



# Spirit Captain Guide

(Adapted by USA Ultimate from WFDF "Spirit Captains" job description, with permission. December 2020 Edition)

## Definition of a Spirit Captain (2020-21 Rules of Ultimate):

A spirit captain is a team member who is eligible to participate in the game and has been designated to address, discuss and resolve spirit issues at any point throughout the competition with opponents, teammates, coaches and game or event officials. Spirit captains are encouraged for all levels of play and may be required for certain tournaments and leagues.

## Skills Practiced by a Spirit Captain:

Spirit captains can and should actively model and reinforce the skills described in this section. However, the responsibility for fair play falls on all players, and these skills should be demonstrated by all players on the field.

- **Learn, know and teach the rules:**

A spirit captain must know and understand the rules such that they can effectively apply them to game situations and efficiently explain the rules to others.

Examples include:

- Frequent review of the rules
- Comfortable with answering questions about the rules
- Willingness to engage with opponents and hold teammates accountable on rules issues and disputes
- Knowledge of, and familiarity with, the use of hand signals to communicate calls

- **Be aware regarding the potential for implicit biases to impact play and Spirit of the Game:**

Spirit captains should acknowledge and recognize that the implementation of Spirit of the Game (SOTG), including spirit scores, is susceptible to bias. Spirit captains should be mindful of, and should encourage their teammates to be mindful of, their own biases when discussing interactions with, and impressions of, other teams as well as when considering interactions with, and impressions of, their own team. Understand that intent and impact are not the same. The intent of a person's statement or gesture may be neutral or positive to them, but the impact of what they say or do may be harmful or hurtful to others.

- **Demonstrate patience and empathy during conflict resolution:**

Spirit captains should model the principles of Spirit of the Game in their interactions with teammates and opponents.

Examples include:

- Willingness to listen with the goal of understanding both sides of the discussion. A spirit captain recognizes that two people can experience the same event, have different conclusions about the event, and that both perspectives can be valid.
- Engaging with others with compassion and an open mind, even in contentious situations.
- Asking for a moment to collect themselves, if needed, to process another viewpoint and reconsider their own experience.
- Communicating their perspective clearly and concisely to others, while taking care not to talk over or interrupt others.

### **Responsibilities of the Spirit Captain:**

- **Before the Season/League/Tournament**

- *Learn the rules!* An important component of Spirit of the Game is knowing and properly implementing the rules. Actively encourage your teammates to learn the rules too.
- Familiarize yourself with the Spirit Score Sheet (addressed below) and the included example behaviors.

- **Throughout the Season/League/Tournament**

- Consider the ways in which spirit captains can work with team captains and coaches to set goals around team culture and inclusiveness.
  - Be mindful that ongoing reflection is often necessary to keep your team accountable to these goals.
  - Based on feedback received during competition, work with team leadership to make adjustments as needed.
- Respond to any requests from organizers.

- **Immediately Before the Game**

- Introduce yourself to the opposing spirit captain and observers, if applicable.
- Be prepared to share anything unique about your team that might affect your opponents' perceptions about your team (e.g. particular cheers or celebrations).
  - Give your opponent an opportunity to respond or ask questions. Work to reconcile expectations or assumptions.
- Establish where and when during the game to check back in with the opposing spirit captain(s).
- Ask your opponents whether they want to have a spirit circle at the end of the game. At minimum, spirit captains should plan to meet briefly after the game.

- **During the Game**

- *Proactively communicate!* Check in with teammates to identify any issues that need to be discussed with the opposing team, or positive moments that can be shared.
- At the established check in time, share what issues need to be addressed and/or offer things to be celebrated.
- Acknowledge and celebrate authentic exchanges of SOTG by your teammates.
- Be a resource to your teammates in resolving questions or issues, if needed.
- Call a spirit timeout, if necessary.

- **After the Game**

- Fill out the Spirit Score Sheet as soon after the completion of the game as possible, incorporating feedback from your entire team.
  - Score your opponents based only on the current game rather than past games.
  - Be sure to solicit specific examples, especially if your team is giving the opposing team a low score.
- If agreed upon, facilitate a spirit circle with the opposing team.
  - If there is not time for a spirit circle due to schedule constraints, or if there is no agreement to have such a circle, check in with the opposing team's spirit captain to share spirit scores (if already completed) and/or any quick thoughts.
- Enter or return scores promptly to tournament organizers or scorekeepers at your field.
- If possible, keep backup records of all spirit scores.

- **After the Tournament or Event**

- Follow up with opposing teams as necessary.
- Respond to inquiries from tournament organizers.

## **Spirit Scoring System**

- There are five measurable aspects of spirit:
  1. Rules Knowledge & Use
  2. Fouls and Body Contact
  3. Fair Mindedness
  4. Attitude
  5. Communication
- Definitions and examples of these five aspects are described in the Spirit Score Sheet (coming soon!)
- Spirit scoring is a **team** effort! The spirit captain's role is to facilitate discussion and consensus regarding scores to be given:
  - Create your preferred methodology for determining what score should be given in each category.
    - Ask players for feedback about the scores they proposed.
  - Clarify outlying scores of 0 or 4 on the Score Sheet with **comments**.
- Reminders for your team:
  - A "2" is a "Good" score in any category, indicative of an average game.
    - Use the examples included with the Score Sheet to help determine a team's score in each category. Remember that low and high scores should be justified with specific examples.
  - Scores should be determined from game play and should not consider additional activities before or after the game.
  - Be aware of ways in which implicit bias could impact spirit scoring. Refrain from determining spirit scores based on preconceived notions or in retaliation.

## **Spirit Circles**

- Upon the conclusion of a game, teams can use spirit circles as an opportunity to highlight, discuss or address any spirit-related issues.
- If agreed upon, the spirit captains of the opposing teams should arrange a space for the conversation to occur between the teams.
- Spirit captains should be prepared to speak about their team's experience during the game.
  - Prior to engaging in a spirit circle, each spirit captain should quickly check in with their team and/or complete spirit scoring so as to inform the discussion in the circle.
  - Discussion and feedback should be honest and candid, but not overly critical, and consistent with the scores submitted.
  - Spirit captains should refrain from calling out individuals for negative actions which may be better discussed with that player or their spirit captain as a separate follow up.

## **Spirit Timeouts (2020-21 Rules of Ultimate)**

A spirit timeout may be called by one or both teams' spirit captain(s) if they believe that either or both teams have failed to follow the Spirit of the Game, and (1) game play has become dangerous; or (2) repeated Spirit of the Game violations are causing conflict between the teams.

### **A spirit timeout can be called only if all of the following conditions have been met:**

- Both spirit captains have discussed the perceived Spirit of the Game violation(s) and adjustments to address those violations, and one or more members of either or both teams have not adjusted their conduct.
- Both spirit captains have discussed the need to call a spirit timeout before calling the spirit timeout. It is not required that both spirit captains agree that a spirit timeout is necessary.
- Play is stopped.
- In games with observers, spirit timeouts initiated by the spirit captains must be communicated to the observers before being called. Observers may call a spirit timeout if the observer believes it is needed and at least one of the spirit captains agrees.

### **During the spirit timeout:**

- Both teams should aim to complete all discussions within 5 minutes, with a goal of resuming play as quickly as possible. If teams require more time to resolve spirit discussions, the timeout can be extended with the consent of both spirit captains.
- Team members should not use this time to engage in tactical discussions or extend the spirit timeout to try to gain a tactical advantage.
- Spirit timeouts may follow one of two formats, as determined by the spirit captains. Where the spirit captains disagree as to the format of the spirit timeout, the default format is for teams to form one spirit circle.
  - All team members of both teams will form one spirit circle, alternating players from each team, if possible. The spirit captains will lead a conversation addressing and proposing solutions to resolve spirit issues; or
  - Two circles will be formed, one for each team to internally resolve spirit issues that have already been discussed between the spirit captains of the opposing team.

### **After the spirit timeout:**

- The game resumes in the same manner as it does after a team timeout.
- Spirit timeouts do not affect timeouts available.
- For spirit timeouts lasting five minutes or less, the time taken for a spirit timeout will automatically be added to the length of the game time to determine time caps for the game. After the initial five minutes, although spirit captains may always agree to extend a spirit timeout, event organizers may limit the time that can be added to the length of games. The spirit captain(s) initiating the spirit timeout will convey the start and end of the stoppage to event support staff or the event organizer for time-keeping purposes.

### **Additional Resources:**

- Official Rules of Ultimate 2020-2021: <https://usultimate.org/rules/>
- USA Ultimate “About Spirit of the Game” webpage: <https://usultimate.org/spirit-of-the-game/>
- World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF) SOTG Resource Page: <https://wfdf.sport/spirit-of-the-game/>
- Ultimate Canada SOTG Page: [https://canadianultimate.com/en\\_in/spirit-of-the-game](https://canadianultimate.com/en_in/spirit-of-the-game)
- 2014 Spirit of the Game Conference: <https://skydmagazine.com/projects/spiritcon/>
  - 6 recorded presentations from 2014 World Ultimate Club Championships by various teams and leaders in SOTG
- USA Ultimate Organizer Resource Manual: <https://usultimate.org/resources/organizer-resource-manual/>
  - Article on “Teaching Spirit of the Game” on page 63
  - Article on “Teaching Self-Officiating” on page 69
- High School Girls Ultimate Resources Manual: <https://usultimate.org/resources/high-school-girls-ultimate-resources-manual/>
  - Section IV - Spirit on page 89
- WFDF Spirit Score Sheet & Examples (rev. 2019): <https://usultimate.org/resources/spirit-of-the-game-score-sheet/>
- USA Ultimate Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: <https://usultimate.org/equity-diversity-inclusion/>