ROOTED
ACADEMY

BUILD.

COACH GUIDE AGES 9 TO 11

The best window to learn skills. A practice playbook for any sport, rec or travel.

DEVELOPMENT CULTURE™
PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

ROOTED-ACADEMY.COM

START HERE

THE GOAL AT 9 TO 11.

Kids who build real skills, make smart choices and still love the game. This is the best window to learn sport skills. Rec and travel start to split here, so protect the basics and the downtime.

1

EVERY KID IMPROVING

One process goal each, tracked all season.

2

EVERY KID ENGAGED

Small groups, equipment for each player, no one waiting.

3

EVERY KID RETURNS

Still the real scoreboard.

PRACTICE AT A GLANCE

- **60 to 75 minutes**, 2 to 3 times a week
- **Half or more** is game-like
- **3v3 to 7v7**, plus small-sided games
- **One coaching point** at a time
- **Talks under 60 seconds**
- **Rotate positions**, with more time where they want to grow

WHAT CAN WAIT

- Year-round single-sport training
- 30+ game fall or spring seasons
- Heavy conditioning and laps as punishment
- Adult-style systems and set plays
- Ranking players publicly
- Max-effort lifting

COACH THE KID IN FRONT OF YOU

Skill gaps grow fast from 9 to 11. Every kid gets the same practice. Each player type then gets one small extra focus, so every kid keeps growing at their own pace.

NEWBIE

New to this sport, often joining friends who've played for years

Plus: a few minutes of 1:1 fundamentals with a parent volunteer during skill build, and a teammate buddy for drills. At home, watch the sport and practice one simple drill a week.

ADVANCED

A few seasons in, often ahead of the group

Plus: leads a demo and partners with other skilled players in drills. A quick 1:1 to teach game and field leadership, then they apply it at practice and during games. At home, take on an advanced skill challenge.

ATHLETE, NEW TO GAME

Fast and coordinated, still learning this sport

Plus: leads the agility drills and gets extra reps on sport skills. At home, watch a game and notice where players move, and master one skill drill a week.

DEVELOPING PLAYER

Loves the game, still building coordination and strength

Plus: 1:1 time with a parent volunteer on agility and coordination, in small, simple steps. At home, karaoke, slides and squats, plus push-ups, sit-ups and planks.

THE FRAMEWORK

FIVE PILLARS.

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

1	**PHYSICAL & BODY HEALTH** Agility, balance, speed. Body-weight strength with good form. Fuel for practice, game and tournament days.	**Your move:** form first, then reps and speed. Track strength at season start, middle and end: push-ups, sit-ups, planks. Nutrition, sleep and recovery tips at practice close.
2	**SPORT SKILLS** Refine technique, then add light pressure: a defender, a time limit, a decision.	**Your move:** drills, 5 to 8 minutes at a time. Add one layer of pressure at a time. Corrections, one at a time.
3	**GAME IQ** Spacing, support, offense and defense roles. Players start explaining why.	**Your move:** freeze the game and ask, "What do you see?" Let players answer first, then affirm or correct.
4	**MENTAL + EMOTIONAL** Next play. Process goals they pick and control. Confidence that isn't tied to the score.	**Your move:** praise effort, give space for frustration, ask for a reset after a bad game.
5	**CHARACTER + TEAM** Own mistakes, encourage teammates, take coaching, shake hands, small leadership jobs.	**Your move:** rotate captain jobs. Character awards given by a teammate. Recognize an opponent who made a good play.

THE PRACTICE ARC.

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

MOVE 10	SKILL 15	PURPOSE GAME 15	PLAY 15	5

1. ARRIVE AND MOVE	Dynamic warm-up with landing and change of direction. Water bottles out.
2. SKILL BUILD	Theme skill, then add pressure. Change it every 5 to 8 minutes.
3. PLAY WITH A PURPOSE	Small-sided game with one rule that rewards the theme.
4. PLAY THE GAME	5v5 to 7v7. Freeze it twice, at most, to ask what players see.
5. HUDDLE	One question, one shout-out, a check on process goals.
6. FUN FINISH OPTIONAL	End with a game the team votes on: after a tough weekend, as a reward, or when focus is fading.

DAY ONE

YOUR FIRST PRACTICE.

Meet the team, set team values, take a strength baseline and see where every player is starting.

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 strength baseline sheet

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 10
ARRIVE AND MOVE

GEAR CHECK + FOLLOW THE LEADER

As players arrive, check gear and fit. One leader per lap, then 5 squat jumps with soft landings and a partner ball warm-up.

Say: "Welcome! Here's how we play together."

10 to 25
SKILL BUILD

SKILL CHECK + STRENGTH BASELINE

Stations for the main skills while you note player types. Partners count push-ups, sit-ups and a plank hold; write the numbers down.

Say: "This is your starting line."

25 to 40
PURPOSE GAME

TEAM VALUES + KING OF THE COURT/FIELD

Players help pick three team values, like "lift each other up." Then three small teams rotate; winners stay on.

40 to 55
PLAY

SMALL-SIDED GAME

Everyone plays. Rotate roles. No sideline coaching.

55 to 60
HUDDLE

GOAL KICKOFF

Each player picks one process goal. Hand out the goal worksheet.

Ask: "What's one goal you control this season?"

AFTER DAY ONE

- [ ] Jot down each player's type
- [ ] Save the strength numbers for mid-season and end of season
- [ ] Send families a short recap, plus a list of any missing gear

SAMPLE PRACTICE · 60 MINUTES · 10 TO 14 KIDS

EYES UP. GAME AWARENESS.

Theme: **eyes up** + **next play**

Eyes up and game awareness in any sport: look before the ball arrives. Know your teammates, the open space, the score, the clock or count, and your next move.

0 to 10
MOVE

FOLLOW THE LEADER + STICK THE LANDING

One leader per lap: jog, backpedal, shuffle, skip. Then 5 squat jumps, landing soft with knees over toes. Finish with a ball warm-up with a partner: throwing, kicking or passing.

Say: "Stick it. Quiet landing."

10 to 25
SKILL

EYES UP SKILL CHECK

Each player works their sport's main skill with eyes up. Add pressure every 5 to 8 minutes.
Soccer, basketball, lacrosse, hockey: move the ball while calling the coach's fingers.
Baseball, softball: before each ground ball, call the outs and your throw. Then field it and throw there.
Volleyball: call the open zone before you send it.

Say: "Know your play options and stay aware."

25 to 40
PURPOSE GAME

FREEZE AND CALL IT

Small-sided game in your sport. Anytime the coach calls "Freeze!", players stop and point to their best play option: an open teammate, a base or a zone. Right call earns a point.
Baseball, softball: live situations. The coach sets the outs and runners, then hits. Fielders call the play before the pitch, then make it. A correct play earns a point.

Say: "What are your options right now?"

40 to 55
PLAY

6V6 WITH YOUR SPORT'S SCORING

Rotate roles. No sideline coaching.

Watch for: eyes up before receiving, a quick reset after a mistake.

55 to 60
HUDDLE

QUESTION, GOALS, HOME

Clean up equipment, then: "When did looking up help you decide?" Each player rates their process goal with 1, 2 or 3 fingers. "Water, carbs, protein and a good sleep tonight."

You need: equipment for each player, 20 cones, pinnies in three colors, 4 small goals or targets, two small fields or courts.

GOAL SETTING.

Process over outcome · Worksheets + tracker: rooted-academy.com/families/#goals

1. SET · WEEK 1
One process goal each player controls: "I call for the ball when I'm open."

2. CHECK · WEEKLY
1, 2 or 3 fingers in the huddle. Adjust it at midseason.

3. CELEBRATE · SEASON END
Share the progress with families. Set the next goal.

GAME BANK

EIGHT GAMES, ANY SPORT.

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

FREEZE AND CALL IT — 3

In any game, the coach calls "Freeze!" Players point to their best option. Right call earns a point.

SITUATION GAME — 3 + 4

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

PRESSURE TARGETS — 2 + 4

Target challenge with a defender, runner or clock adding pressure. Hit it, step back.

BEAT THE CLOCK — 2 + 4

Clean reps of your sport's skill in 60 seconds. Beat the team record.

COACH YOUR PARTNER — 3 + 5

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

SHARKS WITH SKILL — 1 + 2

Sharks and Minnows where minnows move the ball their sport's way.

KING OF THE COURT/FIELD — 3 + 5

Three small teams rotate. Winners stay on; everyone plays every few minutes.

RELAY SKILL RACE — 1 + 5

Relays with a skill at the turn. New teams every round; cheer every runner.

TRANSLATE THE GAMES TO YOUR SPORT

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

SPORT	MOVE THE BALL MEANS...	ADD PRESSURE MEANS...
Soccer	Dribble, both feet	A defender closing in, two-touch limit
Basketball	Dribble, both hands	A hand up on defense, shot clock
Football	Throw, catch, run routes	A pass-rush count, a live defender
Baseball, softball	Field, throw, catch	A live runner to beat to the base
Lacrosse	Cradle, scoop, both hands	A checking defender, shot clock
Volleyball	Bump, set, rally	Live serves, smaller target zones

Any game: everyone plays, keep numbers small, add one layer of pressure at a time.

MAKE IT FUN!

- **Foam ball tag:** soft foam baseball, football or kickball; tag players or coaches out
- **Power-ups:** a golden ball or bonus round worth double
- **Rewards:** a clutch chain or magic move award that moves to a new player each week
- **Coaches or parents vs. kids:** a short game to end practice
- **Silly targets:** balloons, cone or bat stacks, a bucket
- **Mini tournaments:** short games, winners stay on
- **Team records:** beat the team best each week

TEAMMATES COACH TEAMMATES.

The best teams at 9 to 11 aren't built around one star. They're built on players helping each other. A center fielder's success depends on the right fielder backing up first. When experienced players lift up newer ones, the whole team gets better.

THE COACH'S JOB

Make helping expected and kindness required. Experienced players are leaders, not critics. No eye rolls, no put-downs, no one gets talked down to. You set the tone, and the team follows it.

HOW TO GIVE TEAMMATE FEEDBACK

Name + what to do + why it helps us

Baseball: "Sam, back up first. If it gets past, we stop the extra base."

Soccer: "Maya, drop back with me. Together they can't get through."

Basketball: "Leo, cut to the open side. I'll find you."

BUILD IT INTO PRACTICE

- **Pair players up:** experienced with newer in skill build, then switch who teaches
- **Freeze and teach:** pause the game and ask a player to show a teammate where to stand
- **Assist of the day:** players name a teammate who helped them
- **Captains help first:** their main job is making others better
- **Address put-downs right away:** calmly, privately, every time

TEAMMATE TALK

TEACH PLAYERS TO SAY	INSTEAD OF
"I've got your back. Slide over here."	~~"Why weren't you there?"~~
"Next time, back me up. We cover more."	~~"You're always in the wrong spot."~~
"Shake it off. Next play."	~~Eye rolls, arms up, silence~~
"Yes! That's exactly it."	~~Saying nothing when they get it right~~

Why it matters: teaching a teammate deepens a player's own Game IQ, newer players gain confidence faster, and experienced players learn leadership. Everyone's success is connected.

CLIPBOARD PAGE

WHAT TO SAY.

TRY THIS	INSTEAD OF
"What did you see?"	~~"Wrong!"~~
"Great decision, even if it didn't work."	~~"Nice shot."~~
"What will you try next time?"	~~"How many times do I have to tell you?"~~
"Who made the team better today?"	~~"Who scored?"~~

NEXT-PLAY RESET

Same reset all season: a clap, a word, a deep breath. Use it after every mistake, yours included.

PROCESS GOAL CHECK

"What's your goal this week, and how did it go?" Ask two players each practice.

FUEL AND REST.

WATER

Every player brings a full water bottle. Water breaks every 30 minutes, timed around drills. More in the heat.

FUEL

Carbs and protein before and after: fruit, a sandwich, yogurt. Pack extra on tournament days.

SLEEP

9 to 12 hours a night for ages 9 to 12. Late games and early practices add up.

REST

Off days are part of training. Plan that movie night with a friend!

Slow down if a kid limps, has pain that keeps coming back, seems worn out or starts to dread practice. Tell the parents and suggest they check in with their doctor or the club's PT.

A HEALTHY SEASON AT 9 TO 11.

- **15 to 20 games a season**, all in: 1 game day a week, 2 to 3 practices per game
- **Up to 2 tournaments** a season, with rest between games
- **One team per sport** per season
- **1 to 2 days off** a week; weekly hours no higher than their age
- **2+ weeks off** between seasons; 2 to 3 months a year away from any one sport
- **Baseball and softball:** follow Pitch Smart pitch counts and 4 months off throwing a year

MORALE BOOSTER · CHARACTER BUILDING

THE SUPERPOWER CIRCLE.

A quick close where every player names a teammate's superpower and when it showed. It moves the focus from the scoreboard to effort and character.

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 staying positive. He kept us going when we were down."

3 GO AROUND
Toss a ball around the circle. The thrower names the catcher. Every player gets named once, and the coach makes sure nobody is last every time.
Starter: "[Name]'s superpower is ____. I saw it when ____."

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

WHAT GOOD SOUNDS LIKE

"Leo's superpower is never giving up. I saw it when he chased down that ball in the last inning."

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

- One sentence each keeps it fast and real.
- Stuck? Offer two choices: "Was it hustle or helping a teammate?"
- The teammate says "Thank you." No brushing it off.
- Watch who gets a vague one. Name something specific for them next time.

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 reps and speed	Add pressure one layer at a time	Ask "what do you see?"	Process goals, next play	Rotate captain jobs

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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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