

GUIDING YOUTH IN SPORTS



**A HANDBOOK FOR
SPORTS EDUCATORS**



Co-funded by
the European Union



The **EmpowerYouth SportsEd** project is created in response to the urgent need to promote the *holistic development* of youth and equip sports youth workers with the essential tools and knowledge to guide them. In today's youth sports landscape, the role of sports youth workers is more vital than ever. Our project recognizes the critical need to address *various aspects* of sports, *non-formal education* (NFE), and *mental well-being* to better support young athletes.

In this handbook, we will give state-of-the-art insights related to the development of youth in sports, covering topics that are frequently overlooked.



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According to the **Council of Europe**, Non-formal education refers to planned, structured programs and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competencies, outside the formal educational curriculum. Non-formal education is what happens in places such as youth organizations, sports clubs, and drama and community groups where young people meet.

Non-formal education is an integral part of a lifelong learning concept that allows young people and adults to acquire and maintain the skills, abilities, and outlook needed to adapt to rapid and constant technological, social, and economic change in society.



TYPES OF LEARNING



INFORMAL

Learning that occurs in daily life, in the family, in the workplace, in communities and through interests and activities of individuals

NON-FORMAL

Learnings acquired in addition or alternative to formal learning. In some cases, it can also be structured according to educational or training arrangements, but more flexible. It usually takes place in community-based setting.

FORMAL

In education and training institutions, is recognized by national authorities. Structured according to educational arrangements such as curricula, qualifications and teaching-learning requirements.



INFORMAL

Deliberate and self-directed learning



Unstructured, self-motivated and spontaneous

Anywhere

Personal development and self-fulfillment

NON-FORMAL

Complementary learning activities

Structures, planned, and facilitated

Courses, workshops, seminars and training

Skills and Capabilities

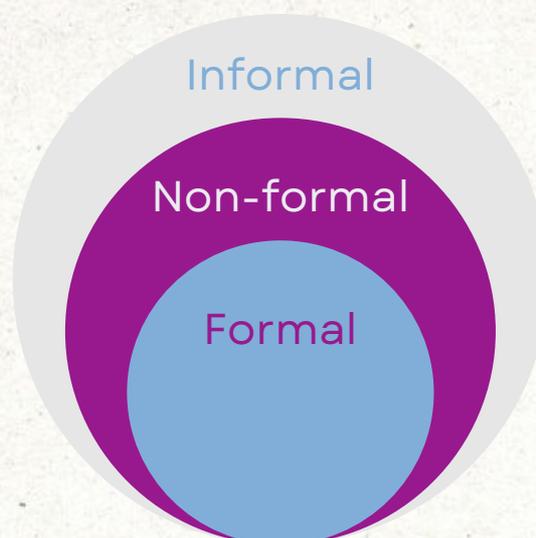
FORMAL

Full-time educational pathway

Structured, planned, and facilitated

Schools, Colleges and Universities

Diplomas and degrees



PRINCIPLES



NON-FORMAL EDUCATION has 4 PRINCIPLES

- There should be adequate relevance to the needs of disadvantaged groups
- A valid concern with particular categories of persons
- Unambiguous focus on clearly defined purposes
- Enormous flexibility in organization and method



METHODS

≡ COMMUNICATION-BASED METHODS



Interaction
Mediation
Dialogue

≡ ACTIVITY-BASED METHODS

Experience
Practice
Experimentation



≡ METHODS WHICH FOCUS ON SOCIAL ISSUES



Partnership
Teamwork
Networking

≡ SELF-MANAGED METHODS

Creativity
Exploration
Responsibility



ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES



ADVANTAGES OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

- ✓ Experienced facilitators with appropriate knowledge who give practical advice and coach personal growth
- ✓ Programs designed with interactive and practical approaches to make them accessible and easy to understand by various types of participants
- ✓ It provides each learner adequate space and time to learn skills and respect each individual associated
- ✓ Consider personal growth, and even the delicate issues are handled with the utmost care with proactive approaches
- ✓ Gracefulness and capability to adapt to an individual's needs and profession to a personal level 18



DISADVANTAGES OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

- ✘ No regular examinations are conducted to evaluate the skill development
- ✘ High possibility of fake certifications through different institutions
- ✘ If you are learning it just as a hobby, you don't require a professional or a trained teacher to impart non-formal education
- ✘ No standardized criteria which can evaluate the skills or knowledge acquired

Content inspiration and references obtained from various sources including:

<https://sportandnfe.eu/>

<https://sportandnfe.eu/project-results/handbook/>

<https://drop-in.eu/media/drop-in-io2-en.pdf>

NON FORMAL EDUCATION IN SPORTS 08

Education Through Sport (ETS) According to the Move&Learn manual (2013) is a “non-formal educational approach that works with sport and physical activities and which refers to the development of key competencies of individuals and groups in order to contribute to personal development and sustainable social transformation.” In ETS, sport is not the central action, but it is part of a learning process in which the physical activity is adapted towards the reaching of a planned educational objective, which is the primary purpose of the action.

Move&LEarn: <https://www.moveandlearn.org/>

move & learn



THE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EDUCATION BY, FOR AND THROUGH SPORT

	EDUCATION FOR SPORT	EDUCATION BY SPORT	EDUCATION THROUGH SPORT
Why?	For the sport itself	For a good cause	For life
Specific objective	Improve sport competencies for competition	Improve public health and well-being	Personal development and social learning
Approach	Technical skill-based	Functional	Existential, socio-cultural
Aim	Success and winning	Functioning better	Citizenship
Outcomes	Awards, better technical skills (some added value)	Social Welfare	Empowerment

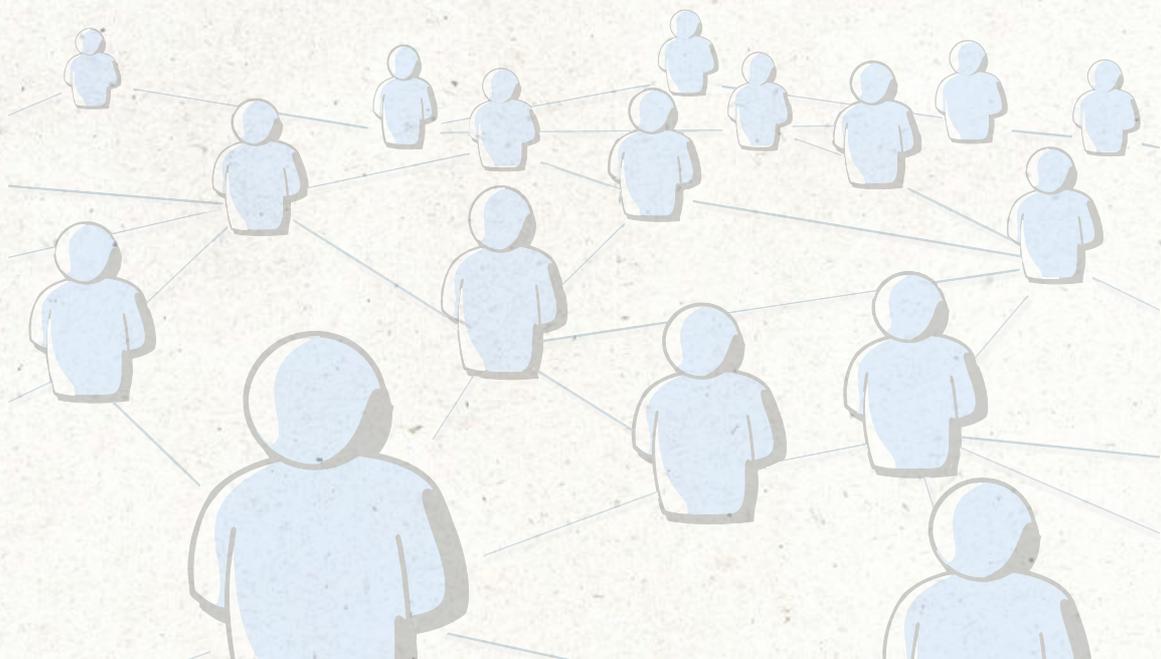
Non-formal education in sports involves learning experiences that are structured but not necessarily curriculum-based, focusing on practical skills, personal development, and social integration through sports and physical activities.

Non-formal education in sports involves several key aspects:

- **Holistic Approach:** Non-formal education in sports emphasizes holistic development, addressing physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects of individuals.
- **Experiential Learning:** It focuses on experiential learning through practical, hands-on activities and real-life experiences rather than traditional classroom-based learning.
- **Life Skills Development:** Non-formal education in sports aims to develop life skills such as teamwork, leadership, communication, problem-solving, and resilience, which are essential for success both on and off the field.



- **Inclusion and Diversity:** It promotes inclusivity and diversity, providing opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and identities to participate in sports and learn together.
- **Community Engagement:** Non-formal education in sports often involves community engagement and participation, fostering social cohesion, community development, and positive societal impact.
- **Adaptability and Innovation:** It embraces adaptability and innovation, continuously evolving to meet the changing needs and preferences of participants and incorporating new technologies and methodologies into its practices.



INDOOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION



Non-formal education indoor sports activities provide dynamic and engaging experiences that foster personal development, learning values, and skill-building in controlled indoor environments.

These activities offer opportunities for physical fitness, teamwork, leadership development, and personal growth.

The structured and controlled environment of indoor spaces allows for focused learning and skill development.

Here are some of the associated benefits:

- **Structured learning environment:** indoors offer focused learning with clear goals and interventions.
- **Facilitated learning experiences:** indoor facilities provide hands-on learning with guidance and resources.

⇒ Consistent training conditions: indoors offer stable conditions for skill development, leading to improvements over time.



⇒ Integration of technology and resources: indoor facilities enhance learning with modern tools and feedback.

⇒ Integration with formal education: collaborations with schools integrate non-formal learning seamlessly.

⇒ Weather independence: indoors ensure access to activities regardless of weather, promoting year-round engagement.



⇒ Safety and security: controlled environments minimize risks, allowing for focused enjoyment.



INDOOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Title: Quiz Showdown

Kahoot! Quizlet

Description: Use apps like Quizlet, Kahoot!, or Jeopardy to create a sports-themed quiz competition. Divide participants into teams, and let them answer questions related to sports rules, history, or famous athletes. Teams earn points for each correct answer.

Materials Needed:

- A device with internet access
- Pre-made quizzes on Quizlet, Kahoot!, or Jeopardy templates
- Projector or screen (optional)

Debriefing:



- How did your team decide on the answers?
- What strategies helped you succeed?
- How can the knowledge gained in this quiz apply to real-life sports scenarios?

Benefits:

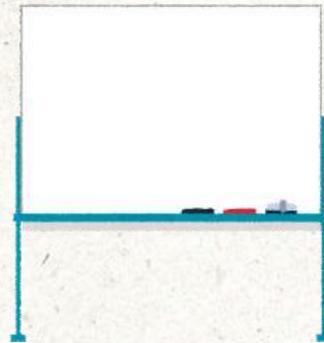
- Enhances sports-related knowledge
- Encourages teamwork and strategic thinking
- Promotes healthy competition

Title: Brainstorm Relay

Description: Divide the group and the board into two sections. Give each team a sports-related topic (e.g., types of sports, famous athletes, sports equipment). Teams have a set amount of time to brainstorm and write as many related terms on their section of the board as possible. The team with the most correct terms wins.

Materials Needed:

- Whiteboard and markers
- Timer

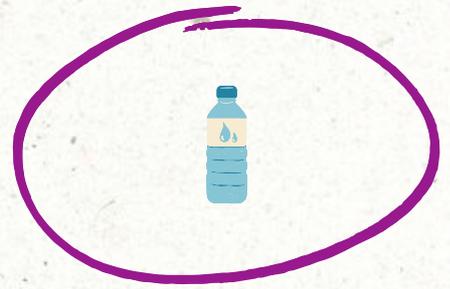


Debriefing:

- What strategies did your team use to brainstorm quickly?
- How did your team handle disagreements about what to write?
- How can quick thinking and teamwork apply in actual sports?

Benefits:

- Stimulates quick thinking and recall
- Encourages collaborative effort
- Reinforces sports-related vocabulary and concepts



Title: Word Grab

Description: After completing the Brainstorm Relay, gather participants in a circle with an object in the center (like a bottle). Each participant silently picks a word from the board. Participants take turns saying a word out loud. If someone says the word you chose, quickly grab the object. The fastest person wins that round.

Materials Needed:

- Object to place in the middle (e.g., bottle, glue stick)
- Whiteboard with words from the previous activity

Debriefing:

- What helped you react quickly to grab the object?
- How did you feel when someone else grabbed the object first?
- How do quick reflexes play a role in sports?

Benefits:

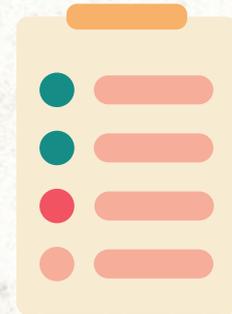
- Develops quick reflexes and reaction time
- Reinforces memory and recall under pressure
- Encourages strategic thinking

Title: Classroom Scavenger Hunt

Description: Create a list of tasks related to sports (e.g., find something that could be used as a ball, find an item with your team's color). Teams race to complete the list within a time limit.

Materials Needed:

- Pre-made task list
- Timer

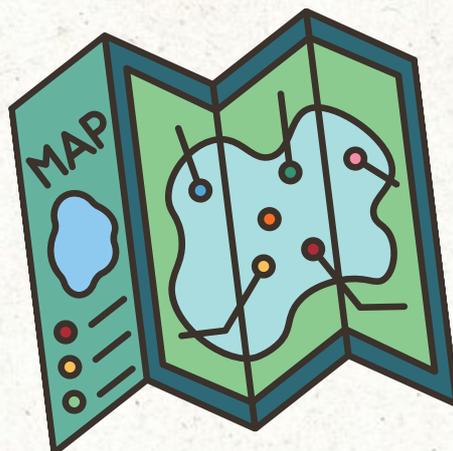


Debriefing:

- How did your team prioritize tasks?
- What challenges did you face during the scavenger hunt?
- How does problem-solving help in sports?

Benefits:

- Encourages creative thinking and resourcefulness
- Promotes teamwork under time constraints
- Develops problem-solving skills



Title: **People Bingo**

Description: Each participant receives a bingo sheet with boxes containing prompts (e.g., "Find someone who has played soccer," "Find someone who can do a cartwheel"). They must mingle to find others who match these descriptions and get their signatures. The first person to complete a row or full card wins.

Materials Needed:

- Bingo sheets with sports-related prompts
- Pens



Debriefing:

- How did you find people to complete your bingo?
- What did you learn about your peers through this activity?
- How does networking and getting to know your team help in sports?

Benefits:

- Encourages social interaction and communication
- Helps participants learn about each other
- Builds a sense of community and teamwork

Title: Back-to-Back Drawing

Description: In pairs, participants sit back-to-back. One person is given a simple sports-related image (e.g., a basketball, a goal post). They must describe the image using geometric shapes and directions for the other person to draw. Afterward, they compare the drawings.

Materials Needed:

- Simple sports-related images
- Paper and pencils



Debriefing:

- How well did you communicate the details of the image?
- What challenges did you face in understanding directions?
- How important is clear communication in sports?

Benefits:

- Enhances communication and listening skills
- Promotes teamwork and collaboration
- Develops spatial awareness and visualization



Title: Picture Guessing Game

Description: Divide participants into two teams. One person from each team sits facing away from the digital board, where a sports-related image is displayed. Their team must describe, act, or draw the image for them to guess. The first person to guess correctly wins.

Materials Needed:

- Digital board or projector
- Sports-related images



Debriefing:

- How did your team decide on the best way to convey the image?
- What strategies were most effective for guessing?
- How does interpreting non-verbal cues help in sports?

Benefits:

- Encourages teamwork and creative problem-solving
- Develops interpretive and communication skills
- Promotes quick thinking and adaptability

Title: I Have a Friend Who...

Description: In a circle, one participant stands in the middle and says, "I have a friend who..." followed by a statement related to sports (e.g., "...loves to play soccer"). Anyone who identifies with the statement must run to the center and find a new spot in the circle. The person left without a spot continues the game.

Materials Needed:

- None

Debriefing:

- How did you feel when you found a spot or didn't find one?
- What did you learn about your peers through this game?
- How does adaptability help in team sports?

Benefits:

- Encourages quick thinking and movement
- Promotes social bonding and awareness
- Develops agility and adaptability



Title: Sports-Themed Board Games

Description: Play board games with sports-related themes (e.g., Monopoly with sports teams, sports trivia games). This can help participants learn about sports while engaging in strategic thinking and friendly competition.

Materials Needed:

- Sports-themed board games

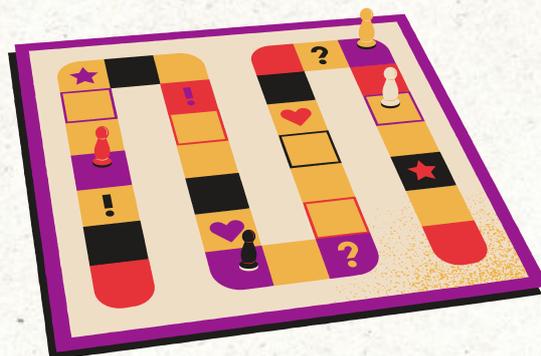


Debriefing:

- What strategies did you use during the game?
- How did you handle winning or losing?
- How can the skills from board games apply to real sports?

Benefits:

- Promotes strategic thinking and planning
- Encourages friendly competition
- Reinforces sports-related knowledge



Title: UNO Card Game with a Twist

Description: Distribute UNO cards to participants in a circle. On the count of three, each person reveals the top card from their deck. The goal is to find someone with the same number and shout their sports-related word first to win their card. The player with the most cards at the end wins.

Materials Needed:

- UNO cards



Debriefing:

- How did you react quickly to find a match?
- What strategies did you use to remember the words?
- How do quick thinking and memory apply in sports?

Benefits:

- Develops quick thinking and reaction time
- Enhances memory and recall
- Promotes friendly competition



Title: Collaborative Comic Creation

Description: Using the Pixton app, participants create a sports-themed comic. They choose characters, settings, and scenarios to illustrate a story, working together to create a coherent narrative.

Materials Needed:

- Access to Pixton or a similar app
- Devices with internet access



Debriefing:

- How did your group decide on the story and characters?
- What challenges did you face when collaborating on the comic?
- How can storytelling and creativity enhance team spirit in sports?

Benefits:

- Encourages creativity and storytelling
- Promotes teamwork and collaboration
- Develops digital literacy and design skills



Title: **Guess the Drawing**

Description: One participant draws a sports-related image in pairs or small groups while others guess what it is. The drawer can only use shapes and lines to represent the object, making it more challenging.

Materials Needed:

- Paper and pencils
- Sports-related images or words

Debriefing:

- How did you decide what to draw?
- What made it difficult or easy to guess?
- How does interpreting visuals relate to sports strategies?

Benefits:

- Develops creative thinking and visualization
- Enhances communication and interpretation skills
- Promotes teamwork and collaboration



Title: Flashcard Battle

Description: Use flashcards related to sports (e.g., equipment, rules, athletes). Two participants face off in a "battle" where they must correctly identify flashcards that are flipped face down. The fastest correct answer wins the round.

Materials Needed:

- Sports-related flashcards

Debriefing:

- How did you remember the correct terms?
- What strategies helped you succeed?
- How can quick recall and knowledge be applied in real sports?

Benefits:

- Enhances memory and quick recall
- Promotes healthy competition
- Reinforces sports-related vocabulary



Title: Create Your Own Sports Event

Description: In groups, participants design their own sports event, including the type of sport, rules, location, and marketing strategies. They present their event to the rest of the group, explaining the unique aspects and the role sports play in their event.

Materials Needed:

- Paper and art supplies
- Presentation materials
- Optional: digital tools for creating presentations or posters



Debriefing:

- How did your group decide on the type of sport and rules for your event?
- What strategies did you use to make your event unique and appealing?
- How can creativity and planning help in organizing successful sports events?

Benefits:

- Encourages creativity and planning
- Promotes teamwork and collaboration
- Develops presentation and communication skills
- Enhances understanding of event organization and marketing

Title: Sports Escape Room

Description: Create an escape room with sports-related puzzles and challenges. Teams must solve clues related to sports rules, history, or equipment to "escape" within a time limit.

Materials Needed:

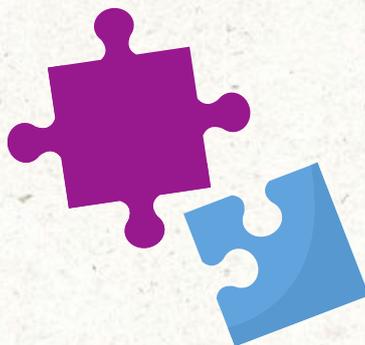
- Sports-related puzzles and clues
- Escape room setup materials

Debriefing:

- How did your team approach solving the puzzles?
- What strategies were most effective?
- How does problem-solving under pressure relate to sports?

Benefits:

- Promotes teamwork and collaboration
- Develops problem-solving and critical thinking skills
- Encourages quick thinking and adaptability



OUTDOOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION



Non-formal education outdoor sports

activities encompass a wide range of interactive and participatory experiences that promote personal development, learning values, and skill-building in natural settings. These activities include outdoor games, team challenges, adventure-based learning, or simply playing sports outdoors. The importance of the natural environment in these settings is key for experiential learning and personal growth.

Here are some of the associated benefits:

- Natural elements improve experience: outdoor sports offer exposure to sunlight, fresh air, and varied terrain, adding excitement.
- More space and freedom: outdoor venues provide ample space, allowing players to explore their skills fully.

➤ Connection with Nature: Outdoor sports cultivate a deeper appreciation for nature and its benefits.



➤ Health Benefits: Outdoor activity boosts mood, reduces stress, and increases vitamin D production.

➤ Team Bonding: Outdoor sports foster camaraderie and teamwork among players.

➤ Adaptability: Players learn to adapt to changing conditions, enhancing resilience and problem-solving skills.



➤ Cultural and Environmental Awareness: Outdoor sports can promote awareness of local cultures and environments.



OUTDOOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Title: Quick Reflex Marker Grab

Description: Divide participants into pairs and have them stand facing each other with a marker in between them. The director will call out various actions (e.g., touch your shoulders, your head, jump, spin around). Participants follow these commands, and when the director says "now," they try to grab the marker faster than their partner.

Materials Needed:

- Markers or similar objects



Debriefing:

- How did you anticipate the director's call to grab the marker?
- What strategies did you use to be faster than your partner?
- How can quick reflexes benefit you in sports?

Benefits:

- Develops quick reflexes and reaction time
- Encourages concentration and anticipation
- Promotes friendly competition

Title: Look-Up Elimination

Description: Participants stand in a circle with their heads down. On the count of three, they look up at another player. Two players must "fall" to the ground if they make eye contact. The game continues until only two players are left standing.

Materials Needed:

- None

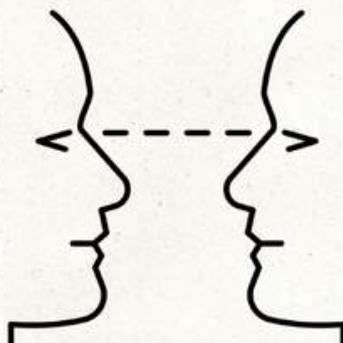


Debriefing:

- What strategies did you use to avoid making eye contact?
- How did you react when you made eye contact with someone?
- How does this game help improve your focus and awareness in sports?

Benefits:

- Enhances focus and concentration
- Develops quick decision-making skills
- Promotes awareness of surroundings



Title: Sock Removal Challenge

Description: Each player aims to remove their opponent's sock without using their hands within the shortest time possible. The winner of each round advances to the next round until one person is crowned the winner.

Materials Needed:

- Socks



Debriefing:

- What strategies did you use to remove your opponent's sock?
- How did you defend your own sock from being removed?
- How does agility and strategy play a role in sports?

Benefits:

- Enhances agility and quick thinking
- Promotes strategic planning
- Encourages friendly competition

Title: Human Snake Tag

Description: Choose a limited area for play. One person is designated as the "snake" and tries to tag other participants. When tagged, they join the snake by holding hands or linking arms. The snake continues to grow until all players are caught.

Materials Needed:

- None



Debriefing:

- How did you avoid being tagged by the snake?
- How did the dynamics change as the snake grew longer?
- How does teamwork and cooperation help in sports?

Benefits:

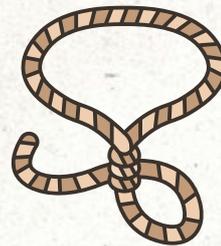
- Promotes teamwork and cooperation
- Develops agility and evasion skills
- Encourages strategic thinking

Title: Spider Web Challenge

Description: Create spider webs between two trees using ropes. Groups must navigate through the web without touching the ropes, and each hole can only be used once. Teams strategize to get everyone to the other side.

Materials Needed:

- Ropes
- Trees or poles to tie ropes

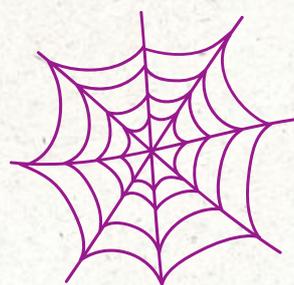


Debriefing:

- How did your team decide on the best strategy to navigate the web?
- What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?
- How does strategic planning and communication apply in sports?

Benefits:

- Enhances strategic thinking and planning
- Promotes teamwork and communication
- Develops problem-solving skills



Title: Drawing Relay

Description: Divide participants into two teams. Each team fills a paper with drawings and places it in a corner of the field. Teams then try to recreate the other team's drawings on a blank sheet in their own corner, while avoiding being tagged by the opposing team. If tagged, participants must perform a dance move for 10 seconds before continuing.

Materials Needed:

- Paper and markers
- Large outdoor space



Debriefing:

- How did your team approach the task of recreating the drawings?
- What strategies did you use to avoid being tagged?
- How does this game reinforce teamwork and creativity in sports?

Benefits:

- Promotes creativity and observation skills
- Encourages teamwork and strategic planning
- Develops agility and coordination

Title: Dance Tag

Description: Play a game of tag where, when tagged, participants must perform a dance move. Someone must then stand in front of them and imitate the move to free them. The person who is tagging changes every 5 minutes.

Materials Needed:

- None



Debriefing:

- How did you choose your dance moves?
- How did your team work together to free tagged players?
- How can creativity and quick thinking be beneficial in sports?

Benefits:

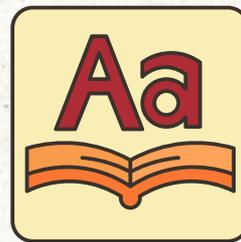
- Encourages creativity and expression
- Promotes teamwork and cooperation
- Develops agility and quick thinking

Title: Vocabulary Run

Description: Think of a word from a predetermined sports vocabulary list. One student calls out words from the list. If the chosen word is called, the student must run around a designated area and return to their spot without being tagged.

Materials Needed:

- Sports vocabulary list
- Large outdoor space



Debriefing:

- How did you prepare to run when your word was called?
- What strategies did you use to avoid being tagged?
- How do quick reactions and knowledge of sports vocabulary apply in real-life sports?

Benefits:

- Enhances quick thinking and reaction time
- Reinforces sports-related vocabulary
- Promotes physical fitness

Title: Vocabulary Handkerchief

Description: Participants are divided into two teams, each standing on opposite sides. A handkerchief (or similar object) is placed in the center. When a word from the sports vocabulary is called, one player from each team runs to grab the handkerchief and bring it back to their team without being tagged by their opponent.

Materials Needed:

- Handkerchief or similar object
- Sports vocabulary list
- Large outdoor space



Debriefing:

- How did you react when your word was called?
- What strategies did you use to grab the handkerchief without being tagged?
- How can quick thinking and physical agility help in sports?

Benefits:

- Develops quick thinking and reaction time
- Encourages teamwork and strategic planning
- Promotes physical fitness and agility

Title: Dodgeball Vocabulary Challenge

Description: Play dodgeball with the twist that when a player is hit, they can avoid elimination by quickly saying three words from the sports vocabulary list within five seconds.

Materials Needed:

- Dodgeballs
- Sports vocabulary list
- Large outdoor space



Debriefing:

- How did you quickly recall words from the vocabulary list?
- What strategies did you use to avoid getting hit?
- How can quick recall and physical agility benefit you in sports?

Benefits:

- Enhances memory and quick recall
- Promotes physical fitness and agility
- Encourages strategic thinking

Title: Outdoor To-Do List

Description: Create a list of outdoor tasks related to sports (e.g., run a lap around the field, do 10 push-ups, find something related to a sport). Participants must complete the list as a team within a set time.

Materials Needed:

- Pre-made to-do list
- Large outdoor space



Debriefing:

- How did your team prioritize tasks on the list?
- What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?
- How does completing tasks as a team apply to sports?

Benefits:

- Promotes teamwork and cooperation
- Develops time management and problem-solving skills
- Encourages physical fitness

Title: Guided Town Tour

Description: Take a tour around the town with participants acting as guides. Ask them to identify locations (e.g., pharmacy, supermarket) and give directions (e.g., how to get to the mall). This can be adapted to include sports facilities.

Materials Needed:

- None

Debriefing:

- How did you navigate and give directions?
- What did you learn about your town's layout and facilities?
- How can navigation and orientation skills be useful in sports?

Benefits:

- Enhances navigation and orientation skills
- Promotes communication and leadership
- Develops community awareness



Title: Scavenger Hunt

Description: Organize a scavenger hunt with sports-related items or clues hidden around a designated area. Participants must find all items or complete all clues to win.

Materials Needed:

- Scavenger hunt list
- Sports-related items or clues
- Large outdoor space



Debriefing:

- How did your team find the hidden items or solve the clues?
- What strategies helped you succeed in the scavenger hunt?
- How do problem-solving and teamwork apply to sports?

Benefits:

- Promotes teamwork and problem-solving skills
- Encourages strategic thinking and planning
- Develops physical fitness and exploration



Title: Message Ball

Description: Participants stand in a circle and choose sports-related words. One person in the center throws a ball while saying "I send a message to [word]." The named person must catch the ball while others run away. When the catcher says "stop," everyone freezes, and the catcher has three steps to try to hit someone with the ball. If hit, that person loses a life; if they catch the ball, they gain a life.

Materials Needed:

- Ball

Debriefing:

- How did you react when your nickname was called?
- What strategies did you use to avoid being hit?
- How can quick thinking and agility help in sports?

Benefits:

- Enhances quick thinking and reaction time
- Promotes physical fitness and agility
- Encourages strategic planning

Title: Relay Race Obstacle Course

Description: Create an obstacle course with various sports-related challenges (e.g., dribbling a ball, jumping hurdles, crawling under a net). Teams compete to complete the course in the shortest time.

Materials Needed:

- Sports equipment (balls, cones, hurdles, etc.)
- Large outdoor space

Debriefing:

- How did your team approach each obstacle?
- What strategies did you use to complete the course quickly?
- How do obstacle courses help improve your overall fitness and agility?

Benefits:

- Promotes physical fitness and agility
- Encourages teamwork and strategic planning
- Develops problem-solving skills



Parents play pivotal roles in their children's sports journeys, offering support, logistical assistance, and financial backing to ensure participation.

They act as advocates, communicating with coaches and organizers to address their children's needs while balancing sports commitments with other aspects of life.

Serving as role models, parents exemplify sportsmanship and resilience, guiding their children through the challenges of competition and instilling values of fair play and perseverance. Their encouragement and perspective help young athletes navigate setbacks, fostering a healthy attitude toward success and failure. Ultimately, parents play an integral part in nurturing their children's love for sports, contributing to their overall development and well-being on and off the field.

COACH-PARENT RELATIONSHIP

A positive coach-parent relationship is vital for young athletes' development and enjoyment of sports. As a youth worker, maintaining open communication, involving parents in decisions, and showing appreciation for their support fosters trust and understanding. Providing guidance and resources to parents helps them support their child's sports journey effectively. By building a strong partnership based on communication and respect, coaches create a supportive environment where athletes can thrive.

However, this relationship can sometimes be fraught with challenges and frustrations. On the following page, we will explore things that coaches/parents do that annoy each other based on the resources from the project *SportParent EU*:

<http://www.sportparent.eu/en/resources>



Things parents do that may frustrate coaches:

- Showing a lack of knowledge about the rules and etiquette of the sport
- Demanding too much of the coach's time
- Hold excessive expectations about a child's sport
- Putting pressure on a child at competitions
- Not respecting the coach's role by giving tactical or technical directions during training or competition that contradict the coach's instructions



Things coaches do that may frustrate parents:

- Not giving equal or fair play time, displaying favoritism
- When children are not having fun or learning in training sessions
- Not understanding child development
- A lack of preparation or attention to training
- Poor organizational skills
- Poor or limited communication
- A lack of respect or understanding for the role as a parent

The state of competitiveness in youth sports development is undergoing a transformation towards a more holistic approach that prioritizes long-term athlete development over short-term success.

There's a growing recognition that youth athletes require comprehensive support not only in skill development but also in physical, mental, and emotional aspects.

This holistic approach involves integrating sports science, psychology, nutrition, and injury prevention into youth development programs. Coaches and organizations are focusing on age-appropriate training methods that emphasize skill acquisition, physical literacy, and injury prevention, rather than early specialization and intense competition.

Furthermore, there's a greater emphasis on creating positive and supportive environments that foster personal growth, resilience, and lifelong participation in sports. This includes promoting values such as teamwork, sportsmanship, and respect, as well as providing opportunities for leadership development and community engagement.

Additionally, efforts are being made to address issues such as athlete burnout, overtraining, and mental health concerns by prioritizing athlete well-being and balance. Coaches and organizations are implementing strategies to monitor athlete workload, manage expectations, and provide support services such as mental skills training and access to qualified healthcare professionals.



The landscape of mental health in sports, particularly concerning youth athletes, is undergoing significant evolution with a growing awareness and advocacy for mental well-being.

Recognizing the prevalence of challenges such as anxiety, depression, and burnout among young athletes, efforts are being made to provide holistic support systems. This includes education and resources for coaches and parents to recognize and address mental health issues, as well as empowering athletes to prioritize their mental well-being. Sports organizations are implementing policies and initiatives to prioritize mental health, such as athlete mental health screening programs and access to mental health professionals. By fostering open dialogue, reducing stigma, and providing comprehensive support, the aim is to create environments where young athletes can thrive both on and off the field.

MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES



Introducing mindfulness activities to youth can provide valuable tools for managing stress, enhancing focus, and promoting overall well-being.

These activities involve practices that cultivate present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. By engaging in mindfulness exercises, young people can develop important skills for navigating the challenges of adolescence and building resilience for the future.

Here are some of the associated benefits:

- **Stress reduction:** Mindfulness activities assist youth in managing stress levels effectively, promoting relaxation and emotional balance.
- **Improved focus and concentration:** Engaging in mindfulness practices enhances attentional control and cognitive abilities, leading to better academic performance and productivity.

➤ Emotional regulation: By learning to recognize and regulate their emotions, youth develop healthier coping mechanisms and emotional intelligence.

➤ Enhanced self-awareness: Mindfulness  cultivates a deeper understanding of oneself, including thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, promoting self-reflection and personal growth.

➤ Increased resilience: youth develop the capacity to respond to difficulties with greater adaptability, self-compassion, and optimism.

➤ Better relationships: Practicing mindfulness encourages empathy, active listening, and non-reactivity, fostering stronger and more meaningful connections with others. 

➤ Promotion of overall well-being: Mindfulness contributes to the holistic well-being of youth by supporting their mental, emotional, and physical health, leading to a greater sense of balance and fulfillment in life.

Body Scan

Lie down or sit in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and begin to bring your attention to each part of your body, starting from your feet and slowly moving up to your head. Notice how each part feels: is there tension, pain, or relaxation? If you detect any tense areas, send your breath there, imagining how the tension releases with each exhalation. This exercise can be done before or after training.

Benefits: Enhances body awareness and helps prevent injuries by being more connected with your body's signals.

Positive Visualization

Before a competition or training, sit in a quiet place and close your eyes. Visualize each movement you'll make: how you move, how you execute the technique, how you achieve your goals. Imagine every detail as vividly as possible, including bodily sensations and the atmosphere. Repeat this visualization daily to reinforce confidence.

Benefits: Boosts self-confidence and improves execution by “rehearsing” movements mentally before performing them.

Conscious Breathing

Before starting a training session or competition, find a quiet place and sit or stand with your back straight. Inhale deeply through your nose while counting to 4, hold the breath for 4 seconds, and then slowly exhale, counting to 4 again. Repeat the cycle at least 5 times. While doing this, focus only on the sensation of air entering and leaving your body. This exercise helps calm nerves and prepares the mind for physical effort.

Benefits: Improves concentration and reduces pre-competition anxiety.

Silent Training

Before starting a training session or competition, find a quiet place and sit or stand with your back straight. Inhale deeply through your nose while counting to 4, hold the breath for 4 seconds, and then slowly exhale, counting to 4 again. Repeat the cycle at least 5 times. While doing this, focus only on the sensation of air entering and leaving your body. This exercise helps calm nerves and prepares the mind for physical effort.

Benefits: Improves concentration and reduces pre-competition anxiety.

Awakening Sensations Routine

Before starting training or a competition, take a few minutes to "awaken" your senses. Touch the ball, feel the texture of your sports equipment, notice the temperature of the air, the ground beneath your feet, or even the taste of your saliva. This focus on the senses anchors you to the present and allows you to be fully connected with your environment.

Benefits: Facilitates entering a flow state, which is essential for optimal performance.

Active Meditation

During repetitive exercises like running, swimming, or cycling, focus solely on the rhythm of your body and breath. With each step, stroke, or pedal, sync your breathing and keep your attention on the physical sensation of the activity. If your mind gets distracted, gently redirect your attention back to the feeling of movement.

Benefits: Develops prolonged concentration and helps avoid distractions, even in endurance sports.

Mindful Stretching

During your stretching session, bring full attention to each movement. Stretch slowly, noticing how each muscle, ligament, and joint feels. Breathe consciously and accompany each movement with a deep inhalation or exhalation. Observe how your body responds to the stretches without forcing it, always seeking a balance between tension and relaxation.

Benefits: Promotes flexibility and prevents injuries by being more aware of your body's limits and needs.

Focus on Technique

Choose a specific technique or skill in your sport (a stroke, shot, jump, etc.) and practice with full attention to the details. Observe your posture, body alignment, applied strength, and movement rhythm. Perform the exercise slowly at first and increase the speed as you perfect the technique, always maintaining attention on each step.

Benefits: Improves technical execution and increases precision by integrating mindfulness into every detail of the movement.

Thoughts and Emotions Journal

After finishing your training or competition, sit quietly and spend a few minutes reflecting. Observe the thoughts and emotions that arise: was there frustration, nervousness, joy? Write down your observations in a sports journal without judging yourself, just recognizing what you experienced. This exercise fosters self-awareness and allows you to identify patterns that may affect your performance.

Benefits: Facilitates emotional and mental self-knowledge, helping to better manage challenges in sports.

Mindful Walking

Before or after your training session, take a short walk focused on mindfulness. While walking, feel each step from heel to toe, notice the balance of your body, posture, and breathing. Observe the sounds around you and the contact of your feet with the ground. If your mind wanders, gently return to the sensation of walking.

Benefits: Relaxes the mind and helps regain calm before or after intense physical effort.

Heart Rate Awareness

During a break in training, pause for a moment and place your hand on your chest or neck to feel your heart rate. Bring your full attention to your heartbeat and sync your breathing with it. You can practice conscious breathing while observing how your heart rate stabilizes.

Benefits: Improves emotional regulation and helps reduce tension by tuning into your body.

Detachment from Results

Instead of focusing solely on winning or achieving a specific result, practice conscious detachment. Before a competition, mentally repeat affirmations like “I focus on the process, not the outcome.” This exercise allows you to release the pressure of results and enjoy optimal performance without added stress.

Benefits: Reduces anxiety and improves performance by allowing you to be more relaxed and focused on the present.

Attention Challenges

During training, choose a specific aspect to focus on, such as breathing, posture, or technique, and try to maintain full attention on it for a set period of time. When you feel distracted, acknowledge the thought and gently return to your point of focus. As you progress, you can increase the duration of the exercise to develop greater mental endurance.

Benefits: Increases the ability to concentrate, especially in high-pressure situations.

Guided Meditation for Recovery

After an intense session, find a quiet space and do a guided meditation focused on muscle and mental recovery. Close your eyes, relax your body, and follow the instructions of a meditation that guides relaxation of each muscle, visualizing how they recover and recharge with energy. You can use recordings or simply guide yourself with your breath and visualizations.

Benefits: Speeds up muscle recovery and reduces post-exercise stress.

Mindful Sports Journal

Spend a few minutes at the end of the day or after training to write in a journal about your mindfulness experiences during sports practice. Record what worked well, the challenges you encountered, and how it impacted your performance. This habit will allow you to identify patterns, improve your focus, and stay motivated to keep practicing.

Benefits: Reinforces learning and allows you to adjust mindfulness techniques based on your sports needs.

The first version of the handbook was meant to give an introduction to different topics for the 21 participants that attended the Training Course in Pelhrimov, Czech Republic.

The final version has have 45 activities regarding indoor/outdoor non-formal education and mindfulness activities.

The publication constitutes one of the deliverables of the “**EmpowerYouth SportsEd**” project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

This project is funded with the support of the European Commission. The information and views set out in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Commission. Neither the European Union institutions nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the creation of this handbook.



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