

Athletes As Leaders



Preseason Session: Returning Athletes & Team Building

Prep Before Session:

Make Sure You Have:

- Unlike sessions 1-10, this preseason session is intended to be with only returning athletes. Determine who the returners are, also referred to as veteran players or sophomores/juniors/seniors.
- Review the definition of hazing:
Hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, isolates, abuses, downgrades, or endangers them, regardless of a person's willingness to participate. (Adapted from stophazing.org)
- Have a way to document brainstorming team building activities.

Review Key Messages:

- Team leaders are responsible for creating a safe and welcoming environment for new teammates.
- Team leaders play a key role in preventing harm. This includes harm that happens on and off campus, within or beyond sports, and online. Hazing, assault, emotional abuse, bullying, and harassment will not be tolerated.
- Creating new traditions helps build team bonding and growth.

Warm Up

Introduce Topic: (2 min)

Welcome back to the team! I am really excited about our team this year and all we will accomplish together. Forming a new team is an exciting opportunity to reflect on past years. Let's be intentional about the group environment we want to build and maintain this season.

As returning athletes and team leaders, you all have experience that the new members do not. You know what to expect from me as a coach. You have practice with balancing homework and our season's busy schedule. You have a history of

playing together and spending time together, and you are older. Altogether, this experience gives you a certain power and status over the newcomers. Today I want to talk about ways we can work to make the new members feel welcomed and respected. We will think of team building activities we can all do together.

Work Out

Discussion Questions: (8 min)

- ❓ **What would make you feel welcomed if you were a new player?**
- ❓ **As a leader on this team, what type of team culture do you want to promote? What type of team culture do you want to avoid?**
- ❓ **What do we want new members to expect from the returning athletes?**

Talking Points: [You may choose to share all talking points, or only those that have not been discussed already by the athletes.]

- » On our team we want everyone to feel supported, safe, and welcome. As leaders on this team, you have a big influence over the newest members and their experience on this team. You can help shape the team culture.
- » Think about how younger players may look up to you. You can be someone they go to for help.
- » As returners with influence over new or aspiring players, you play a key role in preventing harm. This includes harm that happens on and off campus, within or beyond sports, and online. Let's make a commitment to prevent hazing, assault, emotional abuse, bullying, and harassment.

Cool Down

Team Talk: (min) [You may choose to have specific athletes/leaders to facilitate the Team Talk.]

Now it is time for the Team Talk! We are going to think of things you can all do as returning athletes to create the positive team environment we want. Hopefully these will be things everyone in the group can agree to do. We are hoping that this will start the season off strong with a supportive team culture.

- ② **Do we have any traditions on this team? What do we like or not like about them?**
- ② **What are some healthy team building activities that we can plan for this season?**
- ② **There will be times when you are all together as a team without any coaches. What are some ways that you can create a safe and welcoming environment without adults present?**

Talking Points: [You may choose to share all talking points, or only those that have not been discussed already by the athletes.]

- » Harmful traditions in sports such as pressuring team members to participate in dangerous activities, pressuring others to drink alcohol or consume other substances, using demeaning language, and humiliating new members are never okay.
- » Let's also avoid subtle things like making newcomers carry equipment, clean up and do chores that others don't.
- » You can help create traditions that will help build team bonding and growth by making newcomers feel more welcomed and strengthen the team.
- » We can all think about some of the team activities that have helped you feel welcome in the past.
- » Examples of healthy team activities can include team meals, invites to events, returners helping with homework and drills, and team fundraisers.

Thank you for all your participation and great comments today. You all have awesome ideas on how to create a positive team culture. Let's show our community that we embrace our new members in an inclusive and welcoming way. I'm excited to see the ways you all lead.

Note: If you plan to implement the full Athletes As Leaders program this season, give your athletes a preview of the program's Key Principles below that will guide your group discussions.

- Health & Safety
- Inclusive & Welcoming Community
- Empathy
- Consent
- Gender & Racial Equity
- Youth Leadership