



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 schools 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 give 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.