

**USA  
ULTIMATE**



# **RESOURCE GUIDE**



# USA RESOURCE GUIDE

# ULTIMATE



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PART 1

# Ultimate Organizations

## Organizational Structures



# Organizational Structures

*The following chapter provides suggested guidelines and other helpful information for developing a capable and stable organizational structure for a local Ultimate organization. In this chapter, “organizational structure” means the named positions in an organization and the authority and responsibilities that each position has.*

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## Organizational structures are important

Here are a few reasons why it is worth spending time and energy defining and improving the structure of a local Ultimate organization:

**Preventing volunteer burnout** Local Ultimate organizations are fueled largely—if not entirely—by volunteer effort. Keeping volunteers feeling good about their efforts and not feeling overworked helps keep current volunteers involved...and a good organizational structure can help with this.

**Long-term stability** In all local Ultimate organizations, the people who keep the organization going will eventually move on, so the key to keeping things going is to develop the organization so that it is not too dependent on any one person. Creating a solid organizational structure is one of the best ways to do this.

**Greater effectiveness** Whatever the priorities of a local Ultimate organization—whether increasing the number of players in the local area, teaching the sport to new players or to youth, or increasing the variety or quality of playing options available—these priorities will be better accomplished with a good organizational structure.

## Basic organizational structures

This chapter divides the types of positions in an Ultimate organization into four groups:

**The board of directors** The person or group at the top of the organization, in charge of overseeing all that the organization does;

**League and tournament-specific positions** Volunteers<sup>1</sup> whose jobs are directed at a specific event, such as a league or tournament;

**Year-round administrative positions** Volunteers whose jobs exist across multiple leagues or tournaments;

**Paid staff** Individuals who fill some of the roles of one or more of the above categories working for pay as an employee or contractor.

Ultimate organizations of any size need a single structure in charge of overseeing the organization as a whole—a person or a group responsible for everything the organization does. In most non-profit organizations and many for-profit organizations, this job belongs to a board of directors. This chapter explains

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<sup>1</sup> Positions are assumed to be filled by “volunteers” unless otherwise stated. In this chapter, “volunteer” includes those given some incentive or reward for their effort when the reward is small compared to “reasonable” wages for the job. For example, free league fees or a gift certificate. For most local Ultimate organizations, the majority of labor is provided on a volunteer basis; paid staff is the exception. There can be some gray area between volunteer and paid positions, such as those for which a nominal stipend is provided. Stipends are discussed in this chapter under the section on paid staff.

the benefits of a board (of directors) and then assumes that a local organization has a board or some equivalent group at the top of the organizational structure.

An organization's first volunteers after its board will usually be volunteers devoted to running a particular league or tournament. In a small organization—one with fewer than, say, 200 members—the board of directors can handle most of the administrative tasks that exist across multiple events, tasks like managing finances or buying insurance, leaving only event-specific duties for other volunteers. These positions can be filled either by individuals or by teams (committees).

Once an organization is large enough that the board can no longer handle administrative tasks while also managing all of its events (leagues, tournaments, etc.) and looking toward the future, it should create year-round administrative positions. These volunteers handle specific administrative tasks in order to reduce the board's workload and allow the board to focus on overseeing its events and planning for the future.

Finally, both event-specific and year-round positions can be filled by paid staff people rather than volunteers. Most local Ultimate organizations do not have the budget to support full-time staff, but those organizations that have employed a full-time staff person report very positive results. If a full-time employee is not feasible, there are a few less expensive alternatives that are discussed below. As an organization grows, employing paid staff becomes more and more important for managing the organization's affairs without burning out volunteers.

## The Board of Directors

An organization must have some person or group in charge of the organization as a whole. (Otherwise, it is not really a single organization.) This body supervises the efforts of all the other volunteers and staff in the organization. In most non-profit organizations and many for-profit organizations, this job belongs to a board of directors. In a legally incorporated non-profit organization, the board of directors has fiduciary duty to the organization; they are legally responsible for overseeing the affairs of the organization, devoting their efforts to help the organization accomplish its mission. In organizations that are not legally incorporated, the board of directors can still serve as a very beneficial model.

While an organization could be headed by a single individual, there are several advantages that favor a group like a board of directors:

**Continuity and stability** A board helps the organization have continuity and stability whenever a volunteer moves on. Volunteers always move on eventually, and the local organization is much better equipped to handle these transitions if there are others at the helm to pick up where one person leaves off.

**Greater resources** No matter how dedicated an individual is, a group of people will almost always be capable of accomplishing more at a lower stress level.

**Volunteer recruitment** A group of people will tend to have more resources for recruiting new volunteers than an individual will.

**Improved odds of finding the highly-motivated** Volunteer organizations—even those headed by a well run board—tend to rely heavily on the efforts of especially dedicated people, and finding these people tends to happen more if there are more people to look for them.

**Democratic representation** A community of players will have diverse opinions, and a group will tend to represent those opinions more faithfully than an individual.

## Officers and Authority

An organization run mostly, or entirely, by volunteers is one where no one, even its board of directors, will have much power. But a well-run board of directors can be highly respected by the organization's members, and this is an important goal for the board to work toward.

The board should choose officers—at a minimum, three key roles must be filled by a certain person:

**1. Chairperson or president** One person given the job of facilitating the board's work, its discussions, deliberations, and votes; the chairperson doesn't have any authority over other board members, but does have some authority to start, stop, or direct discussion.

**2. Secretary** One person responsible for recording important decisions and work done by the board, at least minutes of meetings and especially a record of votes taken.

**3. Treasurer** One person in charge of tracking and managing the organization's finances.

Each of these people may—and should—have a backup. For example, a vice president is often elected so that someone is identified ahead of time if a replacement for the president/chairperson is needed.



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It may also make sense for an organization to create other officer positions on the board; some discussion of this appears below.

Each member of the board has an equal vote on all matters the board decides on. (Officers hold no extra authority.) This can be important for maintaining an inclusive and “democratic” atmosphere on the board and in the organization.

## Guidelines for Board Meetings and Discussion

Boards of Directors usually follow some portion of Robert’s Rules of Order, the nearly-universal procedures for deliberative bodies, ranging from local clubs to the United States Congress. Robert’s Rules, in their entirety, are probably a bit too cumbersome for a local Ultimate organization’s board of directors, since they provide a very specific framework for managing the debates of very large groups. The local organization should decide for itself what policies or guidelines make sense to keep board meetings moving along efficiently. At a minimum, the board should take formal votes on any matters that impact policies or procedures moving forward. It is important for the board to have a record of decisions that were made at prior board meetings, rather than rely on the memory of current board members.

While the board’s decisions will normally follow a simple majority (>50%) or sometimes a super majority (usually either 60% or 2/3)<sup>2</sup>, it is a good idea to work toward consensus. A board of 7 or 9 members can usually find some common ground, and decisions that are unanimous or nearly unanimous are more likely to be widely accepted and supported. Such decisions are also more likely to stand for a long period of time, whereas more controversial decisions are more likely to be overturned before long, making the organization’s policies less stable. A little extra patience and time invested in getting closer to consensus can be a big help for the smooth running of the board and the organization.

## Priorities for Board Agendas

Before each board meeting, a member of the board of directors must create an agenda for the meeting. The agenda should reflect the priorities the board feels are most important for it to discuss at this particular meeting. One thought that can be good to keep in mind in creating meeting agendas and in facilitating meetings is that the board of directors is the body in

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<sup>2</sup> The organization must document in its by-laws what types of votes require a simple majority and what types require a super majority; by-laws are discussed later.

the organization most centrally responsible for the organization’s long-term well-being. The board will invariably be pulled toward more urgent, shorter-term issues, but the board will be more effective and more responsive to the organization’s “mission”<sup>3</sup> the more it insists on thinking about long-term considerations even though other things are more urgent. (Other things will *always* be more urgent.)

Here are two strategies that can be a big help in allowing the board to focus on longer term issues. First, plan all events and activities at least six months ahead; for everything the organization does, have the board address as many issues as possible as far in advance as possible so that it can consistently devote some meeting time to long-term issues. Second, delegate enough responsibility so that members of the board are not heavily-loaded doing the organization’s day-to-day work; creating new positions and working to fill them with committed volunteers can be a big help.

## League- and Tournament-Specific Positions

Once the organization runs more than one or two events—leagues or tournaments—or has more than a hundred or so people, the board alone will not be able to do all of the organization’s work. As soon as possible, the board should appoint volunteers to perform important jobs that can be done outside the board. The first such jobs will usually be event-specific positions, such as a director of a certain league or tournament.

The organization’s board should appoint at least one or preferably two people to be responsible for a given event. It is important that these volunteers communicate well with the board, so the board should choose volunteers who are not only capable and committed, but who also are easy to communicate and deal with. It is also important that these volunteers get plenty of support—particularly being told how things have been done in the past along with suggestions, assistance, contact information, and so on.

For larger events, one or two people will not be able to run the entire event on their own without being overworked. For these events especially, and for generally all events, it is helpful to create a team of volunteers who work together to make the event happen and spread the work to enough people that no one

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<sup>3</sup> If the organization is incorporated, it will have to create an official mission statement. While this can be nothing more than a legal hoop to jump through, the organization is best served by creating a mission statement (whether legally incorporating or not) by thinking hard about the purpose the organization is meant to serve. More on this appears below.

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becomes burned out. The team can be a combination of the event leaders, year-round administrative volunteers, board members, and others. It is helpful to make it clear what the structure of authority is for the team, but there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to structure such a team, other than to make sure that one or two ‘head’ people are identified who are responsible for making sure everything is done in a timely fashion.

## Year-round Administrative Positions

In addition to event-specific positions, an organization can benefit from volunteers who hold year-round administrative positions. Certain tasks must be repeated for each league or tournament that is held—for example, reserving fields, purchasing merchandise like shirts and discs, creating a schedule, and so on. Such tasks can be done efficiently by someone who has done them before, so it makes sense to put someone in charge of doing or helping with a specific task when it comes up for each event.

Exactly what positions should be created in this category may depend on the organization, its size, how many events it holds, but here are a few positions that are likely to be helpful:

**Field reservations officer** Maintains a list of fields that have been used and contact information for the fields’ owners, and does the work required to reserve fields when necessary,

**Field maintenance director and staff** Works to maintain fields the organization plays on,

**Tech person or team** Maintains organization’s website and email lists, helps with publishing schedules and rosters, helps with gathering scores (hopefully using online score-reporting),

**Volunteer recruiter/coordinator** Talks to potential volunteers, persuades them to volunteer, and matches volunteers to tasks/responsibilities as positions become open,

**Volunteer manager** Supervises the work of the other administrative volunteers and possibly the event-specific volunteers, makes sure the necessary support is provided, coordinates the work of various volunteers, and serves as a liaison between the board and the administrative volunteers.

Having a set of volunteers who take care of tasks that have to be repeated for each league or tournament can make the event-specific volunteers’ jobs a lot easier, which can make it easier to recruit volunteers and also make it more likely that volunteers will be willing to return and serve in the same role the next year.

In order to determine what positions should be created in this category, one approach is simply to make a list of all the major tasks that have to be done for each league or tournament that is held. Next, determine which tasks are repeated in largely the same way for multiple events in the same year. Then create a position for each major task. Each position should involve a manageable but significant amount of work; if there is too little work involved in the job then it should be grouped with some other position, and if there is too much work then the position should be split into two or more positions. “Too little” or “too much” is determined by the workload a “normal” volunteer can handle without feeling excessively burdened—assuming they find the work itself fairly enjoyable, the workload should be light enough that they will consider continuing in their role year after year.

## Committees

Any role in the organization could, in principle, be filled by either an individual or a group/committee. Each option has advantages and disadvantages. As discussed above, it is helpful for the organization’s top authority to be a group. Many other volunteer positions are better filled by individuals. Generally, an individual can perform a task more efficiently than a committee. That is, an individual can usually complete a task in fewer total hours, and volunteer time is probably the most important but scarce resource the organization has. Committees, however, can be a useful way to address important or difficult questions that can benefit from discussion and varying points of view. Committees can also provide a way to delegate a task that is too large for a single volunteer to handle without being overloaded.

Also, some very large events—a major tournament or large and complicated league—require a sizable group of volunteers and naming a group of people to take charge of it can be beneficial both because it allows each person to have a less demanding role and because it helps build a larger volunteer base. In these cases, it is important to identify a chairperson for the committee who is responsible for coordinating the committee’s efforts and insuring tasks are completed in a timely manner.

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## Compensation and Paid Staff

Volunteer effort is the cornerstone of virtually all Ultimate organizations. As organizations grow, however, it becomes difficult to manage them and sustain their growth without having at least one person who is able to devote more time on a consistent daily basis than a volunteer can give. Furthermore, some jobs are difficult or time-consuming enough that it is hard to recruit for them without offering some significant incentive. This section offers brief remarks about two concepts for compensating individuals—paid staff people, and stipends for specific tasks/jobs.

### Paid Staff

When an organization becomes large enough, it reaches a point where employing a part-time or full-time staff person becomes a virtual necessity...for a larger organization, the work can be too much for an all-volunteer workforce to keep day-to-day work under control while also focusing on longer-term issues. Having an employee to help manage volunteers can be a huge help toward making things more manageable.

One potential danger with having an employee is that the employee—by replacing volunteers—can become more familiar with all of the organization's affairs than anyone else, so if she/he leaves it can create a big hole in the organization's ability to get things done. One way to avoid this problem is to task the employee primarily with recruiting and coordinating volunteers, and insure that the employee is constantly training and delegating tasks to volunteers.

Organizations that have hired a part-time or full-time employee have reported very positive results from doing so. It can seem like a big step to hire an employee, and a difficult expense to afford. It is certainly important to have a clear financial plan for affording an employee's salary. But if it the organization can afford it, a paid staff person can be a huge help in allowing the organization to reach its goals.

### Stipends

Before an organization grows to the point where paid staff becomes feasible, it may still find that recruiting for certain large jobs is difficult enough that a financial incentive can be a big help. In these cases, a solution could be to offer a stipend for the job. The amount offered will usually not represent a competitive "hourly wage" for the job, but should be enough that a person feels somewhat better about giving up a substantial amount of free time to perform the job.

This amount will naturally vary by the task, and the organization will have to "feel out" what amount seems appropriate.

Offering stipends may produce multiple volunteers for the same job. It is probably a good idea to be prepared for this and to have some criteria and process for selecting among applicants. The organization's members will appreciate being able to see that the process is open and fair.

## Command Process

This section offers remarks about "command" process, the way that authority is exercised. The leaders of the organization manage responsibilities and jobs partly through the organizational structure—who has what job—but largely through "managing" peer volunteers. This can be extremely challenging—while volunteers typically have a genuine concern for things working out well, they are usually very short on time and a leader has only a limited amount of authority over them (since the volunteer can easily quit). Here are a few things a leader can do to help the command process work more effectively.

### Delegation

For the board of directors and other leaders in the organization, it is essential to delegate as much work and responsibility as possible. There is generally far more to do than the board or a manager alone can do, and the more that can be delegated, the more time will be available to work toward longer-term goals. Delegating work to volunteers can be difficult, however, since there may not appear to be anyone prepared to take up a given task. It often seems easier just to do the work oneself rather than take time to find someone to whom it can be delegated.

In order to overcome this sort of obstacle, the first point is to work hard to stay ahead of schedule. Delegating is easier if there is time to look around for a willing volunteer. The second point is to be willing to ask friends or acquaintances to help; do it gently, so that it is as easy as possible for them to say "no," and be prepared for some people to decline. Third, write down the job that needs to be done—be as specific as possible and make sure the volunteer understands the task well. (This is a case where email can be a big help.)

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## Managing Volunteers

As mentioned above, managing volunteers can be difficult because “authority” over them is always very limited. But a few basic, perhaps common-sense, people-skills can be a huge help. First, remember that a volunteer always has to be asked to do something. Avoid phrases like “I want you to...” or “your job will be to...” Instead, use phrases like, “Would you be willing to...?” or “I need someone to... Do you think you could help with that?” Second, be patient and understanding; volunteers are donating their free time, and while the board member or manager doing the delegating might also be a volunteer, not everyone will be able to make the same level of commitment.

That said, be willing to gently encourage volunteers to get things done—keep track of their progress, and make sure they don’t forget about deadlines or commitments that they previously accepted. Forgetting or losing track of time is one of the more likely reasons a volunteer might not get something done on time. Again, asking for a progress report will work better than high-pressure remarks like “don’t forget that your deadline is coming up.” It is important to make volunteers’ experiences as positive as possible, so that they will be more likely to volunteer in the future.

Finally, do not be afraid to ask a volunteer to step aside; once all reasonable efforts have been made to help someone get a job done, if it simply is not working, politely “ask” the volunteer to pass the role on to a new appointee. Firing volunteers is something that must be done rarely and carefully, or it becomes more difficult to recruit new volunteers.

## Communication

A large portion of the organization’s communication is likely to be done via email. To the extent possible, email should be avoided in favor of face-to-face or telephone conversations. Sometimes, written communication is helpful because it creates a record of exactly what is discussed or agreed to. But, as a rule, speaking with a person allows more details to be communicated more quickly and misunderstandings are often more easily avoided. A discussion can often go into greater detail and more effectively deal with difficult or controversial subjects. There are obviously cases where email can be helpful; face-to-face and phone discussions are highlighted here because the natural tendency will be to gravitate towards email.

Whether communication is written or oral, keep in mind the points above regarding delegation and managing volunteers.

## Incorporation

One step that can provide a number of advantages for an organization is to incorporate as a non-profit, or tax-exempt, organization. This can be done at any time—the organization need not have reached any particular size. It does take a significant amount of work, but offers several advantages:

**Tax-exempt status** Incorporating as a non-profit offers exemption from federal and other taxes, which can be a significant financial advantage,

**Legal protection** Incorporation offers legal advantages, including some degree of liability protection, to the organization’s officers and members,

**Legitimacy** Incorporated organizations often receive greater respect, including greater access to fields or possible approval for grants,

**Focus** The process of incorporating, which requires developing official mission statement and a set of by-laws, formally identifies the organization’s purpose and over time this can keep the organization from ignoring important reasons that it exists.

The downside for incorporating is that it takes quite a bit of work and its benefits will not always be immediate or obvious.

## Status Options

This section refers to the United States tax code. Organizations outside the United States should consult a local expert on non-profit or tax-exempt organizations.

There are two primary tax-exempt “non-profit” status options under which the local Ultimate organization may choose to incorporate. They are referred to as “501(c)3” and “501(c)4,” both named according to the section of the IRS tax code under which they appear. The former, 501(c)3, is the designation of a “charitable organization,” which allows the organization to accept tax-deductible donations. The latter, 501(c)4, is the designation for civic leagues or organizations, including those for recreational purposes.

Naturally, 501(c)3 is a more difficult designation to be approved for. “Providing adult recreational leagues”

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is not a purpose for which the IRS has expressed a willingness to grant 501(c)3 status. Ultimate organizations that have received 501(c)3 status have identified their mission as including either “education” or “fostering national and international athletic competition” (or both), purposes which the IRS has identified as appropriate for 501(c)3 organizations.

A lawyer can be a big help with the incorporation process. There is a good chance that one of the members of a local Ultimate organization is a lawyer who would be willing to help, so consider asking around to see if someone can volunteer and provide professional guidance with this.

## By-laws

When an organization incorporates, one thing it will need to supply is a set of by-laws. The by-laws are essentially a constitution for the organization, a brief document that provides the basic guidelines for how the organization is set up, how top-level decisions are made, how the organization’s leadership is selected, and what basic restrictions are placed on financial decisions.

Since countless organizations have adopted by-laws before, it is probably best to look at those used by other organizations and adapt those from another organization to fit local needs. USA Ultimate and the Philadelphia Area Disc Alliance (PADA), among other Ultimate organizations, have by-laws that can serve as an example. Go to [www.usultimate.org](http://www.usultimate.org) or [www.pada.org](http://www.pada.org) for contact information.

## Organizational Challenges

The board’s job can be very complicated, particularly as the organization grows larger, and it is impossible to discuss all of the types of issues the board will face in just a few pages. This section attempts to point out a few broad categories of issues that are likely to arise and make a few suggestions for dealing with these issues.

### Overwhelmed Volunteers and Burnout

Local Ultimate organizations will tend to grow over time if they are run well, which is a good thing for the sport both locally and globally. As the organi-

zation grows, the work involved in running everything grows too, and this tends to put an increasing load on volunteers. This need for more workers tends to make it even harder to find volunteers.

The solutions are simple, but not easy. First, make it a top organizational priority to constantly recruit and retain volunteers. Recruiting volunteers is usually most successful when done one-on-one, where a current volunteer asks a friend or teammate if they are willing to help with something, rather than by mass-mailing a list asking for volunteers.

Retaining volunteers is easier if volunteers feel supported and feel their job is manageable. So, second, spread the workload among more people by creating more positions and committing to fill them—rather than allow today’s most motivated volunteers to do everything.

## Strategic Focus

The board must spend enough time thinking about the organization’s “big picture” and its future; this is the board’s most important job and it belongs almost exclusively to the board. If the board is finding it difficult to escape from administrative details, more work needs to be delegated to volunteers outside the board. Start by identifying jobs that the board is doing that could be done by a non-board member. Write down the tasks involved with this job, the key people to talk to in order to accomplish the job, and then recruit someone to do it.

At the same time, prioritize “big picture” and long-range thinking above administrative details, particularly at board meetings. Do this at least enough of the time that the organization has a set of goals for the 2-5 year time frame. The administrative details will have enough urgency that they will not be ignored, assuming there is a committed group of volunteers in the organization, but it is easy—yet very harmful—to ignore long-term issues.

## Difficult or Unsuccessful Volunteers

Under most circumstances, the organization should welcome the willingness of any member to volunteer her or his time to help out. Occasionally, however, there may be volunteers who either perform poorly, tend to create conflict, or otherwise obstruct the smooth operation of the organization. It is not easy to

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know how to deal with these situations, but a couple things should be kept in mind. First, make every effort to resolve any problems—if there is a way to avoid “firing” a volunteer while still keeping things running well, that is usually the best course of action, even if it requires a huge commitment of patience and understanding where it does not seem to be warranted. Second, be willing to ask a volunteer to step aside; if a situation reaches the point where it is clear that removing a volunteer is the right course of action, do not hesitate. It may seem like a drastic step at the time, but if it is the conclusion of a careful thought process, it will work out for the best. Third, make any decision like this a carefully considered decision of the board of directors, and publicize it as little as possible—do not try to “cover it up,” but avoid giving the impression that the board is excited about firing volunteers or it could become more difficult to recruit volunteers.

## Discipline and Arbitration

Dealing with conflict between players and players’ behavioral problems is one of the most frustrating aspects of leading an Ultimate organization. The easiest thing to do with problems of players fighting or otherwise breaking rules is to ignore the problem altogether, or issue a brief, courteous, and firm note indicating the expectations for members of the organization. Nevertheless, from time to time, a board will have to deal with a player whose behavior cannot be ignored. In these cases, it helps to have a written policy already in place that guides the process of dealing with the matter. The most important goal for the board is to resolve the issue to an acceptable level of fairness while spending no more time on the issue than is absolutely necessary. Consider asking a single board member or other respected member of the organization to investigate the situation and make any recommendations she/he feels is in order. Then make a decision that is brief, clearly explained and fair. Unless there is a reason to think a situation reflects an ongoing, long-term problem, be sure to avoid allowing issues like this to eat up a lot of time—the organization always has more important things to consider.

## Other Ideas

**Talk to volunteers in other Ultimate organizations** The USA Ultimate website has a directory, or visit the websites of groups about the same size as yours, and email or call some of the contacts listed. Ultimate volunteers are usually excited to talk about their group and the things they are doing, and their issues are very likely to be the same as yours.

**Look to other small non-profit organizations** While local Ultimate organizations face certain issues that are unique to Ultimate, most issues are probably common among small non-profit organizations. Local volunteers can learn a lot by talking to people involved in other organizations in your area. Some groups to look for: small recreational athletic organizations (soccer clubs, cricket clubs), disc golf groups, social clubs, environmental groups, garden clubs. Generally, volunteers involved with non-profit organizations are friendly and very happy to talk about their organization. Depending on the organization, it can be a good idea to speak with a group’s board members, since these are often the most dedicated volunteers and the ones most familiar with the most aspects of the group.

## Summary

A local Ultimate organization can be difficult to run, though perhaps no more difficult than other small volunteer clubs or groups. This chapter has described several simple steps that an organization can take to better accomplish its goals and remain stable over the long term. To summarize, the following four points are key recommendations for local Ultimate organizations:

- Create a clear, simple organizational structure with a group like a board of directors at the top.
- Create enough other positions so that the workload on any one person is light enough that burnout is rare.
- Constantly work to recruit volunteers to fill these roles.
- Identify, focus on, and work toward long-term goals.

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# DiscNW

## A Great Example of Everything an Ultimate Organization Can Be [www.DiscNW.org](http://www.DiscNW.org)

As written on its website, [www.discnw.org](http://www.discnw.org), *DiscNW is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 1995 to promote and support the sport of Ultimate. DiscNW was incorporated with the mission to “serve as a regional resource, promoting growth in the sport of Ultimate and instilling the spirit of sportsmanship at all levels of play.”*

**DiscNW as an organization is a clearing house for ways Ultimate players in and around the Seattle area can promote and play Ultimate.**

### **Opportunities to Play**

DiscNW provides information about leagues, tournaments, pick-up games and local teams as well as information about issues unique to youth Ultimate include coaching resources and fund-raising information

### **Field information and improvement**

DiscNW provides maps to and a description of all the possible playing fields, including surface area and dimensions, in the area. It also advocates for new and/or improved playing fields. For example, DiscNW was instrumental in getting the Magnuson Park upgrade approved. In addition, DiscNW found a park in the suburb of Shoreline that is already a lit sand sports field. Though the parks department there is interested in upgrading to field turf they are short of money for the project. DiscNW is trying to persuade them to go ahead, and promises to help close the funding gap. The organization is pursuing a paid membership structure, donations, and grants, more or less simultaneously, to fund capital projects like this.

### **Hosting on-line discussions**

DiscNW provides a forum to discuss issues concerning the Ultimate community and even has a bulletin board for items left behind and then found on or near the playing fields.

### **Photo sharing**

DiscNW provides avid Ultimate photographers a way to share photos and videos

### **Linking to other sites**

DiscNW links to all sorts of other Ultimate related information.







PART 2

# **Ultimate Leagues**

**Recruiting Players for Leagues**

**Timing Strategy When Starting a League**

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**Recruiting and Retaining Women**



## Recruiting Players For Leagues

By Brevin Balfrey-Boyd

*Like many organizations, yours may be involved with organizing one or multiple leagues each year, hosting tournaments, providing pick-up fields and/or providing your local traveling teams with practice fields. Despite the high demand for fields, organizations that have learned the system often have access to all of the fields they need and are continually looking to expand. This section will provide you with tips in acquiring fields within your own community.*

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### Important Factors to Consider

When organizing an Ultimate league, an early frustration is often not being able to translate passion, creativity, and organizational skills into actual bodies for the league. The greatest entrepreneur can line up every other pertinent detail: field permits, shirts, waivers, online schedules and even sponsors, however, without a critical mass of players, the league will never get off the ground. While organizers are seldom alone in forming a league (often there are teammates, pick-up partners, or friends forming a base of players), the first thing to recognize is that no one knows enough people to make a league from one social circle alone, and even if someone did, to do so would be a disservice to the sport at-large, as well as the specific local community. Disregarding streams of publicity and recruitment besides word-of-mouth excludes many potential players. It's a great way to make a team, but the wrong, or at least long, approach to making an enduring league.

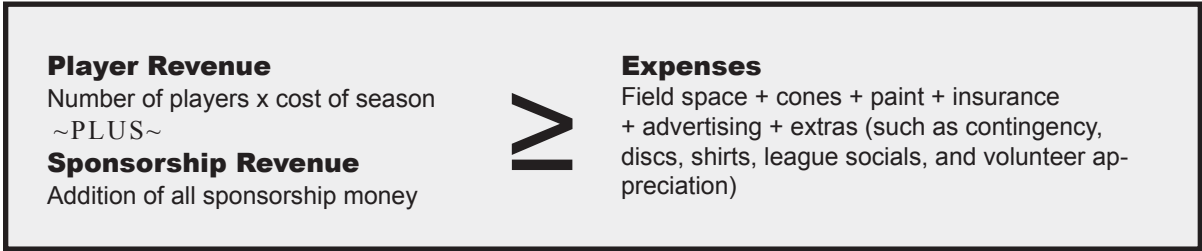
Starting a league takes hard work and is largely thankless, so keep in mind your own personal goals and vision for the league and remember to celebrate the small, day-to-day victories when they are achieved. Start early with an adequate budget and clear vision and plan to achieve a critical mass, or better. Borrow freely from ideas here and elsewhere,

and tweak and mold these methods to your unique community. Be sure to use any and all organic talent already existing in the community/league. Share the responsibilities of recruiting and work as a team to come up with new ideas, artwork, posters and ways to advertise. Identify graphic designers, natural recruiters, web-gurus, and marketing and advertising specialists within the league as early as possible—do not reinvent the wheel. A smart organization may start by recruiting volunteers to help with the recruitment of players. Be creative and relentless with recruiting.

### Practical Constraints: Critical Mass

Recruitment is not just something an organizer arbitrarily does; there are some very practical and economical considerations that an organizer needs to factor into the league's recruitment model in order to calculate a league's critical mass. This is due to the fact that the number of players in the league is one of the only negotiable factors in the league budget equation. So, when planning recruitment, it is essential for an organizer to know, very early on, how many players the league will need to break even.

The number of teams and number of players on each team's roster are practical factors of consideration for the equation above in that each directly



affects the quality of the experience, as well as number of fields required since both will inadvertently affect the Ultimate number of league participants. The more teams a league has, the more fields (or time) the league will need, and an organizer must not overlook the critical mass each team will need to field a full team week in and week out. The organizer must consider commitment to the team, the time of year of the league, and the day of the week and time of the games when coming up with a number for each roster. A cautious organizer will roster two and one-half times the number of people required to play on the field. For example, in a seven-on-seven league with a two-women requirement at all times, each team would have roughly 17 or 18 players (with five women and 12-13 men) to address situations in which players get injured or miss games due to prior engagements. Over time organizers may find that 17-18 players is too many or too few and may adjust the player count per team to meet the needs of the league.

Finally, it is important, even at this planning stage, to keep in mind that if the league is coed, and has gender requirements, the organizer will have to satisfy two separate critical masses: number of male and number of female players. Additionally, the organizer should have a plan to address the participant overflow issue. While having more players than the league can take is a better problem than having too few, crowding each team can significantly affect the overall experience and it ultimately affects league retention.

## Advertising

Advertising is more related to recruiting than most in the Ultimate community acknowledge at present; so closely is it related, that advertising and recruiting in the sense of a local Ultimate league are almost synonymous. Advertising is the single most important factor that can make or break a recruiting campaign as it is an organizer’s strongest tool in terms of getting the necessary information out to the target population.

For this reason, vigilant planning, grave attention to detail, and significant resources (both volunteer and monetary) must be allocated for advertising to hit its mark. Very few start-up leagues budget adequately for advertising and those that do often inadvertently miss their mark by directing the resources to the wrong media with the wrong presentation. The importance of an exciting and up-to-date website supported by an effective advertising campaign cannot be overstated in terms of recruiting. For ideas beyond this section concerning advertising, consult local advertising talent you may have in your league such as career professionals with experience in advertising, marketing, public relations and mass media.

## Communicating the League’s Vision

Advertising planning starts with a vision for the league because successful advertisers know that it is all about image! This vision defines: who the target populations are, where those populations are, and how to reach and motivate them with advertising. It is important to anticipate stereotypes about Ultimate in the community and each form of advertising should do its part to address objections from the target population before they are even verbalized. For instance, if an organizer recognizes that many in the community might ask questions such as: “isn’t that for \_\_\_\_\_?” (insert hippies, white men, dogs, kids, or people who know how to throw a disc),” the resulting ad campaign will go to great lengths to debunk such stereotypes, and instead encourage the targeted population. The posters might show two professional-looking women dressed in eye-catching uniforms throwing on a lined field, with no hint of dogs, children, or tie-dye. The poster might include creative phrasing communicating who the league is open to (the targeted population i.e. “Wanted: Young Professionals looking for a Fun Coed Team Sport: Great Way to Meet People and Workout.” There should also be some mention of who

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the league is not open to, i.e. “Sorry, no youth under 17 years of age in the Adult League, but check with \_\_\_\_\_ (insert the local youth league organizer if applicable). Childcare available!!!”

## Word of Mouth Advertising

In any human endeavor, person-to-person advertising is the most powerful advertising tool, but as mentioned before, it is seldom the most prolific way to reach potential players and it is often not the most effective, stand-alone approach due to its self-limiting nature. However, that does not mean that it should be completely disregarded. Quite the contrary, word of mouth advertising is a wonderful starting point for league recruiting. Promoting word of mouth advertising among early participants can effectively supplement other forms of advertising, and “Bring a Friend” events such as clinics and development tournaments can go a long way while developing a mass media advertising campaign. Some players and volunteers will be better at recruiting than others because it is ultimately about personality and comfort level. As an organizer, it is important not to be frustrated with players who are not good recruiters. No amount of frustration will make a player who is uncomfortable with word of mouth recruiting more motivated or effective. Every community will have a few outgoing members who are natural sales persons. It is an organizer’s responsibility to identify these people and enlist their help, whether on a volunteer basis or with incentives such as a free league membership, discs, gift certificates, etc. This incentive method can work for creating sponsorships as well, especially if the organizer is the type of person who does not feel comfortable person-to-person.

One type of league that especially relies on word of mouth advertising is the league in which players join as a team and captains are responsible for drafting players on to their own team. This type of league will not work in every community and it works best when there is already a developed and prolific Ultimate scene, but then when it does work, all an organizer has to do is recruit captains, who are in turn responsible for recruiting their own roster. For all organizers who are intimidated by recruiting or who favor the laissez-faire approach to building the league, the league that uses a captain draft format to create teams can be a dream-come-true, as long as the community is large enough to support it and the captains come through. On the flip side, team leagues are not the best way to encourage

growth. Existing teams are more passive and do little to bring brand new players into the scene. Either way, there are important factors to consider, aside from recruiting, when choosing the appropriate type of league for your community. Read more about team vs. draft leagues in the Drafting, Ranking and Choosing Teams section of this manual. Also bear in mind that in terms of league coordination, the economics of a league that uses a captain’s draft to form teams are at the scale of a team, not its players.

On a related note, for markets large enough to support them, the best approach to recruiting is to have a diverse offering of leagues. Offering both team and individual sign-up on competitive and recreational, coed and same sex, with diverse choices for days of the week or times, allows players to pick the league that best suits their level, schedule and fancy. This is rarely possible as it requires a massive Ultimate community, but it can be a goal to work towards. In the end, this model will be the most effective in terms of recruiting because the players will be the most satisfied and have the best experience.

## Diversity

Diversity should be an important consideration to any organizer preparing to recruit for their local organization. Efforts should be made to reach out to all populations equally. While it is not wrong to want to make a league look like the overall community it represents, it is important that methods chosen for encouraging diversity within an organization maintain equal and balanced treatment of players regardless of race or sex.

In regards to promoting diversity, and targeting new populations, an organizer must keep two questions front and center when assessing recruitment materials/policies and the overall league experience. First, ask if everything (policies, advertising, etc.) are inclusive for everyone? Then, reflect on the league and whole recruiting process and speculate whether anything (a situation, team name, altercation, anything) could have made anyone feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in the league at any time? Even the slightest ambiguity in the mind of the organizer in regards to answering these questions should throw up a red flag. As with all conduct issues, organizers should address questionable acts or issues regarding discrimination immediately and clearly for all to see that this is not accepted.

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## Targeting Populations

Placement of advertisements and posters affects who will respond to an advertising campaign. Ask, who will see this ad and how can it be made visible not only to more people, but to all races and sexes. So how does an organizer appropriately outreach to new populations? Start with asking members of that population (women, racial minorities, youth, etc.) already playing how they became involved and try to assess a pattern or mechanism from which more new players might come. If the league is completely new, the organizer should contact members in nearby leagues to learn local best practices.

Ultimate can be a relatively cheap sport to play. But consider providing players with opportunities for discounts. Offer new people a way to see what the sport is about and help them become comfortable with the idea of joining. Hosting one or a series of beginner's clinics is a great way to address these issues. Then offer league discounts to clinic attendees. This gives brand new players a chance to learn skills and have an incentive to continue playing. Offer opportunities to volunteer and have incentives to reward those that get involved. Use incentives or creative rewards to encourage players to bring new members to the league. Get everyone involved with the recruiting process. How you as an organizer recruits helps to ensure that everyone can have an opportunity to participate in the local leagues.

While the league should be open to everyone equally, it is common to have too many men and not enough women sign-up for a coed league. Extra efforts in targeting specific groups are often needed to fulfill league requirements. Organizers could further target women by distributing the posters at women's fitness centers or in the women's health section of the local news paper. The ratio of a coed league may not seem like a big issue, but anyone who has played in a recreational coed league knows that unless the ratio is written into the rules, and addressed during recruiting, the potential for resentment and inequity is likely later on both on and off the field. Recognize the role that gender-specific recruiting plays in ensuring that each team in the league has an adequate gender ratio that keeps the peace, and recruit accordingly.

One of the best ways to promote women's Ultimate is to provide an alternative for same-sex competition. A good way to recruit for a niche league, such as a women's-only league, is to help some natural and representative leaders organize a women's only pickup game. Pickup is free and less of a commitment than an entire season, so it is more likely to get

new players out, especially if it is structured with some drills to build skills. Once the numbers start to grow, and the competition improves, recruiting for the league will be much easier.

Many leagues overlook the effectiveness of advertising in the mass media because of the perceived cost. Before judging television, radio, or newspaper advertising campaigns too expensive, at least investigate the prices, which are extremely variant across different localities. There is often an affordable or even free (to non-profits) opportunity, which would otherwise be overlooked.

Another method, which can help new players (both targeted and in general) feel comfortable is to allow "baggage" in the drafting and team-making process. Allowing baggage means providing a space on league registration forms for players to designate at least one other player whom they will be guaranteed to play with. This makes new players, especially from minority populations, feel more comfortable reassuring them that they will be on a team with familiar faces. The baggage method also works well with couples (especially if they have to share childcare responsibilities), parents and players coming from far away who prefer to carpool. While it complicates drafting, the benefits can far outweigh the hassle, especially in small Ultimate markets where recruiting is difficult.

## Be Informative

How to communicate registration information, directions, and general information is another important consideration within advertising and recruiting. Many organizers have seen the merit of having a league website. The internet can be a fantastic advertising tool abounding with opportunities for free or nearly free advertising such as email lists, online social networking opportunities and online communities (both disc-related and non-disc). However, an adequate website is very important to effectively outreach on the web. The league's website should be captivating, well organized, user-friendly, updated often, and graphically appealing; otherwise the internet is at best, an untapped resource and at worst, an agent of misinformation communicating inaccurate and outdated information. Carefully consider the artwork and presentation of the website because both will considerably affect registration and influence a potential player's image of the league and the overall sport. Presentation and effectiveness can be hard to evaluate, but the good news is that there is probably a talented web designer within every Ultimate

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community who may be able to help with designing and maintaining an interactive website which will be powerful for recruitment, and useful in other aspects of organizing.

## Retention

Unfortunately, even once the first season is up and running and recruiting is seemingly over, an organizer's work continues. There will be countless concerns throughout the first season and beyond which require attention, but player retention ranks amongst the most important as well as the most difficult to predict. Everything contributing to the overall experience in the league, which is to say everything related to the league, and even many uncontrollable things beyond it, will affect whether or not players return each season. It is important to have a vehicle for feedback such as an evaluation form because this can help with improving the overall experience of players in the league which will lead to higher retention. This, in turn, will lead to easier recruitment and less demand for it. Many of the comments and demands will be impractical and misinformed, but it is critical to give players a way to voice concerns even if nothing can be changed.

In markets large enough to sustain more than one type of league, one way to improve the overall experience is to offer a variety of leagues which fit the needs and abilities of potential players. Judge whether the local community could benefit from a beginner league, or leagues that are age-specific, time-specific, or location-specific. Ask players how they feel about same-sex leagues, or captain drafted or team leagues, or what niche leagues they would like to see in the future. As long as there is adequate participation, diversity in offerings leads to higher retention because players feel more comfortable, and game times are more convenient.

Pay close attention to feedback regarding team size. This is less important in team leagues where the captain is making the roster, but play time will be an important factor throughout all leagues. It is a difficult thing to balance because it depends on the player and the team, (and the gender in coed leagues) but the fact remains that either too much or too little playing time affects league retention.

It is important to save energy, resources, and time for recruiting even into the second and third season. Some organizations will reach a point in which they can no longer accept everyone who is interested in playing, while other organizations will never seem to grow. Recruiting in subsequent seasons can still

be just as time-consuming and energy-draining as the first because the methods should expand each time to include more ways to reach potential players. But, especially in smaller markets, it is important to continue to promote recruitment. Continuing year after year to serve the same players without outreach attempts to bring in new faces, often results in a stagnation of growth and eventual decrease in size of the league as players drop out for various reasons.

## Summary

Following is a summary of guidelines to keep in mind when recruiting for your league. Remember to reassess progress often and make adjustments as necessary. Recruitment work will never really end as retention and growth are always imminent issues.

- Start by recruiting volunteers. An organization will always be more affective working in numbers than as individuals. Additional help means additional resources, opportunities, talents and time. Use all resources available, talk with other league organizers, talk with various groups and populations and find local talent to help with advertising needs.
- Know how many numbers are needed. Have a specific idea for the number of players per team. Who do you need and want to target?
- When preparing to advertise and recruit, organizations should convey a clear message, vision and goal.
- Use all means possible to recruit. Consider advertising, word of mouth, web, email, posters and media.
- Be sure recruiting methods are representative, welcoming and informative.
- Be creative when working to bring in new players to the league. Offer clinics for beginners and discounts to attend the league, baggage opportunities, volunteer discounts. Provide opportunities so that anyone (regardless of income, race and sex) could participate.
- Provide incentives to players to bring in new recruits, friends, etc.
- Always recruit and strive to bring in new players. Even if your league is well-established.
- Address discrimination issues within your league quickly and effectively.
- Provide opportunities for participants to submit evaluations or feedback on the league.





# Timing Strategy When Starting a League

By Carey Goldenberg

*Organization, planning, and delegation are cornerstones to running a successful youth league.*

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One structure we have used to produce high-level high school and middle school leagues involves spreading out objectives over a 10-week span. It helps to get started early, so you can spread out the tasks. This entails working from just about the beginning of the Fall semester—as teams are being recruited and leadership is being passed to a new set of players and coaches. Good management tools include lining up supporting volunteers, having a planning meeting, and spreading out responsibilities. In the past I have done everything myself, and have found that is much easier and fruitful to share responsibilities with a supporting cast.

## Planning Meeting Topics

1. Disc design
2. Shirt design
3. Permit acquisition
4. Coaches clinic
5. Coaches/Captains meeting agenda
6. Pre-season tournament planning
7. Regular season and coverage planning
8. Final tournament planning

## Disc Design (Late December)

If possible, try to have disc designs into Discraft by the beginning of the year, when they tend to be the least busy. Between college and spring tournaments, Discraft can get very busy, causing the wait for discs to be up to six weeks. With your design approved and

paid-in-full during early fall, you can get your league discs as soon as ten days!

## Shirt Design (January)

Similar recommendations to those for disc orders apply if you are using a local company for league T-shirts. A good goal is to have participant T-shirts ready by the coaches-and-captains meeting, or at the latest by the Pre-Season Tournament, so it makes a big difference to get started early.

Some leagues find it both fun and useful to open up the designs for discs and/or T-Shirts as a contest. This can often manifest many different design options to choose from.

## Permit Acquisition (January)

Obtaining legitimate documentation to use certain field sites may be a greater problem now than at any point in the past. Our league was actually moved this year due to permit problems, which causes a huge hassle for all involved.

The main league fields should be as centrally located as your geography permits. Among the thirty two teams we have in our league, we need enough room to set up at least 12-16 Ultimate fields for both the season and the tournaments.

Try to cultivate a good relationship with whatever organization provides field space. Attempt to get local schools involved in hosting games on a rotating basis,

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so no one gets too much of a home field advantage. Share the responsibility. Keep in mind that even if you are lucky and do not initially have these issues, Ultimate leagues often lose their field space so you may run into problems in the future. Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, baseball, and other sports are all trying to find fields to use as well. At one point, we changed game times for the entire league to Sunday afternoons so we would not have to compete with school usage.

## **Coaches Clinic** (Late January or early February)

We start the year with a coaches' clinic in January so that participants get as much time as possible to communicate and convert their knowledge into practice. USA Ultimate has a great coaches' certification program and will likely schedule one in your area every other year. If a clinic is not already scheduled, you can contact USA Ultimate and work directly with the organization to schedule one.

Have a clinic every year because as students graduate and move on, so does your coaching group. Depending on seasonal weather in your area, this clinic might need to be held indoors at a school or field house. If you have the resources, the clinic should be offered to the local community as well as the specific schools or teams that have coaches. Every team in the league could benefit from having a coach, and some community participants might become coaches later on that season or a subsequent one. Help the coaches set up a network of email addresses to facilitate more efficient communication, then encourage players to check every couple of days for posts.

## **Coaches/Captains Meetings**

The month following the coaches' clinic, our league holds a coaches captains meeting at a restaurant in order to get all the details and rules of the league out to each team. Our adult league has been very generous and paid for these meetings, and you may find your local adult league similarly generous. These meetings offer each team a chance to renew acquaintances, meet coaches if they have expressed the need, set up scrimmages, pay fees, get cones, get discs or shirts, and get psyched up for the season! As the coordinator, this is when I get to spread the wealth of information gath-

ered during the year from The USA Ultimate newsletters, *The Huddle*, and any other well-written articles. I also have offered to go to each school and do clinics to offer basic concepts and drills for the teams that did not have a coach come to a clinic.

## **Pre-Season Tournament**

To sign up pre-season tournament participants we have used a "first come, first served" format. Every new team is invited to come out and play, but due to time limits (one day), I decided to limit this tournament to 16 teams. We use a single elimination format to crown the champions. The winners get \$5 off their individual fees. All teams should be guaranteed at least two games. This day provides an opportunity for all the teams attending to turn in their fees and waivers, pick up their shirts and discs, and learn where the fields are before the season begins.

## **Regular Season Coverage**

Every team should provide any foreseeable schedule conflicts ahead of time in order for organizers to create the week to week schedule before the season. If possible, each team should get two games per day to reward their efforts in getting out to the fields to play. We have found it beneficial to have an Administrator on Duty (AOD) at the fields every week. The AOD's holds a copy of the field permits and extra schedules to help reduce confusion and ensure that everything runs smoothly. If necessary, our AOD may also explain rules and make clarifications on disputes. Each team in our league must have an adult on the sidelines for every game. Ideally, this adult should be their coach, but if necessary it may be an older (over 21 years) relative or parent. Make sure that all participants know where the nearest medical facilities are located.

## **Final Tournament**

Our season culminates in a one day playoff—the reason for all that hard work. Teams are seeded into the tournament based on their regular season win-loss record. This is our first year splitting the league in half

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into two divisions, one “Competitive,” and the other “Recreational.” We will have two distinct champions. Some school teams send a squad to each side, so they can have their B team players work up towards the A squad. In previous years, after teams lost their first game, some would leave and miss out on seeing the more competitive, successful teams play. If players are given another reason to stay, it may motivate them to stick around and watch high-level Ultimate. If your league can raise enough funds for a player lunch or if you can encourage teams to plan a bar-b-que, it can make the entire experience more enjoyable.

Another idea is to give a special disc to each team. The team can decide which player gets this “Spirit Disc.” We have also held a “Coaches versus Captains” game before the semis and finals. This can be a great learning opportunity, a teachable moment. Encourage beginning and intermediate players to “Watch what they do that we don’t.”

The day should have four rounds of play because that is about the most this age should play in one day. Every team should be guaranteed at least two games,

just like during the regular season, in order to figure out final standings. USA Ultimate has a Formats Manual that breaks down pretty much every possible format. Make sure to use common sense in applying these formats to youth teams, as they were originally designed for adult play. We provide bagels for all the teams. All winning teams should get some sort of prize. Prizes have included a single trophy for the champion team and shirts and discs for each player on the winning team. This year, we added the stamp “Champions” to a different color disc for both winning squads.

After the season I created a online survey on SurveyMonkey.com to assess the season and get some feedback for future planning.

### **Post-season Survey**

1. Rate your experience 1-10
2. Favorite aspects of the league?
3. Suggestions for improvement?



# Field Acquisition for Local Leagues

By Chris Burke

*Like many organizations, yours may be involved with organizing one or multiple leagues each year, hosting tournaments, providing pick-up fields and/or providing your local traveling teams with practice fields. Despite the high demand for fields, organizations that have learned the system often have access to all of the fields they need and are continually looking to expand. This section will provide you with tips in acquiring fields within your own community.*

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## How do they do it?

While purchasing fields has been done, many organizations are not quite ready to tackle that challenge. Often there is a scarcity of available land and the cost can be quite high. For these reasons and more, the choice to rent is and will remain the most logical solution for the majority of local organizations.

Organizations that have succeeded in finding as many fields as they can use have often chosen to work with parks departments, school districts, and other entities to rent fields. These fields may be located in the metropolitan area or within urban zones. The rest of the land in our county is zoned either rural residential or for agricultural production; athletic fields are currently not an allowed use of this land.

Advantages of renting existing fields include lower costs, a larger variety of fields from which to choose, and the opportunity to have fields closer to where the people are located. Disadvantages include competition with other users for field space, having to maintain a large internal infrastructure for field obtainment, and having fields spread over a large geographic area.

The four following strategies are recommended for use by any organization interested in finding additional fields in their community.

## Take Part in the Public Process

Like most things, athletic fields are subject to politics. The construction of fields, or their improvement (better surfaces, lighting, etc.), usually has some local opposition. Ultimate players must attend city council meetings, neighborhood meetings, and parks department meetings. They must write letters, post signs, and generally be active, responsible citizens. A recent mayor of Seattle, who publicly supported more fields, cited an email written by an Ultimate player that was widely circulated among all sports groups as a major factor in his election victory. For example, over the last few years, Ultimate players have spearheaded an effort to increase the number and quality of fields at Magnuson Park in Seattle. The effort included testifying and letter writing, and has resulted in a plan, with funding, for a 10-field grass space and a 14-field lit field turf complex.

## Field-Obtaining Team

Have a field-obtaining team, using the principle of one person, one suburb. The parks department or school district person you rent fields from will want to deal with only one person. They will appreciate your effort to accommodate them. This one person should handle all your organization's needs for her suburb,

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including league fields, tournament fields, and team practice fields. If possible, have the person be a league organizer or a practicing team's field procurer, so she has a stake in the issue. Being this one person is so time-consuming that no one should have to deal with more than one city.

## Know Where the Fields Are

This may seem self-evident, but knowledge is power. Organizers must make an enormous effort to identify fields suitable for Ultimate in their area. Consider stretching the boundaries of what constitutes "close enough." Players may have to drive further, but it may be worth it if they get to use better fields. A side benefit is that by playing Ultimate in a suburb, the sport can be introduced to a new area.

## Partner Up

Partner with a field-owning entity to build or improve fields.

**Partner with a church** Churches own land, sometimes lots of it, and as a rule they are not against having sports fields on their land. A church in Mountlake Terrace, north of Seattle, partnered with a local men's soccer group to turn a vacant lot next to the church building into a high-quality soccer field. The soccer group paid to grade the field and install irrigation; they bring their own portable lights. The church pays ongoing maintenance costs and the soccer group is the only user of the field.

**Partner with a developer** Often governments place restrictions on big new developments, such as requiring a certain number of parks or a certain percentage of open space. For example, a giant development under construction east of suburban Redmond (about 10,000 houses) includes a lighted 10-field turf soccer field park. This is because the Lake Washington Youth Soccer Association (LWYSA) partnered with them. The developer owns the land and is basically donating it for the purpose; LWYSA is paying to build the fields. Construction costs big money—expect to pay a minimum of \$1 million per field—but sometimes grants are available.

**Partner with a school** School levies can be a source of the money needed to build a field. An individual with an interest in youth soccer persuaded a Seattle elementary school to replace its asphalt playground with a field turf soccer field. He spent an enormous amount of time lobbying the school district, talking with the PTA, getting local merchants to chip in cash, and shepherding the engineering study. He raised about \$50,000 from donations, another \$100,000 from grants, and his reward was \$800,000 from a recently passed school levy to actually build the field.

### **Partner with a parks department**

Parks departments own the most fields, and they are nearly always interested in upgrading their fields. In some ways, partnering with a parks department is the path of least resistance—at least the parks people will be on your side.

## Recruiting and Retaining Women

By Susan De Cicco

*Coed leagues often face the problem of gender balance. It's rare that just the right ratio of men and women sign up for a league—and though a surplus of women is possible, this is uncommon; the problem is almost always one of too many men and too few women. When men greatly outnumber women, the league may face problems. For example, while there may be enough men and field space to field a certain number of teams, if there aren't enough women to go around, some of those teams can't form (and some men therefore won't be able to play). Also, women may become discouraged by the lack of other women in the league, or even by the league's efforts to manage the gender imbalance. Discouraged women may drop out of the league, and so the problem feeds itself.*

*This chapter examines the problem of recruiting and retaining women in coed Ultimate leagues, and offers a number of possible solutions. It draws heavily on the experience of the Madison Ultimate Frisbee Association (MUFA), a league that started with a very low number of women, but whose coed summer league now regularly fields over 2,200 people, and whose spring league now includes two women-only divisions.*

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### One League's Experience

Before launching into the techniques MUFA used to build a healthy gender ratio, it helps to know a very brief history of the league:

**Early Days (1993-1999)** MUFA exists as a summer league only. It is a clique league (in which teams are self-formed, as opposed to a hat league, where teams are built by league organizers). The gender ratio is 5:2 (five men to two women on the field at any given time). Even with this uneven ratio, many teams struggle to field enough women.

**Ratio Switch and League Development (1999-2000)** After a fair amount of debate, the summer league switches its gender ratio from 5:2 to 4:3 (four men, three women on the field). A coed fall hat

league is also launched, in addition to the mainstay summer league.

**Spring League and Further Ratio Change (2003)** In 2003, single-gender spring leagues are added as a complement to MUFA's summer and fall offerings. Also, a change is made to the gender ratio of the coed summer league: now the team on offense may, at its discretion, choose to play four women to three men for any given point. The team on defense must match the offense's ratio. (This is the 4:3, Offense Decides rule; more on this rule later.)

**Further Adjustments (2003-Present)** The women's spring league is subdivided into beginner and intermediate leagues. The fall hat league also begins to experiment with concurrent, single-gender divisions in addition to the main coed league.

MUFA grew from a small, single-league organization that struggled to maintain a 5:2 gender ratio, into

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a large organization that uses a flexible 4:3 ratio in its coed leagues and offers women-only leagues in the spring and fall. How was this possible? The new few pages will summarize the lessons learned from this league's experiences.

## Equalizing Gender Ratios: Solution, Not Problem

Each time MUFA made a change to the gender ratio—first from 5:2 to 4:3, and then to “4:3, Offense Decides,” there was skepticism. A substantial contingent felt that the ratio changes were either not feasible or not desirable. The main concerns were:

- “It’s hard to recruit enough women as it is. If the ratio changes and more women are required, teams that fail to recruit more women will be unable to play.”
- “Women will take spots on the field that men would otherwise take. Since we already have lots of men who want to play, and not enough women, changing the ratio will just steal spots from existing (male) players.”
- (Regarding the switch to 4:3, Offense Decides): “Our team is finely tuned to have just enough players, so that everyone gets maximum playing time. If we can’t know in advance whether we’ll be playing four men or four women, we’ll have to add extra people to the roster to cover every situation. And then our team will be too big.”
- (Again regarding the switch to 4:3, Offense Decides): “Changing the gender ratio between points will be confusing and will slow down the game. Also, some teams may use it as a tool to gain an advantage over teams with fewer women.”

For the most part, these concerns disappeared within a few months of implementing the new ratio. Here are some results from the ratio changes:

- A more equal ratio encouraged teams to make use of their women rather than ignore them. Each time the ratio equalized, women became more involved in the game: after all, it’s relatively easy to ignore two of the players on the field, but if there are three or even four women, it becomes very difficult to flow the offense without them.

- The increased emphasis on women encouraged more women to join the league. It became clear that some women had either avoided the league, or had tried it and quit, because some teams had been treating their female players as placeholders. As the ratio changed, teams that ignored their women struggled, and often were forced to change their ways.
- While a few teams did in fact have difficulty finding more women for their teams, most did not. The increased ratio forced teams themselves to recruit new women into the league: in effect, the gender ratio changes put the onus of getting more women into the league on individual teams, so that the league directors didn’t have to attack the problem alone.
- Switching to the 4:3, Offense Decides gender ratio introduced a little confusion during the first year, but at present time it is not an issue. Many games are played entirely with a 4:3 ratio of men to women, but many are played with four women on the field much of the time. This arrangement doesn’t appreciably slow down the game.
- The most competitive teams tend to have large rosters, so players can be fresh at all times. The need for extra women is not an issue for these teams. In practice, almost never has the 4:3, Offense Decides rule been used to force a team to play down a woman or to play savage women. It is, however, used strategically, when one team feels its women are superior to another’s. This provides teams with even more incentive to recruit skilled women to their team.

As a league changes the ratio to include more women, organizers can expect a variety of concerns or complaints at the outset. Once the new ratio has been in place for a short time, however, it tends to become a non-issue, and the league will have an easier time incorporating women in the future.

## Getting Women Into the League

The following suggestions may help league organizers to equalize their leagues’ gender ratios. Feel free to try one or many of these ideas.

### Set Ratios Proactively

As the MUFA example demonstrated, if organizers wait for more women to show up before adjusting the



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league's gender ratio, they may be waiting forever. Instead, consider adjusting the ratio and letting the league adapt to it. Expect some complaints in the first year, but also expect that most teams will manage to recruit enough friends, friends of friends, sisters, girlfriends, and acquaintances to make up the shortfall.

## Build Women-Only Leagues

Some women are intimidated by, or uninterested in, coed leagues. If at all possible, consider launching a small women-only league or division to go along with existing coed league(s) or division(s). Keep the fees low and actively promote the league. Encourage current league members to recruit friends. Though the women-only league or division will likely start small, it may gather players who would otherwise not try Ultimate. These players will then filter into the coed league(s).

If possible, try to have two divisions: a higher division and a lower. The lower division will attract women with concerns about their own skill level, in addition to any higher-level women looking to play as much as possible. (These women will likely play in both divisions, if allowed to.) The higher division, on the other hand, will attract women who are certain of their own skills but concerned about playing in low-level games that might bog down with turnovers and poor play.

(As a side-note, if there are two divisions of women's play, it helps to call the upper division "Intermediate" rather than "Advanced." The term "Advanced" seems to frighten off a number of perfectly good players.)

## Host Skills Clinics and Full-League Gatherings

Many potential women players have never played organized sports, or have played organized sports but not Ultimate—and they assume that they need some level of experience in order to join an Ultimate league. If the organizers host free, open-invitation events, such as a skills clinic that teaches basic throws and cuts, these events can convince women to join the league.

When going this route, have existing women players run the clinic, and mass-email current league players, asking them to invite anyone who might be interested in Ultimate to come see what the sport is all about. Consider holding such a clinic before launching a women-only league or division, as it might help boost initial membership.

Full-league gatherings such as all-star games and championship games are a great place to show new people what Ultimate is all about. For example, consider ending the league's season with a party, complete with food, drink, and the league's championship game. Encourage players to bring friends, family, and significant others to this event. Newcomers will be able to mingle with current players, and will also see firsthand what Ultimate looks like. More than a few of them may decide to join next season.

## Allow Women on Multiple Teams

Ideally, a league won't need to make any special concessions to get enough women involved. In reality, since the supply of women players may be limited, the league may have to allow women to play on multiple teams (while men cannot). So for example, a woman who wanted to play extra games could be a member of two different teams, so long as those teams were not in the same division. (Obviously, belonging to same-division teams would cause problems.) This rule allows the most enthusiastic women players to play extra games, and effectively increases the number of women in the league, allowing more teams to exist.

Is this policy perfectly fair? No. In a perfect league, men and women would have exactly the same opportunities. However, this policy may be the only way to have both a large number of teams and an acceptable gender ratio.

For the record, MUFA's summer league allows women to play in multiple divisions. However, if and when the number of women in the league is no longer a limiting factor (for example, if the league's gender ratio becomes almost 1:1, or if the league runs out of field space), this policy will likely be discontinued.

## Focus on Spirit

Do whatever it takes to keep the league as spirited as possible. Many women players have less tolerance than male players for arguments, insults, and general poor spirit. If the league has difficulty recruiting or retaining women, consider whether the games are generally fun and positive, or whether the league is facing a problem with attitude and spirit. While a discussion of how to improve spirit is beyond the scope of this chapter, organizers might

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want to brainstorm or consult with other league organizers (not necessarily Ultimate leagues; any will do) about how they've managed to keep their leagues reasonably positive and pleasant.

## Allow Baggage

If running a hat league (in which the organizers create random teams from the pool of available players) rather than a clique league, the organizers may allow baggage (small groups of players who are guaranteed to be placed on the same team). If a league doesn't currently allow baggage, and it's having difficulty getting women to play, consider allowing it.

Hat leagues can be especially daunting to first-time players, to low-skill players, and to people with no team sport experience (and many potential women players will fall into one of these categories). Instead of joining a group of friends, as is the case in a clique league, hat leagues force players to deal with a group of strangers. If a player is worried that her skills won't be up to the task, and that her teammates will be annoyed or critical, the player very likely won't join. Even if the player is skilled, the prospect of dealing with an entire team of unknowns can be a turn-off.

Allowing baggage softens these concerns, because players know that they'll have at least one friend on the team. Furthermore, allowing baggage lets male players bring wives and girlfriends into the sport. These women in many cases will not join if they can't be on the same team as their partner; sometimes this is for social reasons, and sometimes because it's simply too hard to manage two different team schedules. But regardless of the reasons, allowing couples into the league opens the door to more women.

## Lower Fees

Potential league members who are on the fence or uncertain of their own skills can be swayed by league costs. Since many women may fall into this category, keeping league fees as low as possible will encourage those players to join. This is particularly important if women are allowed to play in multiple divisions; if the league is too expensive, joining multiple teams may be cost-prohibitive.

## Offer Financial Incentives for Women

If an organization has tried everything else and still struggles to get women into its league, it may have to lower the league entry fees for women. This should be a tactic of last resort, since the men in the league may (correctly) feel it's not a fair policy. However, the tactic can work: think of bars that offer "ladies' night."

One approach might be to combine lower fees for women with a rule allowing women to play in multiple divisions. In this scenario the league would charge full price (or nearly-full price) for the first division a women played in, but drastically reduce the fee for each additional team she played on. This would make it feasible for women to play on multiple teams even if the league normally charges high fees.

If the league does have to offer financial incentives, don't view it as a permanent solution.

## Direct Recruiting

If organizers have tried all of these ideas and are still short of women, or if they're in the process of starting a women-only league or division, here are some suggestions for recruiting women into the league.

## Send Personal Email

Have veteran players and league organizers send personal emails to women who might play. Emphasize that they are good enough to play in the league, and that no prior experience or skill level is necessary. This approach can grab players who would otherwise think they aren't capable enough.

Everyone knows someone who could potentially play in the league; that's why it's easiest for the league organizers to email their core players and encourage each of them to personally recruit a female friend or two to join the league—and for those friends to recruit other friends, if possible. Think of it as a benevolent pyramid scheme.

## Encourage Cross-Participation

If running multiple leagues or divisions, encourage existing women players to participate in more than one. This can be accomplished with financial incentives, as mentioned earlier, but it's also

important to send emails and get the word out that cross-participation is desired. There may be fence-sitters in one of the leagues who can be persuaded to join another as well.

This is especially the case when running a women's league with two or more divisions; encourage some of the advanced women players to participate in the lower division as well as the upper. They will serve to anchor the beginner teams and prevent the games from being discouragingly sloppy.

## Recruit at Pickup Games

If there are ongoing pickup games in the area, it might be worthwhile to stop by and spread the word that the league needs women players. Often these players will already know about the existence of the organized league, and some may already have joined. But there may be others who are on the fence, and a personal invitation will be the deciding factor for them.

## Advertising

Traditional advertising may be beyond a league's scope or budget, but it may be useful to advertise the league in non-traditional (viral) ways. For example, organizers could ask core players what other sports leagues they play in, and then have those core players spread the word about the league whenever they play those other sports.

If this approach is combined with an incentive—say, a free league membership for any member who brings two or three new women into the league—the organization can find a number of new players very quickly.

## Final Thoughts

Finding enough women to play in a coed league can be challenging. League organizers may have to make concessions, be they financial (free or reduced memberships for women; free or reduced memberships for players who recruit new women) or rule-based (allowing women to play in multiple leagues or divisions). Sometimes the best way to get new women into the league is completely counterintuitive: for example, adjusting the league's gender ratio, or starting an all-new women's division, seem like ludicrous things to do when the league struggles to get enough women into the league as it is. However, these moves often prove to be the part of the solution rather than the problem.

Regardless of how it's done, equalizing the number of men and women in a league is always a worthwhile goal. It makes team creation easier; it allows a coed league to truly be coed, rather than a men's league with a few token women; and it encourages a balanced approach to the game that results in a better experience for both genders. Taking the time to address a league's gender ratio before it becomes a problem will pay dividends for the league in future years.

# Youth Ultimate Strengthens the Women's Game

By Meredith Tosta

In the fall of 1999 the idea of freshmen women coming to college with any sort of Ultimate skill was largely unheard of on the west coast. In those days, everyone started out totally green and learning to throw, with the majority of the fall being spent on the most basic of skills with the seniors and grad students modeling proper techniques for the underclassmen.

Now fast forward to the spring of 2009, on the sideline of USA Ultimate College Championships in Columbus, OH. There are now alums from the 2008 Girls' Jr. National team shredding through the competition as freshmen. Granted, these ladies now have a season of college Ultimate under their belts but their skills were developed years ago in high school. But it's not just the girls from the Jr. National teams that are having an impact on college programs; it's every girl who has the chance to find Ultimate at a younger age and carries that passion into college.

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This isn't about being hyper competitive. It isn't about getting the early edge over the competition. It's about opportunities for young women to play team sports. It's about being fit and eating healthy. It's about making lifelong friends. And it's about reaching out to the community and giving back. In the end, if it also means that a college program gets a head start on the season, or has more tools available to succeed in USA Ultimate College Series, than that's just the cherry on top. So what can a women's college team do to encourage the growth of girls' Ultimate?

## **Be a mentor**

By taking an active interest in the high schools and middle schools near your college, you have the power to get girls hooked on Ultimate. There may only be a handful of girls on the local team, but having college women coaching and playing with a youth team will make a difference when it comes to retaining female athletes. The USA Ultimate can put you in touch with schools desperately in need of coaches, and can even schedule a Level I Coaching Workshop to generate momentum.

## **Run clinics or hat tournaments**

This can be a great fund raiser for your team (ask for donations or charge a small fee), and also gives you a chance to get to know youth players in the area and interact with the Ultimate community beyond your college campus. Open it up to women of all ages and you may be surprised who comes out of the woodwork to take part. If you need insurance, USA Ultimate can sanction your event and provide it. There are also free Women's Clinic kits available.

## **Play showcase games with regional rivals**

Believe it or not, the market for Ultimate as a spectator sport is growing, and it's the youth players who are driving it. Don't underestimate how cool it is to watch college teams battle it out. This could be another fund raising opportunity, plus its good "show time" practice for your squad. Advertise through the local youth organizers, find a venue that's easy to get to, and where you are likely to draw a crowd.

## **Promoting Women's Ultimate today builds future participation**

When it comes to USA Ultimate membership numbers, women's memberships increased 8% in 2008, slightly more than the 7% for men. The fact that the growth percentage is comparable between the genders is fantastic. What we should also consider is that women represent 31% of the total membership. While this approximate 30/70 split is on par with other team sports organizations, the more that you can help cultivate girls playing Ultimate, the stronger those numbers will be for every generation going forward. The investment made in developing the younger generations will of course pay off when it comes to our competitive teams down the line. Yet, in a culture where girls aren't necessarily as supported and encouraged to participate in sports as their male counterparts, the impact of bringing more girls into the fold goes beyond our immediate experience.

Ultimate is a powerful sport, most notably in the aspect of self-officiating where players learn to have a voice and speak up for themselves. It's an endurance race every game—players must take care of their bodies and eat right to be strong. It's also being a part of a bigger community—one that emphasizes respect, hard work and fair play. Bringing more girls into the community at the youth and the college level not only grows the sport, in numbers and in level of play, it also builds confidence and weaves a network of support that girls can benefit from in many facets of life.



PART 3:

# **Ultimate In Schools**

**10 Steps To Starting a School-based Team**

**Starting an Ultimate Club At Your School**

**Starting a High School League**

**Traveling With a Youth Ultimate Team**

**Growing Youth Ultimate Through PE Classes**





# 10 Steps to Starting a School-Based Ultimate Team

By Kyle Weisbrod

- 1. Publicize** Let people know that you are starting a team. Put posters around your school and articles in the school newspaper. Carry a disc with you everywhere and throw whenever you have a chance. Tell your friends and get them to tell their friends.
- 2. Find an Adult Sponsor** A teacher at the school will help your team gain legitimacy and will give you a voice with the administration as well as provide stability for a program where the participants graduate. A young teacher who is interested in learning the sport is ideal.
- 3. Find a Coach** Check your local Ultimate organization. There are likely many experienced adult players in the area that would be more than willing to help out a high school team. Perhaps even a teacher at the school.
- 4. Show Videos** A great way to get students excited about playing is to show them videos of high level Ultimate. They are also a great alternative when the weather does not permit practice. Schedule a get together at lunch or after school and show some Ultimate footage. Check out *The Wright Life* for great videos and other products. Check out *Above & Beyond*, or *Ultimate 101: Laying Out the Game*, which is available through Wham-O with the purchase of a disc at most sporting goods stores.
- 5. Schedule Practices** Find a time where a lot of people can come out. It is important for your early practices to have a good turnout. If you can get a school field, great! If not, find a local field or park to play in.
- 6. Register on USA Ultimate Website** Register your team and find out where other teams are. Remember, if you have an adult contact it will be much easier for teams to get in touch with you. A sponsor, coach, or parent who is interested in helping out can be a valuable resource.
- 7. Schedule a Game** If you can get a game on or near campus you can promote it and get a large turnout of players and fans. Once students play against another team many are hooked. Try to find a team in your area.
- 8. Attend a Tournament** There is a list of tournaments on both the USA Ultimate website and the Score Reporter site. Find one near you and contact the tournament director. Playing at a tournament is a great experience both athletically and socially. You can also use these sites to locate nearby teams to arrange league play as well as friendly scrimmages!
- 9. Recruit, Recruit, Recruit** I can't say this enough. You can never have too many people who want to play Ultimate. If you have too many for one team you can always create a second or "B" team. It is great to recruit freshmen; they are looking for a social niche and once you get them they'll be playing for four years.
- 10. Pass on the Team** When you are moving on, find a motivated, knowledgeable returning player to lead the team in the future. Remember to teach them what you know so that they can continue to improve what you have started. Don't forget to update your team information on the USA Ultimate website.







# Starting an Ultimate Club at Your School

By Kyle Weisbrod

*So you love Ultimate, but are scratching your head and wondering “why isn’t there a team at my high school?” Ultimate is cheap, fun to play, and growing fast at the high school level and, starting a team at your high school is incredibly rewarding. You will be introducing a brand new sport at your school. You’ll get to play on a team and know you’re the reason a new Ultimate team exists. And as long as recruiting efforts are made, the team will survive.*

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## The Keys to Success

There are a handful of elements that will lead to the successful establishment of a team. Here’s a checklist. There are more details for each of these below.

1. Organizers (1 player, 1 teacher, 1 coach)
2. Recognition from your school
3. Equipment
4. Recruitment and promotion
5. Practice
6. Getting connected to other teams
7. Games and tournaments
8. Maintaining the team year-to-year
9. Building your team for the future

## Building Your Team Organizers

In order to get your team off the ground, you need to have the right organizers. At the very least, you must have a player, a teacher, and a coach. Each of those people has a different role in organizing your team.

**The Player** The player organizer is often the catalyst for the team and is the organization’s person on the ground. The player is able to spearhead recruiting and many of the leadership responsibilities. The role is essentially a captain.

**The Teacher** It is essential to have a teacher involved in the team’s organization. The teacher can be the team’s liaison with the school’s administration and help the team become an official club and get field space and other resources from the school. The teacher’s role is mostly that of sponsor. Don’t be afraid to ask a teacher to be the sponsor for your Ultimate club.

**The Coach** The coach will provide legitimacy and instruction for your team. It is often difficult to be taken seriously as a player/coach and so an adult coach helps. The coach will also serve to limit the school’s liability and is necessary for club status. The coach and teacher can be the same person if he or she is qualified. The coach should be USA Ultimate certified.

## Recognition from your School

Getting club status from your school is one of the most important and easy things you can do to get your team started. You will need a sponsor that is a school staff member. Rules on obtaining club status differ by each school, but your teacher/sponsor should

know how to do it. If not, ask your athletics or activities director. Club status can give you access to field space, equipment, school insurance, the right to use the school's name, and financial support. It will also allow you to advertise for your team in your school. Finally gaining club status is the first step in the road to gaining varsity status.

## Equipment

Before you get going, you'll need to invest in equipment. Luckily, everything you need for an Ultimate team is inexpensive. In fact, USA Ultimate has produced an instructional kit with everything you need including 14 discs, a copy of *Basic Skills, Strategy & Drills*, two posters for recruiting, a PE curriculum, and a rule book. The instructional kit is available from our distributor The Wright

Life. The only thing you'll need in addition to the instructional kit is cones!

## Recruitment and Promotion

Promoting and recruiting for the team will have a significant impact on getting your team off the ground. First, schedule a time after school with your sponsor for an organizational meeting a couple weeks in advance. In the weeks and days prior to the meeting, be sure to carry a disc around school and throw whenever you get the chance. Put signs up around school and tell people about the meeting and make sure they invite others. Some people might have excuses like: "I'm not good enough," "I don't know how to play," "I don't know how to throw." Encourage everyone: "You'll get better," "No one knows how to play yet," "We'll teach you to throw."

# Working with High School Ultimate Parents

By Sherry Harris

Parents of high school aged students appreciate being kept in the loop on team happenings. Many teenage students do not openly share information with their parents, making them feel left out of school events. By having a 'team parent' who works closely with the coaches, she can not only provide her own input on team plans and trips, but she can also keep in touch with the player's parents and give them pertinent information regarding team trips, tournaments, and events.

Many parents are willing to help if asked, but are reluctant to step forward and volunteer or to take the lead. Some parents are juggling one or more full-time jobs, work travel, several children in multiple schools, family responsibilities, and other social responsibilities. So it helps them to know schedules and events ahead of time so that they can plan their lives accordingly. When parents have conflicts with scheduling, advanced notice helps them either reschedule things or lets their child know that they cannot attend their Ultimate event.

Parents who are unable to donate their time to help are often willing, if able, to donate material items like food, drinks, etc. Most parents appreciate the efforts of other adults (parents and coaches) who take the time to work with their children and they try to help in every way that they can!

When students travel with their Ultimate team, parents need to know the details. Parents care about their kids, and if they are given this information in advance and in an organized fashion, they gain trust in the coaches and organization traveling and feel more comfortable in letting their children travel with the group.

Parents generally want to support their teenagers in any way that they can. Teens today are seeking their own independence while simultaneously needing the support and help of their

### Parents Need-to-Know

- Where are their children going?
- How are they getting there and back?
- When are they leaving & returning?
- How much is it going to cost?
- Who are they traveling with?
- What are the overnight arrangements?

The meeting should be attended and run by the captain and the coach. Start the meeting by showing some footage of high level Ultimate. Recommended videos include *Above & Beyond* (2000 Club Open & Women's), *Stacked* or the *CSTV USA Ultimate College Championships*. While the video is running pass around a sign-up list to get names, phone numbers, and email addresses. Once the video is done the coach should tell everybody who s/he is and explain his or her experience. That should be followed with some questions and answers about the sport of Ultimate and finally what they can expect out of practices and playing during the season. Find out what the best times for people to play are and set your first practice. The meeting shouldn't take long and once you're done, head outside to play some, but be sure to collect your sign-up sheet. After the meeting record all of the information from the sign-up sheet.

## Practice

Prior to your first practice be sure to remind everybody using your contact information. For a new team, practice should focus on fundamental skill building and should include plenty of time to scrimmage. For ideas on how to teach skills and drills, use the USA Ultimate's *Basic Skills, Strategy & Drills* manual available from The Wright Life or in the instructional kit.

Warm up your body and stretch before playing. People will think twice about coming out to practice if their body still aches from the last practice. Have group stretches before and after practice. Stretching prevents injuries. Make sure you discuss the importance of stretching.

Remember that practices should be fun. Also keep in mind that is fun to learn new skills and improve.

Don't overload players with new information, but

parents. Parents may be willing to step in, help work concessions, participate in fund raisers, and support their teen in his or her extracurricular activities in any way they can. They just need notice to be able schedule time and know exactly what is expected of them.

Parents enjoy watching their children participate in wholesome organizations like Ultimate where their teen learns sportsmanship, respect, discipline, and team dynamics. They learn how to win humbly and loose with dignity. Students learn how to play hard and work hard, while having a great time! Ultimate is a very physically demanding sport and many students learn if they work hard, play together as a team, and help support each other, they can have a successful Ultimate game or tournament! Parents like to see their child learn these real-life lessons while having a safe, good time with their friends.

Parents are sensitive to their student's grades as their children have high hopes of getting into their favorite college. Parents want to see their child succeed and are sensitive to anything that affects their well being, their study time, their health, and their attitude towards school and their academics. When players participate in a successful Ultimate Club whose members work together and help each other on their school work, group projects, and who are in the same classes as each other, parents see a positive impact on their children. It is acceptable for their child to come home from an event exhausted because they have played very hard and given it all that they can, and whether they won or lost the tournament, they still feel good about what their team did, and their personal donation to the event.

When parents are included in an Ultimate program by being asked to help run tournaments, concessions, transportation for the team to off site events, etc., they become part of the team themselves, and they get swept up by the Spirit of the Game™! They watch their young athletes play the game, learn the rules, and thus parents begin to understand why their child enjoys Ultimate so much. Ultimate is different than other sports like football and baseball, because there is not as much pressure on the students to win and be so competitive. By being self-officiated, students learn to be honest, and they learn how to handle situations that others may struggle with. Playing on a team is a major learning experience within itself and a real-life lesson to learn! Parents like seeing their children act responsibly and honestly. When parents see these things happen, they spread the word to others who encourage their children to get involved in such a positive program!

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give them enough that they can see tangible gains in their skills and knowledge of the sport. Use positive reinforcement when teaching new players to play.

## Getting Connected to Other Teams

Youth Ultimate is growing rapidly around the country. Many states already have USA Ultimate State Youth Coordinators and State Championships that take place at the end of the spring or in the fall and more states are being added every year. The first thing to do is to go to USA Ultimate Contacts Page and find out if your state has a State Youth Coordinator (SYC). If your state does have an SYC, email that coordinator and let them know that you are playing and ask what you can do to get involved.

If your state does not have a state coordinator, email the Regional Youth Director or the USA Ultimate Director of Youth Development. There are likely other teams in your state that these individuals can put you in touch with. Many states also have Yahoo groups or Facebook groups where youth Ultimate players and organizers communicate with each other. USA Ultimate also hosts a teams and tournaments website where you can register your team, find contact information for other teams, report your scores, and find information on tournaments.

## Games and Tournaments

Now that you are connected to other teams in your area, you should schedule games. Scheduling a game is as easy as emailing another team or the local Yahoo or Facebook group and deciding on a time and a place for a game. For tournaments, simply email the tournament director and request a bid for your team. Planning for games and tournaments is covered in the USA Ultimate Coaching Development Program.

## Maintaining the Team From Year-to-year

It's important that when the player/leaders of a team graduate that the team doesn't disappear the next year. Maintaining teams is an important part of growing the sport so that in the future there are more opportunities to play at the high school level. There are two important things to do to make sure that your team continues. The first is to have a coach and a teacher sponsor who will stick around after players graduate. The second is to have a Junior be an assistant captain. Make sure that the assistant is involved in all of the major organizational aspects of the team and knows what to do the next year as a captain. This will make your transition to the next year much easier. If you have too many players for one team, start a second or "B" team.

## Building Your Team for the Future

One step beyond simple maintenance is actually building your team for the future. Many aspects of building your team are covered in depth in the USA Ultimate Coaching Development Program. Introduce Ultimate to the PE department. If people are learning about Ultimate in their PE class they will have a base when they come out to practices. USA Ultimate has many resources for PE teachers including curriculum for teaching the sport. If you purchase the team instructional kit, you can give the curriculum in the kit to your PE teacher. Get your parents involved by inviting them out to games. Parents can be an invaluable resource for your team. They can help with organization, transportation, or help the team financially. Most importantly, they can be strong lobby for your team with the school administration.



# Starting a High School League

By J. Sandahl

*This section will cover the basics of starting a new high school Ultimate league. There aren't many differences between starting a high school league which is comprised of teams from various high schools and a youth club league which can include randomly put together youth teams. In fact, some high school leagues are club team leagues. Therefore, this section will be helpful for those starting any youth league, but will also focus on more specific issues related to starting a new high school league.*

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## Why Start a Youth League?

Why should someone consider starting a youth league? Why not just run a youth tournament? Tournaments are an important part of the growth of Ultimate as they do a great job of getting players hooked. Tournaments are also better at picking the “winner” and this is often an important part of a youth team’s motivation for playing other teams.

League play, however, is vastly superior in terms of teaching the game and helping introduce newer, younger players to the sport. And this should be the goal of any organizer interested in starting a new youth league within their community. Many players at the H.S. level who will join the league have never played or perhaps even heard of the sport of Ultimate before. Organizers of youth leagues should be aware that they will likely be the “face” of Ultimate for most of these players. Players’ experiences in your league will likely be their first impression of Ultimate and will shape their future thoughts of the sport.

Because league games have fewer time restrictions and often less competitive pressure, they tend to allow many more opportunities for teaching than a tournament game. Experience in league games allows teams to be better prepared for the faster paced, more competitive tournaments. This distinction is important as players are

often intimidated when they first begin playing. Offering new and inexperienced players an environment that is supportive and instructional helps players develop their skills and gain confidence as an Ultimate player.

With the additional opportunities for learning, a league environment is also a great time to teach players about the unique aspects of Ultimate such as Spirit of the Game™ (SOTG™) and self-officiating. Not only is it a great time to teach players about this but these aspects alone are a primary reason for introducing the sport to youth players. Practicing and learning about SOTG™ teaches players honesty and respect and will have a critical impact on their development in sports and Ultimate.

League play is also much simpler to organize from an economic and man hour perspective since organizers may use various field sites for a single league. In general, tournaments make good teams and leagues make more teams. Obviously providing opportunities for both is ideal and for most H.S. youth leagues the culminating event is a state or league tournament.

## Preliminary Research

While you can continue to move forward in the planning process, a couple of issues need to be addressed and researched from early on.

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## Finding Fields

Where will the league games be played? Many places can be used and even if you have one site that you can use, it doesn't hurt to investigate other options. Approaching high schools, especially ones with Ultimate teams or pick-up already in existence, is an obvious place to start. But also consider contacting local parks and recreation departments. City parks, churches, schools, and businesses with athletic fields are great places to start. When looking for fields it is important to visit the site. Most fields are built with other sports in mind. When you look at a site consider if the fields are the appropriate size, are water and rest rooms accessible, are the fields themselves healthy and will they be safe for the players? This needs to be looked into early on as there won't be a league without a field site. And many sites may get reserved the longer you wait.

## Insurance

Another thing to consider is insurance coverage. It is not recommended to organize any league, whether adult or youth, without liability insurance coverage. There are several resources available for exploring your opportunities to obtain insurance. Some schools and other sites may automatically provide liability coverage for activities on their site. Check with field providers when considering whether or not to use them. Local Ultimate organizations often have their own coverage and may be willing to let you be covered under their policy. Of course you can consider contacting insurance companies directly and discuss options for obtaining your own insurance coverage. And finally, insurance can be obtained from USA Ultimate through its sanctioning program.

## Establish Contacts Within the Community

Assessing and making contact with people in the community should be your first step in preparing to put together a league. Don't forget to search outside of the Ultimate community for potential support. The more you can draw the community into discussions and involvement with organizing the league, the greater support your system will be and the more people are likely to hear about your league. Following are a few questions to consider when looking for support within the community.

## Explore the Non-Ultimate Community

Is there a person or group in the local community who can help in organizing the league as part of their current job description? Most communities have a person designated to developing or running youth programs. Prime examples often exist in current communities with the strongest youth teams. Many youth camps also use Ultimate as a semi-regular part of their instruction. Some college administrators may be interested in helping out to some degree as Ultimate can be a recruiting tool for smaller schools. Local parks and recreation departments are often interested in integrating the ever-growing sport of Ultimate into their current curriculum.

A person or group like this may be able to provide a great amount of administrative assistance in starting the league if they can be convinced of the benefits to their community. Often these sources will also be able to provide the facilities for organizing the league. Knowing something about the local Ultimate community in terms of numbers of youth playing will allow you to present a case for starting a H.S. youth league.

## Adult Leagues

Is there an adult league that can provide some assistance? Communities with large established adult leagues can often be very helpful in getting a H.S. youth league started. In many cases youth are already participating in these adult leagues. Finding them can help get you more information about where kids are playing and provide potential contacts for teams. Later on, as coaches and advisors need to be found for teams, the adult league may be able to help you match up youth teams with adults who can help to coach. Adult leagues are generally volunteer organizations, however, and they are usually short on resources. So new H.S. youth leagues should not get discouraged if the local adult league is indifferent to H.S. youth league outreach. Reminding them that new youth league players quickly become new adult league players may help.

## Locating Players

Where are kids currently playing? This can be tricky to find out and usually involves some email and phone work. If your community has an established youth team it would make sense to start there. What other schools/locations are aware of youth Ultimate? Emailing athletic activities directors in local school districts can sometimes be a good start to finding the hidden pockets of players. A surprising number of

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high schools have some sort of regular pick-up game being played. Finding these groups will be important for establishing a new H.S. youth league. Additional resources can include the teams, tournaments and organizations listed on USA Ultimate website [www.usultimate.org](http://www.usultimate.org) and contacting USA Ultimate's Director of Youth Development.

Obviously each area will have different time line requirements but ideally a new league will have done much of this initial assessing two seasons ahead of the first league season. Most H.S. youth leagues happen in the spring (since that's when USA Ultimate runs its larger scale youth events) so planning and assessing needs to happen in the fall and early winter of that school year, that is fall of 2010 for the Spring 2011 season.

## Getting the League Off the Ground

Sites have been explored and interest for the upcoming league is spreading. Now it's time to get organized and find the help needed to see this thing through.

## Contact and Communication

Now that the initial legwork and assessment has been done, it's time to choose a contact person that can help get the project off the ground. This could be a person with contacts in the youth recreation or programming world whose title adds credibility to the cause. It could be a person with lots of Ultimate experience that people in the can connect with. Ideally this person would have both. This person will be responsible for collecting emails and answering questions. Basically they will act as a clearinghouse while teams are starting to trickle in. They should have regular, daily access to email and a cell phone and they should have the time, desire and ability to answer questions about the league.

Set up a Yahoo group or a similar email list for group communication. This can be done by the main contact person, but can also be facilitated by another involved organizer. This should be ready to use by the first meeting if not before.

## Prepare for Initial Meeting

The next step is to establish a time, date and location for an initial meeting. This meeting is for anyone who may be interested in helping get the league started including but not limited to coaches, captains, players, local Ultimate organizers, parents, school officials and anyone else who can be persuaded to attend. This meeting should take place about two to three months before the first league games (i.e. meet in late December or early January is ideal for a league that will begin in March). Choose a location that people are familiar with or one that is easy to find. Perhaps a school would allow you to use a classroom or cafeteria. To get the maximum number of attendees, choosing a week night evening (especially Monday or Tuesday) tends to work well.

The last step is to get as many people possible to attend this first meeting. Email local adult Ultimate groups and advertise the meeting. Especially target Ultimate players that are teachers at local schools; their contacts with Ultimate, school administration, and students makes them ideally placed to assist in starting a team, attaining resources and connecting them to the league. Contact everyone you have been in touch with during the first stage of assessing interest in the community. Over communication is the name of the game. The answer to every "How are you?" question should be, "Great! We're starting a youth Ultimate league, have you heard about it?" You really never know where you'll meet someone who knows someone who has a high school pick up game in their back yard. These are the contacts that will make the league thrive.

During the month before the meeting, stay in good communication with those that have expressed interest in being involved. Encourage questions. Provide people with opportunities to get involved even at this early stage. Make information available whether on a website (best option), electronic flyer or elsewhere. This gives them opportunities to share information about the meeting and league with others and it also serves as a reminder. Keep people talking about it and then make sure to send reminders once or twice before the meeting.

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## Initial Meeting: Meet and Discuss

The first meeting is key to getting the league off to a strong start as first impressions generally go a long way. Make sure that all logistics (time, place, directions, refreshments, paperwork and handouts) are double checked the day before. Disorganization at the start is not acceptable. The meeting should go NO LONGER than two hours and closer to one hour would be ideal. Respect people's time and get them out of there excited and hungry for more. If people are still curious about things then let them hang around after the meeting and ask questions.

### Things that should be provided at the meeting include:

- Tables and chairs
- Refreshments/snacks
- Name tags, markers, and extra pens
- Note pad to capture the contact information of everyone who attends
- Examples of discs that are acceptable for league play.
- If possible, provide a complimentary disc (approved for league play) for each team represented—perhaps donated by the adult league
- Handouts with the agenda and basic league information (contact info., Yahoo group, website, etc.)
- Ultimate magazines for people to look through and take home
- Packets for each team contact that include copies of all forms that will be used (roster, waiver, medical authorization, chaperone, etc.)

## Goals of the Initial Meeting

There are several things to accomplish during this initial meeting most of which should happen fairly organically.

**Get acquainted** Bring people together so people can put names to faces.

**Develop relationships and establish contacts** These first two goals should happen naturally but time should be given during this meeting to make them happen.

**Assess and brainstorm league goals** This should be an agenda item and should be run as a moderated group discussion. Ask the general questions, "What should this league look like?" Allow everyone's ideas to be heard and look for consensus but lead the discussion towards establishing some group league ideals. This may take the form of a mission statement eventually.

**Establish buy-in to league ideals** It is not uncommon to have a variety of opinions about what the league should look like and how it should be organized. These opinions may take on a practical form ("We don't want to wear uniforms!") or general form (the ever present competitive vs. spirited debate). Though all opinions should be heard, for most new H.S. youth leagues the focus should be on learning the rules and how to play safely. In a community with many established teams, focus on high level competition may be more natural but as a league—growth of the sport is what's important and helping new players learn the game should take priority to helping experienced players dominate the national scene. Listen to all opinions and try to come to some agreement on some group values.

**Be sure everyone feels heard** Allow time for questions and ask for suggestions multiple times through the meeting. Obtain input about additional league details such as scheduling. Just because someone is facilitating this meeting doesn't mean they have all the answers. Part of getting group buy-in is making sure that everyone had something to contribute.

**Discuss need for volunteers** Most new teams will not have coaches and so skills and rules will need to be taught fairly quickly. One to two hour clinics can be a great help for getting new teams established and this meeting is the time to schedule those clinics and find volunteers to run them. Volunteers may also be needed for help with finances, registration, paperwork handling and processing, web design or upkeep and tournament directing. This meeting is also a great time to work on finding those people.

**Set the next meeting time and location** Make sure to do a head count during this first meeting to find out who expects to be able to show for the next. This should help gauge the level of interest in helping with league needs. Ideally the second meeting is about two to three weeks before the league starts.

**Set a registration deadline for teams wishing to play in the league** The deadline may have to be



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extended for a few teams but if there is no deadline, no one will be registered when the schedule needs to be made. For many leagues the second league meeting will be the deadline. Scheduling games can't be done until the basic numbers of teams is established.

**Elicit suggestions for contacting schools**

Some suggestions should be given to coaches and team captains about the best ways to approach a schools administration for help (start small, be professional, be clear and thorough in what you'd like from the administration, use parents!). Some other thoughts about how to best use parents would be in order (treats after games, drivers, website help, uniforms, etc.). Much of this can be done over email after the first meeting as well.

**Generate enthusiasm** Most importantly, people should leave this meeting excited to help make the league a reality. Maintaining a level of interest early on will help make sure that come league-time, people are still working with the goal in mind. A video clip or two, whether instructional or game highlights, can do wonders to fire people up. Being organized and enthusiastic about helping new people learn the sport is also infectious.

**Determine form of future communication**

Having an established electronic form of communication before the meeting starts that everyone can use (i.e. Yahoo group) will be very helpful in keeping the ball rolling after the meeting is concluded. Make sure that whatever you use is established and relatively simple to use. High school students who are captaining and coaches with little tech experience should be able to join the group and receive all emails that are sent. Make sure that everyone has been given some instruction on joining the group before they leave. Providing a handout which explains this process or even having a computer on site, which can be used to walk people through the process after the meeting is over, can be helpful. This email group should be used to disseminate all league specific information and advertise meetings. Remember that there is often lag time between sending emails to the group and when people receive them. When sending meeting reminder emails keep it in mind that there is a fine line between sending the reminder too early and too late. About one week in advance of the meeting is probably optimal depending on the group. Much earlier than that and people are likely to forget.

## Finalizing League Preparation

Much of the work has been done and by now there should be a core of volunteers willing to help organize the league. Many details were established at or since the meeting. The time between the first and second meeting is a time to find or confirm league details.

**Registration** Determine how you are going to do it, where it will be available, who can sign up/will you invite, when can people do it, etc.

**Paperwork** What forms are needed? Where are they available? Where do they get sent? Who's going to process them?

**Field site** Have your field site determined and make sure to have a contract or written agreement clarifying when you will have access to the fields and for how long.

**Insurance coverage** Have your insurance decisions finalized, contracts signed and an insurance certificate for proof of coverage in hand.

**Executive Committee** Does it make sense to establish a steering committee of adults? Assuming it does, who is that going to be?

**Schedule** Even if this hasn't been finalized, determine a general schedule for league play. When, where, etc.

**Budget** Make sure you have prepared a budget outline. Determine all set and expected expenses. Based on the budget determine what the team or player fees will be.

Many of these may be answered at the first meeting but if not, they should be answered by the time the second meeting happens. New teams may still be attracted at this point and no one should be turned away.

## Second Meeting: Registration & League Information

Once again this is an open invite meeting but those who are taking an active role should encourage a select group of people they consider crucial to the organization and planning of the league. This would include a select group of coaches, captains or team representatives, people with web experience, people with experience directing tournaments, those that have volunteered to help, and those that have expressed interest in being involved, etc.

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The second meeting should take place around two to three weeks before the start of the season. The function of the second meeting is to solidify the primary group of coaches, captains and volunteers that will be running the league and handling registration. Things that need to be on the agenda include:

**Registration and paperwork** Showing people how to register at the meeting will be critical. In youth leagues especially, there can be a lot of paperwork. Be prepared to provide the necessary forms along with detailed instructions and to collect forms from those that received them at the first meeting and are ready to turn them in. Collecting as much as possible now is important. Players should not participate without necessary forms completed correctly (usually required for insurance purposes) and sometimes this may take more than one try. So don't wait until the last minute.

**Hand out the league schedules** In some cases, leagues won't be able to set the schedule until after this meeting and teams should have a definitive understanding of where and when they will receive their schedules.

**Hand out the league rules** Explain the purpose or goal of the league and go over rules regarding spirit and rule. Some teams will still need to attend rules and skills clinics before game play starts and this second meeting can be a time to set up such clinics. A good general rule is that league teams can't play in league games unless the league has faith that they will be able to self-officiate and play the game in a safe manner. Having these clinics can go a long way to establish credibility with the other teams.

**Discuss coaching** A second major issue that will need to be dealt with is coaching. Care should be taken to avoid unsupervised teams. With new leagues there will always be concerns about rules, self-officiating, and SOTG™. Teams that don't have an adult advocate tend to be more defensive with their interpretations and this leads to situations that can get out of hand very quickly. Encouraging coaches to attend USA Ultimate Coaching Certification Clinics can help get teams on a similar page and ensure cleaner games, knowledgeable support and, therefore, more fun for everyone. At the very least teams should not be allowed to play a league game without an adult present who knows the rules. Providing clinics to teach people how to self-officiate and/or requiring teams to have certified coaches can greatly improve the nature of all league games. Do not make the mistake of let-

ting teams get by without an adult just because they feel like they can handle themselves. Make it clear to captains and coaches of other teams that they should not play a league game if there is not an adult present.

**Explain league operational details** Where can all field site directions be found? What should I do if a team doesn't show? Who should I call if there is a threat of weather cancellation? How do we handle conduct issues? Who do we contact if there is a complaint or concern?

**Discuss State/League Tournament** This is the meeting to decide if there is a final tournament to be planned and who will direct it.

**Finalize a basic Executive Committee structure and organizational chart**

Decisions will need to be made about who needs to be at the meeting (simple majority, certain members, etc.)

## League Begins

Plans have been made for all circumstances. The teams have registered and everyone is ready to begin playing. No matter how prepared the league is it's natural for new leagues to experience some early hiccups. The key is not to panic or overreact, but to make sure that issues, mishaps and conflicts are dealt with relatively quickly and thoughtfully.

## Check-In

Someone on the league Executive Committee should make sure to check in with captains and coaches periodically to find how things are going. Good communication is key to staying on top of situations and making sure everyone is getting the best experience possible from the league. This shows participants that organizers care and forces captains and coaches to hold themselves to a higher standard.

## Handling Issues

The biggest threats to a new league are no-shows and spirit/rule disputes. Teams must show up to games that they are scheduled to play. Every time a team doesn't make it to their game, other teams are left with a bad taste in their mouth. Similarly every time two teams can't find an agreeable resolution someone

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is potentially turned off from Ultimate. New leagues can't afford very many of these situations. For a new league it is probably best if most/all of the questions and concerns are funneled through one person. Designate a person before hand, such as the Executive Director or a level-headed committee member who is accomplished at problem solving and communicating. It should be clear to the players, parents, coaches and team captains who they should contact in the event that a situation or concern should arise. It may be appropriate to establish an email committee or such group to handle issues that may arise such as eligibility or rules violation concerns.

## Parents

One other consideration should be made for the above issues. Parents are the single biggest resource for youth Ultimate teams and at times the biggest challenge. Most parents are attracted to the self-officiating and spirited aspect of Ultimate but they can also be tremendously turned off when teams are not playing fair. They can also bring a "shout at the ref" mentality to Ultimate, which has no place in a player-run sport. The league should make sure that appropriate parental sideline behavior is explained and insisted upon. This can be done through coaches and captains but should also be covered through email and website resources if they are available.

## Third Meeting: Executive Committee

The third meeting should just include people who are interested in helping plan or prepare for the end of the season tournament. This meeting should generally take place one to two weeks after the start of the league in order to provide plenty of time to prepare for the final tournament and also allow some league issues to be addressed. During this meeting, it should be established who is involved, what each person's tasks are and when they need to have it done. A fourth meeting could be scheduled shortly before the tournament to continue the planning and preparing process and for the discussion of last minute details.

## League Wrap Up

It is a good idea to allow one to two flexible weeks near the end of the season so teams can make up missed or rained out games. Spring break, inclement weather, and lack of planning generally mean most teams will miss at least one game over the course of a season.

The league can do a lot to ensure its future by investing some time and energy in an end of the season event. For most leagues this is usually their league or state tournament. To wrap up the league, organizers can keep it simple. Consider a smaller hat tournament, perhaps a small tournament followed by a social gathering. Perhaps just a root beer float party. When a league gives back to the players it helps those players buy in to the league.

## Fourth Meeting: Assessment and Evaluation

For the fourth meeting there are two main tasks, get feedback from the past season and prepare the seeds for many more years to come.

**Have an open and honest assessment of the season and tournament** In addition to discussion, consider providing anonymous evaluation forms to players and anyone involved for feedback.

**Examine final details of the budget** Determine what should change for next time.

**Offer THANKS and PRAISE** Make sure everyone that helped gets recognized and rewarded. Leagues should be creative in how they reward good work though some small cash stipends for work above and beyond the call of duty can go a long way to making sure people are interested in coming back the following year. Also consider gift certificates, customized gifts, etc.

**Plan ahead** Set preliminary plans for the next season including, setting a basic schedule of the season and league meetings.





# Traveling with a Youth Ultimate Team

By Nick Ligatti

*Spirit of the Game™ is the concept that helps govern everything in Ultimate—and it can apply to traveling with a youth team as well. Keeping a level head, staying calm, treating people with respect, and knowing the rules will help you lead a trip and take care of any issues that may arise.*

*In this article I have tried to cover all of the information I wish I had known before I took my first trip. All of my own specific experience has been traveling with a high school club team that is recognized by the school, so some information found here might not apply, but I believe that the general concepts should prove useful to any team. I have also included a checklist at the end that will hopefully help you to avoid mistakes that I have made in the past.*

## Roles

There are various roles that need to be filled in order to travel with a Youth Ultimate team. Below are descriptions of the roles that I use. Note that there can be some overlap in responsibilities (for my team the coaches are chaperones and one of the coaches is usually the trip leader).

### Team Leadership Roles

**Coach(es)** Teach the game, lead the team

**Chaperone(s)** Keep the forms, watch over the players, make sure nobody gets in trouble

**Trip Leader** Make hotel and transportation arrangements

**Team Parent** Help wherever they can, organize other parents

## Know Your Players

I would never bring a group of kids anywhere if I did not trust them. As a coach or chaperone, it is extremely important to have established trust with the players ahead of time. You also should have an idea of personalities and any conflicts that might happen. Many hotels require room assignments ahead of time, and knowing how the various personalities interact with each other will make rooming decisions easier. You will also have a better idea if any players might cause problems or incidents. In my experience I have found that there are relatively few troublemakers in Ultimate and I have only once refused a player to travel with us, but you should always be prepared for problems to arise, just in case.

## Know Your Parents

Parents are the most important aspect of any traveling Ultimate team. Without parental involvement, it is extraordinarily difficult for the team to go anywhere. Just like you need to build trust with the players, you also need this trust with their parents.

Most parents will not let their kids go on trips with just anyone, so you need to make sure that parents have met the coach, trip leader, and chaperones ahead of time. For most teams parents are an untapped resource. My team usually travels with between six and ten parents depending on where we go (if the tournament is nearby, more parents will come with us). When I look at the other teams we play against, there are usually only one or two adults. Make the parents feel welcome and wanted; it gets them involved in the sport and with their child.

## Parent Meeting

I recommend having a Parent Meeting at least two weeks before the tournament. At the meeting you should have an itinerary for the trip, being as specific as possible.

### Trip Itinerary Information

- Contact information
- Hotel address and phone number
- Field location
- Trip cost per player
- Weather forecast
- Packing list
- Any other special instructions

Many Ultimate players have not played on traveling teams before, so this is a completely new experience for them and their parents. You must keep the parents in the loop about what is going on with every trip. Most parents are willing to help, but might not know how to help. Let the parents know what you have and what you need (do you need more drivers, food and water, medical supplies, trash bags, etc?).

Although it is rare, some tournaments do not provide water and food, so I always bring food for lunch on both Saturday and Sunday, and water and sports drink. Parents will normally donate these items. Depending on the time of year you might want to think about bringing warm foods. We go to one tournament every winter and having some camping gear to make pasta or soup is extremely useful, lifting the team up when temperatures hit 40° (or colder) outside.

Go over the rules and procedures that the players must follow. You need to set a curfew, which may not

normally be an issue on Saturday night after playing all day, but Friday night the players can be a little restless. Players need to be on their best behavior for a variety of reasons. Tournament directors are not going to want teams that are unruly and disrespectful to attend to their tournament in the future.

Make sure you gather every player's name, parent's name, phone number, and email address. This will make it easier to stay in contact with parents and to coordinate supplies. Included in this Resource Guide as "Appendix F" is a blank player information form. Over the years I have found it makes things easier to also gather players' USA Ultimate ID numbers, especially if going to a USA Ultimate event.

If you go to multiple tournaments in a year, one parent meeting should be enough, unless there is a particular issue that needs to be discussed or if there are a large number of new players. The meeting should be at least two weeks before the first trip and include all of the information above. For all of the subsequent tournaments, all of the information can be collected and distributed through emails and phone calls.

## School Information

Know your school's rules and policies! For my team we are considered a club in our high school, and every time we go to a tournament it is considered a field trip. We have to be given permission from the District Superintendent to travel out of the state or from our principal if traveling within the state. Most schools should have field trip request forms in the office. A trip itinerary must accompany the field trip request form as well. Make sure appropriate parent permission slips are filled out.

Pay attention to the school calendar as well. There are many activities that might conflict with traveling. Since most tournaments are in the spring always be aware of spring break, prom, SAT, AP, and state testing dates. All of these dates are known to the school administration by the start of the school year, and the team should plan accordingly.

In my school system, school employees are not allowed to give medicine to students. Since each trip is a field trip, we cannot give medicine to any of our players without permission from the parent. This includes over the counter medicine. Make sure that the parent gives permission for any medicine you are giving.

## Required Forms for USA Ultimate Events

All forms can be found at [www.usultimate.org](http://www.usultimate.org)

Medical Authorization Form  
Youth Chaperone Consent and Release Form  
Waiver/Release of Liability Form  
*(signed by Parent or Guardian)*

## Transportation/ Lodging

Transportation is always a big concern, especially if you are traveling hundreds of miles. This is also another place where you must know what the school policies are. At my school, we have three options:

- 1. School Bus** Paying \$0.50 per mile for the bus, then you need to add in the price of the bus driver, for the entire weekend.
- 2. Charter a Bus** Our school system only authorized three companies, so you need to get quotes and do your homework.
- 3. Parents Provide the Transportation** Parents drive their own vehicle and we reimburse for gas.

Our school will not allow students to drive for field trips and school employees are not allowed to transport students in their personal vehicles. Our Team Parent normally helps to organize the drivers.

Our Trip Leader (one of the coaches) deals with all lodging issues. Make sure to make reservations early. Once you have a committed number of players going, call hotels and make reservations. If the location is unfamiliar to you, I recommend asking the tournament director for nearby hotels. Be wary of the cheapest places, as there may be good reasons they are so cheap. Staying with a well known chain is usually a good idea, and fewer issues arise here. Check to see what amenities the hotel offers as well, such as a free continental breakfast. We like to see if laundry services are nearby, so if it is rainy and muddy the team has the option to wash their uniforms.

## Know the area

You should never be surprised by the location of the tournament. If possible, try to scout the area a few weeks ahead of time to know what is around. Try to find restaurants, gas stations, a hospital, grocery store, pharmacy or any other helpful places that you could possibly need. Our team always has a team dinner on Friday night, so I try to have a phone number to make reservations at a restaurant while still on the road, or just after checking in. Also, try to know the major roads in the area. There is nothing worse than being lost in a place you are not familiar with.

## Checklist

### Before the trip

- Receive bid to tournament
- Create itinerary
- Fill out all paperwork  
(school and USA Ultimate, if applicable)
- Find hotel
- Find transportation
- Gather supplies  
(food, water, tents, tables, etc)
- Parents Meeting  
(at least 2 weeks before trip)
- Sign-in sheet
- Information sheet for the parents
- Trip Rules
- Cost

### During the trip

- Chaperone has all forms
- Enforce rules
- Take care of any injuries  
(call home, seek medical attention)
- Enjoy the weekend

### After the trip

- Shred any personal information  
that you don't need
- Ask for suggestions on how to improve  
for next time







# Growing Youth Ultimate Through PE Classes

By Catherine Greenwald

*Leagues and other organized Ultimate competition may be quickly growing, but many Americans are getting their first exposure to Ultimate in primary and secondary school PE classes.*

*This experience fuels the growth of Ultimate because very often competitive high school teams or intramural programs are born in these classes. Or, if competitive Ultimate opportunities aren't available at the high school level, youth who enjoyed playing Ultimate in PE will seek it out once they get to college campuses.*

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Individual players, teams, or even leagues can do a lot to accelerate the growth of Ultimate through outreach to local schools, where it is a popular option because of its low cost and great appeal to students.

**Several needs the Ultimate community can help meet through outreach are:**

**1. General information about the game**

Often PE teachers have heard about Ultimate, but are unclear on the rules or even a rough idea of how to play. Providing these schools with materials like the “Ten Simple Rules” could be invaluable in getting them started.

**2. Technical assistance on basic skills**

Most PE teachers have never played Ultimate, and are usually not skilled enough to be able to teach more than perhaps a simple backhand. However, thanks to their background and training, these teachers tend to be very quick learners and are able to relate various aspects of Ultimate to other, more familiar sports. They often just need some initial guidance to make them more comfortable with teaching Ultimate skills.

**3. Suggestions for making an Ultimate unit work** Simply learning to throw and playing Ultimate as we know it is not a viable option for many if not most classes. Teachers often have to

work with constraints such as large class sizes, limited space, and the need to work indoors due to weather. They are looking for ideas for alternative games like relays, Hot Box, or even something like Goaltimate. Hands-on help, not only teaching skills but running several separate 4 v 4 games instead of a 13 v 13 free-for-all (which often occurs in PE Ultimate classes) will ensure a better quality experience for students and teachers.

**4. Education as to the wider world of Ultimate competition**

Many teachers are surprised and impressed to find out that Ultimate is played competitively at over 400 colleges and universities. Awareness of this fact can stimulate their interest in providing a high-quality unit, or possibly even encourage them to help get a team started at their school.

**5. Providing competition-quality discs**

School PE classes very often play with discs of absolutely appalling quality—hard, brittle, rough or poorly designed discs can really turn kids off! Simply introducing them to the benefits of using an official disc can be very helpful, and if you can arrange for a donation of several discs to a school or at least help them to obtain discs at cost, you've done a lot to ensure that Ultimate will get played at that school.

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The question is who is going to provide this outreach and assistance to local schools? It could be an individual who wants to give back to the sport, a parent who wants to make sure his or her children get a chance to play in school, a team committed to community service, or part of a league's outreach to local schools. The commitment of a league to this education effort is probably the most important and effective means of outreach, mainly because of the numbers of people that can get involved, as well as the possibility of money being available to spend on instructors and materials. For example, the Boston Ultimate Disc Alliance (BUDA) has set aside a portion of the money it collects from running several recreational leagues to pay a Youth Educator to run clinics at schools in Eastern Massachusetts. BUDA's commitment to youth education has helped to fuel the continued growth of its high school league, which now numbers over 60 teams.

Approaches an interested individual, team or league can use to get in touch with PE teachers include:

**Working with classes at individual schools**

The easiest and simplest way to start would be to simply get in touch with teachers at a school where there is some connection. For example, when my children were in middle school I called up their PE teachers and offered my services. Although my own kids were mortified to have me in there, the teachers were grateful for the assistance.

**Working with teachers at individual schools**

When it came to the local high school, instead of working with classes directly, I came in one day during time set aside for teacher training and taught the teachers how to throw, played some Hot Box with them, and handed out copies of *Ten Simple Rules*. This gave them enough skills and information to be able to run the Ultimate units on their own.

**Working with teachers on a district-wide basis** Many school districts run teacher training

days before the start of the school year—if you or your group can manage to get on the schedule for an Ultimate clinic during this training, you can hit a lot of teachers (and, therefore, students) in a short period of time. A typical clinic might include an explanation of the game (either by explanation or by showing the DVD, *Ultimate 101-Laying out the Game*), demonstrations of throwing, pivoting and marking techniques, and a short demonstration of an actual game.

**Outreach to teachers on a state-wide basis**

Once a year, usually in the fall, the state or regional affiliates of the AAHPERD (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, and Dance) hold their annual conventions. PE teachers from all over the state (or a sub-region if the state is very large) attend these conferences to get new ideas to take back to their schools. Your involvement could be to man a booth where you can hand out information and answer questions, and/or to stage an Ultimate demonstration. Depending on the state, USA Ultimate may be able to provide materials and support for your participation in the conference. If you are interested, you should go online (preferably in the spring) to check regarding the date of the conference and if it would be possible to be included. There may be a charge to host a booth or stage a demonstration, but you may be able to get that waived if you can convince them that you are not selling any products (many exhibitors are there to sell products and/or services).

**Contact PE teachers-in-training** Your local college or university, if it has a physical education major, may be interested in experienced instructors for Ultimate units. Who knows, you could possibly get paid to teach an Ultimate class!

Regardless of the scale of your involvement, USA Ultimate can provide you with materials that can help present Ultimate to your audience.



PART 4:

# **Teaching Ultimate**

**Ultimate In 10 Simple Rules**

**Teaching the Spirit of the Game™**

**Teaching Self-officiating**

**Coaching Youth League Ultimate**

**Running a Youth Skills Clinic**

**Starting an Ultimate Camp**

**Ultimate Drills**





# Ultimate in 10 Simple Rules

- 1. The Field:** A rectangular shape with end zones at each end. A regulation field is 70 yards by 40 yards, with end zones 25 yards deep.
- 2. Initiate Play:** Each point begins with both teams lining up on the front of their respective end zone line. The defense throws (“pulls”) the disc to the offense. A regulation game has seven players per team.
- 3. Scoring:** Each time the offense completes a pass in the defense’s end zone, the offense scores a point. Play is initiated after each score.
- 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), the defense immediately takes possession of the disc and becomes the offense.
- 6. Substitutions:** Players not in the game may replace players in the game after a score and during an injury time out.
- 7. Non-contact:** No physical contact is allowed between players. Picks and screens are also prohibited. A foul occurs when contact is made.
- 8. Fouls:** When a player initiates contact on another player a foul occurs. When a foul disrupts possession, the play resumes as if the possession was retained. If the player committing the foul 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:** Ultimate stresses sportsmanship and fair play. Competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of respect between players, adherence to the rules, and the basic joy of play.





# Teaching Spirit of the Game™

By Elisabeth Bowman

*One of the most unusual elements of Ultimate is the concept of Spirit of the Game™ (SOTG™). SOTG™ makes Ultimate unique because it allows for self-officiation rather than the use of referees, as in most other sports. While SOTG™ and self-officiation are often the most challenging aspects of Ultimate, they are often the most rewarding. Indeed, they are the reason that many players choose Ultimate over other team sports.*

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## What is Spirit of the Game™?

While SOTG™ is fundamental to Ultimate, the founders did not see the need to include it in the rules when the game was first formalized back in Maplewood, New Jersey, in 1968. It was only as the sport began spreading across the country that it was formally articulated in the rules.

SOTG™ can be divided into three areas:

1. Mutual respect between players
2. Adherence to the agreed-upon rules
3. Basic joy of playing

Simply put, SOTG™ is how most people played games and sports with their childhood friends. Everyone agreed to certain rules and those who didn't abide by them were teased, heckled or even excluded by the group. Think of it as schoolyard etiquette. SOTG™ permeates every rule in USA Ultimate's *Official Rules of Ultimate 10th Edition*. It encourages and enables competitive play, while respecting the rules of the game and safety of other players. Unlike other sports, individual players are wholly responsible for their behavior on the field. As a non-contact sport, SOTG™ helps keep players safe, especially in a coed situation and league play, where players of all skill levels and sizes come together to compete.

To quote the USA Ultimate website: "Protection of these vital elements serves to eliminate adverse conduct from the Ultimate field. Such actions as taunting of opposing players, dangerous aggression, intentional fouling, or other 'win-at-all-costs' behavior are contrary to the SOTG™ and must be avoided by all players."

Another aspect of SOTG™ is the recognition that one team gives another after a game. Whether it is a team cheer or a game played as a group, this acknowledgement is a confirmation of the respect players have for their opponents and helps to diffuse any tension from the heat of competition. It is especially valuable in a draft system as players will often be playing with the very players they competed against at some point in time.

## Challenges of Explaining SOTG™

There are several factors that make explaining SOTG™ to new players challenging. The primary one is the idea of personal responsibility. Players coming from other sports are accustomed to relying on external forces (referees) to ensure that the rules are followed. In addition, many sports encourage "good" fouling and view it as simply part of the game. However, in Ultimate, "...an intentional foul is considered cheating and a gross offense against the spirit of

sportsmanship.” Translation: if an opponent is going to score against your team, intentionally fouling him or her to prevent that score is against the SOTG™, and therefore, the rules.

## Gray Areas

Another challenging factor is the gray area. In reading the official rules, so much can be debated depending on an individual’s perspective. Those are situations in which discussion and, sometimes, heated debates occur. As frustrating as that can be during a game, it is far better and the outcome is at least as accurate as a game relying on referees, who can only view from one perspective and may or may not be in the right place. It is important (especially as tempers heat up) to initiate these discussions with SOTG™ in mind.

## New Players to Ultimate or Your League

In a setting with diverse player skills, it is incumbent upon the more experienced player to make the right call. To quote USA Ultimate’s *Official Rules of Ultimate 10th Edition*, “If a foul is committed and not called, the player who committed the foul should inform the infractioned player of the foul.” Though it may be difficult in the heat of the moment, the player who made the foul is expected to inform the opponent about the foul.

## Promoting & Teaching Spirit of the Game™

In a league setting, the best method for explaining SOTG™ is by repetition and example. Many leagues have developed Ultimate primers that outline SOTG™ and the rules, since reading the official rules can be overwhelming and confusing for new players. Below is an example used by Grass Roots Ultimate (GRU) in Boulder, Colorado. In addition to distributing the primer to all captains and new players, GRU also hosts a beginners’ clinic at the beginning of each season. The clinic is comprised of stations and one of the stations focuses on rules and SOTG™.

In addition to a copy of the *10 Simple Rules of Ultimate* (in PART 4: Teaching Ultimate of this Resource Guide), a sample of a primer provided to captains could include additional clarifying information:

**Disc space** Defensive players must leave a disc’s diameter between themselves and the throwers they are marking.

**Legitimate position** First person in a space has “legitimate position.” Extended arms and legs are not part of a player’s legitimate position. You cannot block an opponent’s path (or vision) with your arms or legs.

**Bad excuse** Going for the disc is never an excuse for clocking/running over/into another player.

The USA Ultimate also recently developed a list entitled *Ten Things You Should Know about SOTG™*. Below are the headings on the list (for the full explanation of each, please visit [www.usultimate.org](http://www.usultimate.org)).

### \*Ten Things You Should Know About Spirit of the Game™

- 1. The Golden Rule: Treat Others as You Would Want to be Treated** Spirited games result from mutual respect among opponents. Assume the best of your opponent. Give him/her the benefit of the doubt. You would want the same for yourself. But if you are thick-skinned, do not assume that your opponent is. Maybe you should think of this rule as, “treat others as you would have them treat your mother.”
- 2. Control: SOTG™ Takes Real Effort** SOTG™ is not just some abstract principle that everyone adopts and then games run smoothly without effort. Close calls are made in tight games. Hard fouls are committed. SOTG™ is about how you handle yourself under pressure: how you contain your emotionality, tame your temper, and modulate your voice. If you initiate or contribute to the unraveling of spirit, the concept falls apart quickly. If you act to mend things (or at least not exacerbate the situation) by following (1) above, the game heals itself.
- 3. Heckling and Taunting are Different** Ultimate has a long tradition of good-natured heckling. Heckles are friendly barbs, typically from non-playing spectators. Heckling can be fun, but taunting is not spirited and wrong. Harassing remarks after an opponent’s foul call or close play are NOT heckling: they are abusive taunts which create unpleasant playing conditions and often escalate to acrimonious disputes.



#### **4. SOTG™ is Compatible with Championship Play**

It is a fallacy to argue that the stakes are so important that some aspect of SOTG™ can be cast aside. Time and again, great teams and star players have shown that you can bring all your competitive and athletic zeal to a game without sacrificing fair play or respect for your opponent.

**5. Don't "Give as You Got"** There is no "eye for an eye." If you are wronged, you have no right to wrong someone in return. In the extreme case where you were severely mistreated, you may bring the issue up with a captain, tournament director, or even lodge a complaint with the governing body. If you retaliate in kind, however, a complaint may be filed against you. We recall point (1): treat others as you would have them treat you, not as they have treated you. In the end, you are responsible for you.

**6. Breathe** After a hard foul, close call, or disputed play, take a step back, pause, and take a deep breath. In the heat of competition, emotions run high. By giving yourself just a bit of time and space, you will gain enough perspective to compose yourself and concentrate on the facts involved in the dispute (was she in or out; did you hit his hand or the disc; did that pick affect the play). Your restraint will induce a more restrained response from your opponent. Conflagration averted, you may resume business as usual.

**7. When You Do the Right Thing, People Notice** When you turn the other cheek, you know you've done the right thing. You may not hear praise, there may be no standing ovation, but people do notice. Eventually, their respect for you and their appreciation of the game will grow.

**8. Be Generous With Praise** Compliment an opponent on their good catch. Remark to a teammate that you admire his/her honesty in calling themselves out of bounds. Look players in the eye and congratulate them when you shake their hands after a game. These small acts boost spirit greatly, a large payoff for little time and effort.

**9. Impressions Linger** Not only does the realization that your actions will be remembered for a long time serve to curb poor behavior, it can also inspire better conduct. Many old-timers enjoy the experience of meeting an elite player who remembers their first rendezvous on the field and recalls the event in detail. A good first encounter with an

impressible young player can have considerable long-term positive impact.

#### **10. Have Fun**

*\*Developed by the 2005 USA Ultimate Conduct Committee (Jeff Dunbar, Kate Bergeron, Eric Zaslow, Will Deaver) and adopted by the USA Ultimate Executive Committee (3/05).*

## **Roles of Captains**

In order to maintain SOTG™ in the league, the league leadership, especially the captains, must be proactive about its importance. The captains must be the flag bearers of SOTG™ and have a thorough understanding of the rules, since the bulk of SOTG™ instruction and modeling falls upon them. Supplying the most recent edition of USA Ultimate Rules to each captain helps in this regard.

Finally, leagues should host a captains' forum or workshop where new and experienced captains can learn about existing league policies and discuss ideas for improvement. Such an event is a great opportunity for the league to present its philosophy regarding SOTG™ and the important role that captains play in the sport. In addition, it is highly recommended that the league create a conduct policy that explains the ramifications of violating SOTG™. This policy may never need to be used, but having a set of formal guidelines surrounding acceptable behavior and expectations is vital to the league running smoothly.

## **Roles of Coaches**

The coach's goal in terms of SOTG™ is to create an environment where players are responsible for upholding the rules and ensuring that the outcomes of plays and games are fair.

## **\*USA Ultimate Spirit of Coaching**

### **Background**

The role of the coach at all levels of Ultimate is unique in a sport that places on-field player authority above non-player influence. As non-players the coach's authority must not extend to the on-field officiating process. Coaches may be faced with situations where they are able to correct the self-officiating process and ensure the correct outcome to a given play. In this

situation, coaches must not interfere in the officiating process, in order to ensure that players learn and take responsibility for officiating. Coach interference in the decision making process, even in the most egregious violations, will indicate to players that the coach and not the players have the Ultimate responsibility for ensuring the inherent fairness of the game. Teaching players the rules and how to implement them should be done at practices or off of the field. It is the coach's responsibility to ensure that the players understand their own responsibilities as players and teach players how to handle those responsibilities.

### Guidelines:

- Coaches should introduce themselves to the other coaches prior to a game and discuss concerns. This could potentially include the level of play, the level of intensity (e.g. spiking and rushing the field), and possible modifications to the captain's clause (e.g. prohibiting zone for new teams or foot blocking).
- Because the potential for misperception is high, spiking is prohibited at the youth level unless otherwise agreed upon by the coaches or captains. Spiking in a disrespectful manner is never okay at any level.
- Coaches will not make calls from the sideline nor offer their opinion on a play. Coaches should encourage players to come to a resolution on their own, and if asked during a dispute coaches may offer rules clarifications. After a dispute a coach may talk to his or her own player about the dispute and offer opinions.
- Youth coaches will make an effort to educate parents about SOTG™ and work to create a sideline atmosphere that respects SOTG™.
- Coaches will teach and give players opportunities to practice knowledge of the rules of Ultimate.
- Coaches will always exhibit respect for opposing players.
- Coaches will always exhibit respect for other coaches.
- Coaches will always exhibit respect for observers.
- Coaches will model SOTG™ at all times.

*\*The Spirit of Coaching guidelines were developed by Kyle Weisbrod, USA Ultimate Director of Youth Development and adopted by USA Ultimate Board of Directors (12/05).*

## Acknowledging and Rewarding Spirit of the Game™

How do you ensure that SOTG™ is recognized and rewarded? Many leagues in the United States and around the world use some sort of spirit-rating system that rewards good-spirited teams. This system can be very formal as in a scaled survey that captains complete on a website or a simple discussion among the team members after a game. Some experimentation may be necessary to determine the best way to reward the most spirited teams (often ranging from an impact on league standings to a spirit prize to the most spirited team). Regardless of the specifics, acknowledging or rewarding SOTG™ provides visibility of the importance of SOTG™ to the league participants and Ultimate community.

### Spirit of the Game™ Rating System

Following is an example of a spirit rating system (SRS) borrowed and adapted from the Association de Ultimate de Montréal and now used by other organizations including Grass Roots Ultimate (GRU) in Boulder, Colorado.

The underlying philosophy in the sport of Ultimate is the notion of sportsmanship and fair play. Ultimate is a self-refereed, non-contact sport. Competitive play is encouraged but never at the expense of mutual respect between players, adherence to the rules and the basic joy of playing. Every player should clearly understand the rules of the game. **The integrity of Ultimate depends on each player's responsibility to uphold the SOTG™, and this responsibility should not be taken lightly.**

After a game that has been played hard, a cheer or fun inter-team game can serve to both celebrate the spirit that was exhibited and to deflate any high running emotions that might carry over to future games. Playing in non-traditional athletic clothing such as skirts, hats or costumes is a way of showing that winning the game is no more important than having fun. However, these things are not necessary elements of spirit and it would be unfair and unreasonable to judge the spirit of a team or player based on the clothes they wear or the songs they sing.

Spirit is a combination of respect, integrity and dignity. There is no dignity in choosing to break the

rules intentionally. Respect implies that no matter how sure you are of your call, someone else's reality may be different and the disagreement can be accepted without anger or arguments. SOTG™ involves understanding that your opponent is not your enemy. Without an opponent you couldn't play the game. SOTG™ does not compromise competitive play in any way but it also emphasizes fair, honest and respectful play between teams and players.

GRU uses a rating system based on AUM's rating system which is designed to render the scoring procedure less subjective and more objective. A table was created for the SRS that is intended to emphasize the really important points that make up the "SOTG™" and help remind players/captains of them every time a team's spirit score is entered. The new SRS offers more criteria for minus points rather than plus points so that each team can see what aspects of the game can be modified to better understand what constitutes good or bad spirit. Please remember that a score of 10 is absolutely limited to only that perfect, mythical game that was an absolute blast, where there was terrific flow and outstanding sportsmanship among ALL players throughout the entire game.

All teams start with a spirit rating of 5 and points can be added or subtracted according to the criteria listed in the SRS table.

**Each team starts with a base spirit score of 5 points. Rate the following statements and then determine the final score. (Maximum score = 10; minimum score = 0).**

- 1 = Strongly Agree (1 pt)
- 2 = Agree (.5)
- 3 = Neutral (0)
- 4 = Disagree (-.5)
- 5 = Strongly Disagree (-1 pt)

1. Our opponent understood the rules or was willing to learn them.
2. The team cheered us at the end of the game or engaged in some positive display of spirit.
3. No one on the opponent's team engaged in dangerous play, reckless endangerment or poor sportsmanship.
4. No disputes were made or were kept to a minimum when calls were made.
5. Calls made were justified and consistent with SOTG™.

## Spirit of the Game™ and Competitive Play

"Highly competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of mutual respect among players, adherence to the agreed upon rules of the game, or the basic joy of play." (Introduction, *USA Ultimate 10th Edition Rules*)

Depending on one's competitive nature, the idea of SOTG™ and highly competitive play may not seem to go well together. In practice, however, the SOTG™ allows players to compete at a very high level, while maintaining respect for each other and for the game. It allows Ultimate to approach the ideal of competition for competition's sake. Of course, with the freedom that SOTG™ allows comes the responsibility of upholding it. While it is often a challenge on the field, it is one of the most important skills in any Ultimate player's arsenal.

## Recommendations for Ensuring Spirit of the Game™

- Train and educate your captains and league representatives about SOTG™
- Model good SOTG™
- Create a primer of rules that incorporates and explains SOTG™
- Create a conduct policy outlining acceptable behavior and consequences
- Reward good SOTG™ throughout the season and on tournament day.



# Teaching Self-Officiating

By Will Smolinski

*It is important to remember when coaching youth Ultimate that everyone in the community is an equal. The intertwined concepts of Spirit of the Game™ and self-officiating rely on every participant in the game feeling safe and respected. Everyone is expected to follow the same rules, and should show the same respect to other teams and teammates as they do to you.*

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Self-officiating works best in a positive environment, free from ridicule and aggressive/defensive behavior. It is imperative that athletes are not verbally or physically aggressive toward other players no matter what their roles outside the scope of the team may be.

## Know the Rules

The rules of the game are the cornerstone of self-regulation. Imagine watching a game where one team is trying to play Rugby and the other is trying to play American Football—it would be quite a mess. To a lesser degree, this can happen in youth Ultimate. What is considered a foul on one team may not be on others. The only way to prevent this from happening is to establish a firm knowledge of the rules, which can be surprisingly easy.

## Practice the Rules

Just like throwing, catching, cutting, and defensive skills require practice, so does familiarizing yourself with the rules and using conflict resolution skills. The four things that are important here are:

1. Recognizing / Calling the Foul
2. Reacting
3. Listening
4. Resuming Play

## Teaching Ultimate Rules

- Reading the Rules as Homework
- Assign “Rule Experts” responsible for knowing a specific section
- Stop play to teach/talk about rules
- Correct misinterpretations of the rules during practice
- Cover one rule per day at conclusion of practice
- Talk to individual players about frequent rule violations
- Rule Quizzes / Tests

## Recognizing Fouls

A lot of times it is hard for newer players to play and officiate at the same time. If you get them to act as an observer on the sideline it can help them focus on just recognizing and calling infractions. During drills they can make calls like travel, up/down, and in/out. Making sure they announce calls loud enough for the whole field to hear is important. It can help to occasionally designate players who purposely foul and assign observers during scrimmages to pay close attention to rule violations.

## Reacting

Athletes can become defensive when a foul is called on them or become overly critical of an opposing team if they are making a lot of calls. It is very important that they learn that both fouls and foul calls are not personal. Having players practice taking and making foul calls to resolve conflict without punishing either team is difficult. It is important to start off talking about “community health” skills such as conflict resolution strategies, showing respect to every player, and making everybody feel safe.

It is imperative that players learn to control their non-verbal reactions, like tone of voice and eye rolling, as much as their choice of words.

### Practice Conflict Resolution

- Create drill where one position is fouled in the same place each time—get players used to calling and reacting to foul calls
- Assign team “Jerk” whose role is to contest everything, or to be rude at practice, saying only “contest” or “foul” and not reacting to non-verbal behavior
- Correct individual players’ reactions to foul calls using specific cues, such as “calm down,” “just say ‘contest’,” or “ask what the foul was.”

## Listening

Many times teams commit the same fouls repeatedly because they do not call that rule in practice (even if they know it). This is where a thorough knowledge of the rules becomes very important. All conflict resolution requires both parties to listen. It is

important that both teams know their role in the foul calling process, question each other, and recognize the concept and significance of “best perspective.” One creative way to practice listening is developing role plays where athletes are given scripts of situations that they must discuss as players on opposing teams (see below). They must come up with solutions to the scenarios. Another way is to have one player on each team be “mediator” for foul calls. They must listen to one side, relay that call to their team, listen to their teammate, relay that call to the other team and so on and so forth. Over time, different players should take on this role so that everyone learns the rules and how to self-officiate.

## Resuming Play

During self-officiated games it is important to move on and continue the game when a foul is called. This is easiest to accomplish if both teams know the rules and listen to each other. Players involved in a foul call should make sure both teams are ready and promptly tap this disc in (“Defense ready? Disc in!”). Ways to work on this are using the tap-in to start iterations of drills, or providing incentive/encouragement to players who ask ‘are you ready’ to both teams before they tap-in.

### Sample Script

1. Defender on Team A calls “pick” at stall 5
2. Thrower on Team B does not acknowledge the call until after the throw
3. Receiver on Team B hears call, catches disc, stops play

**Questions:** Who should have the disc when play resumes? What is the stall count?



# Coaching Youth League Ultimate

By Carey Goldenberg

*With a little preparation, coaching an Ultimate team can be a great challenge rather than an overwhelming and daunting task. Prepare yourself to be patient—it can take between three and five years to develop a successful program. Your personal growth as a coach may take less time but your team will need some extra time to learn your drills and philosophies. When coaching freshmen, start with the basics. By the time your players are seniors, you will have built a strong foundation and players can continue to fine tune their skills for each game and tournament.*

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## Basics

### Discs

Encourage new players to acquire their own discs to use at their leisure. Whether your players buy them on their own or borrow from a “team supply,” each kid needs to develop his own collection of prized wall hangers and playing stock. Who knows when and where they will want to practice throwing and catching? If they want to throw at 8pm in the park, they can take their disc out to work on their inside-out forehands on their schedule.

Discs can be purchased in bulk from Discraft, and they will sell you misprints for \$2 apiece. If you buy a large quantity at once, you can sell them at the school for a profit (\$10 each is a reasonable amount), which can cover your team’s own supply of discs, as well as help fund shirts or travel. Contact Discraft directly for quotes on bulk orders and misprints.

### Throwing and Catching

Teaching the fundamental skills of throwing and catching the disc requires a bit of time. Each player

will need individual cues and direct feedback, whether this means telling them to, “Keep the disc parallel to the ground,” “Put more spin on the disc,” or “Change the angle of your release.” If you can recruit a particularly skilled, experienced thrower to help teach these fundamentals, it can help speed the learning process and solve a lot of the team’s issues. The better each player can throw, the greater the chance they will help the team when they step on the field.

At the beginning of a player’s throwing career, it helps to stress the outlet, or “reset.” This is a necessary tool for beginners—if players can grasp the concept of “not throwing the disc away,” or possession-oriented offense, their decision-making will help the team much more than a lower-percentage risk-taking philosophy. New players don’t want to be blamed for turnovers, so for a while they may be intimidated to throw tougher down field passes. Having newer players concentrate on a “dump-reset” strategy can keep them from irritating more experienced players. Encourage each player to throw 50 backhands and 50 forehands during every warm up. When catching throws above the head, players should try to get both hands on the disc with their thumbs pointing down. For throws below the waist, thumbs should face up. At waist height, catching with a pancake or clap catch works best.

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## Simple Drills

### Three Person Throwing and Marking Weave

Have players get into groups of three and set up a simple weave. Thrower plays defense as soon as they release the disc. Player A throws to player B with player C covering the throw. Then player B throws to C with A playing defense. Finally, player C throws to A with B playing defense. If they have learned about the stall count, have the count be five (5). This drill will build up their faking skills, their pivoting, marking, and their ability to make good decisions quickly.

### Straight on Throwing Drill

Split the team into squads of five or so, standing in 2 lines facing each other about 30 to 40 feet (when more skilled, 40-50 yards) apart. Once the drill starts, player A from the front of one line runs at the thrower in the front of the other line. This thrower must throw directly at the person running at them. Once the disc is caught, the player at the front of the other line makes a cut straight toward the player who just caught the disc. They must wait until the disc is caught though, or the drill doesn't work as well. These timed cuts will help out once they start playing the game and they realize that they aren't getting thrown to. They should learn to time their cuts to get open better.

### Four Corner Drill

This drill takes time to learn but is great for cutting, anticipating cuts, setting up fakes that lead to good throws, and throwing a lead pass to space. This drill should be used in both directions (clockwise & counter-clockwise), so as to practice both forehands and backhands. Cones are set in a square pattern, about 25 yards apart. Players line up several yards behind each cone. Again, as in the "Straight-on Throwing" drill, the cutter waits for the thrower to actually catch the disc before they start their cuts and run to the next cone. As players improve over the course of the season, they should start setting up their cuts before the disc is caught. Imagine a square, with another square inside, with its corners at the midpoints. The player starts at the cone (first square) and runs toward the next cone, but catches the disc at the

midpoint. After catching the disc, they stop, pivot and throw to the next player.

Remember to only introduce one or two new skills per practice. Beginning players need to integrate basic concepts into play, which helps out the real reason they come out—to have fun!

## Defensive Philosophies

I start with teaching defense. If a player can learn to be a great defender, the rest of the game will seem easy. No matter what a player has learned, played before, or generally prefers, everyone should be somewhat versed in several different styles of defense. In theory, all a team has to do to score is play catch and team keep-away down the field. It seems easy, but a strong defense can take easy passes away. But how? Is it best to force towards one side of the field? Do you try to make your opponent throw forehands all day? Do you try to use the direction and strength of the wind to your advantage? There are virtually limitless options, but your team has to choose those that work best for them in any given situation. Explain the concept and positions of Zone Defense—a good zone can help your team conserve energy and frustrate the other team into a few quick turnovers that give you the lead. Perhaps your philosophy targets the strongest players on the opposing team, neutralizing them with your best defenders. Sacrificing your players' energy on defense can really help a team's confidence.

## Offensive Philosophies

Again, if you use your experience as a club player, the concepts that work for you and your club team may be too advanced for the less experienced athletes on the team. Let them experiment with different play styles until they find one they have the most success with and are most comfortable playing. Breaking down various offensive positions (handler, middle and longs) can be a familiar concept to former football and soccer type players. They can apply those cross-sport concepts to the mind set of Ultimate relatively easily. Whatever offensive strategies are employed—vertical stack, horizontal stack, dominator, chaos, etc.—your players have to want to buy into that thought process. Make sure you spend enough time introducing each new concept and style, so they your team gains a firm understanding of these techniques. Try not to force any particular style on the team. Let them choose



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what works best for them. What works well for one team may be difficult to grasp for another.

As newer players are introduced you can help them integrate into the offense as their skills develop. Create the concept of “team first,” and then players will achieve individual accolades later.

Instill patience and confidence into every aspect of your team and you will help your individual players in a myriad of different ways. Alternate your critical coaching comments with praise and encouragement. Remember the formula: praise, comment, praise!



# Running a Youth Skills Clinic

By Will Smolinski

*Youth clinics can be a valuable resource to players looking for a head-start to their Ultimate career. By being prepared and implementing some of the strategies below, many challenges of running a Youth Skills Clinic can be managed or avoided.*

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## Preliminary Expectations

The first step is to try to get a preliminary idea of what the expectations are from the participants. A simple questionnaire that asks for their current skill level, knowledge and confidence with specific skills (throwing, cutting, marking, etc.) and what they would like to learn more about will help with designing your clinic. This will also help you become acquainted with players before they arrive.

Along those same lines, try starting off with an introductory activity where people learn names and you can gauge personalities (there are lots of silly games that involve a disc out there).

Make sure that when presenting skills, drills, and concepts that there are handouts for participants to bring back to their teams. With so much information being covered in such a short period of time it is good to have materials that will remind players of the most important cues or objectives of each drill.

Finally, split time between mass instruction with the entire group and one on one instruction as much as the size of your clinic permits.

## Teaching Different Ability Levels

If there is a range of ability levels in the group there are a few techniques that will help differentiate instruction. The easiest is to break them into homogeneous groups. Although this might take some prep time or even some time observing to accurately assess

skills before breaking into groups, players will feel less pressure in a peer group that is close to their ability level. This also allows each group to focus on developmentally appropriate objectives even if they are working on the same drill. Adding different challenges or cues to each group is another way to tailor instruction according to each specific group's needs.

The opposite approach can be another successful solution. Pairing more skilled players with less skilled players can be beneficial in learning individual skills like throwing or marking. Allowing experienced participants to help with some aspects of instruction gives players with less skill more one-on-one time while deepening the understanding of the more skilled players. Teaching somebody else a skill forces the teacher to evaluate and breakdown each task into smaller components, which leads to a more thorough understanding.

It should be noted that mixing ability levels while teaching advanced concepts (such as team strategy or drills that involve 'flow') can be frustrating and should generally be avoided.

## Planning the Day

If the clinic is going to last more than a couple hours it will be beneficial to break up the day with some forethought. Some easy tips include:

- Mix up running- and throwing-based drills to allow for some rest.
- Have several 5-10 minute throwing sessions instead of one 45 minute throwing session.

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- Progress the drills from individual skills to team concepts (forcing and downfield positioning do not matter if the mark is constantly getting broken).
  - Mix in disc games besides Ultimate, such as Double Disc Court, Disc Golf, or Keep Away.
  - 20 minutes for each activity (three minutes of instruction, 10 minutes of doing, two minutes of re-focused instruction, five more minutes of doing).
  - Finish tasks on a positive note by setting goals (i.e. 20 completions and we're done).
  - Allow five minutes of down time for every hour.

## Managing Your Energy

Running a clinic is exhausting. Make sure to take care of your body throughout the day so you can bring the best version of yourself to each activity. That includes taking water breaks with the kids, eating small snacks throughout the day, and allowing for some participant-run activities where you can take a mental breather.

### Participant Questionnaire

- Current skill level
- Strengths? (throwing, cutting, marking, etc.)
- What would you like to learn?

# Starting an Ultimate Camp

By Mark Rosser

*In running an Ultimate camp, it is important to realize that many different situations exist throughout the country and the world. There is no one “right” way to run a camp. Information in this section is put together based on experiences from running the Philadelphia Ultimate Camp with Jim Brose for the past several years. A number of the decisions made have been based on the Ultimate community in Philadelphia, along with personal preferences. Our camp organizers have different strengths and this serves us well. It is important to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the organizers and to fill additional important roles as well. Getting good people involved is the key. For kids, much of a camp experience relates to the counselors. It is important to find counselors who are knowledgeable, teach the game well, and that will help the kids have fun.*

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In addition to the suggestions shared in this section, consider other paths that could be taken. In general, one of the main goals should be to breed Ultimate and to pass on the game to the next generation. Doing things right can help the camp be financially sound, but a number of conditions must be present to create a camp which is consistently a financial success. For example, the goal in our first year was to get the word out and to make sure the kids who came had a great time. A strong investment is necessary in the first year in order to help build success for the future.

## Operating Independently vs. Through Another Organization

There are advantages to each of these approaches. Operating independently allows organizers more freedom, but will also be a lot more work. Much of that work will be paperwork. It is important to

consider what is best for YOU and the organizer’s involved. The Philadelphia Ultimate Camp operated independently for the first three years. In the third year, the Camp was contacted by a local township recreation department to run a camp for them. This provided us with the opportunity to see both situations.

If you are interested in running a camp through another organization you should talk with the director of recreation centers or coordinators of summer programs for townships. Our camp with the local township was geared for kids ages 7-11. They ran a number of other programs and they advertised our camp in their summer catalog that was mailed to all of the residents in the township. They handled all of the registration and the camp’s responsibility was just to show up and teach. Administration and advertising were handled by the township. The campers had a fun, educational week of Ultimate. The income and expenses were smaller numbers, but fairly predictable.

In contrast to this is our program for older players. A majority of these players were ages 14-18 and also play on their high school teams. With this camp, we did the advertising. We had flyers and discs available at tournaments. We mailed flyers to the players. It

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helped that I run the local high school league in Philadelphia as well. I was able to mention the camp in emails or at league meetings. It's been said that people need to hear something six times before it sticks with them. Get the word out to people who work with kids. Get to know the people that run the youth programs in your area so you can work with them. It is a win-win situation. It can help you attract players to the camp, and it can help them to improve the level of play for their players.

## Determining the Location

If you are operating independently, you will need to find a site. If you are not operating independently, you will need to find an organization to work with. In terms of groups to work with, check with existing camps and township programs. Groups like these are often excited to add new activities to their lineup. Emphasize to them that Ultimate (or perhaps just "Frisbee™" if you are working with a younger group) is a fun way to get kids to learn sportsmanship and get good exercise.

If you are operating independently, finding a site is the most important step. Without a location, camp can not occur. Be persistent with this step. It may take many phone calls or emails. What should you look for? Depending on your location and your campers, weather may be a consideration in choosing a site. What will you do if it rains? Ideally, your site should also include a gym where you can go if there is heavy rain. It is also nice to have a classroom with video capabilities. Other perks to look for would be access to an ice machine and water. If there is a lunchroom, that is also a plus. You may decide that you do not need all of these, but it is best to try to plan for adverse weather conditions. Many parents sign their kids up for camp, and then expect that no matter what the weather is like, you will run your program.

There is a great deal of competition among camps for summer sites. As a result, it may be difficult (and expensive) to find a site. Be prepared to put in the extra time initially to find a quality site that is within your financial range. Often colleges and public high schools will be a bit more expensive. Private or parochial schools are sometimes more flexible and more reasonable in price. Township parks are also an option, but you will need to develop a plan in case of heavy rain.

When approaching the site coordinator, be prepared to answer the types of questions they will ask. Some will want information in writing. Prepare a description of your camp's mission statement and the staff. People want to know that you are a responsible person and that even if the camp is new, that it will be a reliable entity. Give your background in running programs and working with kids. Some places may want background checks.

One of the questions you WILL need an answer for is insurance. We participate in USA Ultimate's Affiliation program and I strongly recommend this as an option. Another option would be participating in your local Ultimate group's policy. Insurance is a must. Take care of it early so you can move ahead with other essential planning items.

## Determining Your Target Group

This may depend on your community. Consider what is available and your resources.

- Is there a local high school league?
- Are there a number of players in your adult leagues with kids?
- Is the local recreation department looking to add programs?
- What age groups do you want to work with?

As a general rule with younger groups, it is best to have a slightly shorter program and perhaps mix in a few non-Frisbee™ related activities. For example, consider a session for kids ages 8-11 that is 3 hours a day for one week. When grouping kids together, a good guideline is to think of elementary, middle school, and high school as a good general barometer. There may be some activities where there can be some mixing beyond these guidelines, but in order to help kids challenge themselves safely in age-appropriate drills or activities it is best not to have too large a disparity in members of the groups. Day camp environments work fine when combining girls and boys or separating them out. It may depend on further details of the program as to which may work best for you.

Consider these and other factors when determining your target group. Once you have decided on your target group, gear your advertising efforts toward this group.

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## What's in a Name?

The name of your camp tells people who you are so choose your name carefully. It is nice to be creative, but the name should also be informative for parents and players. Consider the message or information you want to share. Be clear and concise. Consider what people will find when they search the web or look in a directory. Some organizations also use an alternate nickname or acronym in place of their full name. Consider this when developing your name. Important things to consider including are who and what.

## Advertising

Advertising is crucial in getting the camp started. Determine a budget for the year. Consider the places where you can get the word out in the most cost effective way. Follow that up by seeing which forms of advertisement were most effective for you. On our application, we have a line where applicants write “where they heard about the camp.” In our first year we spent a large chunk of change on a local newspaper in the Philadelphia area. None of the applicants reported that they heard about the camp from the ad. As a result we dropped it the next year. On the other hand, many of the kids wrote that they heard about the camp from a mailing. So the following year, we increased mailings to the high school players.

A great way to advertise is through custom-made discs. Get your camp logo and web address on the disc. These can be given away or sold at local high school tournaments. Have camp shirts made. Be sure to design a cool logo so people will want to wear the shirt. If your camp is in the summer you probably want the shirt to be white to help kids stay cool. If it wicks away sweat, that's even better. We give a disc and shirt to each camper AND counselor. Build positive feelings in these people and then let them be ambassadors for your camp. Word of mouth is critical to having a successful camp. Make sure the captains of the local teams know about the camp.

There are also other free, or relatively inexpensive, ways to advertise. Where do many of the games occur? Is there a bulletin board? Post flyers there. Do you ever send an email? Have the camp website be attached as part of your signature. Does the local Ultimate group have a website? Ask if you can post camp information on that website. Don't be shy about promoting the camp.

## The Website

In this day and age, it would seem that a website is necessary. For a small cost, it will save you a lot of time. Posting necessary information on the website will make it easier for those interested in attending your camp. It will also save you time in terms of answering questions related to the information on the website. In addition it is also a great chance to show pride in your program and the people who are serving as counselors.

Use a digital camera to take lots of pictures. In our application that parents sign, we ask permission to use photos of the players to advertise our camp. And if a picture is worth a thousand words, then a video must be worth a million. Our camp posted video footage on our website found that this is something players really enjoy watching. It also highlights details and experiences available through the program. Make sure to involve people with a variety of skills.

Give people a reason to visit (and revisit) your website. Post content there that might be of interest to potential campers. On our website, we post the local high school league standings. Keep in mind, that some parents may not know that much about Ultimate. Post links to USA Ultimate, your local Ultimate organization, and other helpful resources.

## Camp Registration

Having forms available online is a great help. We use three basic forms: camp application (Appendix A), medical authorization form (Appendix C), and the waiver (Appendix E). The waiver and the medical authorization form are part of USA Ultimate's Affiliation program. However, even if you choose not to use USA Ultimate's program, it may be a good idea to have forms similar to these. Consult your local attorney and find out specifics on requirements from the group or insurance you choose for your camp.

The application is an important tool in gathering information. How did you find out about the camp? Emergency contact information is also important. Get as many phone numbers as you can in case you need to contact a parent. Get home, work, and cell numbers for both parents. Email is important for communicating so ask them to please write their email NEATLY. If you are going to have groups based on skill level, do what you can to gather some information on their Frisbee™ experience so you can plan in advance.

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## Building Relationships is Key

The most important people are the kids. It is all about giving them a fun experience where they learn more about playing Ultimate. It is also important to develop a good relationship with parents. As director of a camp, introduce yourself to the parents. Encourage them to stay and watch their kids play. Help them to see that you and your counselors are doing a fine job with their kids. Point out positive steps that their son or daughter has made. As it was mentioned before, build strong relationships with the coaches, youth program directors, and the leaders in the local Ultimate community. You are providing a beneficial product for them and they can help you to find the kids that can benefit from that product.

It is also important to build positive relationships with the “support” people. The “support” people are those that do not play Ultimate but play a role in the township or facility that you are using. This could be the recreation director, the administrative assistant at the school, the maintenance crew, directors and counselors of other camps on the site. These days it is hard to find good sites. You want yourself and your camp to be known as people who “play well with others” so that you are welcome guests for years to come.

## Staffing

Building the staff for camp is another important step. Perhaps you are the best person to run the day-to-day activities of the camp. However, take a step back and consider if there are others who might be just the right person to fill that role. The on-site director should be a person with a strong Ultimate background and a strong knowledge of the game. This person should have plenty of experience teaching the game to others. Not all great players are great teachers. This person should also be comfortable working with other counselors. Because teachers are not in school in the summer, you may find that a teacher is a good person to fill this role or the role of counselor. You want to find the best players/teachers available. Often times people who have been captains of teams are comfortable teaching others.

Not everyone has total flexibility with their schedule, so be willing to have “guest stars” come in for a day or two as their schedule permits. Be sure to have a solid core of counselors who will be there all week. This will

provide continuity in the teaching and help the kids feel comfortable. However, adding guest stars can provide something new and fresh for each day.

Staffing the camp involves important decisions. Giving the kids a quality experience means trying to keep a relatively low counselor to camper ratio. Of course, the lower the ratio the higher the cost. It is desirable to have one counselor for every 5-7 campers. It’s an added benefit if it’s possible to have an extra “floating” counselor that can move from group to group and give pointers or problem-solve and deal with issues that may arise.

Selection of the staff will also be affected by the age range of the players. Certainly you want to seek out top notch players. However, another consideration when selecting counselors for younger kids (ages 8-11) would be finding players who can maintain an enthusiasm around younger, newer players. High school or college players could fill this role very nicely, along with an experienced player to maintain the organization and scheduling. A teacher could be a very good candidate for this director position.

## Planning the Week

Several weeks before camp, it is very useful to meet with the main counselors who will be running activities during the week. At this point, you can plan the progression for the week and decide on drills and activities. Getting the counselors involved in this stage is very important. These counselors will be the ones who help make the activities successful. You may have a great Break the Mark drill, but if the counselor who is running the drill is not clear about how the drill works, then the drill may be a flop. This meeting is also a good time for the counselors and staff to make connections between the activities so that the kids can build their Ultimate knowledge and see the applications of it.

## Planning the Day

With our younger kids we had camp from 9am until noon. With our older kids we have two sessions that last three hours. The morning session goes from 9am until noon. Lunch break goes from noon until 1pm. The afternoon session is from 1pm until 4pm. Especially with kids who are new to the game, it is important to give them many opportunities to



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be successful and then to build on those successes. As with any team sport, you want to start with a lot of repetitions of individual skills and then build up to incorporate those skills into drills and eventually game situations.

Have a flexible framework established. Know your plan, but be ready for minor changes. We started the morning working on throws. This is a good chance to give kids a few tips to work with, and also to evaluate skill for groups. Your numbers may dictate something a little different, but the past two years we split into three groups based on ability. After stretching and working on throws, each group would go to a different station. One of our head counselors (counselors who were there all week and helped developed the plans) would be running an activity at that station. Our groups were about 12-14 kids. We had another counselor rotate with the group so they could make connections between the stations and work closely with those kids. Because the kids were at different levels, the head counselors did make some adjustments to the activities as needed.

After the three rotations we had teams which we kept all week for the “Camp Cup.” These teams brought all of the players together to compete in healthy competition for the week. The counselors also played on these teams. This was a chance for the counselors to incorporate the lessons of the day, as well as model good leadership and sportsmanship skills for the campers.

Ultimate is a demanding sport. The kids work hard and are often very tired after a grueling week of developing their skills. A number of other sports may not be as grueling and kids could participate for a number of weeks. Because a week of camp can be so taxing, it may be difficult to get many kids to attend for several weeks. Consider the length of each session, amount of time spent on Ultimate and amount of time (if any) spent on other activities and the age group, and whether or not it will include people who have played before or not when determining how long to schedule camp. You would prefer people to leave feeling good, like they learned something, happy but also wanting more.

## Looking Ahead

Once camp has concluded, the question to ask is “How can we improve for next year?” Who better to ask than the kids who attended? Evaluations are a great tool. We have kept ours rather simple with a few basic open-ended questions. What did you learn that you can take back to your team? What was your favorite part of camp? What suggestions do you have to improve the camp for next year? While you may not be able to “put a dome over the field and install air conditioning,” the evaluations do provide useful feedback to apply for the future. See sample Evaluation Form (Appendix B).

While things are fresh in people’s minds, it is best to wrap things up. When you do this, write things down. Something that may seem obvious a week after camp has ended may fade into a memory by the time next year’s camp rolls around. Take care of all necessary paperwork. Toss unnecessary items and file away the useful ones. Taking care of organizational items well in advance allows you and others running the camp to present an organized, well-run program.

Important things to note include suggestions from campers and counselors. Write down which drills worked well and which ones might need revising. Keep records of campers so you can mail them brochures the following summer. Try to stay in touch with some of the campers; they are the key to spreading the word about your camp. If they play high school Ultimate, see some of their games or find a way to volunteer to help the youth community.

## FUN and RESPECT

Most of all, keep looking for ways to make it fun. For the kids. For the staff. For you. For everyone. Breed Ultimate. We all know it is a great sport and we love to lace up the cleats and play. We are fortunate to be part of a wonderful community that has respect for the game and the people who play it. Share that love and respect with the next generation of players.



## Ultimate Drills

By Carey Goldenberg

### Straight on Throwing Drill

Split the team into squads of five or so, standing in 2 lines facing each other about 30 to 40 feet apart (when more skilled, 40-50 yards). Once the drill starts, Player B from the front of one line runs at the thrower (Player A) in the front of the other line (see Fig 1-1). This thrower must throw directly at the person running at them. After throwing, player A clears out to the back of the far line to make space for the next cutter. Once the disc is caught by player B, the player at the front of the other line (player C) makes a cut straight toward the player who just caught the disc (see Fig 1-2). Player C must wait until the disc is caught though, or the drill doesn't work as well. These timed cuts will help once athletes start playing the game and realize that they aren't getting thrown to. Over time, players should learn to time their cuts to get open better.

Fig 1-1

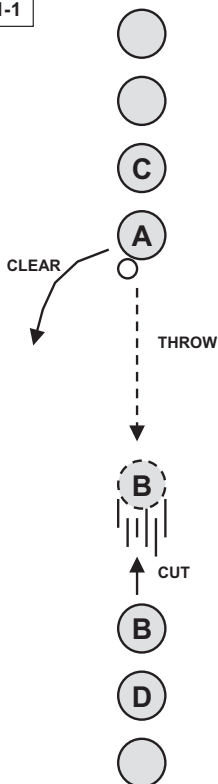


Fig 1-2

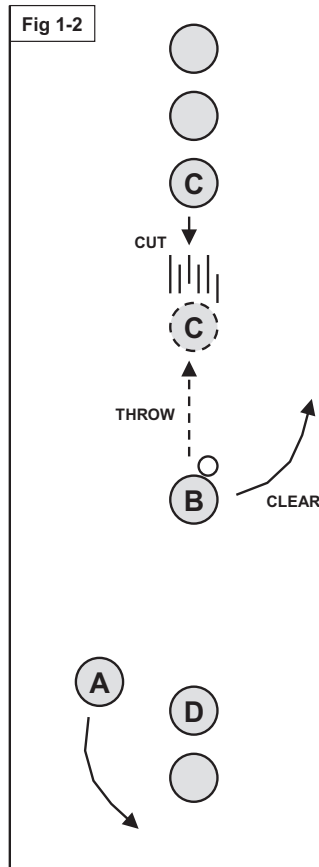
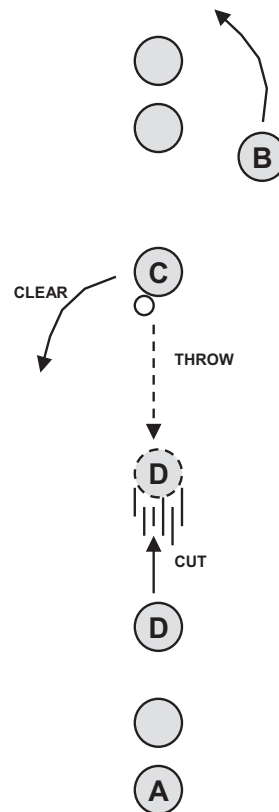


Fig 1-3



## Three Person Throwing and Marking Weave

Have players get into groups of three and set up a simple weave. Thrower plays defense as soon as they release the disc. Player B throws to player C with player A covering the throw (Fig 2-1). Then player C throws to A with B playing defense (Fig 2-2). Finally, player A throws to B with C playing defense (Fig 2-3). If they have learned about the stall count, have the count be five (5). This drill will build up their faking skills, their pivoting, marking, and their ability to make good decisions quickly.

Fig 2-1

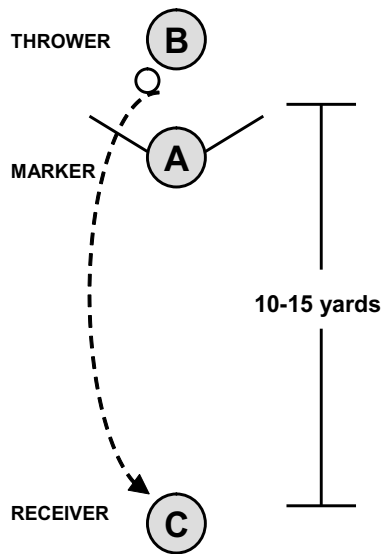


Fig 2-2

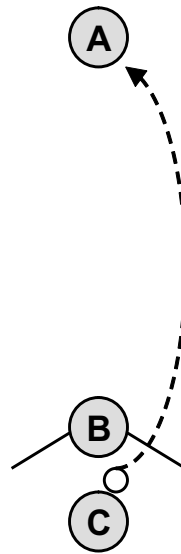
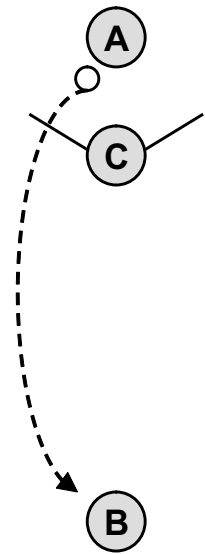


Fig 2-3

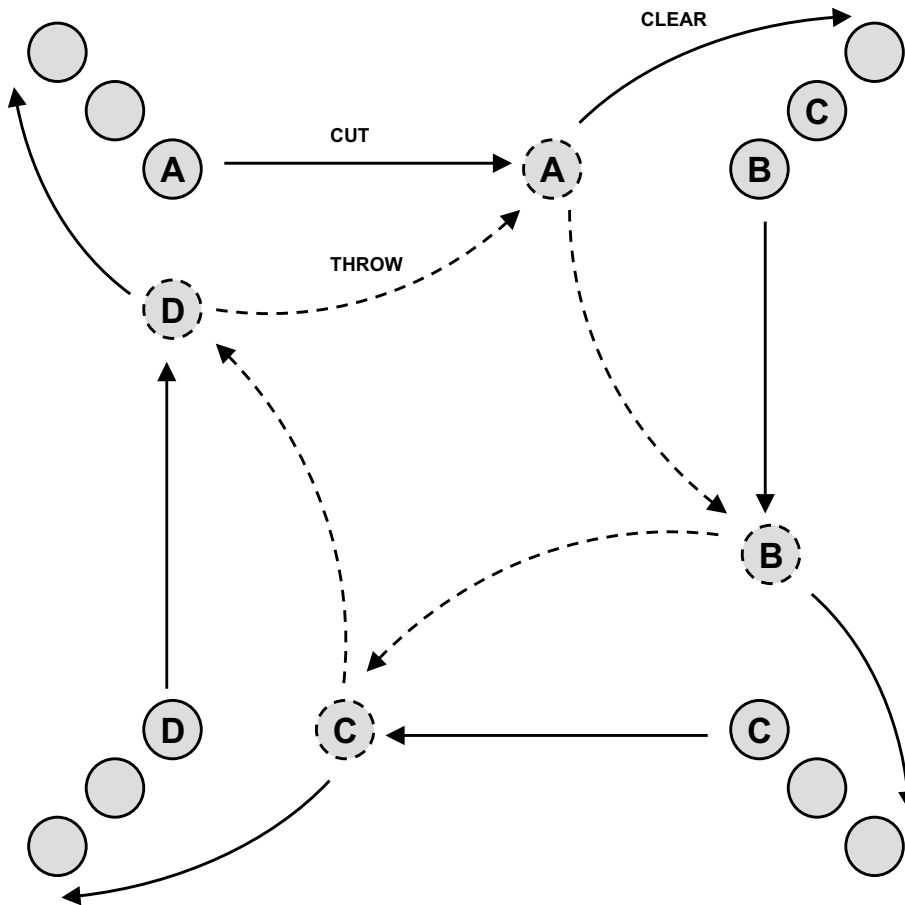


## Four Corners Drill

This drill takes time to learn but is great for cutting, anticipating cuts, setting up fakes that lead to good throws, and throwing a lead pass to space. This drill should be used in both directions (clockwise & counter-clockwise), so as to practice both forehands and backhands. Cones are set in a square pattern, about 25 yards apart. Players line up several yards behind each cone. Again, as in the “Straight-on Throwing” drill, the cutter waits for the thrower to actually catch the disc before they start their cuts and run to the next cone. As players improve over the course of the season, they should start setting up their cuts before the disc is caught. Imagine a square, with another square inside, with its corners at the midpoints. The player starts at the cone (first square) and runs toward the next cone, but catches the disc at the midpoint. After catching the disc, they stop, pivot and throw to the next player.

Fig 3-1 demonstrates the forehand version of the Four Corners Drill. Player A cuts toward Player B while receiving a throw from Player D. Once Player A catches the disc, Player B cuts towards Player C, receiving the disc from Player A. Immediately after throwing to the next receiver, players must clear out to the back of the next line.

Fig 3-1







PART 5:

# **Getting the Word Out**

**Gaining Media Attention**

**Building the Ultimate On-line Presence**





# Gaining Media Attention

By Ryan S. John

*The following chapter will help you gain media attention for your tournament or league. It contains instructions on how to create a press release, agate, and a press kit. There is also information on what to do before, during, and after your event takes place and how to pitch your angle. While no method can guarantee media exposure, there are many things that can be done to improve the chances of your event being published.*

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## Tools of the Trade

Before you attempt to gain media attention for your event, there are a few tools of the trade you should familiarize yourself with. Press releases, agate, press kits and how to seek out different story angles are all integral pieces of the media puzzle that will help you promote your event. Not only will you become better familiar with these items, but you will be able to create your own and begin to gain media attention for your event.

## Press Release

A press release is simply an announcement meant to draw media attention to a specific event, in this case your event. A press release is the most basic tool of media relations and doesn't cost you anything more than time to produce. A good press release can make the difference between your story winding up in the newspaper or in the editor's garbage can. Please refer to Appendix H for tips on how to write a successful press release.

## Layout

Media expect a standard layout when receiving press releases. Please refer to Appendix G for an example of how to lay out a press release. At the top of your release, against the left margin, include "For Immediate Release" with the date on the next line below. Skip a line and place the headline on the next line, centered and bolded. If you choose to have a sub-head, it should go directly beneath the headline in a

slightly smaller font and be italicized. Skip a line, put the dateline followed by the body of the paragraph. The dateline is simply the city you are reporting from in all caps, followed by the state in AP style format (see figure 1-2) for AP style formatting.

## The Body

All press releases answer the same basic questions: Who? What? Where? Why? When? These questions should all be answered in one or two, to-the-point sentences within the first paragraph. Members of the media can be bombarded with press releases on a daily basis and your first paragraph often dictates whether or not they move on to the second. Be concise and you have a better chance of garnering attention.

The second paragraph can either explain what the outcome of the event means or feature a quote from someone involved with the event. Use a quote from someone involved with the event as it adds credibility by using a direct source close to the event. If it is a pre-event release, the tournament director or event organizer is a good person to quote. During the event you should always try to use someone competing in the event to reiterate what you are saying happened during the game(s). Whenever using a quote from someone, be sure to attribute it to them and follow their name with where they live (city, state) in parenthesis.

*Example:* "It is also good to break up quotes into two parts," said Ryan John (Boulder, Colo.), USA Ultimate director of communications. "The first part of the quote should state something and the second part back it up with a fact."

All the rest of the paragraphs should complement the first two paragraphs. This is where you would put additional information, peripheral details and any interesting facts that make your release seem newsworthy.

You should conclude your press release with a wrap-up paragraph. This would be a good time to mention the next day's match-ups and/or times, the next event that your organization is running, or recaps from past events such as, "A year ago Team A breezed through the competition to win their third Our City Classic title."

At the end of your press release, include all contact information for the person in charge of the media. Provide as much information as you can to make the media's job as easy as possible. Again, refer to the sample press release layout in Appendix G to see an example of how to layout your contact information.

## Agate

The word agate, as it pertains to print not the gem, comes from a size of font approximately 5 1/2 points, which is the size font that classifieds and box scores normally are printed. For our intents and purposes, agate is just another word for "scores" and, if done correctly, is your best bet for getting your event in print on busy news days.

There are simple rules to follow when putting together your agate and the closer you follow these rules the less the copy editor has to do and the easier you make his job, which is Ultimately the goal in everything you do for the media. You should start out your agate page with a header listing the name of your league or event, where the league or event takes place, dates the event takes place, and the date of the results. Please see Figure 1-1 for a sample of a tournament agate header and a league agate header.

After the header you will put your scores. Organize and label them clearly by division first and then by round if you are creating agate for a tournament. Correct agate lists, in order, the name of the team that won the game, where they are from, the losing team's name, where they are from followed by the score. You also want to check out your local paper's sports section, or, if you need to, call, to find out what format they use when publishing scores. In the mean time, the following is a sample of a line of agate.

Women's Quarterfinals  
Barnstormers (Boulder, Colo.) def. Fliers (Sarasota, Fla.), 15-12

If you notice in the sample above, postal state abbreviations aren't used, but rather Associated Press (AP) style abbreviations are used. Figure 1-2 shows accepted AP style abbreviations for all 50 states. Use these in all City, State references except when a state is used by itself.

Be sure to include your contact information, in the same manor that you do on your press releases, at the bottom of your agate.

Creating and preparing agate may seem simple—and it is. It is the easiest way to get your first media attention and should not be overlooked. Often times, if papers have room anywhere it is in the scores section where your agate would go. It can be the first step towards building a relationship with your local media and making Ultimate become more familiar and commonplace within their publication.

### *Fig. 1-1* Agate Headers

*Tournament Agate Header*

**2007 USA Ultimate High School Western  
Championships  
Pleasantview Soccer Complex  
Boulder, CO May 20-21**

**Results: Saturday, May 21**

*League Agate Header*

**Grass Roots Ultimate 2007 Summer League  
Pleasantview Soccer Complex  
Boulder, CO**

**Week 3 Results: Saturday, May 28**

## Press Kit

Although a press kit may seem more involved than many people have time for, it is surprisingly simple and inexpensive to create a basic press kit, and it will go a long way towards making your event appear professional to a member of the media.

A press kit can simply be viewed as a folder with all of your "stuff" in it. It will include everything that you have to promote your event and is something that you will distribute to members of the media and keep on hand during your league or event. The following are some examples of what you would want to include in a press kit.

## Two-pocket Folder

You don't need fancy folders made specifically for your event, instead use a basic, two-pocket folder that can be picked up at any office supply store. If you have a business card, you will want to get the type with the business card holder.

## Labels

Also be sure to clearly and neatly label the outside of the folder. You need to include a logo (if you have one), the event or organization name, and the words "Press Kit." With so much information needed to go on the label, a 3 1/2" X 4" address label, available at most office supply stores, seems to work well. Please see the figure 1-3 for an example of what your label should look like.

## Press Releases

Any pre-releases you have written for the event should go in the press kit. The press kit should be updated throughout the event with new releases as you write them. This way if a member of the media shows up at your event, they will have all the information they need at their fingertips. Also, if you have had anything else recently newsworthy within your organization (new board election, recent charity event, etc.) include those releases as well.

## Easy-to-read Schedule

You want to include a schedule that is easy to read and follow in the press kit. This should clearly show times and field locations. An added bonus is creating the schedule large enough to write on so that you, and the media, can easily update the draw sheets.

## Fact Sheet on Ultimate

Fact sheets on Ultimate are available for download under the media section of the USA Ultimate website. Of course if you choose to make your own, assume that you are explaining the game to someone that has never heard of the sport. Be sure to mention the basic rules and how to play the game as well as the aspects of the sport that make Ultimate unique, such as Spirit of the Game™.

## Fact sheet on Your Organization

This fact sheet is your chance to tell a little about your organization. You would want to include a list of officers, number of members, number of tournaments held each year, any charities that your organization donates to, a list of frequently asked questions, and basically anything that may be of use or interest to the

media. Also, be sure to include as much contact information as possible on the fact sheet. This includes contact name, email, phone(s), fax, and mailing address.

## Publications

If your event publishes a tournament program or player guide, be sure to include it in the press kit. If your organization publishes a newsletter, be sure to include that in the press kit.

## Angles

Your local paper most likely likes to publish local stories, which is perfect for most Ultimate tournaments and leagues. Be sure to play up the local angle. If you are running a tournament, be sure to make mention of the local teams competing in it. Look for people that are prominent members of the community that play in your league, business owners, councilmen, people that have unique jobs. Of course, be sure to get that person's permission with your media efforts.

There are many different angles available at your fingertips; you just have to try to find out what they are. Try to dig a little deeper than just people playing Ultimate. If people don't play Ultimate then they won't care who won the league tournament this year. They might be interested, however, in the team that won the league tournament and donated two large boxes of canned goods to their local food drive.

### *Figure 1-2* AP Style State Abbreviations

Ala.	Ariz.	Ark.	Calif.	Colo.	Conn.
Del.	Fla.	Ga.	Ill.	Ind.	Kan.
Ky.	La.	Md.	Mass.	Mich.	Minn.
Miss.	Mo.	Mont.	Neb.	Nev.	N.H.
N.J.	N.M.	N.Y.	N.C.	N.D.	Okla.
Ore.	Pa.	R.I.	S.C.	S.D.	Tenn.
Vt.	Va.	Wash.	W.Va.	Wis.	Wyo.

**Never abbreviate:** Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas, or Utah



## Getting to Work

OK, so now you have some tools to use during your quest for media attention. Now, what do you do with these tools? When do you use them? We'll be going through a step-by-step of the basics from what to do before the event starts through the completion of your event and how to make sure that you increase coverage next time you seek it.

## Pre-event

### Gather Contacts

Now you know how to write a press release, prepare agate and build a press kit. But who will you give it to? Before the event starts is when you need to gather your media contact list. The fastest and most accurate way to research your contacts is on the internet. There are several media search engines to help lead you to your local media's websites where you will usually find all of the contact information you will need.

Be sure to gather as much information as you can, including contact's name, title, email, phone, fax, mailing address and physical address. You want to pinpoint your releases and contact to those that are

most likely to pick your story up. The motor sports reporter might not be very interested in your release and you would just be wasting your time sending it to them. The high school reporter might be very interested if you are running a youth league.

Don't be afraid to make contacts outside of sports. With the correct story angle you may also be able to get attention in fitness, lifestyle, community, business, entertainment, or a special segment.

### Contacting the Media

This is your chance to get to know the editors and reporters in your area and for you to introduce them, often for the first time, to Ultimate and, more specifically, your event or league. You will want to introduce yourself and the sport to the media a few weeks to a month before your event or league begins to make them aware of it.

There are basically four avenues for you to contact the media: visit, call, email, fax. Depending on your level of comfort and amount of time you have, any of the first three are acceptable ways to make your first interaction. If you decide to call or visit, be sure to know their deadlines and not bother them around those times. Being sympathetic to an editor's schedule will make him or her more apt to want to listen to what you have to say.

Don't fax unless someone requests information in that manner. It is even less personal than email and ideally you want to have a relationship with the members of your media. Plus, with faxing, they are unable to simply "copy and paste" the information you send.

If you visit the media, be sure to bring the press kit you created (if you created one), along with any other information or promotional material that you may have. You don't have to wear a suit, but be sure to dress nice for your visit.

Your initial contact, whether it be in person, by phone or email, is not only your chance to pass along information, but also to gather information for yourself. Be sure to ask important questions such as when deadlines for press releases and agate are. Also find out if you are talking to the right person. Often times the reporter you are talking to will know someone else in the department that might be better suited to report on your story and increase your chances of getting press. This is also a good time to update the contact information you have for their company and find out when they will be sending someone out to cover your event.

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## During Event

If you did a good job during pre-event then you need to be prepared to capitalize on all of that hard work during the event.

If you created press kits, be sure to keep them available at the tournament desk, or somewhere easy for you to quickly grab, if someone from the media shows up. Keep the press kits updated with the latest scores and press releases. If you are running media operations for a tournament, be sure to update the draw sheets that you included in your press kit.

It is also important to have someone there, not playing, that can answer questions or that can get a hold of you immediately. The media may not have much time to be at the field and therefore, not enough time to wait for you to finish your point. You should already have a list of potential interviewees in case they want to interview someone at the event. You'll want to keep in mind how they will look and what they will say when choosing your candidates.

Be sure to write a press release and create an agate each day after the completion of competition. You know when deadlines are for your media contacts so be sure to get your information there before hand. The earlier you send in your information the more likely they are to use it. They certainly aren't going to hold the presses if they don't have your release or agate by their deadline. And if they were expecting it, you may have taken a few steps back in your media quest by not sending it.

## Post Event

After your daily agate, the post event press release is the next most likely piece of information to be published from your event. Include the story of the final, who won and how local teams and/or players fared. Also be sure to include any awards that were given out or items donated to charity. In addition to the final scores, your final agate should include a list of the final standings with each team listed in the place they

finished, followed by their city and state.

It is also a nice touch to follow up with the local media after the conclusion of your event. Send them a nice thank you note or email. If they gave you coverage, be sure to comment specifically on it. If you didn't attract any media attention this time around, try not to be discouraged and still follow up with the media. Something to the effect of, "Thank you for taking the time to read through our material. We understand that your (paper, station, etc.) is very busy and perhaps next time you will be able to find some room in your..."

This is also a good time to tell them of your "next time." Include your next event in the final release and also in any follow-up correspondence. If you don't have anything coming up for awhile, be sure to turn them on to another Ultimate event in your area or on the national scene.

## Wrap-up

You now have the beginnings to launch a successful media campaign. Don't worry if you don't have six television crews and three newspapers out at your next event just because you sent out a press release. Gaining media notice in a world so oversaturated with sports takes time so stay positive and try slightly tweaking your approach when unsuccessful.

Odds are that you won't get anyone to come out for your league games each week, but you can still use your leagues to help set up your tournament media. Be sure to send in your agate, every week, consistently. This will help to build your relationship with local media and they will begin to view you as someone that has things organized and is easy to work with.

Ultimate is really such a beautiful sport to watch and is very media friendly. If you can't get them down to the fields, try to point them towards video. Getting the media to notice the sport is the most difficult part, once they see how exciting it is, they will want to come back for more.





# Building the Ultimate Online Presence

By Josh Seamon

*Any Ultimate team or league can benefit from having a robust online presence. The benefits of hosting an online Ultimate site generally fall into two broad categories.*

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## Communication

Gone are the days when captain's meetings were organized over the phone and only occurred once a year. It still can be a chore to push volumes of information out to your team, but connecting to everyone in your organization has never been easier.

## Media

Ultimate players love photos and videos of themselves playing Ultimate. Incredibly inexpensive bandwidth and wonderfully simple online services make it possible to share gigabytes of media with your team and the world.

Before you set off into the wilds of the Internet, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do I have any money to work with?
2. Do I want to make the site public or private?
3. How many photos/videos do I want to post?
4. How much do I really know about web programming?

## Scenario 1

*You have no money, want to make the majority of the site public, have lots and lots of photos and video to post, and you know nothing about web programming.*

Lucky for you there are many other people out

there like you that want to be able to do the same thing. There are also countless services out there that are almost identical. Which service(s) you settle on will ultimately be up to the personal preferences you will develop as you play with the myriad of free offerings that are out there.

## My Opinion

When I look for free and dynamic web services I look for ones that are simple to use and work well together. My favorite solution is Google. For the site itself you can use Blogger, for photos you can use Picasa Web Albums, for your mailing list you can use Google Groups, for video you can use YouTube, for document sharing and data collection you can use Google Documents, for managing your team calendar you can use Google Calendar, and if you want to build a more static site you can use Google Sites.

## Pros

They are all free services! All of the accounts are controlled by one account. There's no need to remember login information for multiple services. All of the user interfaces are clean and simple and no web programming knowledge is needed to add content. All of the services are integrated with one another so you can very easily do things like embed your photos and videos into your Blogger site. You can easily change the style and layouts of each service. All of the services have granulated user permissions that allow you to keep certain content private.

## Cons

You cannot change every last aspect about the layout and style of each service. There is a 1GB data store limit to free Picasa Web Albums accounts. YouTube has a 10 minute cap on videos. You can't make complete local backups of your sites.

## What you can do with a little money

1. Purchase a Flickr Pro account to host your online images. For \$25 a year you can host an unlimited number of photos.
2. Purchase a team domain from GoDaddy for \$10 and point it to your main site. You can then create as many sub domains as you'd like and have them point wherever you want. For example, images.youteamname.com could point to your Flickr account. You can also setup email forwarding with the domain. You could have the email address captain@youteamname.com.

If you want to make the majority of your site private I recommend using Ning, a service that lets you build custom social networks. It is free, very easy to use, and access to the entire service can be limited to specific users.

## Scenario 2

*You have some money, want very fine control of how certain pages are accessed, have a massive amount of media to post, and you know a pretty good amount about web programming.*

For less than \$10 a month you can kick the free web hosting habit and buy your own hosting package. There are thousands of hosts to choose from but you really cannot go wrong with HostGator. Once you have your own hosting package, your options for what do to next are endless. I recommend jumping head first into the world of open source web applications. Some of my favorite options are as follows:

**Note:** You do NOT need significant programming skills to install any of these pieces of software. When you purchase your own domain you will have access to a domain control panel, which 99% of the time includes Fantastico, a script that will let you install just about any web application with a few clicks.

## Content Management

My two favorite systems are Joomla and Wordpress. If you want to build a large site with lots of

various features, I recommend using Joomla. If you want to run a smaller, lighter site, I recommend using Wordpress. If you look around you will find many pages written about the specifics of each system. Each system has disciples that are as devoted as the most hardcore PC/Mac cultists. I recommend playing around with both systems and then deciding which one is the right one for you. Keep in mind that both systems have a very large database of free add-ons.

## Media

Gallery 2 is a full featured, very powerful photo management package.

## Free services worth keeping

While it is possible to host and stream your own video files, there's no real reason to ditch YouTube completely. When you have your own hosting package you can put your raw, super high quality video files online for download, and post lower quality versions to YouTube. Now that YouTube supports high definition video, there seems to be less and less of a reason to post your own video downloads. Google documents is still king when it comes to easy document collaboration and data collection. Even though there are many free and simple calendar plugins for both Joomla and Wordpress, Google Calendar is a difficult service to ditch.

## Pros

You have complete control over all of your content. You can make your site look any way you'd like. You can make local backups of your data. You have access to thousands of free content management system plugins and themes. You have access to thousands of other free applications that can be installed on your hosting package. There is a massive amount of help material available for all of these systems.

## Cons

You will need to manually update software. Many packages come with automatic updaters, but some do not. The user interfaces for Joomla and Wordpress take a little while to get used to. Good hosting is not free.

## Example websites

### The National Ultimate Training Camp

Media rich, blogger site

The UltiVerse Wordpress-powered podcast blog

BUDA Joomla-powered league website





PART 6:

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A: Sample Camp Application Form**

**Appendix B: Sample Camp Evaluation Form**

**Appendix C: Sample Medical Authorization Form**

**Appendix D: Sample Youth Chaperone Consent  
and Release Form**

**Appendix E: Sample Waiver/Release of Liability Form**

**Appendix F: Sample Player Information Form**

**Appendix G: Sample Press Release Layout**

**Appendix H: 10 Tips For Writing a Press Release**



## Sample Camp Application

### Your Camp Name Here Camp Application

Please print this form, fill out entire form, sign form, and mail it with deposit.  
Be sure to also download and complete USA Ultimate Waiver AND the Medical form

#### Camper Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are you a USA Ultimate member? Yes  No   
 How did you hear about the camp? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Male  Female   
 Email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Grade in school as of 9-1-11 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shirt Size \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

#### Guardian Information

Guardian One's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Guardian One's Home phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Guardian One's Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Guardian One's Work phone \_\_\_\_\_

(if applicable)  
 Guardian Two's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Guardian Two's Home phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Guardian Two's Work phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Guardian Two's Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

#### In Case of Emergency Notify

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Your camp dates and location(s) here

#### Discounts (optional)

Earlybird  Local organization membership  State organization membership  Sibling  Attended in past

Original cost \$ \_\_\_\_\_ — Total discount \$ \_\_\_\_\_ = Final cost \$ \_\_\_\_\_

See rates and schedules link for discount info and which discounts can be combined.

Make checks payable to: ***Your camp name*** and send this application, the medical form, and the USA Ultimate waiver to : ***Your camp name, camp address, city state, zip.*** A deposit (50% of tuition) will reserve your spot. Full tuition is due by June 15 or enrollment is subject to cancellation. Reservations are made in order of receipt, and we will notify you if preferred weeks are not available. No refund will be made if notice of cancellation is not received 3 weeks prior to the weeks selected. We reserve the right to dismiss any student whose conduct is detrimental to the camp and no refund will be made. No refund will be made for late arrival or early departure. No refund will be made for withdrawal due to illness or family vacation. All cancellations subject to \$100 cancellation fee. Camp retains the right to use photographs of campers for advertising purposes unless a specific written request to the contrary accompanies the application forms.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND AGREE TO THE CONDITIONS STATED HERIN.

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Sample Camp  
Evaluation Form**

Your Camp Name Here Evaluation Form

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are new strategies, drills, or games that you learned this week? What elements from camp do you think you (or your team) could use in the upcoming season?

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2. What were your favorite activities or things about camp?

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3. What suggestions do you have for next year? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Anything else you want to say?

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**Sample Medical Authorization Form**

**USA Ultimate  
Medical Authorization Form**

V2



Purpose: To enable parents or guardians to authorize the provision of emergency treatment for their children who are injured or become ill while under the authority of *[Name of chaperone]* \_\_\_\_\_ in the event the parents or guardians cannot be reached.

This acknowledges that we, the undersigned, parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of *[Name of participant]* \_\_\_\_\_ recognize the potentially hazardous nature of the sport of

ULTIMATE that an injury might be sustained. These injuries include but are not limited to PERMANENT DISABILITY, BLINDNESS, PARALYSIS AND DEATH. In the event of such an injury to my child and we (I or my spouse or guardian) cannot be contacted, we give permission to qualified and licensed EMTs, physicians, paramedics, and/or other medical or hospital personnel to render such treatment.

We (I) release USA Ultimate, its employees, its agents, its volunteers and its assigns from any personal injuries caused by or having any relation to this activity. We (I) understand that this release applies to any present or future injuries or illnesses and that it binds my heirs, executors and administrators.

This release form is completed and signed of my own free will and with full knowledge of its significance. I have read and understand all of its terms.

**Parent/Guardian:**

Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian:**

Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Family Physician:**

Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Preferred Hospital:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Child's Medical Insurance Carrier:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact:**

Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Specific facts concerning child's medical history including allergies, medications being taken, chronic illness or other conditions which a physician should be alerted to: \_\_\_\_\_

**Completed forms should be given to the chaperone. Chaperones are responsible for keeping these forms on site at all times. USA Ultimate does not collect these forms (unless otherwise noted).**

**USA ULTIMATE**

4730 Table Mesa Drive, Suite I-200C, Boulder CO 80305

Web: [www.usultimate.org](http://www.usultimate.org) Email: [sportdevelopment@usultimate.org](mailto:sportdevelopment@usultimate.org) Tel: 303-447-3472 Fax: 303-447-3483

# Appendix D



## Sample Youth Chaperone Consent and Release Form

**USA Ultimate**  
**Youth Chaperone Consent**  
**and Release Form**  
V.3



I will chaperone for (Name of Organization/Team/Player): \_\_\_\_\_

Org/Team/Player Location (City/State): \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Street

Apt.#

City

State

Zip Code

Home Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Drivers License Number: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

I [Name of Applicant] \_\_\_\_\_, understand that I am responsible for obtaining Medical Authorization forms for each of the minors on my team/that I am chaperoning and having them available at USA Ultimate events.

### **Age Requirement**

I understand that the age requirement for chaperones at USA Ultimate H.S. Easterns, USA Ultimate H.S. Westerns and USA Ultimate Youth Club Championships (YCC) is 25 or older.

I understand that the age requirement for chaperones at all other USA Ultimate events (includes USA Ultimate-sanctioned events, H.S. state championships, etc) is 18 or older **AND** have graduated from high school.

I confirm that I was born on \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

I confirm that I have graduated from high school.

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

***All portions of this form must be completed or it will not be accepted – one form per chaperone. Chaperone forms are valid for one calendar year, expiring on 12/31 of each year.***

# Appendix E

## Sample Waiver/Release of Liability Form



### USA Ultimate 2010 Membership Registration & Waiver/Release of Liability



Return completed form and payment to Membership, USA Ultimate, 4730 Table Mesa Dr., Suite I-200C, Boulder, CO 80305.

Circle one: Renewal or New Member      Circle One: SSN # or USA Ultimate ID: \_\_\_\_\_ (may use only last 4 digits of SSN)

Name: (First) \_\_\_\_\_ (Last) \_\_\_\_\_ Former name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt/Ste #: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip/Ctry: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ HS Graduation Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Youth players please provide a parent/guardian name and email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Check your membership level.** Visit <http://members.usultimate.org> for additional information.

- \$20 Youth – Must not have graduated from HS.
  - \$30 College - Half-time student or more. Max 6 yrs.
  - \$40 Regular
  - \$45 Player & Coach (Youth players not eligible.)
  - \$18 Friends & Family (non-playing member level)
  - \$25 Coach (non-playing level)
  - \$33 Friends and Family & Coach (non-playing level)
  - \$750 Lifetime Membership
- In addition, I am enclosing a tax deductible contribution in support of Ultimate development \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**USA ULTIMATE WAIVER & RELEASE OF LIABILITY** (This waiver may not be modified. Signed waivers are required to participate in USA Ultimate events.) In consideration of being allowed to participate in any way in USA Ultimate programs, related events and activities, the undersigned acknowledges, appreciates and willingly agrees that:

- I will comply with the stated and customary terms and conditions for participation. If, however, I observe any unusual significant hazard during my presence or participation, I will remove myself from participation and bring such to the attention of the nearest official immediately.
- I acknowledge and fully understand that each participant will be engaging in activities that involve risk of serious injury, including permanent disability and death, and severe social and economic losses which may result not only from their own actions, inactions or negligence but the action, inaction or negligence of others, the rules of play, or the condition of the premises or of any equipment used. Further, I accept personal responsibility for the damages following such injury, permanent disability or death.
- I hereby authorize and give my full consent to USA Ultimate to copyright and/or publish any and all photographs, video and/or broadcasts in which I appear while attending any USA Ultimate event. I further agree that USA Ultimate may transfer, use or cause to be used, photographs, video, or broadcasts for any exhibitions, public displays, publications, commercials, online streaming, art and advertising purposes, and television programs without limitations or reservations.
- I knowingly and freely assume all such risk, both known and unknown, even those arising from the negligent acts or omissions of others, and assume full responsibility for my participation.
- I, for myself and on behalf of my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and next of kin, hereby release, and agree to hold harmless USA Ultimate, its officers, officials, affiliated clubs, their respective administrators, directors, agents, coaches, and other employees of the organization, other participants, sponsoring agencies, advertisers, and, if applicable owners and lessors of premises used to conduct the event, all of which are hereinafter referred to as "releasees", with respect to all and any injury, disability, death or loss or damage to person or property, whether arising from the negligence of the releasees or otherwise, to the fullest extent permitted by law. I will indemnify, save and hold harmless above named releasees of, from and against any loss, cost, expense, damage or liability that such releasees may incur as a result of, arising from or in connection with such claim, including without limitation any attorney's fees, or other costs or expenses or litigation.

I have read this release of liability and assumption of risk agreement, fully understand its terms, and understand that I have given up substantial rights by signing it and sign it freely and voluntarily without any inducement.

- 18 or Older
- Under 18 Years

Participant's Signature (including minors) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

This is to certify that I, as parent/guardian with legal responsibility for this participant, do consent and agree to indemnify and hold harmless the releasees from any and all liabilities incident to my minor child's involvement or participation in these programs above, even if arising from their negligence, to the fullest extent permitted by law.

Parent/Guardian Signature (required if participant is under 18) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**A Note About USA Ultimate Rules and College Eligibility:** Your participation in this or any USA Ultimate event or USA Ultimate sanctioned event or league is always subject to the rules, policies, procedures and governing documents of USA Ultimate and may trigger important consequences. In particular, please note that participation in a USA Ultimate or USA Ultimate-sanctioned event initiates your college eligibility period. Please review the USA Ultimate college eligibility rules (<http://www.usultimate.org>) to understand how participation in this event may affect your college eligibility.

USA ULTIMATE 4730 Table Mesa Drive, Suite I-200C, Boulder CO 80305

Web: [www.usultimate.org](http://www.usultimate.org) Email: [membership@usultimate.org](mailto:membership@usultimate.org) Tel: 303-447-3472 Fax: 303-447-3483



**Sample Player Information Form**

**Player Information**

*Team Name Here* \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Player Name** \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade \_\_\_\_\_ USA Ultimate ID \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian-one Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian-two Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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**Player Name** \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade \_\_\_\_\_ USA Ultimate ID \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian-one Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian-two Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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**Player Name** \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade \_\_\_\_\_ USA Ultimate ID \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian-one Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian-two Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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**Player Name** \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade \_\_\_\_\_ USA Ultimate ID \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian-one Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian-two Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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**Player Name** \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade \_\_\_\_\_ USA Ultimate ID \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian-one Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian-two Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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**Player Name** \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade \_\_\_\_\_ USA Ultimate ID \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian-one Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian-two Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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**Player Name** \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade \_\_\_\_\_ USA Ultimate ID \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian-one Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian-two Name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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For Immediate Release  
Month Day, Year

### **Headlines are Meant to Summarize the Topic of the Release**

*Subheads can go into more detail, but make sure they don't take away from the impact of your headline*

CITY, State—The who, what, when, and where and why should all be included in one or two, to-the-point sentences. For example: Led by Joe Schmoe (City, State) and Jane Doe (City, State), the Boulder Barnstormers mounted a second half comeback against the Sarasota Flyers to win 15-14 and take home the Our City Classic title held at the Pleasantview Fields in “City”, “State” Saturday.

“A good way to get a point across without sounding like it’s an opinion is to have someone from the event or game that you are writing about give a quote that summarizes the point you are trying to get across,” said the Barnstormers Joe Schmoe. “After you mention the comeback, let Joe Schmoe tell it in his words to back you up. You add to the release by having a reliable source reiterate what you already wrote.”

The rest of the release should complement the beginning paragraphs. Put additional information, peripheral details and any tantalizing facts that make your release seem newsworthy. Be sure to add local ties to the release that will make it more interesting. Even if you have a great team from another state in town for the tournament, your local media will still be more interested in the local players and teams participating.

Put your wrap-up paragraph at the end. If you didn’t already mention the next day’s matchups or times, this is when you should do it. If it is a pre-event release this is a good place to recap what happened last year.

For more information please contact “your name or whoever will be in charge of media”, at email@wherever.com - 555-555-5555 ph.—555-555-5555 fax

For more information online please visit [www.tournament\\_or\\_organizationsite.com](http://www.tournament_or_organizationsite.com)

For more information on the sport of Ultimate, please visit [www.usultimate.org](http://www.usultimate.org)



## 10 Tips for Writing a Press Release

### Guidelines for Writing Press Releases

- 1) Decide why you are writing a press release and determine your focus. Make sure it is both timely and newsworthy.
- 2) Keep the tone of your release very business-like. Make sure you write it in third-person, and don't give personal opinions - or your press release will likely end up in the garbage.
- 3) Keep it short and to the point. Most press releases are no more than one page. A release that is full of mundane and useless information is usually deleted. If an editor is interested, they will ask for more.
- 4) Make certain the first paragraph includes all the vital information: the five W's who, what, why, when and where...Also, make sure that first paragraph is effective, making an editor or that person on the desk want to read on.
- 5) Include some tantalizing peripheral details or facts to spark curiosity in the paragraphs that follow your opening. A good press release not only informs but also teases (makes them want more). Make releases useful and fact-filled and easy for the media to do their jobs.
- 6) Follow journalistic style. If it is filled with language that an editor does not understand, they will not use it. Also avoid excessive use of adjectives and fancy language. Keep your language clear and concise. Remember to be "mainstream" media friendly.
- 7) Make sure you call the local media affiliate and ask the best way to send the press release over to them—usually it will be by email, or sometimes fax—this is also a polite way to just let them know you are sending a press release their way, so that it doesn't get lost in the shuffle.
- 8) Send your press release to the reporter that covers the area you are targeting (most likely sports) instead of the managing or senior editor, who most likely is too busy to filter through every release that comes through the office.
- 9) When emailing the story, the subject line should be the title of the release or a version of it pertaining to a local tie. For instance, if the title is "Kent State University Wins College Championships", but you are sending it to Georgia media, and Georgia is listed in the release as finishing second, then the subject line should say "Georgia Finishes Second at College Championships". Make the media recognize the value of the release you are sending.
- 10) Make it as easy as possible for media representatives to do their jobs.