their off-hand has a ton of benefits. Not only does it help fix imbalances that come with a uni-side dominated sport, but it will also help them

have more tools in their toolbelt. Plus, young people pick this up really quickly and it boosts their confidence. The game is changing rapidly and players that can use a variety of different throws are the future! We may as well get them comfortable with their offhand now. Top club players already use their off-hand a lot, especially near the endzone to break the mark.

Common Errors and Corrections

1. The throw is floppy.
 - Need to practice closer-range wrist snaps
 - Just more practice will fix this
2. The athlete somehow ends up using a lefty backhand and a righty backhand instead of a forehand and now they travel everytime they pivot.
 - Whoops...sorry

High Release

Elevate Usefulness Rating: 9.5 / 10

Elevate Coolness Rating: 4 / 10

The high release is the most “normal” and useful throw out of all the throws here in this chapter, especially for young athletes. Like it sounds, a high release throw is just a backhand or forehand that is released higher than normal to get it over a marker’s arm or shoulder. The other added benefit is that high release throws are softer and easier for receivers to catch.

Common Errors and Corrections

1. The athlete throws the disc upwards.
 - A high release is not a disc that is thrown high into the sky. Have your athletes focus on keeping the disc as flat as possible while releasing the disc at shoulder height.

Now you have a list of some of the throws we whip out in our practices to keep the athletes curious and engaged with the disc.

Your Turn - Incorporate Other Throws into Your Practice

What drills / scrimmage adaptations can you do to allow your athletes to practice their upside-down throws?

What about off-hand throws?

When else can you do to incorporate these 'trick throws' in your practices?

Chapter 24 - Mindset

“On your own time, close your eyes and take three deep breaths. Breathe in through the nose and exhale gently through the mouth. Notice wherever you feel the sensation of your breath the most, whether it’s your nostrils, or the expansion of your stomach, or anything else you may feel. Keep breathing and noticing your breath. Whenever you notice that you’re thinking about the future or the past, smile, and gently go back to the sensations of your breath.”

This five minute breathing routine is how every Furious George practice and game started in 2018 and 2019. For a team that used to be built on a culture of literally becoming furious, this might seem quite out of the ordinary. However, it is generally understood by now that the physical capabilities of an athlete and team are only half the battle, if not less. It is the strength of the mind that truly catapults an athlete and team to greatness, and it is our job as coaches to instill good mental habits into our young athletes.

Benefits of Meditation for Kids

The list of benefits of meditation and mindfulness is a long one. Meditation lowers stress, anxiety, and blood pressure, while increasing a person’s attention span, their ability to regulate emotions, and their ability to fall asleep. How many of these reasons do you think excites young athletes?

Kids don’t care about their blood pressure or regulating their emotions, and they definitely don’t care about improving them unless there is a tangible benefit. As a coach, your job is to find ways to make meditation and its benefits relatable and cool for your young athletes.

1. Top Athletes Take Meditation Seriously

The first thing we always start with when introducing the topic of meditation and mindfulness is the list of top level athletes that take meditation super seriously. With a quick google search, you’ll be able to find top athletes such as Serena Williams, Tom Brady, Lebron James and Abby Wambach, all being quoted about the importance of meditation and mindset in their sport of

choice. Once kids know that other top athletes take meditation seriously, they'll start to take it more seriously, too.

2. Handling Mistakes

Once we can tell our athletes are a bit more interested in meditation, we usually begin a conversation about making mistakes on the ultimate field. More importantly, we communicate how everyone makes mistakes on the ultimate field, but not everyone recovers as quickly. Relating this back to meditation, we teach our athletes that a person's ability to focus on their breath and stay present is directly correlated to, for example, a person's ability to drop a disc and immediately focus on their next job of covering their check.

3. More Favourable Foul Call Resolutions (and more friends)

Another tangible benefit young athletes (especially teenagers) will get from becoming more mindful are more foul calls going their way. It has been proven in all the science related to negotiations that staying calm and listening are the most effective ways to persuade the other person in your favour. People's instinctive reaction to a foul call is usually to yell and be angry at their opponent, which only makes their opponent more defensive and sure of their foul call. On the other hand, with the power of meditation, young athletes can have more calm foul call discussions which gives them a much higher likelihood that their opponent may retract their call. Even if their opponent sticks with their call, this calm conversation will keep the rest of the players calm, and ensure that everyone is friendly throughout the match.

Meditation Exercises for Kids

Now that you have some benefits to communicate with your team, how do you actually implement these exercises with energetic kids? Like any of the skills in this book, meditation takes practice and your job is to piece together the skill in digestible chunks for your athletes.

1. Start Small

You don't need your athletes to meditate for 30 minutes for them to start to receive benefits. Your team's meditation practice can even be one or two minutes and have great effects. We'd recommend starting your practice with meditation to put everyone in the right, focused mindset.

2. Gamify Meditation

A theme you may have noticed throughout the book is our focus on gamifying skills and drills for kids. You can do this a couple ways for meditation. One example is to set a timer for one minute and ask your team to close their eyes and notice as many unique sounds as possible. After that minute, ask people to share the various sounds they heard, and for them to be as specific as possible. After a few people share, start another one minute timer and challenge them to notice more sounds than the first minute.

Another simple way to make meditation easy for kids is the use of counting. Set a timer for one or two minutes and ask your players to focus on their breathing. Everytime they track their breath all the way from inhale to exhale without being distracted by something else, they mentally count "one." If a player notices that they were in la la land and were thinking about homework or their dog, they have to start their count at zero. Challenge your players to get all the way to ten and back down to one.

3. Active meditation

Meditation doesn't just have to look like your kids sitting in "meditative" poses for two minutes. Remember, meditation is just the act of becoming present with one's self and sensations. People just find sitting silently an easier way to achieve this. However, with younger kids, why not try some mindful running? If your team does warm-up laps, instruct that they may not talk and instead, must focus on their breath the entire time. Other options are they can try to just focus on the feeling of their feet hitting the ground, or their heart beating, or their arms swinging.

At the end of the day, you are not going to turn your ultimate athletes into spiritual monks, and

we don't believe this should be your goal. Sports are a great tool for teaching young people skills they can use off the field, and the habit and importance of meditation is something we feel strongly about teaching. Meditation will not only help your team perform better, but will help make better humans one mindful breath at a time.

Section 7 - Team Skills

Chapter 25 - Offensive Cutting Systems

Your athletes have been building up their FUNdamental skills, and they're finally ready for their first game. Their throws look crisp and they're exploding out of their cuts. The pull goes up and your handlers centre the disc.

All of the sudden, your cutters and handlers turn into bees and the disc turns into honey. All six receivers begin cutting with extraordinary power and grace, beating their defenders left and right, out and under. From the thrower's perspective, however, all they see is 12 people running around like gas molecules, so they begin to panic. They throw a perfect huck into the crowd, hoping and praying a teammate catches their hospital pass.

What is missing here?

An offensive system.

Create Space, Attack Space

We have hopefully made the following theme clear but we want to reiterate it one more time: The information contained in this book is only from the perspectives of the two authors. We will be going over Horizontal and Vertical offence in this section, but there are tons of different ways to achieve offensive greatness. Who knows, perhaps the best system has not even been discovered yet. We also want to note in this preamble that unless you're coaching a highly competitive youth club team (16 - 18 years old), our philosophy is that there are no such kids that are just handlers or cutters. We believe kids should play all the different positions as it will make them better players in the long term.

The only concept that you need to remember when thinking about offensive systems is the end goal: **Having your players be able to create space and attack space with the goal of moving the disc towards the end zone.** The process your team goes through in achieving this is up to you.

Vertical Stack Pros and Cons

Pros:

- Easy system to teach to young athletes.
- Very systematic and organized.
- Because it's easy to learn, vertical can lead to kids being able to play organized ultimate faster, leading to more confidence and success in the short term.
- Handlers have lots of space to cut and see the field.

Cons:

- Because it is so systematic, kids improve their decision-making skills less compared to horizontal, potentially hurting them in the long term.
- Easy to defend against because it is so systematic.
- Players are standing in the deep space meaning hucks are harder to execute.
- Harder for kids to learn horizontal if they are used to vertical stack.

Horizontal Stack Pros and Cons

Pros:

- Makes kids think harder and improves their decision-making skills, bettering them for the long term.
- Hucks are easier to execute as there is more room in the deep space.
- Once horizontal is learned, vertical is easier to pick up for kids.

Cons:

- Harder system for kids to understand.
- Handler space is more crowded.
- Because it's a harder system, it can lead to some frustration early on.

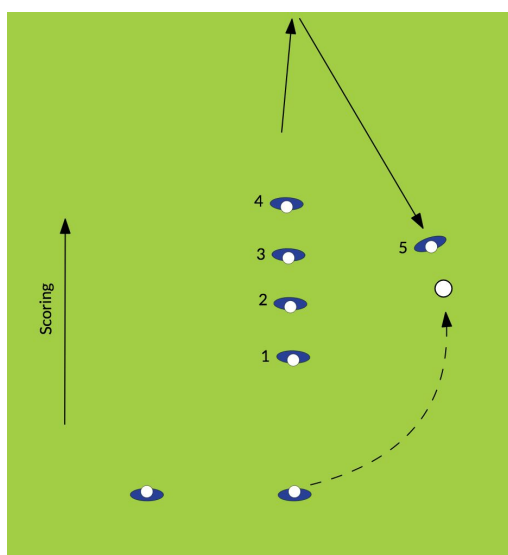
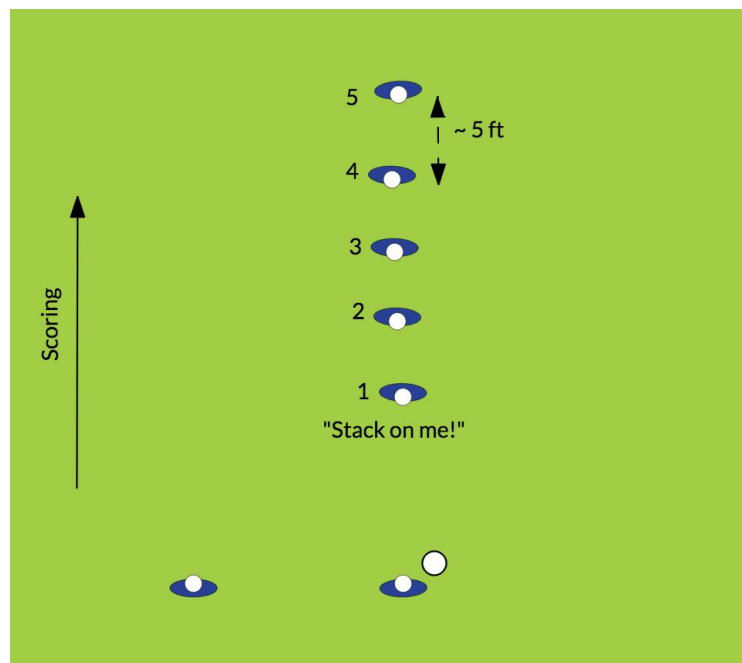
As you can see, we do not have a right answer for you. Deciding on which system you should teach your kids, and when you should teach it, is something you'll have to decide on your own! Now let's get into the basics of each system.

Vertical System Explained

A vertical offensive system will normally consist of two handlers and five cutters. The five cutters should be in a vertical line in the middle of the field, and the front of the stack should "Set the Stack" (Kids normally like to yell "Stack on Me") 10-15 yards away from the plane of the disc.

Each cutter should be about 2 - 3 arm lengths from each other to ensure there are no **picks** when they cut.

Based on this diagram, can you draw or describe where you think the system is creating space for players to attack?

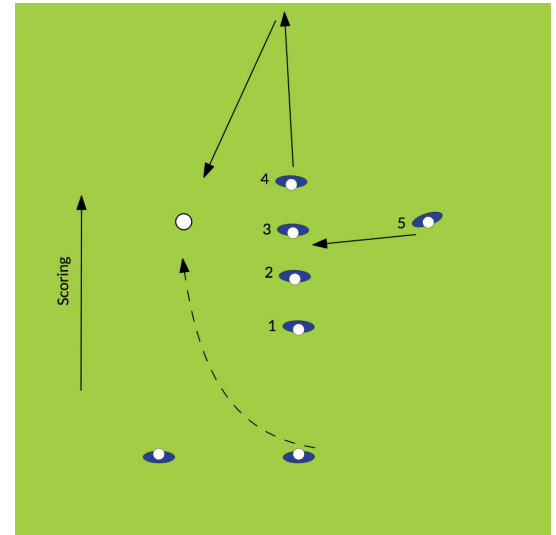


In a typical vertical stack, **the initiator** (or first cut) typically comes from the back of the stack. Just like what we taught in the individual cutting section, the initiator should cut out towards the endzone to receive a huck, and then cut under to get the disc once the huck cut is no longer viable.

If the initiator is unsuccessful in getting open, they should clear to the middle of the stack so the lanes are open for another cutter to run into.

If a cutter from the back of the stack gets open and receives the disc, two things must happen. First, whomever was second-last in the stack needs to cut as they are now the back of the stack. In other words, they are the **continuation cutter**.

Second, the whole stack needs to move upfield as a unit, making sure they stay in a straight line to keep the side lanes clear. After a player throws, they must rejoin the middle of the stack. If everything goes well, this pattern continues until a receiver catches a goal.



It is unlikely that every cutter gets open every single time. In this situation, if the initiating cutter is unable to get open and the stall count is already at 4 or 5, the handler may have to look to their reset. We'll go over handling resets in a later section, but for now, if the handler does not get open on their cut, the front of the stack must cut and become a handler.

How to Practice Vertical

Level 1: Have seven athletes run around randomly. When you whistle, they need to get into formation as quickly as possible (Two handlers and five cutters spaced out correctly in the middle of the field).

Level 2: Have seven athletes run around randomly. You throw the disc in a random place and the athletes need to get into formation as quickly as possible based on the position of the disc. (The front of the stack needs to set up 10-15 yards away from the plane of the disc).

Level 3: Same as Level 2, but now athletes can cut and the handler can throw them the disc. Work the disc all the way to the end of the field.

Level 4: Same as Level 3 but when you whistle, the cutter is “not open” and must clear as fast as they can to the middle of the stack. The new cutter at the back of the stack must be ready to cut.

Level 5: Add defence to all the cutters (you don’t need to whistle anymore, obviously). Have a coach or player count stalls from the sideline. If the stall count gets to 4-6, have the handler reset to another handler, and then have the system try again on the other side.

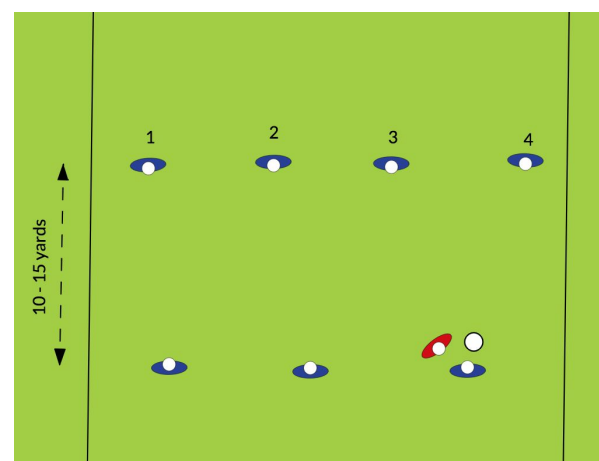
Level 6: Add defence to everyone. If the handler cannot get open, make sure the front of the stack cuts out and becomes the new handler.

Horizontal System Explained

A horizontal offensive system will normally consist of three handlers and four cutters. The four cutters should be in a line across the field, and all cutters should be about 10-15 yards away from the disc.

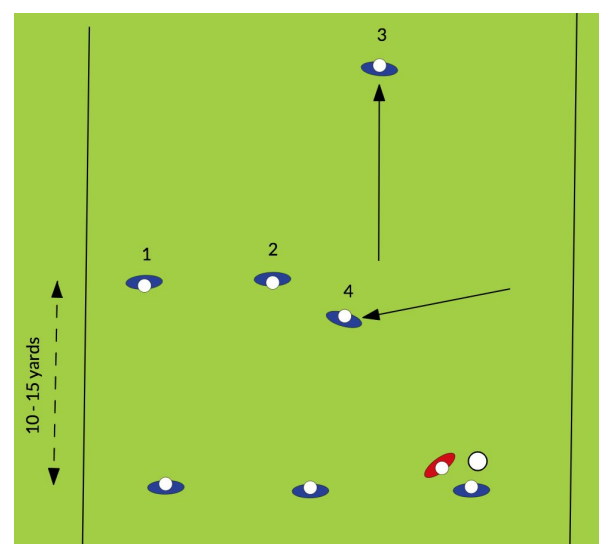
The cutters should be evenly spaced across the field, with the outside cutters almost starting on the sideline.

Based on this diagram, can you draw or describe where you think the system is creating space for players to attack?



For ease of explanation, let’s start with the disc closer to one sideline with a sideline force.

In a horizontal stack, the cutter in front of the disc needs to clear to the middle of the field to create an open lane for their teammate. Simultaneously, the cutter closest to them

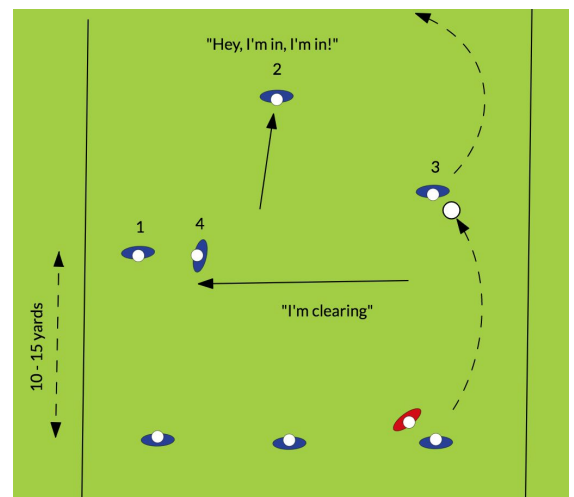


should initiate by cutting out towards the endzone to receive a huck. If they are not open, they should cut under and try to get the disc. As you can hopefully see, this would have not been possible if the first cutter had not cleared that space.

Once the initiator gets the disc, this is where the less systematic, more decision-making process comes in. For beginners, we like to teach that whomever cleared (Cutter 4 in the diagram above) will be the continuation cutter. After they clear to the middle and the initiator catches the disc, it is their turn to cut long and come under. This process continues until the disc is hopefully caught in the endzone.

As your players start to become more advanced, the clearing cutter does not necessarily have to be the continuation cutter. Maybe Cutter 2's defender is asleep and that would be a better option to continue. This would involve quick and clear communication, something like "My cut!" or "I'm in!" which would signal to Cutter 4 to keep clearing.

Another situation where more communication and decision-making is needed is when the disc is in the middle of the field, or in an ambiguous position.



In the example below, who would you have clear, and who would be your initiator?



Whatever you wrote, you're probably not wrong. As long as someone clears space for someone else to attack, this works! Again, this will take a lot of communication between cutters and handlers so that everyone knows what they are doing.

How to Practice Horizontal

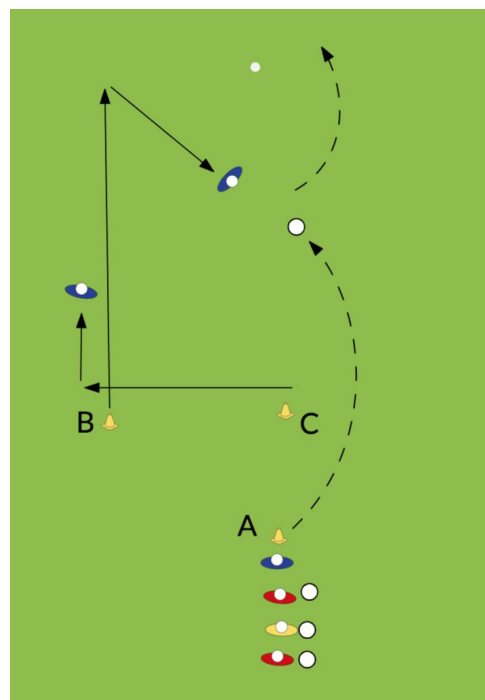
To practice the clearing and cutting pattern of just the initiator and continuation cutter, use the **Triangle Drill**.

Once everyone is comfortable with this pattern, you can move on to:

Level 1: Have seven athletes run around randomly. When you whistle, they need to get into formation as quickly as possible (three handlers, four cutters, spaced out correctly).

Level 2: Have seven athletes run around randomly. You throw the disc in a random place and the athletes need to get into formation as quickly as possible based on the position of the disc (all cutters need to be 10-15 yards away from the plane of the disc).

Level 3: Same as Level 2, but now athletes can clear and cut and the handler can throw them the disc. Work the disc all the way to the end of the field



Level 4: Add defence to all the cutters (you don't need to whistle anymore, obviously). Have a coach or player call the stall count from the sideline. If the stall count gets to 4-6, have the handler throw to another handler, and then have the system try again from a different position.

Level 5: Add defence to everyone and have offence try to work the disc down the field.

Chapter 26 - Handler Resets

It's every soccer and hockey coach's dream for their athletes to finally learn that passing backwards is not only okay, but sometimes necessary and highly beneficial. Similarly, ultimate athletes need to learn that resetting the disc when cutters are not open upfield is a better option than hucking it to no one.

When communicating the "Why" to your athletes, the main two benefits are:

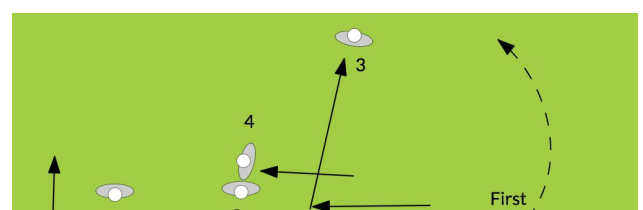
1. Your team resets the stall count and maintains possession of the disc. You can't score if you don't have the disc (**Callahans** aside).
2. Your team changes the angle of the disc which makes it easier to score.

The Golden Reset Rule

The primary goal of a reset is to get the disc in a better position than it was before.

Regardless of a horizontal or vertical offensive set up, handlers should ensure they have 15-20 yards of horizontal spacing between them and the other handler. This is so that the reset handler has space to make a move or two.

If the disc is on the sideline, the best place for a handler to receive a reset is: (in order of preference)

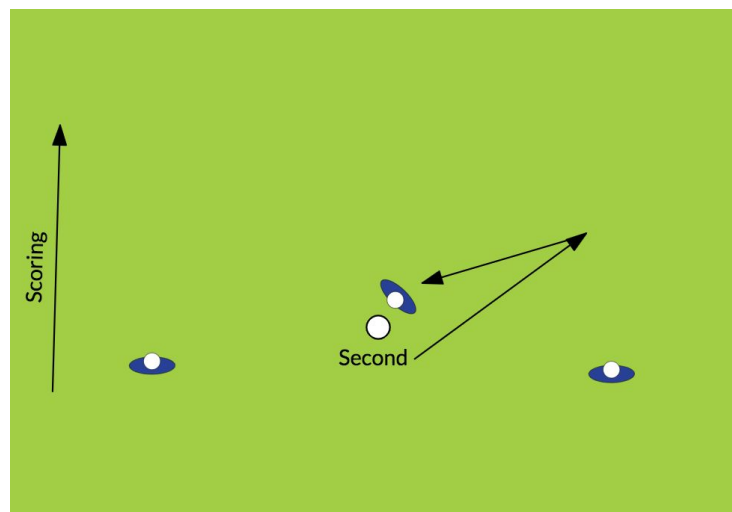


1. Upline

Upline is the best option because the defender will usually be trailing the handler, allowing them to have a clear throw upfield. The handler also has momentum from their cut which translates to better huck opportunities.

2. In the middle of the field, slightly ahead or at least parallel from where the disc started

In the middle of the field is the next best option because the thrower has more options to throw to, as opposed to the sideline where the thrower can realistically only throw to two, maybe three receivers.



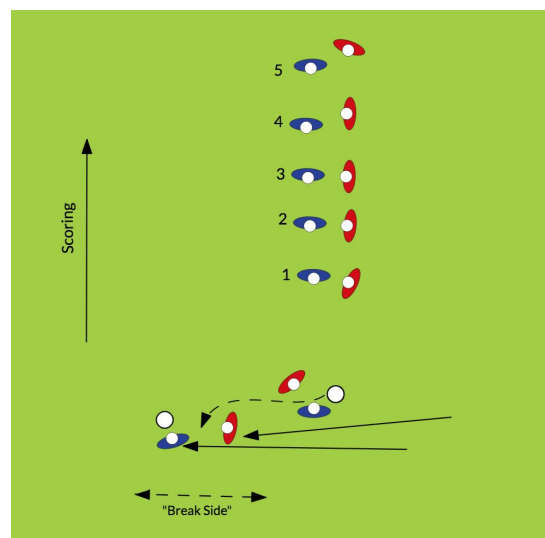
3. Anywhere to reset the stall count

Sometimes it won't look so pretty. The handler has to run wherever necessary to receive the reset throw so the team can avoid a turnover.

If the disc is in the middle of the field, the best place for the handler to receive the disc is:

1. On the breakside

When the disc moves quickly to the breakside, defenders on cutters are all of a sudden in a bad position, especially in a vertical offence. This makes it easy for the disc to advance upfield.



Resets With the Disc on the Sideline

1. Thrower must recognize need for reset

This is probably the hardest step for young athletes, and something that is honestly hard to teach. For our athletes, we keep it simple and instruct that they must look for a reset at stall 4-5, and maybe even earlier if they are on the sideline.

2. Thrower turns and faces their reset handler

To communicate the need for a reset, we tell athletes they must pivot and fully face their intended reset receiver. This makes it clear to the reset handler to start their cut.

3. Reset handler cuts upline

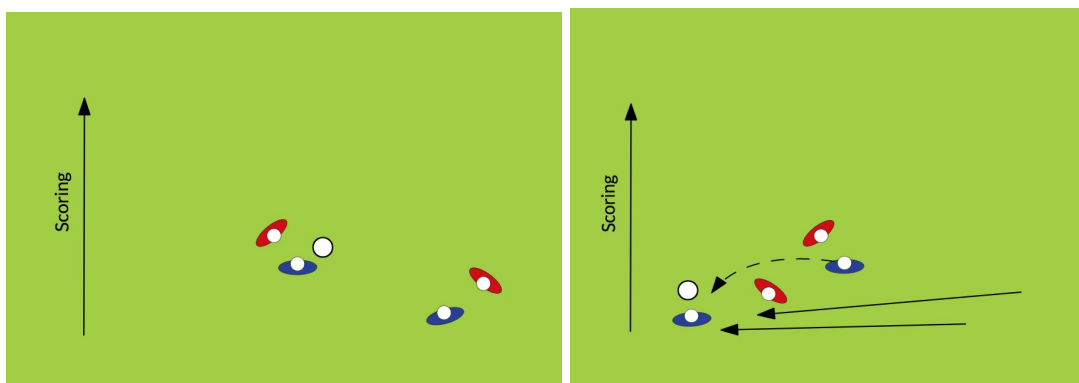
If the best place to get a reset is upline, then that is exactly what the handler should try to do first. The handler has time for one to two moves (i.e., shoulder fakes, change of speed) to get past the defender to the upline space.

4. Reset handler cuts back towards where they started

If the handler is not open up the line, the thrower should fake a throw to indicate that the handler should cut back towards where they started their cut. If the defender did a good job of stopping the upline cut, they should be in a bad position to defend this throw to the middle of the field.

Resets With the Disc in the Middle

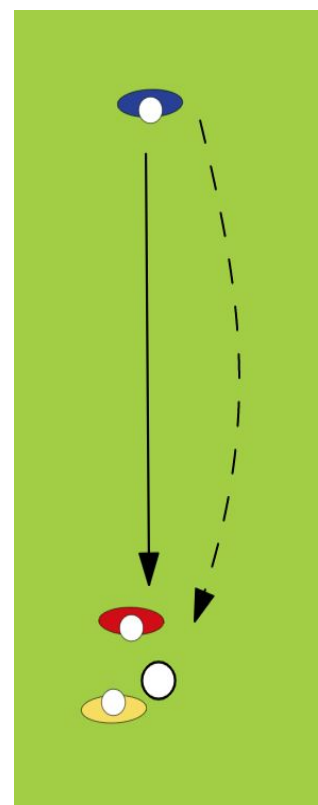
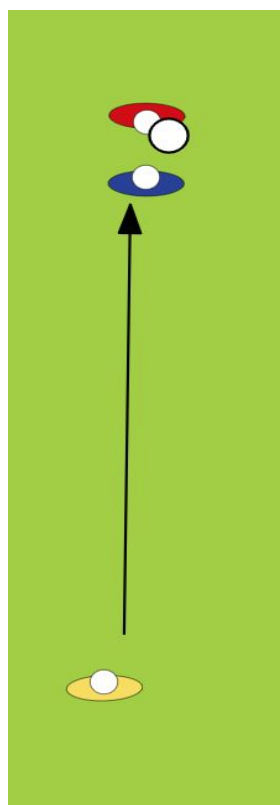
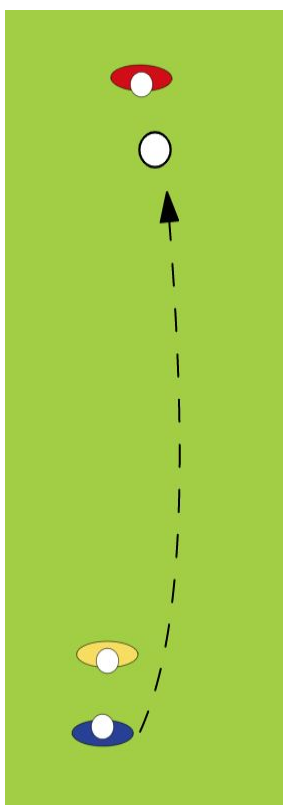
1. Same as first step above
2. Same as second step above
3. Usually, the best option to get the disc to the breakside is the use of a jam cut. This is where the handler on the open side runs behind the thrower to receive a pass either in the middle of the field, or hopefully slightly to the breakside.



How to Practice Resets

Level 1: Have athletes throw in partners. Before they throw, they have to visualize where the field is and “look upfield” for 3 - 4 stalls. Then they must turn their body fully to their reset and then execute a throw.

Level 2: Add a mark to the thrower. This will look like a three-person drill. Similar to Level 1, have athletes visualize looking upfield before turning to face their reset at stall 3-4. They now must use fakes and other techniques to throw past the mark. The receiver is not allowed to move.



Level 3: Similar to Level 2, but now the receiver needs to make a reset cut when their thrower looks at them. For the sake of the drill, the thrower will fake the upline cut every time to practice their centering throw against the mark.

Level 4: Add defence to the receiver as well. If the receiver manages to get open up the line, the thrower can throw this pass. If they are not open, the thrower should fake and the receiver should try to get the disc in the middle of the field.

Chapter 27 - Endzone

So you've finally taught your athletes how to create and attack space on offence. Your team is able to work the disc up the field beautifully and efficiently, leaving plenty of space for everyone. As the disc gets closer to the endzone, there seems to be a problem: The back of the endzone. You're running out of space and your athletes have nowhere to cut deep anymore! This is when your endzone system comes into play.

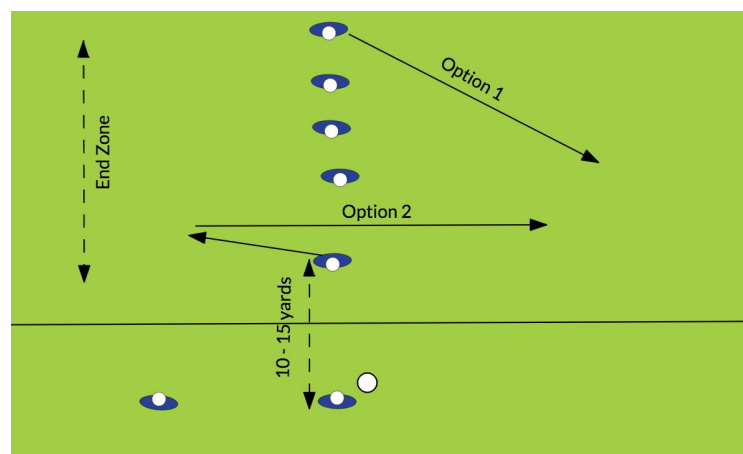
There is nothing more frustrating than working the disc all the way up the field just to turn it over near the endzone. On the other hand, there is nothing more beautiful than a patient, efficient endzone system.

Because each team teaches endzone very differently, this section will only contain common traits of a good endzone. It will be up to you to design your own!

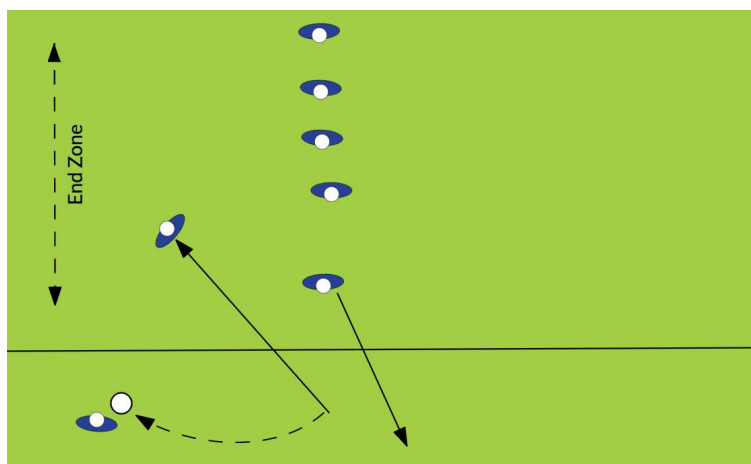
The principles of endzone systems are no different than the offensive systems: Create space and attack space. In the case of the endzone, the differentiating factor is that you have limited space vertically.

Basic Principles

- Teams normally set up in a vertical stack with two handlers and five cutters.
 - The five cutters should be spread out evenly in the middle of the endzone. The back of the stack should be right at the back of the endzone.



- The front of the stack should be about 5-10 yards away from the plane of the disc.
- If the disc is in the middle of the field, the first cut usually comes from the back or front of the stack.
- If a cutter is not open, they usually run into the middle of the stack.
- If the disc is in the middle of the field and then gets thrown to the sideline, the handler normally follows their pass and runs upline to score.
- If the disc starts on the sideline, the first cut usually comes from the handler trying to catch a goal by running upline.
- Similar to vertical stack, when the handler goes upline, the front of the stack usually fills and becomes the handler.



How to Practice Endzone

Level 1: Have seven athletes run around randomly. When you whistle, they need to get into formation as quickly as possible (two handlers, five spaced-out cutters in the middle of the endzone).

Level 2: Have seven athletes run around randomly. You throw the disc in a random place and the athletes need to get into formation as quickly as possible based on the position of the disc

(the front of the stack needs to set 5 - 10 yards away from the plane of the disc, and the back of the stack is right at the back of the endzone).

Level 3: Same as Level 2, but players can now throw. Tell them ahead of time that certain cuts are not open so they have to practice the system.

Level 4: Add defence to all the cutters.

Level 5: Do an endzone scrimmage. Each team gets five chances to score using the endzone system.

Level 6: Do a double-score scrimmage. Play a normal game and when there is a goal, the person that scored the goal brings it 10 - 15 yards out of the endzone. The same team has to try to score again using the endzone system.

Chapter 28 - Offensive Plays

“Dragon Tail!”

“Oak Tree!”

“Ice Cream Is Tasty!”

Nothing excites a team and coach more than executing a solid play, regardless of how bad the names of the plays your athletes come up with are. Let’s get into a few pros and cons of running plays for kids.

Pros

- Can be fun to create as a team, which improves team chemistry and bonding.
- Helps kids think about creating space.
- Can help your team stay organized on the field.

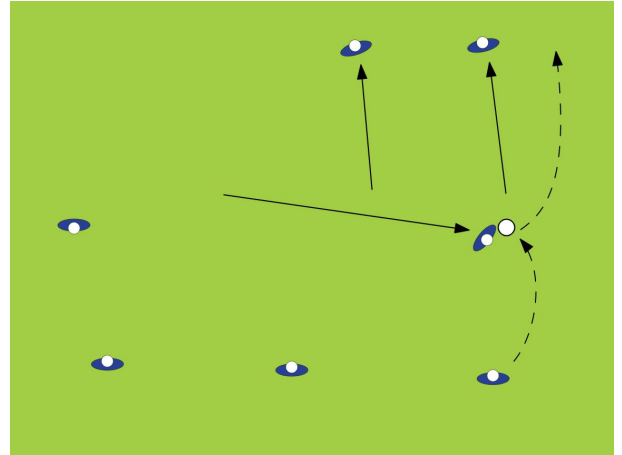
Cons

- Athletes can sometimes get too stuck into the play. If there are two people wide open but they aren’t “part of the play,” young athletes have a hard time abandoning the play.
- Athletes can get into a bad habit of running the same play with the same players every time, especially if the play works.

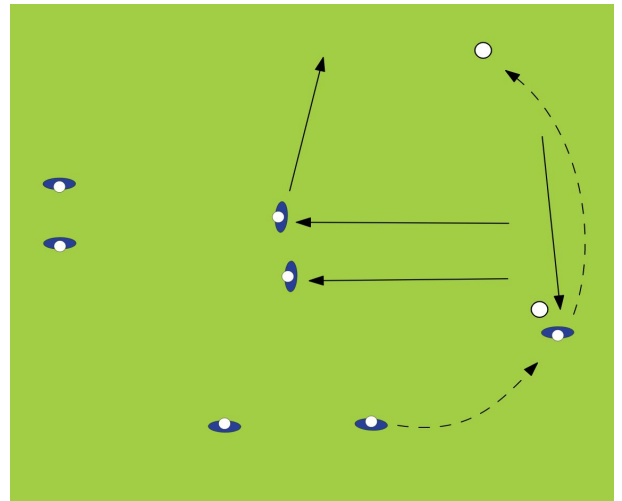
Just like our offensive systems, the only golden rule you need to remember when designing plays, or helping your athletes design plays, is that they should create space and allow other people to attack that space.

Can you see how these plays create space?

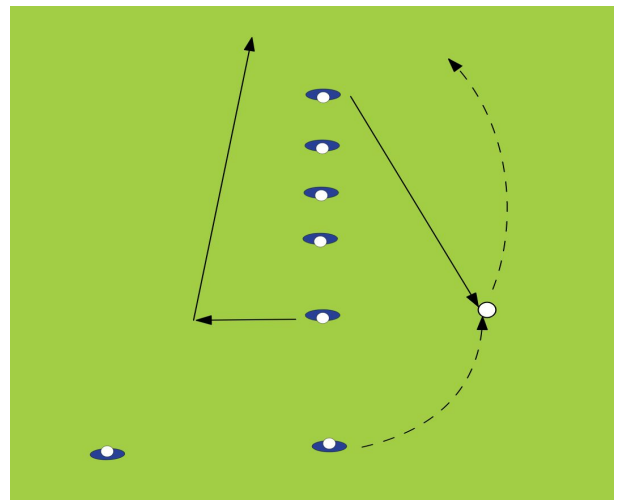
1. Tree (Horizontal Play)



2. JetsGo (Split Stack Play)



3. Sockeye (Vertical Play)



Your Turn - Create Your Own Creative Play

From a horizontal stack

From a vertical stack

Chapter 29 - Defensive Systems

If you had to bet your life savings on whether 99% of the turnovers in a kids' ultimate game came from amazing defensive positioning and awareness, or from an offensive error such as a throwaway or drop, what would you bet on?

Let's be real. The best young ultimate players are not that great. What they need the most work on are the fundamentals of the sport: Throwing, catching, and cutting consistency. This should have already been made clear in the season planning section, but to reiterate, we do not recommend going into too much detail about defence with kids, at least until they are in Grades 9-12.

That being said, there are a few important concepts we think can be at least introduced at this level.

Your Turn - Defensive Triage

Before we go into our opinion, we have listed some defensive concepts below. Place them in order of importance, the first one being the most important. Also add a quick why (this builds the triage muscle in your brain).

We will not be covering zone defence in this book

Concepts	Your Order of Importance	Why?
Defensive buffer		
Triangulation		
Marking Techniques		

Open-side / break-side concept		
Defensive footwork		
Deciding on checks		
Poaching		

Below are the most important defensive concepts we teach to our more intermediate and advanced young athletes.

Deciding on Checks

If your players don't know who their check is, we guarantee the amazing defensive footwork you taught them will not work. This seems obvious, but tons of coaches never teach their players how to choose their checks properly!

No matter what type of scrimmage we are doing, whether it is 3v3 or 7v7, we get our players in the habit of choosing checks properly. This means the pulling team stands on their endzone line and looks at the other team, which should be standing on their endzone line. Whoever wants to cover the person on the far left calls out "One," and the rest of the defensive team shouts out numbers in order until everyone is covered.

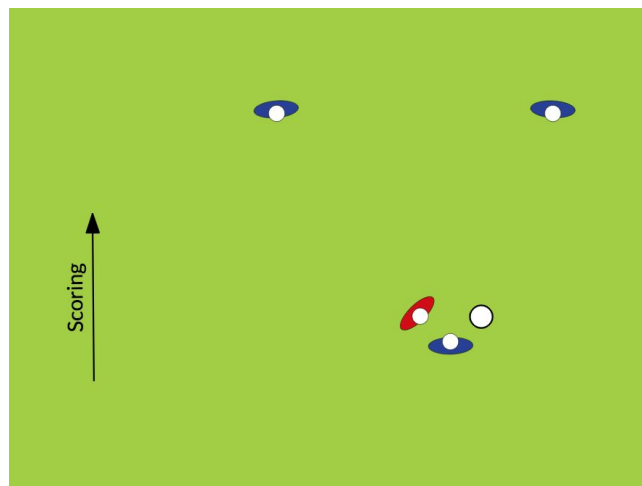
The key here is to instill good habits whenever you can. Instead of letting your team call out names because they know their own teammates, help them act as if it's a real game against strangers.

Open Side vs Break Side

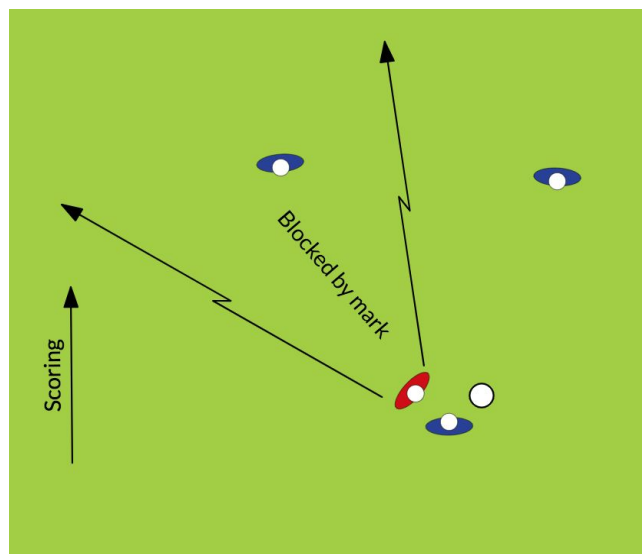
The next most important concept is the open side vs the break side, as it will help ensure that your defenders only have to cover 50% of the field.

We normally like to teach this concept through questions and easy math:

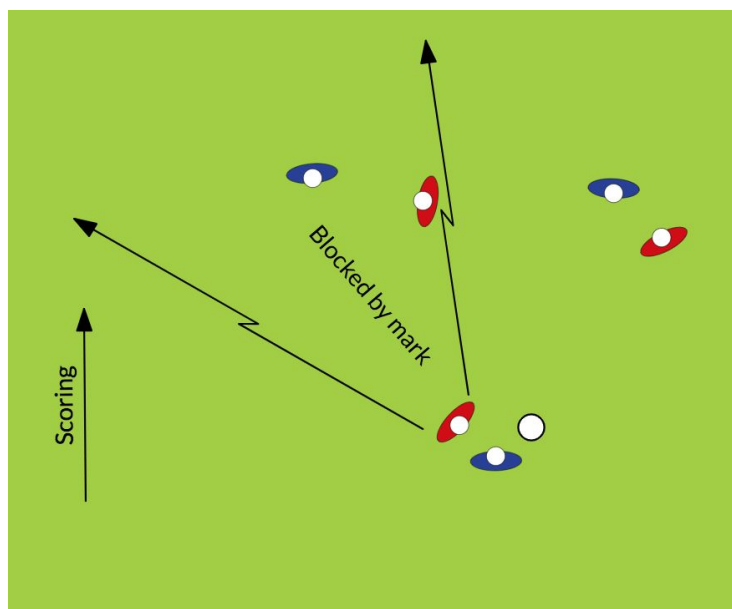
1. In ultimate, it is the marker's job to take away $\frac{1}{2}$ the field, and the other defenders' job to take away the other $\frac{1}{2}$ of the field. If you had to take away $\frac{1}{2}$ half of the field as a marker, how would you position yourself on the thrower? **(You have now taught the force.)**



2. If the marker sets up on the thrower like this (i.e., forehand force), which side seems more "Open" to the thrower? **(You have now taught what the open side is.)**



3. If you were defending a cutter and you knew the thrower could only throw to 50% of the field, which side would you pick to stand on (have an example cutter in front of the thrower)? **(You have now taught basic defensive positioning.)**



We would then add this concept to a pulling team's habits on the line. Now they must pick checks correctly and also choose a force they will hold for that point.

Triangulation

This may sound like a high-level concept, and it can appear at the highest levels of ultimate, but we believe it is the next most fundamental concept to teach at this age group. It is as simple as this: Position yourself so you can see the disc and your check.

We have found this plays out mostly when defenders are trying to stop the upline cut in the handler space. Young (and older) athletes have a bad habit of turning their back to the thrower. The thrower in most cases can then throw to the upline cutter even if the defender is close because the defender has their back turned and doesn't see it coming.

Marking

At the most basic level, good marking involves the defender staying light on their feet with their arms outstretched to make it harder for their opponent to throw. A key to success is that the marker must focus on staying balanced by shuffling their feet side to side rather than leaning one way or another to try and get a block. As soon as the marker shifts their weight to one side, the thrower will be able to pivot the other way and complete a throw.

Conclusion

Congratulations coach, you've finished the Team Skills section! Your athletes have their fundamental skills down pat and are applying them in the various team tactics you're teaching them. It's time to add the final piece of the pie to your team, the piece that makes ultimate so unique and special.

Section 8 - The “Secret Sauce” of Ultimate

Chapter 30: The Rules and How to Teach Them

Before we dive into specific rules and how to teach them, let's take a second to appreciate the beauty and importance of a self-officiated sport such as ultimate. It allows athletes to advocate for themselves, to perspective-take, and to learn how to navigate what can be intense moments with grace and respect for others.

Social-Emotional Learning

The concept of Social-Emotional Learning is a big buzzword among educators, and ultimate truly hits on SEL in the self-officiation aspect.

Take this excerpt from an article posted on Ultiworld for example:

When implementing SEL, schools are seeking a holistic approach but are hard pressed to find programs that use SEL outside the classroom. This is where Ultimate fits in perfectly. All five SEL competencies – self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness – are in action in a game of Ultimate. By playing Ultimate, students practice SEL in real-life situations.

Think of what happens during any given point of a self-officiated game of Ultimate:

Upon recognizing a rule violation, a player makes a call (self-awareness). All players acknowledge the call and stop moving. The opposing player may accept or contest the call (self-management). The players discuss and come to a resolution about the call (relationship skills).

If there is a disagreement over the call, for instance if a player insists she incidentally touched a receiver rather than fouled him, the disc is sent back to the last thrower, the defence readies itself, and then play resumes. Fair and quick resolution of calls is considered good Spirit (social awareness). Players may always retract a call they have made if, upon reflection, they determine their call was incorrect (responsible decision-making).

After the game, teams form a Spirit Circle, a ritual that pushes the boundaries of physical and verbal interaction to a deeper level beyond the default “good game” and high five. Again, all five SEL competencies are engaged in a format that is practically identical to SEL’s practice of “restorative circles” where students sit in a circle facing each other to facilitate open, direct communication. During the Spirit Circle, players identify post-game emotions (self-awareness), link arms with their opponents (self-management), build relationships with the other team (relationship skills), practice perspective taking (social awareness), and reflect on their collective performance and behavior (responsible decision-making).

Teaching the rules can be an incredibly frustrating and confusing aspect of ultimate to some, but it is really an incredible opportunity to teach epic life skills.

Teach Certain Rules When It Makes Sense

Most coaches of middle-school-aged athletes typically fall into one of three categories:

1. They’re an ultimate player looking to give back.
2. They’re a parent looking to coach their kids’ team.
3. They’re a teacher and the team wouldn’t exist without their supervision.

Whether you know the rules or not, teaching the rules to kids can be a daunting task. At least in basketball and soccer, there are referees that will make the calls if you as a coach do not know them. In ultimate, however, it’s YOUR responsibility to not only know the rules, but ensure that your athletes understand them as well. Otherwise your team is ‘unspirited’.

One of the most common things we have found when doing clinics at elementary and middle schools is that the majority of coaches do not know much about ultimate, and everyone has a different understanding of the rules. Why do all young teams think that you have to tap the disc on the ground to score? Why do people think they can take three steps? These misinterpretations of the rules are typically a blend of the rules of other sports and what they were told one time at a game. We’ve seen incorrect rules be spread like wildfire across leagues.

For us, teaching rules when we were newly coaching was the bane of our existence. We could barely get the athletes to hold the disc properly... how were we going to explain the intricacies of the “pick” rule?

Just like teaching a skill, teaching the rules must be broken down and also should be taught when it *makes sense*. Just like teaching skills and tactics over the season, you should prioritize what rules are most important and put them closer to the beginning of your season. Overloading your players with all the rules in one workshop will lead them to understanding none of them. Finding ways to implement teaching the rules throughout a practice will have way stronger sticking power.

Teaching “Disc Space” in Practice

At the beginning of practice, I bring everyone in. I explain that we will be working on breaking the force today and a few rules that may come up in that scenario. They warm-up and we get right into the three-person marking drill. I let the drill run for a while and then bring everyone in. I now explain and demonstrate the rule “disc space.” I show them the space that they need to give the thrower while they are marking them. It must be a disc distance even when the thrower pivots.

“So if the thrower is pivoting, how can you make sure you do not violate disc space?”

“Take a step back... be on your toes...”

“Great, now if you are too close, the thrower should calmly say ‘disc space’ and then the person on the mark must back up. If they do not, you call ‘violation’ and play stops. This will give you a chance to explain your perspective to the other person without the stall count going higher. Now go back to the drill, and every once in a while I want the mark to get intentionally too close so that the thrower can practice calling disc space. Aim to have this be every 3-4 throws.”

Not only does this give the athletes the space to practice their throwing and faking skills, but also their ability to ‘use their voice’.

When you're planning your practice, take a look at where it makes sense to fit in a part about rules. Also, just as in skill feedback, positively reinforce them when they are able to make a call during a scrimmage or game.

The 10 Basics Rules of Ultimate

1. The Field: A rectangular shape with endzones at each end. A regulation field is 70 yards long by 40 yards wide, with endzones 20 yards deep.

2. Starting Play: Each point begins with both teams lining up on the front of opposite endzone lines. The defence throws ("pulls") the disc to the offence. A regulation game has seven players per team.

3. Scoring: Each time the offence catches a pass in the defence's end zone, the offence scores a point. The teams switch direction after every goal, and the next point begins with a new pull by the team that just scored.

4. Movement of the Disc: The disc may be advanced in any direction by completing a pass to a teammate. Players may not run with the disc. The person with the disc ("thrower") has ten seconds to throw the disc. The defender guarding the thrower ("marker") counts out the stall count.

5. Change of Possession: When a pass is not completed (e.g., out of bounds, drop, block, interception, stalled), the defence immediately takes possession of the disc and becomes the offence.

6. Substitutions: Players not in the game may replace players in the game after a score or during an injury timeout.

7. Non-contact: Players must attempt to avoid physical contact during play. Picks and screens are also prohibited.

8. Fouls: When a player initiates contact that affects the play, a foul occurs. When a foul causes a player to lose possession, the play resumes as if the possession was retained. If the player that the foul was called against disagrees with the foul call, the play is redone.

9. Self-Officiating: Players are responsible for their own foul and line calls. Players resolve their own disputes.

10. Spirit of the Game: The foundation of the rules in ultimate is Spirit of the Game, which places the responsibility for fair play on the player. Competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of respect between players, adherence to the rules, and the basic joy of play.

Now you may be one of the lucky coaches that have athletes that can play 7v7 without each point lasting 15 minutes. If you're in the same boat as most people, your team struggles to complete more than a few passes in a row.

Motor skills become worse when you're learning something new. Have you ever noticed that when you start introducing a tactic for the first time, your team cannot throw a forehand or catch any more? That's because their brain space is focused on learning something new. Just recognizing this will help ease your coaching pain when it seems like all the work you did leading up to that point was moot. They can still throw, it's just hiding somewhere in their backpack or maybe they left it at home for the day.

We have some simple game adaptations that we use to slowly build understanding of the rules of ultimate without overwhelming the athletes.

Ultimate Adaptations to Help Teach Rules

1. Start with a ball

- This seems counterproductive, but when the athletes have a more familiar object, they are less worried about throwing and can focus on the rules.

2. Play without defence

- The goal can be to try to make it across the field with as few turnovers as possible.
 - Slowly add in defence.
- 3. Make the mark be at arms length rather than a disc-length**
- This may help ease the throwers stress.
- 4. Play keep-away**
- Try to get the athletes to move in space while completing 5 passes in a row.
 - Add defenders until you're at 4v4 or 5v5.
- 5. Play mini (2v2 or 3v3 or 4v4)**
- We can't stress enough how important small-sided games are for developing everyone on your team.
- 6. Play games that aren't ultimate but work on ultimate skills**
- See "Galaxies" in the Appendix
- 7. Use J-Stars**
- They're lighter, softer, and less scary to catch.

How We Got Grade 2s to Play Ultimate

We started with basic backhands to a partner using J-Stars. Once they were able to make some passes and catches, we had them leap-frog and do give-and-gos across the space. This was not only teaching them to move after they throw, but also that they cannot run with the disc. They were starting to understand how to play ultimate without playing ultimate.

Once they were comfortable doing give-and-gos with a partner, we added a challenge. We made a big square at the end of the field and they had to use their give-and-gos to catch the disc in the box. Next, coaches played light defence to try to stop their passes. Our next progression was to have one group of kids start at one side and try to complete passes working towards an endzone. If they made a mistake, they would drop the disc, go to the sideline, and the other team would try to make their passes to the other end-zone.

If you try this technique, repeat it until there is understanding. Then run a mini-scrimmage, and have coaches play if possible. See what happens! When we've used this method with

7-year-olds, we've actually gotten a pretty decent scrimmage going, with completed passes and athletes moving in the correct direction.

Key Tips and Reminders

1. Assign two or three athletes to each rule and have them be the guru of that rule. They can present it to the group and be responsible for helping out when that rule comes out during a scrimmage.
2. Intentionally have your athletes practice making calls.
3. Come up with a team way of responding to calls if / when you're upset (the BE CALM method, etc.).

Your Turn - How Would You Teach Picks?

Chapter 31 - Spirit of the Game

Spirit of the Game can be tricky to define and even trickier to teach, as it tends to mean something different to everyone. Typically, though, it's defined as:

1. Respect for self and others
2. Knowledge and understanding of the rules
3. Joy of play

Sounds wonderful right? It has historically been compared to school-yard etiquette, in that everyone should feel included, that you do not need a referee to keep the game going, and that everyone is playing because it's fun.

What Spirit Can Look Like

Spirit looks different depending upon where you are, the ages of the groups, and the competition level. Here are some examples of what we've observed being considered 'good Spirit' from the general population at the various levels:

1. Any-age school tournaments that are primarily for fun

- High fives for teammates AND opponents
- Costumes
- Spirit prizes for the other team
- Cheering for the other team when they do something cool
- Getting to know the other team on the sideline
- Explaining the rules to someone if they do not know
- Playing a Spirit game together at the end of the game

2. Middle school tournaments that are more competitive

- High fives for teammates AND opponents
- Acknowledging cool plays from the other team
- Playing a Spirit game together at the end or having a Spirit discussion

- Knowing the rules and keeping discussions on the field (no sideline calls, etc.)

3. High school tournaments that are more competitive

- Some high fives for the other team / acknowledgment of legitimately good plays
- Spirit discussion at the end (sometimes a game but more rare)
- Knowing the rules and keeping discussions on the field
- Playing your hardest even if the game is not evenly matched
- Spirit captains check in with each other at halftime to see if everything is going well for both sides (in terms of Spirit)

Teaching Spirit

Teaching Spirit begins with making sure your players know the rules so they can calmly make and resolve calls.

Once you tell your team the basics of Spirit, ask them what it means to them. Ask them what Spirit sounds like, looks like, and feels like. Having them come up with answers on their own will make Spirit more personal and powerful for them.

You must use your practice time to practice Spirit. Encouraging your players to acknowledge good plays from their opponent in practice will create a habit that will translate into real games. Having Spirit circles at the end of your practice where you model how to give feedback to teams about their rules knowledge and physicality is vital here.

Teaching perspective-taking is also a useful activity to do with your team. There are many examples on the internet of this, but it basically boils down to explaining to your athletes that:

1. Everyone has their perspective.
2. Everyone believes their perspective is right.
3. You cannot 'know' that you are right and they aren't.
4. Speaking with anger and intensity will never get you your way.
5. Speaking calmly and breathing will help everyone.
6. If you can't agree, that's ok! There are rules to help with that.

There is a misconception that teams that ‘make calls’ are unspirited. Making calls isn’t unspirited; not playing by the rules is unspirited. You can also retract your calls if you think you made a mistake. What a good life lesson.

Always remember how much power and influence you have on your team’s Spirit. When someone does something Spirited or unSpirited, it is your job to either praise or address it immediately. This immediate feedback is the only way your players will learn Spirit of the Game quickly.

Are Spirit Games and Circles Really Necessary?

One thing we’ve come to notice in our programs is that ‘Spirit games’ become one of our athletes’ favourite things about the sport. It gives them a chance to be silly, mingle, and just be kids. Even adults like them, so they can’t be that bad.

The purpose of Spirit circles and games are to bring teams together (typically after a match) to remind us that we are really all on one team together. It can bring down peoples’ guards, it can ‘humanize the enemy’, and it’s a really nice way to complete a match.

Make sure you check out our list of Spirit Games in the appendix.

One Little Side Story...

It’s Canadian Junior Nationals, and I’m coaching a very tenacious and lively team from Surrey, BC. The team had a reputation in the past for physicality, and I even knew this firsthand from when I coached against them the previous year. When I signed on to coach them, I was determined to turn this around.

We had lots of discussions about Spirit and physicality throughout our season. We talked about perspective-taking and how to resolve calls calmly. I was proud of where we got to. Fast forward to Nationals, where I believe we are having great Spirit circles with the other teams. Everything is sunshine and rainbows. My team hides in the shade and takes out the Spirit score cards. Our

Spirit captain goes through the categories one by one asking the team to vote. If there's an outlier, our Spirit captain reminds the team that one bump or incident does not necessarily mean the whole team is unSpirited. We then pretend we are the other team and we honestly evaluate how we thought we did. I am proud of them as they take the process seriously and are learning a lot about it.

Later on, I log onto the website and take a look at the scores for the day: We are DEAD LAST in Spirit for the whole tournament. I am rattled. What went wrong? I looked into it and saw that one team gave us some 0s out of 4. I think back to the game and I can't remember a single incident. Moreover, there was nothing said in the Spirit circle and the coach never approached me. Was I missing something?

Later on, I find the coach of the team and I ask about the scores. Her response was that the captains do the scores without her supervision, and that she would talk to them and make an adjustment. I asked her what her opinion was of the game and she thought it was good...but that we had a reputation.

She found me at the field the next day and informed me that her team did not want to change the Spirit score. I broke the news to my team and they were deflated. They didn't understand why it happened and were starting to lose faith in the whole Spirit-ranking process.

Now is it possible that my bias kept me blind to my team's bad Spirit? Yes. But I'd like to think I have enough integrity and humility to admit if my team was truly showing zero-level Spirit.

I tell this story because it shows that the ultimate Spirit ranking system is far from perfect. Ranking Spirit can lead to a 'fake niceness' to get Spirit points from other teams, hindering our athletes' intrinsic motivation to be good, Spirited people. On the other hand, I believe there's a lot of joy and merit to teams and individuals winning Spirit prizes and being recognized for exemplifying being a "sports personlike" team / person.

I believe that Spirit circles should be spaces where athletes actually discuss Spirit and not pretend that everything was ok when it wasn't. We must teach our athletes to address issues coherently and also be able to hear them in return. These are brilliant learning opportunities

and simply washing over the truth because being honest is awkward isn't the lesson I personally want to be teaching to young people.

Spirit of the Game is your opportunity to teach your athletes more than just how to throw and catch a disc. It's our opportunity as coaches to make the next generation of humans more empathetic and understanding in all areas of life.

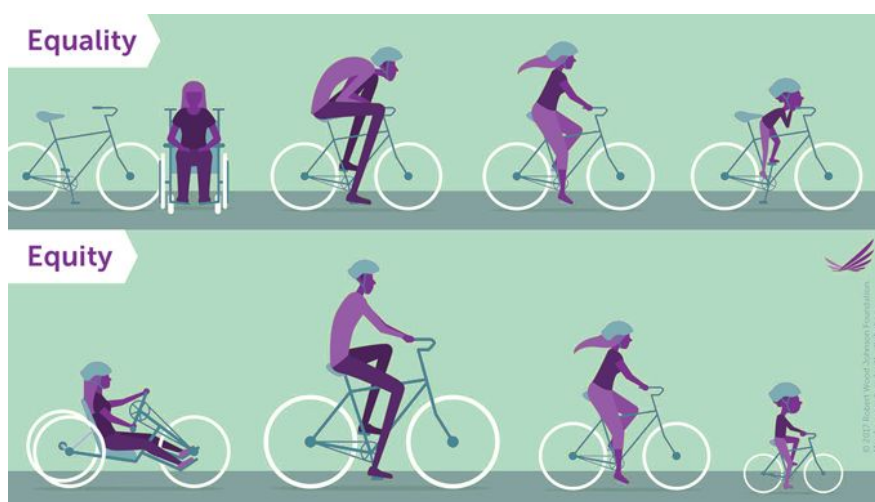
Chapter 32 - Gender Equity

I get asked to play in fun tournaments all the time, even from teams with players that I barely know. The main reason why they ask? They need a female player. I used to not think much about it other than how lucky I was to be considered “good” and offered a spot to play. I love getting lots of playing time, and I got that because there were never many female subs. It wasn’t until I was a bit older that I saw the bigger picture.

When playing league or pickup, it was a common sight to see newer women get looked off, talked over, and basically ignored. They didn’t get better. They looked lost and frustrated. One time, someone confided in me, sarcastically, that they “thought ultimate was welcoming.” That stung.

If you get a bunch of female ultimate athletes together and bring up equity, everyone will have a story about how they had to prove themselves when their male counterpart didn’t. Experiences of being new to the sport are different depending upon gender. The intricacies of gender and identity are not something we will dive into in this book because we are simply not experts on the subject. We are lifelong learners and continually curious about identity and how it changes experiences for people. It is, however, important to understand that there are a lot of engrained norms and behaviours that you will come across while you’re coaching, especially if you’re coaching mixed or co-ed ultimate. You have an enormous opportunity and responsibility to teach your young athletes equitable norms and behaviours.

I’m sure you’ve seen the image of equity versus equality. Yes, the one with the fence. It’s been around the Internet for a while, but it’s fabulous. It makes conceptualizing the difference between the two really easy. To shake it up, here’s another one I’ve seen:



Everybody getting the same bike versus everyone getting the best bike for them to help them get to where they're going.

How to Promote Gender Equity at Your Practice

1. Alternating gender with each pass (there are also fewer people cutting at the same time, which is nice).
2. Small-sided games!
3. Empowering girls and women to pull, be the playmakers, and leaders for the team.
4. Instituting an "open is open" rule at practice, so that no matter who it is, you throw to the first open person you see (this helps new players get more touches as well).
5. Avoiding rules that are specifically for "girls" (e.g., 2 points if a girl scores), which only undermines all the girls on the team.
6. If your team is ready for it, you can do a fishbowl activity to create awareness of people's feelings about the team.
7. Ask your team to fill out surveys consistently about whose voices are being heard, who's making the big plays, who is being relied on, and who's important... you'll get a pretty good idea of where everyone's at.

8. Language is incredibly powerful. Talk to your female athletes like they're the bad-ass disc-bombing humans that they are.
9. Expect a lot from your players on and off the field. If they are able to have these conversations at a young age, they will be more comfortable expressing their feelings in the future.
10. Take it seriously and address issues when they arise. If a girl is about to pick up the disc and a boy tells her to go away, saying nothing is saying a lot. Stopping the practice and addressing the issue right away is extremely powerful.

You're not going to change the world in a practice, but if you have a plan, you will have the ability to plant seeds in the minds of your athletes that will eventually lead to safer spaces for everyone.

Your Turn - Create a Gender Equity Season Plan

Let's reverse engineer your season.

Let's assume you're coaching mixed, even if you're not.

Through the lens of gender equity, fill out the table below:

Your Team	At the end of your season, your team... (Dream big, nothing is impossible)
Looks Like:	
Sounds Like:	
Feels Like:	

Plays Like:	
-------------	--

Halfway through the season, in order to achieve those outcomes, you need to work on the following:

Your Team	What would you do to make your team...
Looks Equitable	
Sounds Equitable	
Feels Equitable	
Plays Equitably	

At the beginning of your season, what rules/norms/behaviours/activities would you have to institute in order to achieve your end goal?

Your Team	How would you start teaching / guiding your team to...
Looks Equitable	
Sounds Equitable	

Feels Equitable	
Plays Equitably	

The reason we like to start at the end is because that's the important part. It's about allocating time and resources in order to get everyone where you need to go. Equality focuses on the starting line, whereas equity focuses on the finish line.

Where do YOU want your team to be at the end of the season?

Conclusion + Funny Story

“Bag of dicks. Dicks! Ugh, I mean bag of dicks! Discssss.”

Let’s rewind to give you some context.

It’s a sunny Friday afternoon in July and we are just about to finish a summer camp. It’s a tradition at Elevate for the campers to invite their parents, siblings, grandparents, and whomever else they want, to the last 30 minutes of camp to show off their skills and play some fun group games. There’s a certain energy on the field when both the adults and kids are playing for the pure joy of it, and it’s a tradition we will keep forever.

As the camp comes to a close and we are checking campers off our attendance, one child introduces us to his parents and his grandma. The grandma is particularly excited at how fun the games looked and how skilled her grandson was at ultimate.

We continue to chit chat when the grandma finally shares that it’s really no surprise that her grandson is so good because he and his dad have a “big bag of dicks” at home. She continues to try and correct herself as the parents turn beet red, the grandson’s face opting for a pale shade of white. We pretend not to notice and say our thank yous and goodbyes. Just another day in the life of a full-time coach.

We end with this story because, first of all, it’s hilarious, and second of all, we think it best encapsulates our **why**. We love hanging out with kids, seeing them grow, and experiencing all the weird, wacky, hilarious stories that come with it. From the deepest parts of our hearts, we hope that you’ve learned a few things throughout this book that will help you improve your athletes’ ultimate experience, and therefore your own. We wish you all the best, and please feel free to reach out anytime with questions or feedback. Keep on being awesome, coach.

Thank you.

Section 9 - Other Ultimate Experts

An Open Mind - John McNaughton

John is one of the top players and coaches in Australia. He was the captain of the first ever U20 Australian national team that competed in the U20 World Championships in 2004, and has competed at six world championships since then. He was the Assistant Coach for the U20 National Team in 2017, and has completed honours in Exercise Science from the University of Queensland. Below is his contribution.

Working with youth in ultimate gives an exciting ability to influence the future. Our sport is still growing and maturing, and our players will be shaping it for years and decades ahead. As coaches, we can heavily affect the mindset that players take to their ongoing growth and development.

"Safe" coaching is teaching vertical stacks, dump-swing offence, flat forehands and backhands, match defence with a simple force, and the like. It's what everyone is doing, and stereotyped as "good fundamentals", and therefore it's considered sound coaching advice.

This is a systemic bias in thinking: because it's common, it must be the best choice.

I dare you to open your players' minds to opportunities. Teach in a way that gives ideas and examples, rather than rules and gospel. Set challenges without guidance and see how the players overcome them. Give suggestions and ideas, and watch what unfolds with time and practice. In doing this, you will not create system-bound athletes, but creative players who can both push the sport in a new direction, and (vitally) adapt to changing demands and circumstances.

Team Culture and Charters - Heather Ann Brauer

Heather Ann has coached elementary through college ultimate for over 10 years, and has extensive experience with creating positive team culture. She is one of the founders of the Girls' Ultimate Movement (GUM) which empowers girls to have a voice, become young leaders in their communities, and discover the joys of ultimate. Below is her contribution.

All Voices, One Song

Back in 2015, I helped restart the girls' ultimate program at Ingram High School where it had gone missing for a number of years. In that first season, players came together from diverse ultimate backgrounds: We had players who were completely new to the sport, players who had played a couple years of middle school ultimate, and players who had been competing on the national stage with the YCC program. We focused on growth and coming together that season: The expectations were low and the season was blissful.

Fast forward two years and I'm being approached by a frustrated player near the end of the season. The program had morphed into something they weren't happy with. They had come to play ultimate because their friends played ultimate because it was fun. However, over the two years of being a team, the competitive vibe had increased, and our goals had become competition heavy. Without fully realizing it, we had dovetailed from the inclusive team for anyone to feel at home to a team with more mandatory workouts, high intensity practices, and competitive subbing. Not surprisingly, we were losing the engagement of players who were core to the original culture. At that moment, we were in the playoffs already and it was really difficult to reconfigure. Concurrently, having lost in quarterfinals of states, there was a drive by many players to double down on competition for the subsequent season. Two players declined to return the next year despite a lot of conversations to create something different, and I found myself struggling to find a way to balance these diametrically opposed desires.

I spent hours trying to dissent how I hadn't noticed sooner or been able to create the change in real time. We had set goals as a team and talked about the season each year, but that obviously wasn't enough to get the team aligned. Going into the next season, I was determined to bring something new to the conversation. My roommate at the time was a teacher and had just

completed the RULER training which is out of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. One of the tools they had gleaned from this training was around developing a classroom charter. At the heart of the classroom charter was giving students the ability to identify how they wanted to feel across different situations in the classroom and bringing those together with actions. I repurposed this concept as a team culture tool and asked players on day one, “How do you want to feel as a part of this team?” I then used that to guide our goal development and overall culture.

I’ve iterated over the seasons, though the three key takeaways I have for you are:

1. **Don’t rush the process.** You might be anxious to get to drills and on-field skills, but taking the time to develop a team charter with intention will make all of the downstream work of the season more successful. Players may also be anxious to get out onto the field, so I have adapted by breaking the charter process down over three days. This not only creates space for field time, but it also forces a revisiting of the charter over multiple days, and thus cementing it as the foundation for the season.
2. **Keep it in play.** Once you create the charter, I’d encourage you to find a way to keep it present for all players throughout the season. I create a word cloud, or pyramid bringing together charter and goals, or images, and laminate it for the players to attach to their bags for their season. I also use it to check in with captains and players throughout the season.
3. **Start again with every team.** It might be easy to say, “We only have one new player this season, so we can recycle the charter,” but that player will never fully integrate into the team. I always preface the conversation to players who have been doing this for years that this is the opportunity to create something from nothing and design their season. Since they have grown as people and players, what matters most to them could look different from the previous year. I often find it does.

Here is the charter process I take broken down over three practices:

Day 1: How do you want to feel at practices, games, workouts, or when you are hanging out with the team?

1. Have players either call out words as you write them up on a white board/poster board or split players into groups and have each group brainstorm words together. Make sure all words are written up on the white board/poster board, and always ask “anything else?” a few times to make sure all voices are included.

I like to pause here and have players take a good look at all of the words, emphasizing that this is how their teammates want to feel this season. All of these feelings are the foundation for the team culture.

Now all players get to determine which feelings resonate most with them. You can give them space to select three to five. If using a whiteboard, they can come make hashmarks and if using a poster board, I like to use star stickers. I often let double votes, though nothing above that to prevent them from upvoting their idea.

2. At this point, there are usually some words that stand out based on the stars or hashmarks and you can circle these words. Something that is critical is to never cross out any of the words even if they don’t have a single vote. Why? To ensure that all players feel like they are contributing, and nobody feels as if their word wasn’t important.

You get to decide how many words you want to have - I aim for three to five words. If you have more than you want, I typically re-write the circled words and go through the process above a second time.

3. Once the final words are selected, I re-write them cleanly for the team. I remind players that all words suggested are still part of our culture and I tell them that we are going to

be coming back to this tomorrow. I encourage them to start thinking about what actions we can take as a team to make these feelings come to life.

Players will come up with silly, sometimes nonsensical words, and I have found that those are the words that create the most culture. Resist the urge to push back on their ideas and instead get them to talk about what that word means to them. Over the last few seasons, one of the “words” that really brought a team I coached together was #LittyGritty. It’s not really a word, though to them it embodied working hard, putting it all on the line, and celebrating along the way. To this day, it remains one of my favorite words! I tend to call the words our team values, though you can call them whatever works best for your team.

Day 2: What actions can help us maintain our team values?

I break this down word by word with the team so that we spend some time thinking about each of these. For the purpose of this outline, I am going to use confidence, connected, and grit.

1. I have players work in groups to come up with clear actions that we can take as a team to make *confidence* come alive. Each group must come back to the team with two to three ideas.
2. I often find that there are similar themes to the ideas, and this is where you can contribute to pull themes together. Ultimately, you are looking for one to three actions that players can do to make *confidence* come alive.

If you have five values, I really recommend keeping actions to two or three. If you have three values, three to five actions can be doable.

3. Repeat this process for each of the values. Here’s an example from a few seasons back:

Confidence

- We will consistently attend practice and hold one another accountable.

- We will not say I'm sorry. We will be stars.
- We will give each other high fives with eye contact.

Connected

- We will have monthly team bonding.
- We will focus on each other and support one another.
- We will recruit heavily to keep the program growing.

Grit

- We will RAWR!
- We will push ourselves and our teammates
- We will be focused at practices, on the sideline, and in games.

Day 3: What happens when things breakdown?

1. Depending on the age of players, I'll often ask them to brainstorm ways for us to keep these values front and center in our season. Some ideas have been:
 - Having subgroups of players accountable for each value throughout the season.
 - Reminding the team of a value each day in the huddle.
 - Checking in with buddy groups at the end of practice about how the values showed up.
 - Having captains be responsible for a value focus throughout the season.
2. I talk about how despite best intentions, it is not uncommon for teams to get off track from their values from time to time, and how that's entirely okay. I will either share a story from my own playing experience here or I will ask players to share from their experience.

3. I emphasize that it is how we recover from those moments that make a difference. We then come up with one thing we can do if we get away from our values. I often split the team into groups and have them work together to get to one thing they want to bring to the group for their assigned value.

Here is an example based on the values above:

Confidence

- When we are lacking confidence, we will do a go-to drill until we get to 50 completions no matter how long it takes. Then we will celebrate!

Community

- We will combine with JV for a practice full of fun games and bonding.

Grit

- We will do a layout drill and bring the energy to support our teammates in being gritty!

4. Again, I will review the whole list with the team, asking if anyone has any adjustments or ideas. Making sure there is always space for discussion in this process is an important underlying value that will make a difference during the season.

I like to print out the full charter for players to have and put wherever they want so that they have a reference point throughout the season. This completes the charter exercise and I often use it as a primer going into the season goals discussion.

Intersectionality in Youth Ultimate - Chip Chang

Chip is a PhD candidate in American Studies at the University of Minnesota. She writes about Asian American issues, race, gender, history, and ultimate frisbee. She was a top 10 Callahan nominee in 2014. Below is her contribution.

This article has been adapted and edited from its original form by its original author to fit The Art of Coaching Youth Ultimate

Dear Ultimate Community,

We need to talk.

This will be a difficult conversation, it might make you uncomfortable — it's meant to. But please, read (don't skim) this whole thing through, absorb every single word, and let it simmer, don't just discount them. What we often refer to as the "ultimate community" is special in so many ways. Our sport is governed by Spirit of the Game, we're self-officiated, and we choose to devote much of our time, money, and energy to play, volunteer, or organize this sport.

But there's a problem. You see, we call ourselves progressive. We think we're special, that we're different from other communities or organizations. That we're exceptions. We argue that we're welcoming, inclusive, and tolerant. That we don't discriminate against others based on race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, or any other form of identity. We love and welcome everyone. But by claiming and embodying this progressive identity we erase the fact that there's still a LOT of work that needs to be done. And we ignore those in our community who still fail to see the dire need for gender and racial equity, labeling them as outliers. We ignore that our community, just like any other, is susceptible to trolls, to toxic masculinity, to unintentional (yet still just as harmful) biases, to bigotry, subtle racism, sexism, transphobia, and homophobia. Our community is still prone to ignorance and hate. And to constantly claim we're progressive is to ignore the fact that we have much work to do. And not just on the front for gender equity.

Gender equity is only one aspect of inclusion. And we cannot talk about gender, without also talking about race, class, and sexuality. We call this lens of looking at the world, this framework

for solving problems, *intersectionality*. Think about it this way, the very notion of “inclusion,” can only exist with the practice of “exclusion.” We would not be able to fathom what it means to “include,” if we didn’t have a conceptual understanding of “exclude.”

Let’s look at this example: Feminism. Yes, we need feminism. As many amazing college teams and communities have pointed out, following the lead of Boston University’s women’s and men’s college ultimate teams, we all need feminism. Even if you’re a straight white male, you need feminism. And not because feminism applies to the women in your life. Yes it’s about women’s rights, but it’s also about debunking harmful notions of masculinity. You know, the narratives that men can’t cry, men can’t express emotion, men need to be taller than the person they’re dating, and men need to resemble hypermasculinity.

Even so, the problem with “Feminism” is that as a political and social movement, it is founded upon exclusionary practices. Feminism has historically excluded women of color, female-identified trans people, poor women, or women who don’t fit within the norms of respectability or “true womanhood.” Surprise, some white suffragettes were racist and upheld white supremacy.

This isn’t to try to discredit Feminism, the movement, or feminism, the ideological belief that gender should not predetermine one’s future. It’s to point out the importance of adopting and ingraining an intersectional lens in our daily understandings of the world we live in. Yes, Feminism is problematic, but how can we learn from it, engage with it, become conscious of its flaws, and build?

So as we continue these conversations about gender equity, we need to consider the role that race, class, and sexuality play. **We need to think critically and apply consciously, intersectionality without wearing it out.** It’s not always perfect. In fact, it’s incredibly messy and there will never be a straight-forward answer. **But we need to continue to ask the hard questions, instead of taking the easy route, because those shortcuts are how we got here in the first place.**

In the face of oppression, silence takes the side of the oppressor, not the oppressed. Apathy feeds oppression. Yes, race might make you uncomfortable. Sometimes, it’s easier to talk about

gender, than it is race. Where do you start? What if you say the wrong thing? What if you mess up? Try. Because if you don't, then you'll never learn, grow, and change. And that is a luxury, or what one might call a privilege, that you have.

Think about it this way. We all learned to play ultimate at some point, none of us were born and simply *knew* how to huck a disc, throw a hammer, or break a mark. We tried, we learned, we grew, we changed. We definitely did the wrong thing at one point, messed up along the way. It happens. That's part of the process. It's how you react to those moments, what you do with your mistakes that matter. **Take ownership of your actions, your thoughts, your voice. Hold yourself accountable, hold yourself to a higher standard, to one that will make you better — and stick to it. Apologize when you need to, promise to keep learning, and take action.** And if you find that you're in a position of privilege or power, hold others in those positions accountable. **Because while you fear saying the wrong thing, there are others who fear losing their life.**

If you want to continue to ignore it, if you want to continue to remain ignorant, if you don't want to have the hard conversations because they make you uncomfortable, then think about this. **Historically marginalized people are not afforded that privilege.**

If we truly value this community and everyone in it, then we need to start acting like it. Otherwise, we don't get to say we're progressive and inclusive. **Stop shutting down and tone-policing historically marginalized people in this community and start listening.** Stand up for others, online or in real life, because this burden is not just for women or people of color to bear. If you consider yourself an ally, show it. Act. Help carry the burden. Educate yourself. Ask for guidance, but don't let people do it for you. If you consider yourself an ally, use your power and privilege by calling others out. If you work with or coach young people, name prejudice and bigotry, and have these conversations with them. Encourage difficult conversations. Use your influence to start the dialogue. If not for yourself, do it for your peers and this community. That's one way you can *start* to reconcile privilege.

We must start acting as if our life depends on it, because we all know someone in this community for whom it does.

You might be wondering, as a coach, why is it your job to talk about equity with your players?

First and foremost, sports are a vehicle to change. If you only see sports in a one-dimensional way, as a means for athletic endeavors, you are missing the point entirely. Yes, sports offer emotional and physical reprieve, but sports also create community, rely on interpersonal dynamics, offer spaces for young people to learn, grow, and develop as *people, not just athletes*.

Second, sports do not exist in a vacuum and its playing fields aren't equal. Whether you're attending school, going to work, shopping, or playing a sport, how to walk about the world is not exempt from larger systems of oppression and power. Your non-white athletes do not navigate the world or the field as white players. When they come to practice, they carry baggage. When an opponent uses a derogatory slur or assumes the worst of intentions regarding spirit because of the color of their skin, your athletes do not get to pretend their markers of difference don't exist. When women athletes are sent to the worst fields or given the worst tournament schedule, their gender difference matters. From youth sports to professional sports, athletes of color and female athletes are constantly judged differently than their white male counterparts.

Third, having conversations around racial and gender equity can create a stronger team culture, leading to more success on the field. As a coach of a boys team for instance, facilitating conversations about masculinity can lead to more vulnerability among teammates, which can then lead to more trust and accountability on and off the field.

Fourth, as a coach, if you don't engage your players in "politics" you are doing a disservice to your non-white and non-male players, and the women and people of color in your life.

Coaches have influence (and power) over their athletes. Many of us choose to coach because of past influential coaches in our lives. Offering mentorship and guidance is a natural part of coaching, and coaching is not confined to teaching fundamental ultimate skills or planning practices. And let's be honest, as youth ultimate coaches, we're not coaching our athletes to land the next multi-million dollar contract. As youth coaches, we help build individual confidence, engrain a work ethic, and teach respect for self, teammates, and opponents. Our athletes will carry these values onto the rest of their lives. It is worth having conversations about

social inequalities.

What to do as coaches? These are not fast and hard rules, and oftentimes, what you do as a coach depends largely on your players, your team culture, and the role of power. Below are some steps you can take, but please use your best judgement and when in doubt, think about the power dynamic at play. For instance, do not tokenize your athletes of color, do not put them on the spot, or ask them to speak for all experiences.

Assess

First, assess the situation. What is the gender, race, and class demographic of your team? Which identities are vulnerable and which ones have power? What's the ratio? For instance, if you are on a majority white or majority male team, do not start by talking about racism or sexism. Instead, take an internal look and examine whiteness or masculinity. Too many times, people with power seek to help those without, without first reflecting internally on their own power. If you coach a boys team and you want to talk about gender equity, remember that masculinity has just as much to do with gender as does femininity.

Educate Yourself

You've chosen a topic to bring up with your players, now it's time to educate yourself. The internet has wonderful resources. Sites like **everydayfeminism.com** or blog posts on **Medium** are a great place to start. Magazines like **TeenVogue** have done a phenomenal job not only raising awareness of different social issues, but also creating understandable talking points. Books like **Ijeoma Oluo's *So You Want to Talk about Race*** and **Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Anti-Racist*** are not only great ways to educate yourself, but are also a great way to share excerpts with your players to get a conversation started. And if you're looking for something related to pro sports athletes navigating themes like racism, sexism, mental health, body image, etc. check out **Sports Illustrated's Player's Tribune**. Lastly, an ultimate specific resource that can also complement this coaching manual is the **Without Limit's College Women's Resources Manual 2nd Edition**. This resource can be found free at withoutlimitsultimate.com and has topics ranging from starting a conversation about equity with your teammates to how to coach women athletes within patriarchy.

Come Up With A Plan

There are several ways you can plan, and while this article can't cover them all, a good way to start is to have a discussion around one resource, it can be an article, a book, a YouTube video, a short clip, etc that addresses a topic around social inequalities. Have everyone read or watch it, and discuss. Easy questions to start with are, how did it make you feel? What do you think? Does this resonate with you? And over time, the discussion would build to questions like, In what instance have you seen this happen in ultimate or in your life? What identities are power were involved? For instance, on a men's team, having a team watch-party of the documentary, *The Mask You Live In* (2015) which is about masculinity, can be a great starting point to talk about masculinity with your male athletes.

Create Common Language

Start by defining words that are thrown around too often. What do we really mean when we say diversity? Inclusion? Sexism? Racism? Gender? Then, make sure you have a set of guidelines or a community of practice. You need rules to make sure the discussion doesn't get out of hand, and that those with vulnerable identities feel protected when they share. And practice interruptions for justice - if a player says something problematic, encourage a space to call that person in and talk about the impact of those words, rather than the intention behind them. For instance, we take too much time saying, "That wasn't my intention," when what we need to do is to take care of the impact of those words.

Pay People For Their Time

Too often, we ask women and people of color to teach us, without compensating them for their time, energy, and emotional effort. You wouldn't expect free medical treatment from a physician or free merchandise from a small-business owner. Pay people for their time, and do not ask them to do it for free. Especially if you're asking someone who has experience, expect to pay up. And if you want professional services, definitely make sure you have a budget and a realistic understanding of what you can expect with limited funds.

Extra Tips

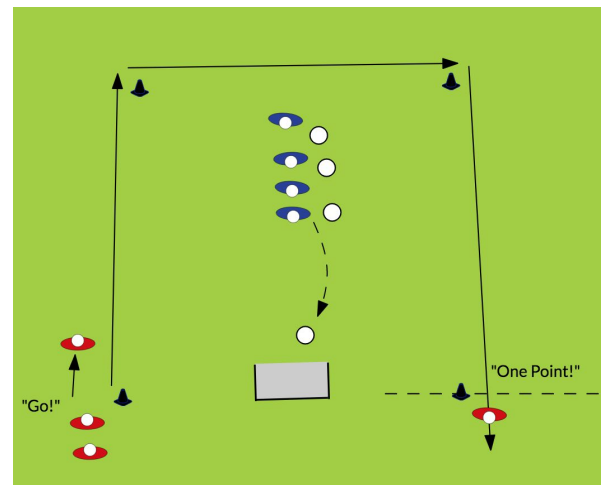
1. Part of coaching is explaining how and why, then allowing your players to practice. If you have players who are interested in leading a discussion, give them the tools to do so, while offering help - logistics, schedule planning, etc.
2. Be aware of power dynamics that exist between you, your co-coaches, parents, and players. Protect the most vulnerable, not your favorite players. Remember, as a coach, you are leading with your example. If you allow racist or sexist comments, no matter how subtle or “I didn’t intend to offend anyone,” you can definitely expect your players to think those comments are acceptable. Remember, intention doesn’t matter here, impact does.
3. If you feel like you need more training on this, take initiative and get help - just be ready to compensate that person.

Games, Drills, and Spirit Games

Games

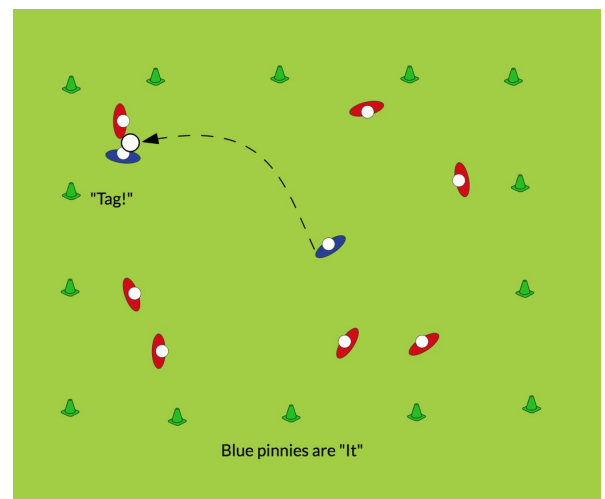
1. Asteroids

Make two teams. One team is facing a pole or basketball hoop with two or three discs. The other team is at a corner of the field or gym. Team 1 has to sink three discs into the hoop to get "three outs." Meanwhile, the team on "offence" is running around half of the gym/field to get points. If a player is running and a disc is sunk, that player immediately stops running and the next person can start running. If a player is running and reaches the finish line, offence gets a point and then the next player can run. Play two or three "innings."



2. Disc Tag

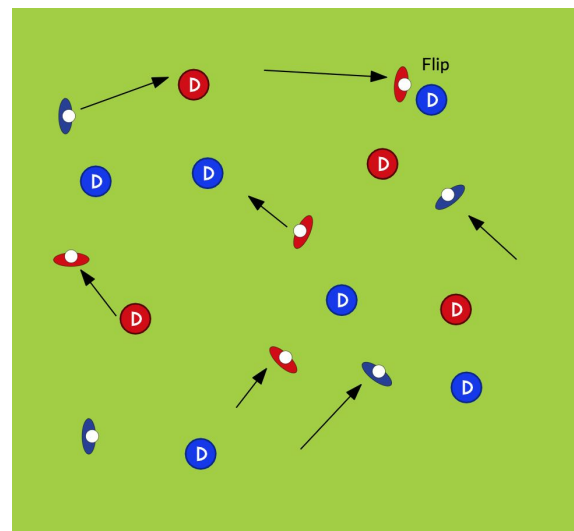
Make a square using cones. Size will vary depending upon age & group size (be prepared to adjust on the fly). This is a game that gets people understanding how to move an object by passing. All athletes must stay inside the square (if they go outside, they are now "it"). The people who are "it" are wearing pinnies and are trying to tag people with the disc. If someone gets tagged by the disc, they grab a pinnie



and join the “it” team until everyone is tagged. The players with the ball cannot walk, they can only pivot & pass.

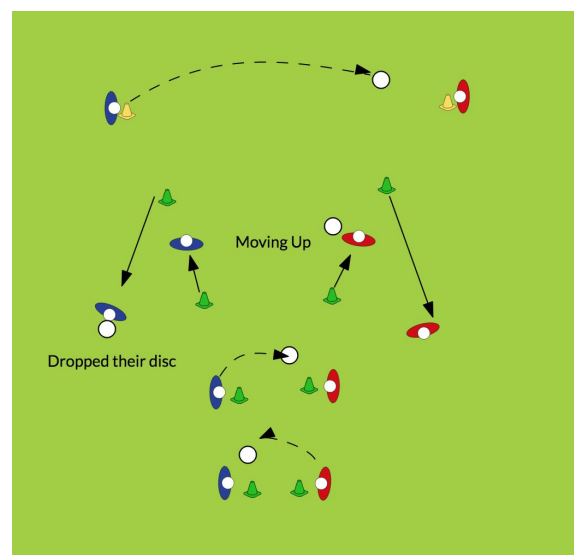
3. Up/Down Disc

Spread 10 - 20 discs around the field, half of them facing down, half of them facing up. There are two teams: Team Up and Team Down. Team Up is trying to make all the discs face up while Team Down is trying to make all the discs face down. Do three or four one minute rounds and come up with fun ways for your athletes to move around. For younger kids, we do fundamental movements like bunny hops and side shuffles. For older kids, you could do backpedaling, high knees, or butt kicks.



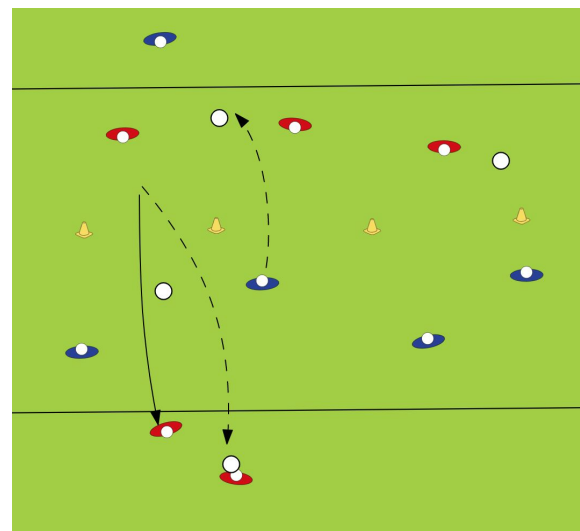
4. Mount Everest

Set up cones in two rows across from each other. At one end, the cones are very close together. At the other end, they are pretty far apart. The cones should go from close to far from one side to another. Partner the athletes up. They stand on one set of cones and pass back and forth. If one of them drops, they both move down to the bottom of the 'mountain' and everyone else behind them moves up. The goal is to be at the top at the end of the time (2-4 minutes).



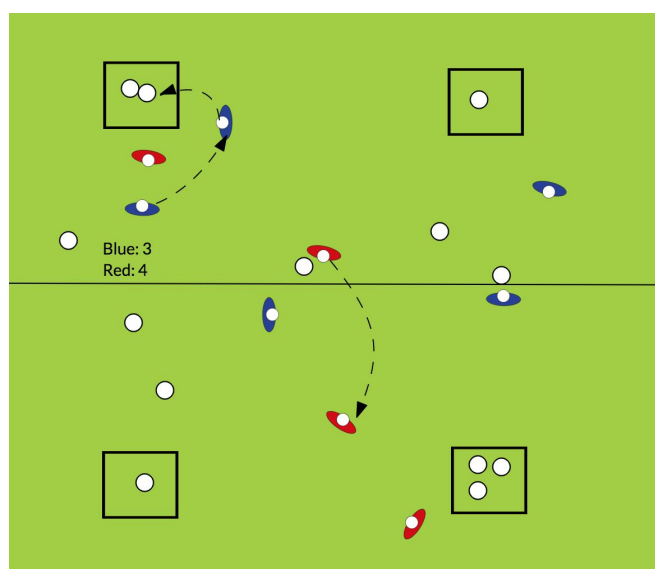
5. Deserted Island

Similar to an ultimate field with two end zones. The goal of the game is to save everyone on your team before the other team does. Start by sending one person to “safety” on the ship (the other team’s end zone). Each team is not allowed to enter the other team’s half unless they complete a pass to their ‘safe player’ and then they join them on the ship. Teams take turns throwing the discs over the defenders trying to have their safe person catch it. Once someone completes a pass, they join the safe person and help save the rest of the team. Players can play defence but they cannot go in the end zone. The game is over once all people from the island are safely on the ship.



6. Galaxies

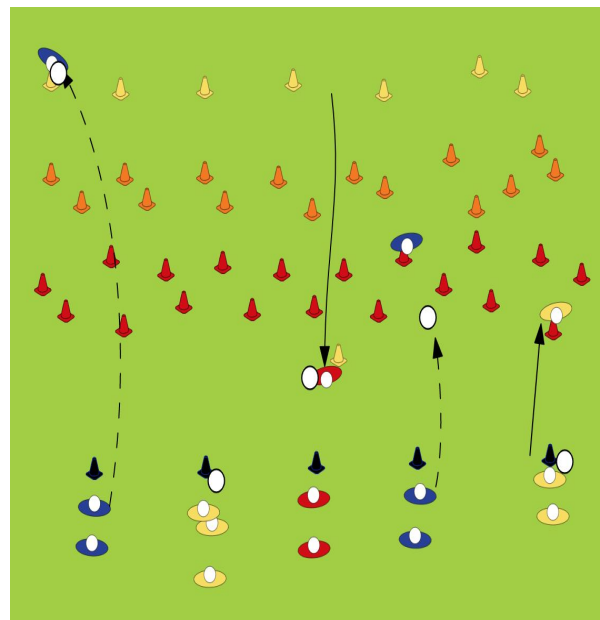
Set up a square/circle (or two) in each end zone and a halfway line with cones. Each side should start with 4-8 discs. The goal of the game is to land the most discs in the other team’s square until all the discs have been scored. Athletes can run and make mistakes with the disc on their own half. As soon as they cross half, they have to play with ultimate rules (no traveling, incompletion is a turnover etc.) and defence is now live. If there is a turnover in the attacking end, the team trying to score cannot pick up the disc (they can only pick up the discs off the ground in their own end). The disc counts as a goal if it lands in the square. If it



rolls from in to out, it is out. Both offence and defence are NOT allowed in the square.

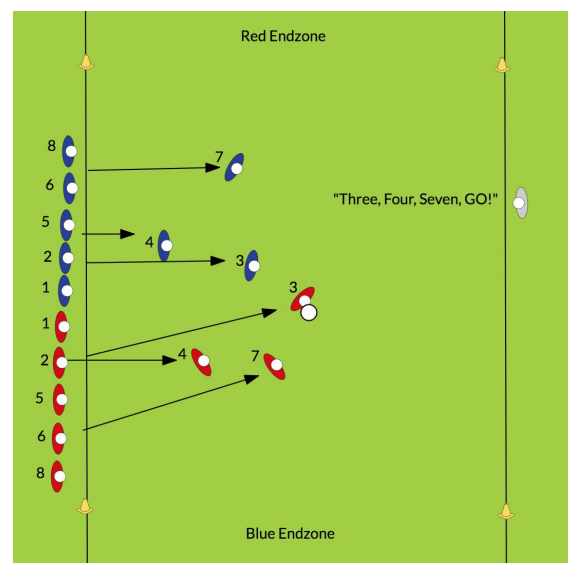
7. Duck Hunting

Set up rows of cones (ducks) all in the same colour. Set up cones of another colour a little farther away. First few rows of cones should be an easy distance for athletes to throw to and the colours further back get progressively more difficult. Teams line up single file and the first person chooses a cone (duck) to stand on. The next player in line has a disc and tries to complete a pass to the person on the cone. If the person on the cone is touching the cone while they make the catch, they pick up the cone (duck) and take it back to their team. The thrower then goes to choose a cone to stand on. If the throw is not complete, that turn is still over. Keep going until all the 'ducks' have been retrieved. If there is only one left, the players must take turns. Make each colour a different point. The team with the most points wins!



8. Numbers Scrimmage

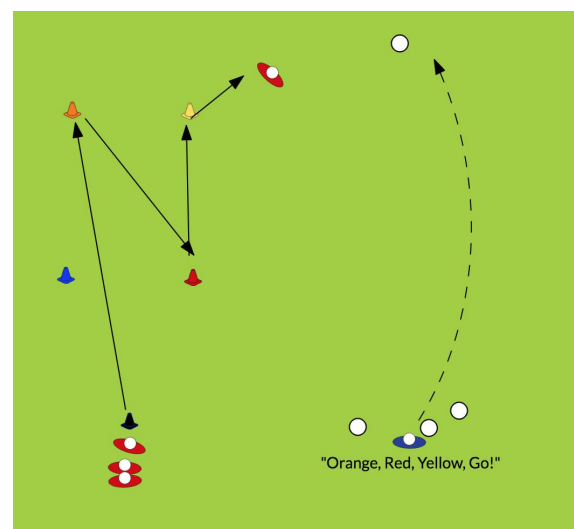
Make two teams, and number each player on each team from one to however many players there are. Throw the disc in a random place and yell anywhere from two and seven numbers ie. "One, four, six." The three corresponding players will then run out and try to score in their opponents endzone.



Drills

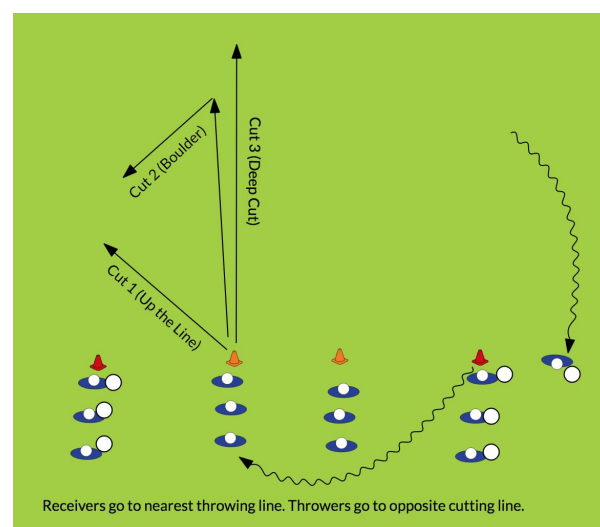
1. Colour Cutting

One cone of each colour per group (one group per throwing coach). Space the colour cones in places that make good cutting angles from where the thrower starts (should include slashes and strike cut options). Leave room to throw long. Coaches call out colours and the athletes must run to each cone in the order that is called (using good footwork). After the last colour, they run long.



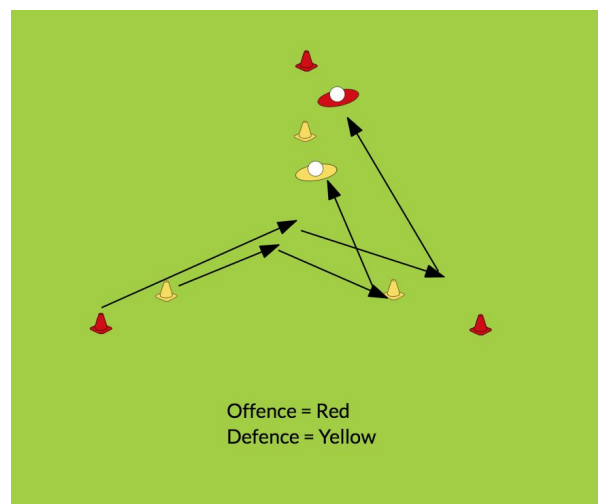
2. Four Lines

Set up four lines. The outside two are throwing lines, the inside two are cutting lines. The first cut is a diagonal one (up the line) and the thrower tries to throw them a pass while the cutter is still in motion. Now the athlete who just threw goes to the opposite cutting line, and the athlete that just caught goes to the throwing line. Can do this also for boulder cuts (out and back under working on faking), and also deep cuts.



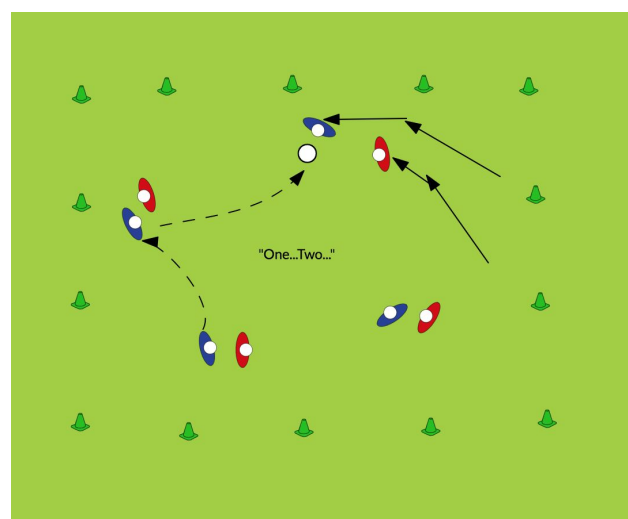
3. Triangle of Death

Three cones each of two different colours (per group). Set Up: Create a triangle with one set of colours. Using the other colour, place the cones outside of the other triangle to create a bigger triangle. Two players are in the triangle at once for 30 - 60 seconds. One is on offence and the other is on defence. The athlete that is on offence is trying to make jukes and cuts to be able to touch the outside cone at a particular point of the triangle. At the same time, the defender is trying to read the cutter and is trying to beat the offensive player to that corner by touching the cone that is closer. Rest then switch.



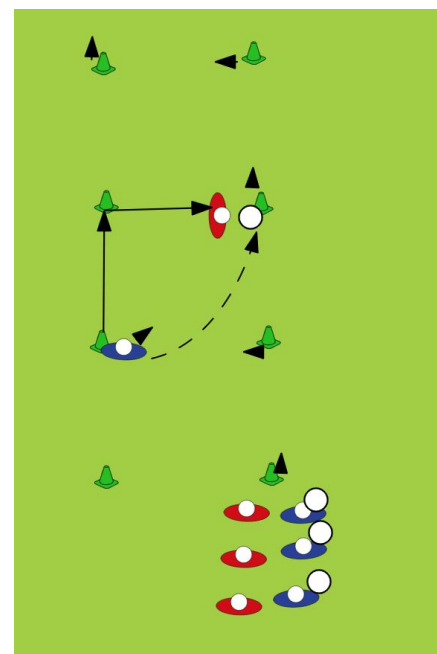
4. Keep away

Played 3 on 3 or 4 on 4 in a space. There are two teams playing keep away with the disc in a square. They must complete a certain amount of passes in order to get one point (e.g. 5). If they turn it over, the other team gets a turn. Play until one team gets to three points.



5. Cutting Ladders

Set up cones in two rows approximately 10-15 yards apart. There should be one lane with cones every 10-15 yards and another lane with cones that match the other side. There is a thrower and a cutter. They start at the same cone. The cutter cuts out straight to the field cone in the lane and turns 90 degrees to the other matching cone in the other lane. The thrower makes a pass that meets them at the cone. The thrower then follows their pass to where the cutter is standing. The thrower gets the disc back. The cutter cuts out straight again and then cuts 90 degrees back to the original lane and receives a pass again from the thrower. This continues until they are finished the ladder. Switch and repeat. Do different rounds such as all forehands, all backhands, alternating, scoobers, hammers, etc.



6. Jail Break

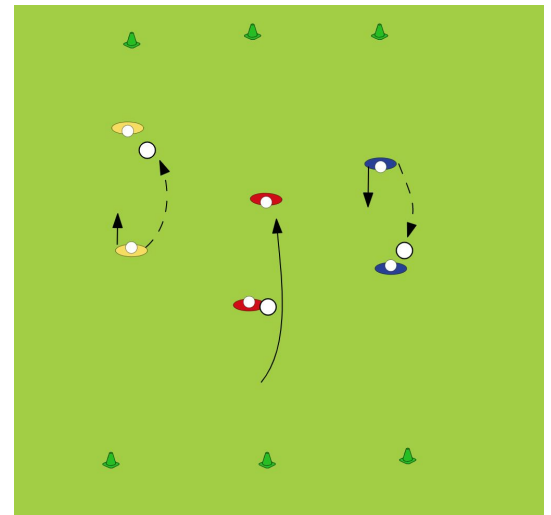
Make groups of six and give each group five or six discs. Place three cones a good throwing distance away from the starting point and spread them evenly. Place a cone at the throwing place. Place all the discs at the beginning. The goal of the game is to complete passes to your three teammates who are stationary on the back three cones. There are two people in the middle on defence. The thrower must use fakes and/or overhead throws to complete passes past the defenders. After all the discs are thrown, rotate through (one defender moves over, the other goes to the back row).



The receivers all move down one. Received that is bumped out now becomes the thrower. The thrower is now a defender etc.).

7. Leapfrog

This is a great drill for younger kids (Grade K - 2) to teach the concept of passing and moving in a certain direction. Pair athletes up and give each group one disc. Set the goal of reaching the far cone and back two or three times, but instruct that they are not allowed to run with the disc. Kids will then have to make passes to their teammate and then follow their pass. Feel free to make this a competitive race.



Spirit Games

1. Balloon and Shield

Have each athlete pick two people in their minds (keep it a secret). One person is their balloon and it is filling up with paint quickly! The other person is their shield. They need to make sure their shield is between them and the balloon so they don't get paint on them when the balloon explodes! Set a timer for 30 seconds and see who gets paint on them.

2. Biggest Fan

Students play rock, paper, scissors with each other. If the student loses, they then become their opponent's biggest fan. They cheer them on and get extra HYPED for them. The winning student

moves on to find another opponent to rock, paper, scissors with. Whoever wins each battle, gains all the fans as theirs so their fan group grows. Last person standing has all the fans.

3. Disc Detective

Student in the middle (Detective) closes eyes and counts down from a particular number (e.g. 20). The other students pass the disc behind their backs in the circle. Once the detective gets to around three, the student with the disc should try to hide it. The detective then opens their eyes and looks around the circle to try to guess who is hiding the disc behind their back. The detective gets three tries. All students should try to pretend they have the disc in order to make it more challenging.

4. Pizza Party

Every student possible gets a disc and balances it in their hand like a pizza. They try to keep their pizza as long as they can. They cannot cradle the disc against their body or use their other hand to keep it on. The object of the game is to knock off the loose disc from the other players' hands. If there is any hitting of the students on the body/arm etc. it is an automatic loss. If students start without a disc, they can knock off a disc from someone else and take their pizza. Students with a disc can also knock discs off and have two pizzas. Students must have a pizza by the end of time to win. After the round is complete, have students pick someone else and show them how to hold the discs.

5. Story Time

All the students hold their left hand out flat, palm facing up. They place their right index finger in the palm of the person to their right. The coach tells a story with a secret word eg. disc.

Everytime the word "disc" is said out loud, the students simultaneously try to grab the person's finger and pull away their finger to avoid getting caught. Keep adding new words to increase the challenge level, and try to come up with sentences that will fake kids out. For example: "I was walking along the street when I saw this DISCo store. We walked in and we were surprised to

see so many DISCgusting pieces of gum on the walls.

Glossary

Callahan - Essentially one of the greatest and prestigious plays in Ultimate. It is when you catch an opponent's pass in his/her end zone resulting in a point for the catchers team. This rarely ever happens, ever.

Greatest - Essentially the greatest play in Ultimate. It is when the disc gets thrown out-of-bounds, before the disc touches the ground a receiving player jumps from in-bounds, catches the disc in the air, and throws it back into play before he/she lands. If JUST that is done, it's awesome. But if another player then catches it resuming play with no turnover, it's even more awesome. And if you catch the disc in the end zone after the Greatest you will be nothing short of a legend.

Picks - When guarding a man on defence you are given the right to guard them without interference. So say you're on defence and guarding an opposing player by basically following them everywhere they go. If another player, whether a teammate or enemy, gets in the way or cuts you off allowing your mark to escape and receive the disc you can call "pick!" That's right, you can call pick on your own player. This call will result in a re-do if the player catches the disc, if the pass is not completed it will result in a turnover.

Wave Game - Create 3 even teams. Two teams face off and the other waits on the sideline to run in. The game is played continuous (once a team scores, they go back the other way to score). If a team gets scored on, they run off to the sideline. The team waiting on the sideline runs on and plays defence as fast as possible. The teams must be ready otherwise they will get scored on quickly.

Appendix A - Stages of Development



TECHNICAL SKILLS	Active Start age 0-6	FUNDamentals age 6-9	Learn to Play age 8-12	Train to Play age 11-16	Train to Compete age 15-19	Learn to Win age 19-23	Train to Win 22+	Active for Life
Backhand								
Grips		Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Basic	Introduce	Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Low release			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
High release			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Varied release points			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Short distance		Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Medium distance		Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Long distance			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Inside-out			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Outside-in				Introduce	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Forehand								
Grips		Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Basic	Introduce	Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Low release			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
High release			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Varied release points			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Short distance		Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Medium distance		Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Long distance			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Inside-out			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Outside-in				Introduce	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Hammer								
Grips			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Basic			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Short distance			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Medium distance				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Long distance				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Other								
Basic 'Scoober'				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Off-hand throws				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Push pass				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Blade				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Pulling								
Distance			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
In-bounds/Accuracy			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Good hangtime				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Consistency				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All



TECHNICAL SKILLS	Active Start age 0-6	FUNDamentals age 6-9	Learn to Play age 8-12	Train to Play age 11-16	Train to Compete age 15-19	Learn to Win age 19-23	Train to Win 22+	Active for Life
General								
Game skills			*Introduce	Develop*	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Correct pivot			Introduce	Develop*	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Proper body positioning		Introduce	Develop	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Fakes-basic			Introduce	Develop*	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Fakes-advanced				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Fakes-balance				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Fakes-extension				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Break mark				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Consistency			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Consolidate	Refine	All
Decision making			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Consolidate	Refine	All
Dump the disc			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Downwind throws-short			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Downwind throws-medium			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Downwind throws-long				Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Crosswind throws-short			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Crosswind throws-medium			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Crosswind throws long				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Upwind throws-short			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All



TECHNICAL SKILLS	Active Start age 0-6	FUNDamentals age 6-9	Learn to Play age 8-12	Train to Play age 11-16	Train to Compete age 15-19	Learn to Win age 19-23	Train to Win 22+	Active for Life
DEFENCE								
Marking Throwers			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Basic mark (no force)			Introduce	Introduce	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Force-backhand			Introduce*	Introduce*	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Force-forehand			Introduce*	Introduce*	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Force-middle			Introduce*	Introduce*	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Force-straight up			Introduce*	Introduce*	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Force-sideline			Introduce*	Introduce*	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Hold force			Introduce*	Introduce*	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Pressure thrower			Introduce*	Introduce*	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Call "up"			Introduce	Refine	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Footblocks			Introduce	Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Strategic marking skills				Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Marking Non-Throwers								
Person-to-person handlers			*Introduce	Introduce*	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Body D: handlers			Introduce	Introduce	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Person-to-person cutters			*Introduce	Introduce*	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Body D: cutters			Introduce	Introduce	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Switching			Introduce	Introduce	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Positioning before cut			*Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Positioning to contain after catch				Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	All
Field awareness				Introduce	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All
Footwork				Introduce	*Develop	*Consolidate	Refine	All



TECHNICAL SKILLS	Active Start age 0-6	FUNDamentals age 6-9	Learn to Play age 8-12	Train to Play age 11-16	Train to Compete age 15-19	Learn to Win age 19-23	Train to Win 22+	Active for Life
Receiving								
Cutting			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Positioning			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Good angles			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Timing			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Reading the disc			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Jump stationary			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Jump moving			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Lay-out			Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Dump cut			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Boulder			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Deep strike			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Clearing			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Making space for other cuts			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Use body to shield incoming disc			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Recognize defence & adapt				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Mirror cut			Introduce	Introduce	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Fakes for cuts			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Boxing out				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Handler cut			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Catching								
Stationary catch	Introduce	Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Step into catch		Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Run through catch			Introduce	Develop*	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Layout catch			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Two-hand pancake	Introduce	Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Two-hand trap above head			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Two-hand trap below knee			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
One-hand trap above head: dominant hand			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
One-hand trap above head: off-hand			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
One-hand trap below knee: dominant hand			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
One-hand trap below knee: off-hand			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Attacks the disc			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Catch with coverage			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Jump catch			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Strategy catch			Introduce	Develop*	*Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All



TECHNICAL SKILLS	Active Start age 0-6	FUNDamentals age 6-9	Learn to Play age 8-12	Train to Play age 11-16	Train to Compete age 15-19	Learn to Win age 19-23	Train to Win 22+	Active for Life
Offense								
Vertical stack-basic			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Vertical stack-advanced				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Horizontal stack-basic			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Horizontal stack-advanced				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Split stack				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Zone offense-basic				*Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Zone offense-advanced					Introduce*	Develop*	Refine	All
Cycling the offense					Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Set play				Introduce	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Other offences					Introduce*	Develop*	Refine	All
Defence								
Person-to-person			Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Zone-basic				Introduce*	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Zone-advanced					Introduce*	Develop*	Refine	All
Zone-trap					Introduce*	Develop*	Refine	All
Zone-mark				*Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Zone-cup				*Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Zone-mid				*Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Zone-deep				*Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Communication			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Help defence			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Zone-person transition					Introduce*	Develop*	Refine	All
Switching				*Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Transition							Refine	All
Capitalize on opportunities				Introduce	Develop*	Refine	Refine	All
Offense transition				Introduce	Develop*	Refine	Refine	All
Defence transition				Introduce	Develop*	Refine	Refine	All
CONCEPTS								
Spirit of the game	Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	Refine	Refine	All
Space (green space)			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Disc position			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Resetting the disc/dump			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Field sense			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Sideline support			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Poaching				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Baiting				Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	All
Containing			Introduce	Develop*	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Understanding spin and flight dynamics			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Swing the disc			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All
Communication			Introduce	Develop	Consolidate	Refine	Refine	All

Appendix B - Practice Template

What skill(s) are the focus for this practice?

- 1.
- 2.

Suggestions	What	Focus	Time
Warm-up (make fun if possible)			
Game that demands skill			
Explanation of skill (kids will be like "ahh I wish I had these skills for the previous game)			
Drill / Game that uses skill			
Drill / Game that uses skill			
Cool down/spirit game			

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ari Nitikman started playing ultimate when he was in Grade 6. He went on to play semi-professionally for the Vancouver Nighthawks of the MLU and Vancouver Riptide of the AUDL. He became a rookie on Vancouver's top men's team, Furious George, when he was 20, which was also when he dropped out of business school to start Elevate Ultimate full time. He has represented U24 Team Canada twice, earning a bronze in the mixed division in 2017, and a silver medal in the open division in 2019. His goal is to represent Canada at the Olympics one day, whether it be playing or coaching.

Jocelyn "Danie" Proby started playing ultimate at the University of Victoria in her first year. She quickly became captain, led them to a Canadian National Championship, and their first-ever qualification to the USA College National Championships. She went on to play for Vancouver's top women's team, Traffic, until she, unfortunately, tore her ACL. She kicked rehab in the butt and went on to make Team Canada Mixed Masters just three years later. She also became the assistant coach of the U20 Team Canada women in that same year. Danie has a Physical Education degree as well as her Advanced Coaching Diploma, and was the Coaching Director for Ultimate Peace. Her goal is to represent Canada at the Olympics one day.