ROOTED
ACADEMY

CONNECT.

COACH GUIDE AGES 12 TO 14

Connect skills to real games and real choices. A practice playbook for any sport, rec or travel.

DEVELOPMENT CULTURE™
PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

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START HERE

THE GOAL AT 12 TO 14.

Players who connect their skills to real games, own their choices and keep playing. Growth spurts, tryouts and early or late maturing make this the age many kids quit. Your job is to keep every player growing, not just the ones who look ready today.

1

EVERY KID GROWING

Late developers coached as hard as early ones.

2

EVERY KID HAS A VOICE

Players help plan, lead and review.

3

EVERY KID RETURNS

The age most kids quit. Not on your team.

PRACTICE AT A GLANCE

- **75 to 90 minutes**, 2 to 4 times a week by level and season
- **Game speed**, with decisions and fatigue
- **Small-sided and full-sided** games
- **One coaching point** at a time
- **Players lead** one part of practice
- **Check in** about school, stress and other activities

WHAT CAN WAIT

- Max-effort lifting
- Pressure to specialize before the player chooses
- Judging potential by one season
- Running as punishment
- Playing through pain

COACH THE KID IN FRONT OF YOU

Bodies and skills change fast from 12 to 14, and the gap between early and late developers is real. Every kid gets the same practice. Each player type gets one small extra focus, so every kid keeps growing.

EARLY DEVELOPER Bigger and faster right now	**Plus:** challenges size can't solve: limited touches, a new position, the hardest matchup. A 1:1 on leadership and humility. At home, technical work on their weaker side.
LATE DEVELOPER Still growing, often underestimated	**Plus:** extra skill reps and real game minutes. A reminder that size catches up and skills last. At home, a body-weight strength and movement routine.
NEW TO THIS LEVEL Just moved up, or missed a cut and kept going	**Plus:** a clear role and one goal set 1:1, plus a mentor teammate. At home, one skill focus a week and watching their position played at a higher level.
MULTI-SPORT ATHLETE Balancing two or more sports	**Plus:** a practice load planned around their other sports, and credit for skills that transfer. At home, rest and recovery come first.

THE FRAMEWORK

FIVE PILLARS.

Every practice touches all five. Let one or two lead each session.

1	**PHYSICAL & BODY HEALTH** Supervised strength training, form first. Re-teach movement during growth spurts. Recovery players own: fuel, water, sleep, speaking up about pain.	**Your move:** form first, then load and speed. Scale back during growth spurts.
2	**SPORT SKILLS** Skills at game speed and under fatigue. Position work grows; all-around skills stay.	**Your move:** game-speed reps, 8 to 10 minutes at a time. Corrections, one at a time.
3	**GAME IQ** Team tactics, reading opponents, adjusting mid-game.	**Your move:** players help plan and review: "What would you change?" Then affirm or correct.
4	**MENTAL + EMOTIONAL** Pressure, setbacks, cuts and playing time. Self-talk and routines. An identity bigger than one sport.	**Your move:** honest 1:1 check-ins. Teach a pre-game and next-play routine.
5	**CHARACTER + TEAM** Leadership, accountability, sportsmanship, self-advocacy: talking to the coach directly.	**Your move:** captain roles and player-led huddles. Character awards given by a teammate.

THE PRACTICE ARC.

Same five parts every practice. Pick a **theme of the day**: one skill, one pillar.

MOVE 12	SKILL 18	PURPOSE GAME 20	PLAY 20	5

1. ARRIVE AND MOVE	Player-led dynamic warm-up: mobility, landing, acceleration. Water bottles out.
2. SKILL BUILD	Theme skill at game speed. Change it every 8 to 10 minutes.
3. PLAY WITH A PURPOSE	Small-sided or situation game with one rule that rewards the theme.
4. PLAY THE GAME	Full-sided or close to it. Players call one timeout to adjust.
5. HUDDLE	One question, one player-led shout-out, one thing for home.
6. FUN FINISH OPTIONAL	End with a player's-choice game or a coaches vs. players round. Use it after a big weekend, as a reward for great effort, or when the team needs a reset.

DAY ONE

YOUR FIRST PRACTICE.

Set the standard: players help write team expectations, pick captain jobs and set their own goals.

BEFORE DAY ONE

- [ ] Roster with parent contacts and medical notes
- [ ] A welcome note to families: schedule, gear list, water bottle
- [ ] One or two parent volunteers to help run stations
- [ ] Equipment, first aid kit and a goal sheet for every player

GEAR CHECK

Soccer	Shin guards under socks, cleats, a ball
Basketball	Court shoes, a ball
Football	Cleats, mouthguard, a flag belt or a helmet and pads that fit
Baseball, softball	Glove, batting helmet that fits, bat at the right size, cleats
Lacrosse	Helmet or goggles, mouthguard, gloves and pads, a stick that fits
Volleyball	Knee pads, court shoes

Every sport: a full water bottle, shoes tied, layers for the weather. Helmets snug, straps fastened.

DAY ONE AGENDA

0 to 12
ARRIVE AND MOVE

GEAR CHECK + DYNAMIC WARM-UP

As players arrive, check gear and fit. Lead the warm-up yourself today and explain that captains run it from here on.

Say: "This is your team. Let's set the standard."

12 to 30
SKILL BUILD

SKILL CHECK + MOVEMENT SCREEN

Main skills at game speed. Watch landing, sprint form and skill level, and note player types.

Say: "Show me your best, not your fastest."

30 to 50
PURPOSE GAME

TEAM STANDARDS + MINI TOURNAMENT

Players write three team standards together and agree on captain jobs. Then short games, winners stay on.

50 to 70
PLAY

SCRIMMAGE

Full-sided. The coach stays quiet during play.

70 to 75
HUDDLE

GOAL KICKOFF

Each player writes one skill goal and one habit.

Ask: "What do you want to be known for this season?"

AFTER DAY ONE

- [ ] Jot down each player's type
- [ ] Book a 1:1 with every player in the next two weeks to review goals
- [ ] Send families a short recap, plus a list of any missing gear

SAMPLE PRACTICE · 75 MINUTES · 12 TO 16 PLAYERS

READ AND REACT.

Theme: **read and react** + **lead the team**

Read and react in any sport: see what the opponent gives you, decide early, act at game speed.

0 to 12
MOVE

CAPTAIN-LED WARM-UP
Captains run a dynamic warm-up: mobility, skips, shuffles, landing and three short sprints.

Say: "Captains, you've got it. I'll watch."

12 to 30
SKILL

READ THE PLAY
Groups of three with equipment. Read what the opponent gives you, then pick the move or target that beats it. Rotate every 2 minutes; change the challenge every 8 to 10.

Soccer, basketball, lacrosse: read the defender's position and choose the move or pass that beats it.

Football: read the defender's leverage and break to the open side.

Baseball, softball: read the runners and outs before the pitch, then the ball off the bat, and choose the throw.

Volleyball: read the block and send it to the open court.

Say: "What did they give you?"

30 to 50
PURPOSE GAME

SITUATION GAME
Coach sets a situation: down one with two minutes left, or a runner on second with one out. Players huddle 20 seconds, call the plan, then play it out. New situation every 4 minutes.

Say: "Decide early. Commit."

50 to 70
PLAY

FULL-SIDED SCRIMMAGE
Captains get one timeout per half to adjust the plan. The coach stays quiet during play.

Watch for: talking on the field, reading the defense, a captain lifting a teammate up.

70 to 75
HUDDLE

QUESTION, SHOUT-OUT, HOME
Clean up equipment, then: "What would you change if we played that again?" A player picks the character award. "Water, carbs, protein and 8 to 10 hours of sleep."

You need: equipment for each player, 20 cones, pinnies in three colors, goals or targets, a full field or court.

GOAL SETTING.
Athlete-led · Worksheets + tracker: rooted-academy.com/families/#goals

1. SET · WEEK 1
One skill goal and one habit each player owns: "I do my arm care before every practice."

2. CHECK · EVERY 2 WEEKS
A quick 1:1. What's working, what to adjust.

3. CELEBRATE · SEASON END
Players share their progress and set the next goal.

GAME BANK

EIGHT GAMES, ANY SPORT.

Every game works in every sport. Change the situation and the rule all season.

SITUATION GAME — 3 + 4

Coach sets the score, outs or clock. Players call the plan and play it out.

FREEZE AND EXPLAIN — 3

Coach calls "Freeze!" A player names the best option and why. Then play on.

PRESSURE CIRCUIT — 1 + 2

Four skill stations at game speed, 90 seconds each, short rest.

BEAT THE CLOCK — 2 + 4

Clean reps of your sport's skill in 60 seconds, right after a sprint.

PRESSURE TARGETS — 2 + 4

Hit a target with a defender, runner or clock adding pressure.

COACH YOUR PARTNER — 3 + 5

Partners give one tip: name, what to do, why it helps. Then switch.

MINI TOURNAMENT — 3 + 5

Three teams, short games, winners stay on. Captains set lineups.

CAPTAIN'S CHOICE — 4 + 5

A captain picks and runs one drill from the team's favorites.

TRANSLATE THE GAMES TO YOUR SPORT

Every game above says "move the ball" and "a game situation." Here's what that means in your sport.

SPORT	MOVE THE BALL MEANS...	A GAME SITUATION MEANS...
Soccer	Dribble, pass, first touch under pressure	Down a goal, 3 minutes left
Basketball	Dribble, pass, attack the closeout	Down 2, 30 seconds, our ball
Football	Throw, catch, run routes	Third and 5, 2 minutes left
Baseball, softball	Field, throw, hit to a spot	Runner on second, one out
Lacrosse	Cradle, pass, dodge	Man-up for 30 seconds
Volleyball	Serve, pass, attack	Down 2, game point

Any game: everyone plays real minutes, keep the pace high, let players run one part.

MAKE IT FUN!

- **Coaches vs. players:** a 5 minute game they'll talk about all week
- **Player-designed drill:** one player builds the warm-up game each week
- **Music on:** players pick the warm-up playlist
- **Mini tournaments:** captains draft teams, winners stay on
- **Team records:** a team best to beat each week
- **Wild-card rules:** a mid-game rule change everyone has to adjust to

CLIPBOARD PAGE

WHAT TO SAY.

TRY THIS	INSTEAD OF
"What did you see there?"	~~"What were you thinking?"~~
"Here's what will earn more minutes."	~~"You're not ready."~~
"Next play. What's the fix?"	~~"Don't do that again."~~
"Come talk to me directly anytime."	~~"Have your parents email me."~~

PRE-GAME ROUTINE

Help each player build one: a breath, a cue word, a picture of their first play. Rehearse it at practice.

HONEST CHECK-INS

"How are school, sleep and other sports going?" Two players each practice, 1:1.

FUEL AND REST.

WATER

Every player brings a full bottle, two on tournament days. Breaks every 15 to 20 minutes, more in the heat.

FUEL

Carbs and protein before and after every practice and game. Growing bodies need steady fuel.

SLEEP

9 to 12 hours a night at 12, and 8 to 10 hours at 13 and 14.

REST

1 to 2 days off a week, and 2 to 3 months a year away from any one sport. Plan that movie night with a friend!

Slow down if a player has pain that lingers or changes how they move, loses effort or sleep, or starts to dread practice. Tell the parents and suggest they check in with their doctor or the club's PT.

MORALE BOOSTER · CHARACTER BUILDING

THE SUPERPOWER CIRCLE.

A close that builds trust: players name a teammate's superpower and the moment it showed up, win or lose. It shows what this team values.

WHEN TO USE IT After a loss · After a tough practice · When the team feels flat · Before a big game · Any time a team needs a lift

HOW TO RUN IT

1 CIRCLE UP
Everyone sits or kneels in a circle, equipment down, eyes in.

2 COACH FIRST
Name another coach's superpower so players hear how it sounds.
Say: "Coach Dan's superpower is how he owns his mistakes. He showed us how today."

3 GO AROUND
Toss a ball around the circle, or draw names. Every player gets named once. After the first time, a captain can run it.
Starter: "[Name]'s superpower is ____. It showed up when ____."

4 CLOSE IT
Hands in, a team word on three, then home.

WHAT GOOD SOUNDS LIKE

"Maya's superpower is talking on defense. It showed up when she called the switch that saved a goal."

NAME	STEER AWAY FROM
☐ **Cheering others on**	~~Scoring the most~~
☐ **Never quitting on a play**	~~Being the best~~
☐ **Helping a teammate up**	~~Cool gear~~
☐ **Trying new things**	~~Put-down jokes~~

COACH TIPS

- ☐ Keep it about effort and character, not stats.
- ☐ No inside jokes or backhanded compliments. It has to be real.
- ☐ The teammate says "Thank you." No brushing it off.
- ☐ After a loss, end with one thing the team takes into next week.

Why it works: players learn what their teammates notice and value, and every player gets a moment to be seen. In the Practice Plan Builder, check **Superpower close** to add it to any practice.

COPY THIS PAGE

MY PRACTICE PLAN.

DATE _____ SKILL THEME _____ PILLAR THEME _____

PART	MIN	GAME OR ACTIVITY · COACHING POINT
1. ARRIVE AND MOVE		
2. SKILL BUILD		
3. PLAY WITH A PURPOSE		
4. PLAY THE GAME		
5. HUDDLE		

HUDDLE QUESTION _____ WHAT WORKED? _____

PILLARS THIS PRACTICE TOUCHED · TICK EACH ONE

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PHYSICAL & BODY HEALTH	**SPORT SKILLS**	**GAME IQ**	**MENTAL + EMOTIONAL**	**CHARACTER + TEAM**
Form first, then load and speed	Game speed, one fix at a time	Ask "what would you change?"	Routines and check-ins	Captains and player-led huddles

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BUILD THE ATHLETE.
PERFORMANCE WILL FOLLOW.

More coach guides and the Development Culture™ self-assessment at **rooted-academy.com**

SOURCES

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