



PART 4:

# **Teaching Ultimate**

**Ultimate In 10 Simple Rules**

**Teaching the Spirit of the Game™**

**Teaching Self-officiating**

**Coaching Youth League Ultimate**

**Running a Youth Skills Clinic**

**Starting an Ultimate Camp**

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# Ultimate in 10 Simple Rules

- 1. The Field:** A rectangular shape with end zones at each end. A regulation field is 70 yards by 40 yards, with end zones 25 yards deep.
- 2. Initiate Play:** Each point begins with both teams lining up on the front of their respective end zone line. The defense throws (“pulls”) the disc to the offense. A regulation game has seven players per team.
- 3. Scoring:** Each time the offense completes a pass in the defense’s end zone, the offense scores a point. Play is initiated after each score.
- 4. Movement of the Disc:** The disc may be advanced in any direction by completing a pass to a teammate. Players may not run with the disc. The person with the disc (“thrower”) has ten seconds to throw the disc. The defender guarding the thrower (“marker”) counts out the stall count.
- 5. Change of Possession:** When a pass is not completed (e.g. out of bounds, drop, block, interception), the defense immediately takes possession of the disc and becomes the offense.
- 6. Substitutions:** Players not in the game may replace players in the game after a score and during an injury time out.
- 7. Non-contact:** No physical contact is allowed between players. Picks and screens are also prohibited. A foul occurs when contact is made.
- 8. Fouls:** When a player initiates contact on another player a foul occurs. When a foul disrupts possession, the play resumes as if the possession was retained. If the player committing the foul disagrees with the foul call, the play is redone.
- 9. Self-Officiating:** Players are responsible for their own foul and line calls. Players resolve their own disputes.
- 10. Spirit of the Game:** Ultimate stresses sportsmanship and fair play. Competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of respect between players, adherence to the rules, and the basic joy of play.





# Teaching Spirit of the Game™

By Elisabeth Bowman

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

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## What is Spirit of the Game™?

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

SOTG™ can be divided into three areas:

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

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

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

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

## Challenges of Explaining SOTG™

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

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

## Gray Areas

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

## New Players to Ultimate or Your League

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

## Promoting & Teaching Spirit of the Game™

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Roles of Captains**

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

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

## **Roles of Coaches**

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

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

### **Background**

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

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

### Guidelines:

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

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

## Acknowledging and Rewarding Spirit of the Game™

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

### Spirit of the Game™ Rating System

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Spirit of the Game™ and Competitive Play

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

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

## Recommendations for Ensuring Spirit of the Game™

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





# Teaching Self-Officiating

By Will Smolinski

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

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

## Know the Rules

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

## Practice the Rules

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

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

## Teaching Ultimate Rules

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

## Recognizing Fouls

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

## Reacting

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

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

### Practice Conflict Resolution

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

## Listening

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

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

## Resuming Play

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

### Sample Script

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

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



# Coaching Youth League Ultimate

By Carey Goldenberg

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

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## Basics

### Discs

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

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

### Throwing and Catching

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

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

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

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## Simple Drills

### Three Person Throwing and Marking Weave

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

### Straight on Throwing Drill

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

### Four Corner Drill

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

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

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

## Defensive Philosophies

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

## Offensive Philosophies

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

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

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

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



# Running a Youth Skills Clinic

By Will Smolinski

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

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## Preliminary Expectations

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

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

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

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

## Teaching Different Ability Levels

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

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

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

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

## Planning the Day

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

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

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

## Managing Your Energy

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

### Participant Questionnaire

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

# Starting an Ultimate Camp

By Mark Rosser

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

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

## Operating Independently vs. Through Another Organization

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

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

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

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

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

## Determining the Location

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

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

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

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

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

## Determining Your Target Group

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

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

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

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

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## What's in a Name?

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

## Advertising

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

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

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

## The Website

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

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

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

## Camp Registration

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

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

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## Building Relationships is Key

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

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

## Staffing

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

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

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

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

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

## Planning the Week

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

## Planning the Day

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

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

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

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

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

## Looking Ahead

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

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

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

## FUN and RESPECT

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



## Ultimate Drills

By Carey Goldenberg

### Straight on Throwing Drill

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

Fig 1-1

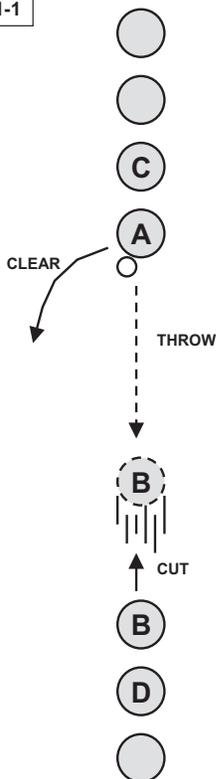


Fig 1-2

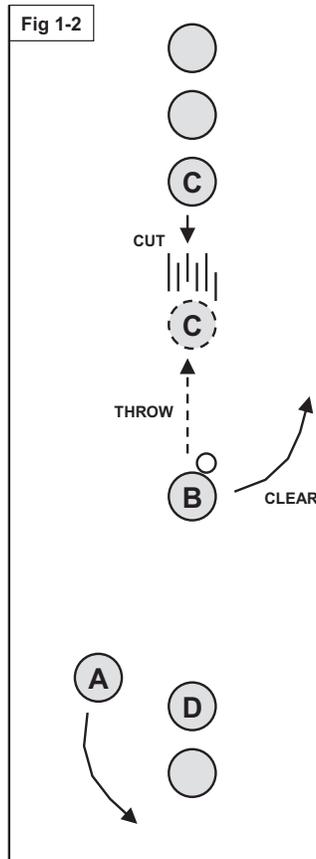
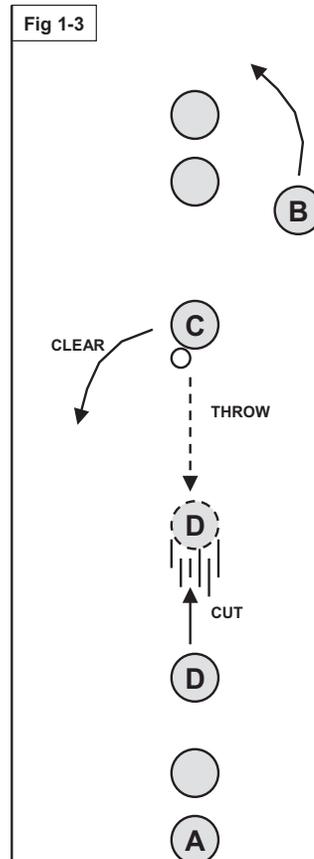


Fig 1-3



## Three Person Throwing and Marking Weave

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

Fig 2-1

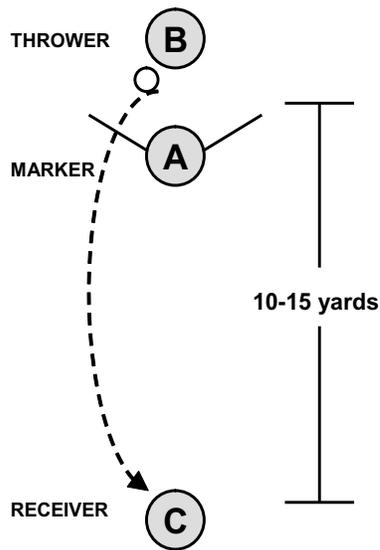


Fig 2-2

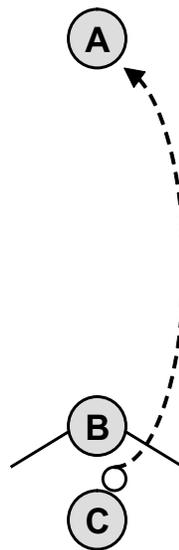
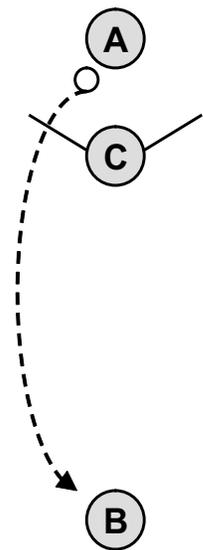


Fig 2-3



## Four Corners Drill

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

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

Fig 3-1

