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# HOW TO GET (AND KEEP) GIRLS PLAYING

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**STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING & RETAINING GIRLS IN SPORT**

**A GUIDE FOR COACHES &  
PROGRAM LEADERS**

Made  
to Play  




WE COACH



YOUTH SPORT TRUST  
INTERNATIONAL

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**THE RESEARCH SHOWS GIRLS LOVE TO PLAY AND PLAY COMPETITIVELY. EVEN SO, THEY START SPORTS LATER AND STOP PLAYING EARLIER THAN BOYS DO – OFTEN BECAUSE OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS OR BECAUSE OF NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES. THAT’S A BIG PROBLEM BECAUSE GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN NEED THE BENEFITS THAT SPORTS OFFER. THE GOOD NEWS IS THE RIGHT COACH CAN MAKE ALL OF THE DIFFERENCE.**

Girls participate in sport at lower rates than boys, at all ages. Girls also tend to get involved in sport later than boys do and they drop out sooner. These disparities are more evident in urban communities and among girls and young women from visible minorities.<sup>1</sup>

Recent research from the Women’s Sports Foundation (USA) reveals that the reason girls and young women participate less is not because they don’t enjoy the key components of sport: being competitive, feeling athletic, reaching goals and building a team. They do want these things and they report enjoying sport at high rates. The reality is that girls have extra challenges to overcome when it comes to getting and staying in sports. For example, girls receive conflicting cultural messages about what it means to be a girl or young woman and what it means to be an athlete. They often feel that they must cross gender boundaries in order to play a sport seen as masculine, they get teased by boys while in traditionally male-centred sport spaces, and they do not have enough female coaches to look up to and relate to.

It matters that girls aren’t accessing the benefits of sport as much as they could be. Girls and young women need the physical, mental, academic and social benefits that sport participation has been shown to give. In recent years, a worrying trend is the high rates of depression and anxiety evident in girls and young women in Europe. Many of these girls and young women are unable to access

the mental health treatment they need, so access to programmes that provide benefits in non-traditional ways is vital. Young girls in urban communities, who have the least access to sport, are particularly vulnerable to experiencing certain types of trauma and have inadequate access to high-quality mental health services.

Sport has huge potential to benefit girls, but it has to be done effectively. While many factors contribute to whether or not a girl continues to play a sport, it is clear that girls need great coaches. The Women’s Sports Foundation found that how a girl feels about her coach is one of the most important factors related to if she keeps playing.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While we know that coaches have the best intentions when it comes to helping their athletes succeed, we also know that people come to coaching, and any interaction, with implicit and explicit biases. For example, in a physical sport like rugby, a coach's perceptions of female "toughness" may cause them to focus on different activities or skills when coaching girls as opposed to boys. A coach's bias or expectations about femininity may influence whether they encourage their players to weight train or participate in other strength-based exercises. A coach who believes girls participate in sport primarily to "be with their friends" may not focus on girls' skill development as much as they would when coaching boys.

Any of these behaviours, while not necessarily intentional, could influence how fulfilled and challenged a girl feels from their sport experience. Becoming more aware of biases around the role of women and girls in sport and using strategies to overcome them is fundamental to changing the way girls and young women are treated in sport. Coaches also might simply be unaware of ways that girls are feeling unwelcome in the sport context or are facing barriers that they need extra support to overcome. Since coaches are at the core of how girls experience sport, we want to give coaches tangible tools they can use to create more girl-friendly sport and play environments.



<sup>1</sup>[http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/go\\_out\\_and\\_play\\_exec.pdf](http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/go_out_and_play_exec.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Coaching through a gender lens (WSF)

<sup>3</sup> <https://adaa.org/find-help-for/women/mental-health-in-young-girls-and-teens>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/11/health/children-teens-mental-health-untreated-study/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ywca.org/wp-content/uploads/BRIEFING\\_PAPER\\_GOC\\_AND\\_TRAUMA\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.ywca.org/wp-content/uploads/BRIEFING_PAPER_GOC_AND_TRAUMA_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Hodgkinson, S., Godoy, L., Beers, L. S., & Lewin, A. (2016).

Improving Mental Health Access for Low-Income Children and Families in the Primary Care Setting. *Pediatrics*, 139(1). doi:10.1542/peds.2015-1175

<sup>7</sup> Coaching through a gender lens (WSF)

# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

**THIS TOOLKIT AIMS TO BUILD ON THE COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF WHAT GIRLS NEED FROM THEIR SPORT EXPERIENCE OUTLINED BY THE WOMEN'S SPORTS FOUNDATION IN THEIR APRIL 2019 REPORT "COACHING THROUGH A GENDER LENS", AS WELL AS THE SUBSTANTIAL WORK OF OTHER RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS IN THE FIELD.**

**WE HOPE TO TAKE THE LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH THE BODY OF EXISTING RESEARCH AND TRANSLATE THEM INTO ACTION. THESE RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE BEEN COLLATED BASED ON A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH ON GIRLS IN SPORT, AN EXPERT CONVENING OF PRACTITIONERS AND LEADERS IN THE FIELD, AND PILOT TESTING OF TRAINING MATERIALS BY TWO GROUPS OF COACHES WORKING IN THE FIELD.**

## COVID-19 GUIDANCE

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 crisis will have lasting impacts on the way we coach, gather and play. As communities begin youth sports and activities again, it is important to consider how best to protect players, coaches, families and communities.

Coaches and programme leaders should consult local health officials to determine if and when it is safe to resume play and sport activities, as well as how to implement policies and procedures to slow the spread of COVID-19. Each community and sport is different, and coaches should consider local guidance to meet their community and activity's unique needs.



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# RECOMMENDATIONS ON WHAT COACHES SHOULD DO

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# 1. MAKE SURE THE PLAYING SPACE & TEAM CULTURE WORK FOR GIRLS

There are some basic things that coaches can do ahead of time to make sure that they are creating girl-centred environments. Some of these things have to do with the physical space, the language we use, the examples we elevate and the way we model behaviours. In some cases, like with facilities, coaches may not have direct control over these things. Regardless, it's important for them to understand and advocate to programme administrators for the needs of the girls on their teams. Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility, and coaches should always prioritize the safety, security and well-being of young athletes.

Coaches should take time to explicitly examine and equip the playing space and team culture with the things they need to be more girl-friendly. Here's where to start:

## CREATE A SAFE, WELCOMING SPACE AND PROVIDE APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT

- Check all spaces are as safe and welcoming to girls as possible. This means coaches should check that spaces are hazard-free, well-lit and appropriately supervised.
- Ensure bathrooms are accessible and meet girls' needs.
- Make sure girls aren't simply included but are welcomed into their sports experience.

- Prioritize opportunities within programmes for girls to be in girls-only spaces.

## USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Without meaning to, we are all responsible for perpetuating a culture of masculinity in sport through language. One of the most common ways we do this is by referring to all young people as "guys". Girls are not "guys". In fact, in one study of classrooms where teachers called all the students "guys", researchers found that girls were significantly less likely to raise their hands because they thought the teacher wasn't talking to them. We also tend to provide sport examples that feature men. When making team names, don't just rely on names like FC Barcelona, Tottenham Hotspurs, Inter Milan and Hertha BSC. Be sure to also consider Chelsea LFC, Paris Saint-Germain Féminines and other women's teams.

## THINK ABOUT HOW YOU INCLUDE GIRLS

Make time to reflect on how you include girls as part of your everyday approach. Talk to other coaches, programme administrators and the girls on the team about successes and challenges. Think about what kind of biases you might have when it comes to girls' participation in sports and find ways to include players and parents in conversations about perceptions and misperceptions of female athletes. Check out the Conversation Starters on page [29](#).

## COACH'S CORNER

### CHANGE THE RULES TO INCLUDE EVERYONE

Coach Olga from Perspektiva in Moscow often changes the rules of the game or equipment she uses to include all girls, irrespective of their individual needs. For example, some girls refuse to participate in group activities because they are afraid of a fast-paced environment, being hit by a heavy ball or being unable to move as fast as the other girls. Substituting a ball with a lighter one, starting with a slow practice or exercise and not keeping score before everyone has had a chance to practise helps to include everyone, irrespective of their needs or fears.



## 2. CREATE CONNECTIONS WITH GIRLS

One of the most important things a sports programme can do to promote girl-friendly policies is to invest in the people who will be part of that girl's experience. A healthy relationship with a caring adult, like a coach, can make a girl feel like they belong in sports and help to fuel her positive development. Coaches can model good decision-making, provide support when things are hard and share their own experiences so that girls understand that what they are going through is normal.

### **Most importantly, a coach can help show a girl what is possible through sport!**

- Teammates can also be a source of inspiration and drive engagement for girls.
- Peer influence is important, especially during adolescence, and it can be a powerful tool to get girls excited about sports and help girls to feel welcome and safe in a sports environment that might otherwise feel new and different.
- Relationships with peers are also more likely to stay with a girl outside of sport – providing a protective layer of support both on and off the pitch, field or court.

## COACH'S CORNER

### **MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS**

Coach Rascha from Berlin Kickt in Germany always tries to include conversations with individual girls in every session. A conversation at eye level is worth its weight in gold. The girls feel taken seriously and the relationship with the coach, who is also a role model, is strengthened. This in turn promotes trust in the girls themselves. They trust themselves more and learn that it is important to have a voice.

### **THE ARGUMENT FOR MIXED SESSIONS**

Bea, a social educator at the Barça Foundation, finds that boys enrolled in permanent mixed sessions have a greater tolerance towards girls playing sport than boys who participate with girls on an ad hoc basis.

### **PEER INFLUENCE**

Nazlı, a hip-hop coach in Istanbul, always engages in a trusting relationship with the girls she trains. She puts a lot of sincerity into every little move she shares. Through hip-hop activities and this valuable relationship, the girls build the self-confidence they need in life and sport.





### 3. LET GIRLS COMPETE

For a long time, competition has not been viewed as one of the primary motivations for girls to play sports. The myths that girls are there to lose weight or socialise have existed for decades. And, while it's true that girls prioritise relationships in sports, this has come to be understood as somehow in conflict with the idea of competing.

**The two are not mutually exclusive.** It turns out girls are most motivated by coaches who can do both – create meaningful relationships and challenge them to improve and compete.

Competition comes in many different shapes and sizes. Coaches have the ability to set up sports experiences so that girls have the chance to experience, become comfortable with and excel at all of them. Competition can be motivating for girls, and coaches should not shy away from challenging girls to improve as individuals, as a team and against others. When a coach's approach to competition focuses on individual and team improvement and not just the final score, their feedback to their players is more personalised and engaging.



#### COACH'S CORNER

##### ENCOURAGE CELEBRATIONS FOR SELF-CONFIDENCE

Coaches Dinesh and Yvan from Sport dans la Ville in Paris have built an atmosphere that encourages the girls to celebrate their goals with a celebration dance. “They gain confidence on the field and assert themselves as they play. They are taking their rightful place on the pitch.”



## 4. FOCUS ON PROGRESS, NOT THE FINAL OUTCOME

- Girls want coaches who create positive environments that encourage safety, fun, skill-building and healthy competition.
- They want feedback that is relevant to their development and not only based on the team's win-loss record.
- In an expert approach, coaches focus on the effort and process behind learning a skill, not the outcome. It focuses on the things that are within an athlete's control – the progress and not the performance of the athlete and team.

The process of seeing yourself get better at something is incredibly powerful. Unfortunately, though, that power is wasted if girls aren't conscious of the fact that they've improved. It's the job of coaches to make sure they see their progress and, through that progress, undergo the transformation from feeling like they "can't" to believing that they "can".

When coaches focus on progress and not performance outcomes, the definition of success changes. Not only are girls rewarded for winning games, but they are also celebrated for making progress on key sport and life skills that help them perform.

**Being celebrated for their improvements helps build their confidence and encourages them to try new things and take risks – something that girls really like about participating in sports.**



### COACH'S CORNER

#### GIRLS ARE PART OF GOAL-SETTING AND MEASURING PROGRESS

Coach Alecia from Girls in the Game in Chicago starts every season by asking each girl to pick one skill she wants to get better at that season. They take two minutes every training session to work on the skill and Alecia periodically records how each player is doing. At the end of the season, each girl sees how she's improved.



## 5. ENCOURAGE GIRLS TO BE BRAVE, NOT PERFECT

For many girls, there is significant pressure to portray themselves in a positive light. Social media is one of the factors that influence girls to think that they always have to be perfect; but girls are typically celebrated and rewarded for being perfect, while boys are celebrated and rewarded for taking risks. This means girls are often socialised to be less likely than boys to try new things, especially when they aren't sure whether or not they will be successful. But when they don't try things, they miss out on the opportunity to discover what they enjoy and where they find success. You can't learn something without being willing to take a risk and try something new.

In order for girls to be willing to try something new, we have to:

- Create environments that reward bravery, not perfection.
- Make girls feel safe to take risks, knowing that they won't be judged and that the courage they use to take a risk will be rewarded. They have to know that what they bring to the team is valued and that their contribution matters.

- Set expectations and give positive attention to and praise girls who try new things even more than those who perform skills well. When everyone understands that trying, even if they fail, is among their team's most important values, you will see girls who feel safe to take risks.



### COACH'S CORNER

#### CONNECTING TO THE FUNDAMENTALS

Coach Olivia from Sported's "Future Leaders in Sport" in London always tries to make sure her netball classes are energetic and to allow girls to have fun with the fundamentals - "I'd say making sure sessions make participants always remember why they got into their sport and their love for it. So keeping sessions fun and structured!"



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# **TOOLS FOR COACHES & PROGRAM LEADERS**

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# GIRL-CENTERED ENVIRONMENTS CHECKLIST

## HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST (PROGRAM MANAGERS)

Set up a regular schedule to run through the checklist – e.g. before the season, midway through the year and at the end of the year. Share the tool with coaches and create a two-way dialogue about successes and challenges. Coaches should share how they think they are doing and what support they need from the programmes. Programme managers should share feedback about where they see coaches being successful and ask how they can be more supportive.

## HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST (COACHES)

Use the tool to check in regularly about how successful you are at providing the right environments for girls. Be sure to ask participants to review and provide feedback on what they see working and what could be improved. If something needs to change that is outside of your control, advocate to your programme manager or the league administrators about making a change.





# THE CHECKLIST

## SAFE, WELCOMING SPACE AND TEAM CULTURE

- Girls are safe when arriving at practice or games. Entrance and activity space are hazard-free, well-lit and appropriately supervised.
- Girls' bathrooms are accessible and appropriately stocked. Garbage cans and hygiene products are accessible.
- Girls are actively and intentionally welcomed to the space and included in activities.
- Girls see pictures of female role models or other girls being active in their sport spaces.
- Girls see grown women who look like them when they participate in sports.
- Girls have the opportunity to be active in space that is reserved just for them.

## APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT

- Girls have access to sports equipment that works for them: the right size, appropriate to the rules of their sport, etc.
- Girls have access to personal items, like sports bras, hair ties and sport shoes or cleats, which enable them to participate in sports. If they don't have these items, coaches or programme administrators attempt to secure them on their behalf.

## INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- Girls (and boys) are referred to in gender-neutral terms. Coaches don't refer to all players as "guys."
- Girls hear coaches refer to positive female athlete role models – when naming teams or giving examples of great performances.
- Girls hear coaches acknowledge important female sports events, like WNBA playoffs, the U.S. Open, or the Women's World Cup.

## TIME TO REFLECT

- Girls have the chance to reflect on their experiences in formal and informal ways.
- Girls have the chance to provide feedback to the coaches about their experiences.
- Girls see their coaches reflect on their bias about girls in sport and actively work to change it.
- Girls see their coaches intervene when they hear comments or see actions that minimize girls' ability to participate in sports.



# KEY COACHING STRATEGIES

## 1. LEARN NAMES

As simple as it sounds, too many coaches don't learn their athletes' names, take too long to learn them or simply don't use them. Coaches should have a strategy for learning names and shouldn't be afraid to admit to their team that they are working hard to learn all the names. But it's not enough to just learn the name. Use them for every player at every session.

## 2. CIRCLE UP

Circles create inclusion and safety. Circles put everyone on the same level, including coaches. Girls are more likely to connect with one another and with their coaches when they feel equally valued and heard. Circles also help players feel safe – there's nothing going on behind them, someone's watching their back – so they can relax and pay attention to what's happening with the team.

## 3. ASK QUESTIONS

Show you're interested in girls and engage them in their learning by asking questions instead of always giving instructions. When a young girl asks a question, she is building her still-developing rational thinking and decision-making skills.

## 4. CELEBRATE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONTRIBUTIONS

High-performing teams get contributions from every player, not just the coach, captain and best athletes. Not all athletes contribute in the same way. Some do it through encouraging comments, some do it by modeling a great work ethic, some do it by rising to the challenge during competition. Encourage your athletes to find the unique things that they can contribute to the team. Be sure to highlight and reward contributions that don't always get

attention. It's important for the team to see that everyone's contribution is not just nice, but necessary.

## 5. LET GIRLS SET THEIR OWN GOALS

Encourage girls to set their own goals for what they want to accomplish and help them identify goals that are within their control. They may not be able to control the outcome of a game on their own, but they can control how they prepare for that game and the kind of effort they put out for the game. Helping girls focus on things that they can influence, like working hard, sticking with something and trying to be brave, will also result in better team and individual performance.

## 6. CREATE A COMPETITIVE CULTURE

There are lots of ways to be competitive. Be sure to mix up your practices so that girls have the chance to compete against themselves, and with and against their teammates. Have them try and set "personal records" – which will encourage them to focus on their own progress as much as their progress against their teammates or opponents. Giving girls the chance to practice being competitive in lots of different ways will set them up for success when the big game comes!

## 7. PRAISE THE RIGHT THINGS, THE RIGHT WAY

As coaches, we have tremendous power to set the tone and priorities of the team. The things we reward become the things that the players will care about. Don't just say, "good job." Be sure to call out and specifically acknowledge the behaviors that your players exhibit that contribute to the team. These should be things that players have control over, so they start to believe that they have the power to get better and learn new things.



# KEY COACHING STRATEGIES

## 8. PRIORITIZE BRAVERY

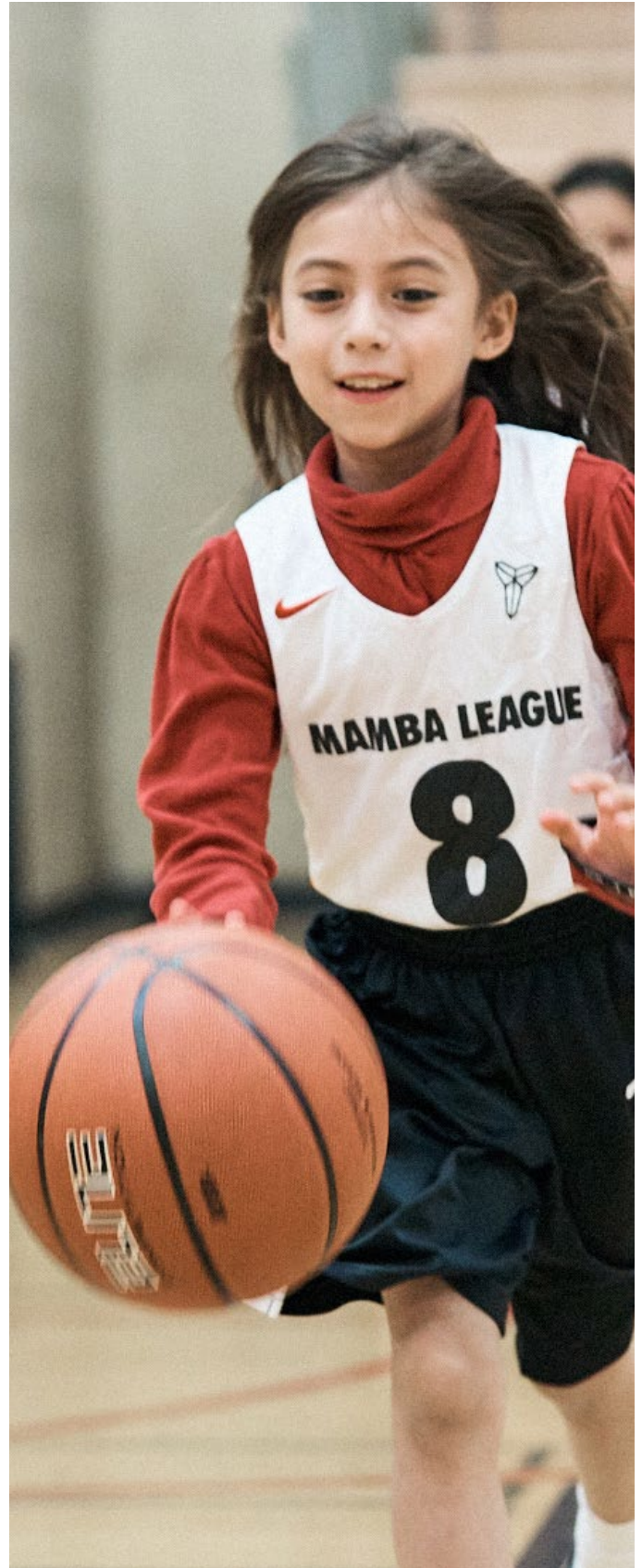
Many girls feel pressure to be perfect at whatever they do. That focus on perfection can keep them from trying new things, especially when they don't know if they'll be able to master it. In order to encourage girls to take risks and try new things, make a conscious effort to reward bravery. Make being brave the most important thing a player on your team can be by calling it out and having girls celebrate it in each other. You could even go from having a Most Valuable Player to a Bravest Player award.

## 9. LET MISTAKES GO

If girls are too scared to try new things, they will never have the chance to experience the confidence and joy that comes from tackling something new. Nothing is more powerful for girls than to know that you are not perfect. It means that they don't have to be. Share your mistakes so that they feel safe to make their own. Encourage girls to move on from mistakes by engaging in a physical gesture that she can use to remind herself that mistakes are ok and to get ready for the next play.

## 10. MAKE TIME FOR GIRLS TO TALK

Coaches should carve out time at the end of every practice where girls get to talk about what they want to talk about. Give girls the chance to have their voices heard and learn more about and connect with their teammates.







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# COACHING MIXED-GENDER TEAMS

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# COACHING MIXED-GENDER TEAMS

For many coaches and programmes, thinking about how to create great environments for girls starts with creating single-gender opportunities, especially for girls. We know there can be value in this approach (particularly where marginalised girls have the chance to participate without the glare of the boys that sport favours). However, it is important that we recognise the value of providing opportunities for boys and girls to compete together.

The Women's Sports Foundation recommends that prior to puberty – when variation tends to be among individuals, not genders – girls and boys should compete with and against each other on mixed-gender teams.

Additionally, they go on to recommend that, under the right conditions, there is value to continuing this practice even after puberty.

**The strategies in this toolkit focus on the things that research shows are most important to creating a good experience for girls in sport.** Many of them address historical barriers that women and girls have faced in sport and support coaches to overcome typical pitfalls that come from centuries of bias about female athletes. However, there's no reason these strategies can't be applied to mixed-gender teams.

**Strategies that work well and enable a great experience for girls are often strategies that work well for boys and mixed-gender teams too.**

At the core, the strategies are about prioritising relationships, encouraging young people to take risks, focusing on the process of learning and giving every athlete the things they need to be successful. And while we may need to work harder to ensure that every female athlete has the tools she needs to be successful, providing this support does nothing to diminish the experience of male athletes.



<sup>1</sup><https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/issues-related-to-girls-and-boys-competing-with-and-against-each-other-in-sports-and-physical-activity-settings-the-foundation-position.pdf>



# KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MIXED-GENDER TEAMS

Girls and boys often experience sport differently. Boys may be more inclined (and encouraged) to try different things. Some players may find it easier to access opportunities to play than others. Bullying and teasing can be a problem. Parents, caregivers, coaches and even players themselves can have conscious and unconscious biases that affect the experience. As the coach of a mixed-gender team, here's what you'll want to think about:

## 1. PAY ATTENTION TO GROUPINGS

As with any team, a mixed-gender team will have a natural range of skill and competency. The environments that best support the development of young people at every level are those that consciously group participants around their skill and experience level, not by school, gender, size or age.

## 2. AVOID DIFFERENT STANDARDS

Many programmes think they are “levelling the playing field” by changing the standards for girls. For example, they double the points scored by a girl or set a minimum number of minutes a girl has to play. Rather than elevating the girls' role, this serves only to call attention to differences. Instead, make the requirements the same for boys and girls. For example, in a mixed-gender basketball league, require that in the first and second quarters, each team must play with three girls and two boys; in the third and fourth quarters, three boys and two girls.

## 3. WATCH WHAT YOU CELEBRATE

Our natural biases often appear in the form of rewarding behaviours that we think of as characteristic to a specific gender identity. When coaching girls and boys together, it's even more important that we avoid reinforcing these stereotypes and praise everyone for the things we prioritise most. For example, a coach should cheer just as loudly when a male or female player tries something new as when they score a point or win a race.





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# **TRAINING SESSION PLAN (GENERAL/SPECIFIC SPORT)**

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# TRAINING SESSION PLAN (GENERAL/SPECIFIC SPORT)

## HOW TO USE THE PRACTICE PLAN (PROGRAM MANAGER):

One way to ensure that coaches remember some of the key concepts you shared with them at training is to use a standard session plan template that reinforces those concepts. Share the template below with coaches so that they can find the right moments to integrate the strategies we know will help girls make the most of their sport experience. A great training session focuses on building sport skills and essential life skills that girls can use on and off the field.

## HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST (COACHES)

As a coach, you're in control of each training session. And creating a consistent structure for sessions will help you build the right coaching habits and create the best environment for your players to thrive in. A training session plan will help ensure you find the right moments to integrate some of the key coaching strategies we know will help girls make the most of their sport experience. A great training session focuses on building sport skills and essential life skills that girls can use on and off the field.





**TIME**  
(90-min  
practice)

## TRAINING COMPONENT

## COACH FOCUS

### 5 MIN CIRCLE UP

Establish a routine so girls know what to expect (e.g. how training will start every day). Give players an outline for the day and let them share anything that they are thinking about before the session!

Always [form a circle](#): Circles put everyone at the same level and make us feel safe – someone's always got your back!

[Ask Questions](#): Check-in and see how players are doing!

### 10 MIN WARM-UP

Make your warm-up consistent, active and focused on connection. It's even better if it's something the girls take control over after the first few sessions. This is the time when girls can shake off whatever's been happening during the day and focus on training.

At the beginning of the season, use this time to focus on [learning names!](#)

### 15 MIN TEAM BUILDING

This should be a high-energy, physical activity that really gets the blood pumping. It should also be a time when players have the chance to work with different teammates and work to solve a problem together or get to know something about their teammates!

Observe players doing something good and recognise their contributions: Offer specific praise to players for things they can control, like supporting their teammates, working hard and, most importantly, trying new things!

### 15 MIN SKILL BUILDING

Introduce your skill of the day. For example, in basketball, create a simple drill and add difficulty. Provide challenge by:

16. Increasing speed (e.g. dribble the ball faster)
17. Adding pressure (e.g. dribble against a defender)
18. Introducing fatigue (e.g. dribble longer & farther)

[Help girls set goals for themselves!](#)

Remind players that mistakes are part of learning and, instead, encourage them to focus on the progress they've made by asking,

"How did you do that?"

### 30 MIN GAMES

Transition into games that reinforce the skill you are working on. Get creative and plan for lots of activity!

Make sure you leave time to reflect and review – tweak the rules of the game to highlight the skill you are working on.

[Mix up the competition](#)- challenge players to beat personal records, combine for a team record, or find the day's winning team.

Remember to recognise players who are being brave, taking risks and trying new things. It matters that you focus on this when it counts.

### 15 MIN COOL DOWN AND CREATE A CIRCLE

Consistently follow your end of session routine to cool down from the day's activities and get ready to transition out of training.

Give the players time to connect with each other and talk about whatever is going on with them.

Instead of telling players what you thought of the session, ask questions: What did they notice about the session? What did they like? What would they do differently?

Let them talk about what they want to talk about!

A blue-tinted photograph of a man wearing a dark cap, smiling and interacting with a group of children. The man is in the upper right, looking down towards the children. The children are in the lower left and center, some looking up at him. The background is a solid orange color.

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# **BEHAVIOUR BANK**

**(FOR PROGRAM LEADERS,  
COACHES OF COACHES)**

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# HOW TO USE

**THIS SET OF BEHAVIORS CAN BE USED IN MANY WAYS.**

## TIP OF THE DAY

Provide one of these tips for every active day of the season so that a coach is reminded to attend to girl-specific needs every time they interact with their team (this might be printed on training session plans or in a coaching manual, or might be delivered via email, text, app, etc.)

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## TO ESTABLISH COACH EXPECTATIONS AND HELP WITH THE OBSERVATION

Choose the behaviours that are most relevant to your programme (the highest leverage or the areas in which you think your programme most needs to grow). Share these behaviours directly with coaches to illustrate your expectations. This may include creating a tool that allows administrators or coach developers to observe the coaches while coaching. Use these observations to start an ongoing conversation with coaches about how to build their skills, so they deliver on every expectation.

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## TO BUILD THE HABIT OF REFLECTION

To help coaches reflect and create consistent feedback loops, require coaches to answer a few short questions related to the behaviour bank after every training session. They will be reminded of what is important and get into the habit of asking themselves what worked and what didn't work that day.





# BEHAVIOR BANK

## LEGEND



CREATE CONNECTION



BRAVE, NOT PERFECT



PROGRESS, NOT OUTCOMES



GIRL CHECK



LET HER COMPETE

### 1. LEARN NAMES

Let girls identify what they want to be called. Quiz yourself after training to make sure you know the names of every player.

### 2. LISTEN FOR LANGUAGE

Track the number of times you say “guys” to refer to the team on a given day. It’s probably more than you think. Challenge yourself to insert a different term like “friends” or “athletes”. Make a game out of it by having your team hold you accountable!

### 3. ESTABLISH A LIST OF “WE BELIEVES”

Together with your team, create a set of team “norms” or “we believe” statements. Make sure there is explicit language around how important it is to take risks and try new things.

### 4. ASK QUESTIONS

Show you’re interested in girls and engage them in learning. Asking more questions also means they are practising using their “thinking brain”.

### 5. BUILD BELONGING

Include an activity where girls get to create an identity symbol for their team. Maybe it’s a team flag or a team mascot.

### 6. CHALLENGE BALANCE OF GENDER ROLE MODELS

How many female coaches are part of the programme? Are you helping to recruit other female coaches?

### 7. CREATE A CIRCLE

Start and end each training session in a circle. A circle puts everyone on the same level, encourages connection and creates safety because everyone’s got each other’s backs.

### 8. DIFFERENTIATE DEBRIEFS

Mix it up! You don’t always have to have the team share their thoughts and experiences in big groups. Have them talk in pairs or small groups about what’s going on!

### 9. EXAMINE EXAMPLES

When you give an example of a successful athlete, are they always men? Are there pictures of female athletes around? Do you highlight the backgrounds of accomplished female coaches and athletes as much as male coaches and athletes?

### 10. PLAY DOWN PERFECTION

Do you always focus on the result or on the courage it takes to try something new? Be sure to offer specific praise for taking risks and learning from mistakes.

### 11. MAKE CONTRIBUTION COUNT

Can every girl identify what she brings to the team? Ask three players what they think they are contributing to the team.



# BEHAVIOR BANK

## 12. SET THE TONE

Have you shared an example of a time you tried something new and failed recently? If we want coaches to be vulnerable and share their experiences so that girls feel safe to try new things, we have to make coaches feel safe to be vulnerable. Make trying something new the topic of the next coaches' newsletter or meeting.

## 13. FIND OUT WHO'S ON HER TEAM

Make a list of the girls on your team. Can you and the other coaches identify a parent or caring adult for each one by name? If you can't, prioritise getting to know more about those girls.

## 14. GET REAL ABOUT RISK-TAKING

Talk to girls about the differences between "comfort zones" and "learning zones" and encourage them to reflect on where they are when they are doing an activity.

## 15. ENCOURAGE "GOOD GOSSIP"

Pick a girl every active day of the season and make a call or send a text to a parent or contact to tell them what's great about her!

## 16. DO A BATHROOM CHECK

Are the spaces clean and well-lit? Do all the bathrooms have sanitary bins for the girls to use if they need to? Report to the programme if they aren't and remind the girls that you're there to help if they need anything.

## 17. SHARE THE POSITIVES

Make sure to end every coach gathering with a reflection and give the coaches a chance to share their observations. Check that they are doing the same at every training session.

## 18. DO SHOUT-OUTS FOR COMPETITION

Do a reflection exercise and specifically praise the girls who competed the best that day – either with herself, among her teammates or for her team.

## 19. CREATE GIRL SPACES

Think about how visible your training is. Is there ever a time when girls get to be in a space by themselves, without boys watching? Create a little of that time if you can, even if it means doing a fun activity in the girls' locker room or for a few minutes before training.

## 20. LET GIRLS CHOOSE

Give the girls the chance to work together to plan the day. They'll feel ownership and you'll learn what they like the most about being part of the team.

## 21. GET FEEDBACK FROM GIRLS

Ask your players how they think the season is going. You can do this formally (have them fill out a short survey) or informally (have them rate their experience on a scale of 1 to 5, using their hands). The more you ask for their feedback, the more engaged they will be.

## 22. USE NAMES FROM WOMEN'S TEAMS

Have a big group game or tournament where all the teams are named after professional women's teams. (Let Her Compete)

## 23. FIND OUT WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED

Ask five girls what they have improved at this season. Make sure that every girl can identify something they've gotten better at doing



# BEHAVIOR BANK

## 24. ESTABLISH TEAM TRADITIONS

When you visit an event or training, do you see players participate in something that makes them feel like part of the group – like a team chant, a team name or some kind of activity that they always do together?

## 25. UNLEASH THE POWER OF “YET”

What happens when a girl says “I can’t”? Do you answer with encouragement? Adults that help young people focus on the fact that they can get better at something help them build more confidence. Encourage your girls to add “yet” to the sentence every time they think they can’t.

## 26. USE A FEEDBACK BOX

Give girls the chance to give feedback in private by writing down their feedback and putting it in a box. Have all players write or draw something on a piece of paper and turn it in, so that everyone puts something in the box and any girl who wants to share feedback feels safe to offer it.

## 27. GET EVERY GIRL A WIN

Every girl has something positive to contribute and it’s a coach’s job to make sure that she has the chance to offer it to the team. Find ways to encourage girls to take risks, try new things and discover what they, uniquely, bring to their team.

## 28. ESTABLISH A WORD OF THE DAY

Girls don’t always get rewarded for being “strong” or “hard-playing”. Set a word of the day that celebrates girls’ complete spirit. Be sure to call out three things you see girls doing today that are examples of the word, such as girls being physically and mentally strong.

## 29. MAKE TIME TO REFLECT

Mix up your moment of reflection for the day by having girls share in pairs or small groups.

## 30. CREATE A “TRY TALLY”

Keep track of the times you see a girl try new things and call them out during shout-outs at the end of the day. Ask the team who else noticed their teammates trying new things.

## 31. FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

Have a routine where girls spend time every day working on the fundamental skills of your sport. Feeling confident in these skills can help girls see themselves getting better over time. It can also be a great way to help girls transition from wherever they’ve been to training.

## 32. ASK “HOW DID YOU DO THAT?”

Asking “how did you do that?” forces a girl to take ownership of her accomplishment and think about the process she went through in order to be able to achieve it.

## 33. SET PERSONAL RECORDS

Instead of comparing themselves to their teammates, have girls keep track of their own personal records and try to beat those records. Celebrate when a girl sets a new best!

## 34. DIAL UP ... AND DOWN

Help girls get ready to take on the next challenge by dialling back the pressure in a drill – even for just a few repetitions – after you’ve pushed them outside their comfort zones. This gives them a chance to regain their sense of control and achievement.



# BEHAVIOR BANK

## 35. THINK ABOUT GROUPINGS

Be intentional about how you group girls together – give girls lots of opportunities to work with different members of the team so that they can start to feel safe with all of their teammates. Safety promotes learning!

## 36. USE GROUPINGS TO BUILD SKILLS

Groupings can also be used to help develop skills. Parity helps drive skill development, so think of ways to get kids who are close in ability to challenge each other. When there's a big gap in skill level, ask the more skilled players to help teach the skill to newer players

## 37. CELEBRATE A "GIRL OF THE GAME"

After a game or training session, present a "Girl of the Game" award to the girl who was the best competitor – either with herself (e.g. accomplishing something she hasn't done before), among her teammates or against the other team. Be sure to award different girls for different reasons, not just the girl who scored the most points.

## 38. SET UP SOME FAMILY FUN

Encourage parents, siblings and other important adults in each girl's life to come and play in a fun tournament with the girls. Try and seek out as many female participants as possible to be part of the experience (mums, aunts, grandmothers, teachers, etc.). The more the family invests in the girl's experience, the more likely she'll be to stick with it.

## 39. TEACH NEW SPORTS AND NEW SKILLS

Spend part of training teaching a brand new sport or activity that requires new and different skills. This evens out any existing skill hierarchies and helps everyone focus on the basics. It might also highlight the strengths of a player who isn't the most competent in their sport.

## 40. FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON OFF THE FIELD

Take an interest in what's going on with your players off the field. How are they doing in school? What's going on at home? What are their goals? The more we know about our players, the more strategies we have to help support them as they develop into confident players and people.



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# HOW TO TRAIN COACHES (PROGRAM LEADERS / COACHES OF COACHES)

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NIKE  
COMMUNITY  
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# HOW TO TRAIN COACHES

## PROGRAM LEADERS / COACHES OF COACHES

Now that you know what girls need out of their sports environment, how do you make sure that your coaches are delivering it? Below is a list of four high-impact changes to consider as you build a coach training programme:

### 1. CREATE AN EXPERIENCE

You can't give what you don't have. We find this to be particularly true for coaches, who most often coach the way they were coached. And since we're asking most coaches to coach differently than the way they were coached, they have to know what it looks and feels like. This means modelling the kind of coaching we want to see. Here are some ways to do that:

#### How to Create Connection

- Ask questions: Start debriefs with questions, ask coaches to say more when they have something to offer, create structured opportunities for them to answer questions with a partner or in a small group.
- Debrief or instruct in circles so that everyone is at the same level and part of the circle.
- Treat our teammates the way we want them to treat their co-coaches and the way we want the girls they coach to treat each other.

#### How to Encourage Coaches to be Brave, Not Perfect

- Always give encouraging answers – avoid criticizing someone's contribution and thank them for sharing.
- Invite, never force, participation: allow coaches to have some control over their experience so that they will allow players some control over theirs.

#### How to Focus on Progress, Not Outcomes

- Establish a baseline: Provide coaches with the opportunity to reflect on where they are starting.
- Ask coaches what new things they are committed to trying.
- Follow up: reminding coaches of the new things they've tried and asking them, "How did you do that?"

#### How to Let Coaches Compete

- Model different ways to be competitive during training (against a goal, as a personal/team record or against another team).
- Create fun competitions for the not-fun parts of coaching, such as turning in timesheets or lesson plans on time.

And most importantly, if what we're doing isn't working for a coach, then it's on us as programme leaders to change what we're doing, not on them to "understand it". If we aren't reflective about how we're setting up the programme and supporting coaches, we can't expect them to be reflective about how they are setting up training and supporting players.



# HOW TO TRAIN COACHES

## PROGRAM LEADERS / COACHES OF COACHES

### 2. START WITH A COMMON LANGUAGE

If you can, it's great to try and get all your coaches on the same page before the official kick-off meeting or training session. Having something to reflect on and refer to ensures everyone is speaking the same language and sets a tone that learning is encouraged and expected.

Nike and the United States Olympic Committee recently collaborated to build an online coaching hub called "How to Coach Kids" ([howtocoachkids.org](http://howtocoachkids.org)), with a series of modules that create this common language and fundamental knowledge base. Encourage coaches to take the "How to Coach Kids" course and the "Coaching Girls" module to really kickstart the season.

### 3. ACTIVELY RAISE AWARENESS OF BIAS

Bias is the natural result of the millions of messages we receive about the role of women in sports. And it's not hard to see why many coaches (and athletes) arrive at training with preconceived notions of women's role and value in sports, given that it's only been around 50 years since race organisers tried to physically stop Katherine Switzer from running the Boston Marathon and fewer than 25 years since the start of women professional leagues, and seeing as less than 6% of television time in the United Kingdom, for example, is focused on women's sport. So, while it's natural to have biases, we also know that these biases can impact the behaviour of a coach and interfere with their ability to create the best possible sports experience for the girls on their team.

The good news is that simply being aware of and reflecting on bias is a great place to start. A Harvard University study of teen girls

and leadership bias found that simply being aware of bias is a critical part of challenging those biases. Creating an open dialogue with coaches, encouraging them to be reflective and challenge some of the things that "have always been done" (like referring to groups of girls as "guys") are good first steps. If you have more time, you can kick-start the reflection process with an activity in this toolkit or using other activities that help start conversations about bias.

### 4. PRIORITIZE LEARNING

Like any educational process, coach training works best when the conversation doesn't stop after one session. Like athletes, coaches flourish in cultures where learning isn't just a bonus; it's a fully integrated expectation. Learning shouldn't be one way, from programmes to coaches. We can't expect coaches to spend time getting feedback from their players if we don't spend time getting feedback from them. To really prioritise feedback is to do more than just send out a survey at the end of the season. It means creating feedback loops where coaches receive specific and personalised feedback and are asked to provide the same kind of detailed, thoughtful feedback to programme or league administrators. Feedback can't be an afterthought; it should be part of the season plan and implemented consistently in formal and informal ways.

In order to best prepare coaches, we need to create as many experiences as possible that reinforce the kind of coach we want them to be and encourage them to be reflective about their growth. Making small changes to interactions – asking the right questions and sharing the right information – can have an outsized impact.



# HOW TO TRAIN COACHES

## PROGRAM LEADERS / COACHES OF COACHES

These touchpoints don't need to be resource or time-intensive. They can be as simple as text messages that remind coaches to do something to help girls be brave and not perfect. It can be as easy as replacing "What was the score?" with one question that causes them to stop and reflect on how they supported or challenged their girls to take risks, or one thing that really worked well (or didn't work at all) at training that week.

Programs might try some of the following to build good learning habits:

- Schedule a short survey of one to three questions for a coach to receive by email or phone at the end of every training session, where they reflect on what worked and didn't work at training. Run a contest with a significant reward for the coach who has the best response rate.
- Send a text message that reminds coaches to do something to help girls be brave and not perfect or another reminder from the behaviour bank in this toolkit (link).
- Replace "What was the score?" with one question that makes a coach stop and reflect on how they supported or challenged their girls to take risks, like "Who surprised you today?"
- Implement Think Tank Tuesday where you share a video, podcast or article that would be interesting to the coaches and highlights ways that girls and women are defying expectations

- Make trainings mandatory and, if applicable, pay or incentivise coaches for their time. If you work with volunteer coaches, incentivise participation with an in-kind item like sportswear or food or the chance to win some kind of prize.
- At every meeting or training, ask coaches to shout-out another coach for something they saw or heard about that the coach did well.

The best thing we can do to train coaches is to think critically about how we want them to interact with their players. What kinds of relationships do we want them to have with their players? What should their priorities be? How should they handle adversity and what should they do to create supportive but challenging environments? We have to start by modelling all of these things in the ways that we interact with them.



<sup>11</sup> <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/reports/leaning-out>

<sup>12</sup>Activities for addressing bias: [https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/tt\\_sports\\_gender\\_stereotypes\\_09.pdf](https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/tt_sports_gender_stereotypes_09.pdf)  
(gender bias in sport) <https://cultureplusconsulting.com/2018/08/16/a-ha-activities-for-unconscious-bias-training/> (general biases)





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# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

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# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

One bias that we often run into with coaches is that most people assume sport access is closer to equal than it really is. Despite the best efforts of international laws and policies and the growth of opportunities at all levels of sport for girls to play, we are still nowhere near parity, particularly when it comes to leadership opportunities and coaching.

This misunderstanding about the reality of the experience for girls and women in sport can result in misguided assumptions from both male and female coaches as well as programme administrators and parents.

One way to illustrate the differences between men's and women's experiences is to let them tell you about it. Encourage them to reflect on their experiences and see the similarities and differences by using the activities below:

## STEP IN / STEP OUT

### Set-Up

Participants should be standing in a circle or square (use the lines of the gym or field if you can or set up lines using cones).

### Introduction

I'm going to read a series of prompts to you, with instructions to step in to the circle if the first answer best reflects your experience, and to step out of the circle if the second answer best reflects your experience. There are no right or wrong answers and what other participants are doing shouldn't influence whether you stand up or sit down. There will definitely be similarities and differences between your experience and the experiences of the group. Try to notice some of those as we go, and we'll talk more about it at the end.

We'll be talking about single- and mixed-gender programming and about the amount of time your gender identity matched with the gender identity of the other people playing on or coaching your team. When we refer to "your gender," you should choose the gender you most strongly identify with.





# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## Prompts

- For this question, think about your experiences in non-structured active play, like recess, pick-up games, or camp.
  - **Step in** to the circle if most of the time (more than 50% of the time) the majority of the people you played with were the same gender as you. Step out if the majority of the people you played with were a different gender.
  - **Step in** to the circle if you were ever the only person of your gender playing during a game or activity; **Step out** of the circle if you were never the only person of your gender playing during a game or activity.
- For this question, think about your experience in structured youth sports (if you didn't play structured youth sports, you can just keep standing where you are).
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time you played on a single-gender team that matched your gender; Step out of the circle if the majority of the time, you played on mixed-gender teams.
  - **Step in** to the circle if you were ever the only person of your gender on a team; Step out of the circle if you were never the only person of your gender on a team.
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time, you played on a team where the coach was the same gender as you; Step out of the circle if the majority of the time, you were coached by someone of a different gender.
- For this question, think about your experience in competitive sports – playing at school, university or professional level.
  - **Step in** to the circle if, the majority of the time you played competitive sports, your head coach was the same gender as you. Step out of the circle if, most of the time, your head coach was not the same gender as you.
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time you played competitive sports, at least one coach was the same gender as you. Step out of the circle if, most of the time, none of your coaches were the same gender as you.



# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## Debrief

### 1. Ask: What did you notice?

You will likely see a variety of experiences, but answers could include:

- That most of the men usually had male-dominated experiences (if you have men participating)
- That many women share the experience of being in the minority (or even the only woman)
- That many women were not coached by women most of the time, whereas the vast majority of men were almost always coached by men (if you have men participating)

### 2. Ask: If all of this is true, what does that say about who sport is created for? What does it say about who's experience, boys or girls, are most likely to be represented?

Answers could include (and the facilitator can help support participants in seeing these disparities):

- Sport is primarily created for and caters to men and boys. When girls are primarily playing with or coached by men, their experiences may not be as readily represented as those of boys and men.
- Girls often don't have opportunities where they can be in the majority and have access to positive female role models as coaches.

### 3. Ask: If sport was created for and primarily caters to men, and women are not equal represented in leadership or coaching roles, what kinds of biases or assumptions might this cause coaches (men and women) to make?

Answers could include (and the facilitator can help support participants consider these assumptions):

- Assumptions that women and girls don't belong
- Assumptions that there are some things in sports that women and girls shouldn't do
- Assumptions that what motivates and challenges girls about sports is the same as boys
- Assumptions that girls and boys want the same things out of sport

### 4. Ask: What kind of impact could these assumptions have?

Answers could include (and facilitator can help support participants to understand):

- We miss opportunities to create the best sports environments for girls – those that prioritize the things that most motivate and challenge girls, where they can develop relationships with other girls and learn from powerful positive female role models.

It's our job to understand that we all have biases and that those biases can influence our behavior. To minimize any negative outcomes that come from those biases, we have to keep reflecting on our actions and decisions as coaches and commit to learning as much as we can about what research establishes, and more importantly, girls tell us about what they really need from sports.



# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## ATHLETES ARE...

### Set-Up

Split your group into two and separate them so they can't hear or see what the other group is doing. If the group is mixed gender, try and split the groups evenly. Each group should have access to some flip chart paper, a whiteboard or some other way to record their brainstorm. Assign a "scribe" from each group who can write quickly and (relatively) neatly.

### Introduction

You'll have one minute to come up with as many words as you can to describe a certain group of people. Feel free to yell out your answers, but also give some time to your scribe to record everything. We're trying to get as many words as we can in our 1-minute time frame.

### Prompts

- Have one group start their minute brainstorm by providing words to complete the sentence "Male Athletes Are..."
- Have the other group start their minute brainstorm by providing words to complete the sentence "Female Athletes Are..."

Have both groups bring their brainstorms back and share them with the whole group.





# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## Debrief

### 1. Ask: What do you notice about the two lists?

Answers could include (but will reflect a variety of answers)

- That there are some similarities (ask the participants to estimate what percentage of the activities they think are similar)
- That there are some interesting differences (ask the participants to name which words they heard exclusively on one of the other lists.

### 2. Ask: Is it fair to say that we might have at least slightly different perceptions of what it means to be a female athlete and what it means to be a male athlete? (Participants should agree) If so, what might those assumptions mean for coaches as they approach working with girls?

Answers could include:

- We have different expectations and may treat girls differently
- Our unconscious biases, which are normal, might influence how we behave
- We might assume that the things that work for boys will work for girls when boys and girls may have different needs
- We might assume that girls and boys have different needs in cases where they actually want the same things

It's our job to understand that we all have biases and that those biases can influence our behavior. To minimize any negative outcomes that come from those biases, we have to keep reflecting on our actions and decisions as coaches and commit to learning as much as we can about what research establishes, and more importantly, girls tell us about what they really need from sports.

## Modifications to this Activity May Include

1. Split the group separating men and women. Have both groups complete both prompts and then compare the lists.
2. Split the group and have both groups only complete the "Female Athletes Are" prompt to see how many of the words they use match up what research tells us about what girls want from their sports experience. Highlight words that illustrate that girls are strong, they like to compete, they are brave and try new things and focused on connection.



# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## PAIR SHARES AND SHARE BACKS

### Set-Up

Have each participant find a partner and discuss one of the following questions. Once the pairs have a chance to chat with each other, ask if anyone would like to share back with the whole group. Follow up after you hear some of the share backs with questions that get the group to think about how different genders experience sport.

### Introduction

With your partner, take turns answering this question. Make sure you leave time for both of you to answer.

#### Prompt 1:

- Tell your partner about a time when a coach made a positive difference for you. What did they do, what did they say, how did it impact you?
- Report out to the group about the impact a coach had on your sports experience.

#### Prompt 2:

- On a piece of paper, write down as many of your coaches as you can think of. Once you're done, draw a check or a star next to each of the coaches that you would consider a "good coach" – they supported you, you learned something from them or you had a generally good experience playing for them.
- Talk with your partner about what percentage of the coaches you've had in your life were "good" coaches and why you think they were good.

- Now go through and circle each of the coaches who were the same gender as you
- Raise your hand if all of the coaches you circled were the same gender as you. Raise your hand if most of the coaches you circled were the same gender as you. Raise your hand if most of the coaches you circled were NOT the same gender as you. And finally, raise your hand if NONE of the coaches you circled were the same gender as you. (You'll likely see a gender difference with men having more male coaches; if your group is just women, you'll likely see some similarities in that fewer of their coaches reflected their gender, although you'll likely see a range).

#### Prompt 3:

- Think about the best coach you know about – it doesn't have to be someone who coached you, it could be a coach who you admire and whose career you've followed. Write down the top five reasons why you think that coach is so great. When you and your partner are done, talk about why you think that coach is so great. Any similarities?
- Report out to the group on any things your coaches had in common that made them great.



# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## Follow Up Questions

### 1. Ask: Raise your hand if you were talking about a female coach

If a small percentage of the room raises their hands, ask: Do we think there are so few women coaches because women coaches are not as good as men? NO! Then why are we talking about so many fewer great female coaches?

- Because there are fewer women coaches
- Because the media doesn't tell as many stories about great women coaches
- Because most of us had more men as coaches than women, particularly at the higher levels of sport
- We have biases that keep us from thinking of women as great coaches

## Debrief

Any coach can have a positive impact on a young person, but this difference in gender is worth noting – girls are far less likely to have female coaches than boys are to have male coaches. And boys are even less likely to have female coaches. This means that most of the good lessons we're learning from adults are coming from men. Don't we want our kids to see women in positive leadership and mentoring roles?





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