

# APPOINTING TEAM CAPTAINS

When athletes are given the opportunity to be team captains, they learn valuable life skills like leadership, how to build connections, and how to support others. Team captains can help guide other athletes through both successes and challenges and help reinforce a positive sports culture. Whether coaches choose to have full-season team captains or switch them every week, the following tips can help them make the most of a team captain program.

## ✓ DETERMINE CRITERIA

- Be specific with athletes about the criteria you will use to determine team captains. When they know what you are looking for, they can better understand the decisions you make and what they need to do to fit the role.
- Instead of appointing the most skilled players as captains, look for athletes who are putting in the most effort, who regularly encourage and support their teammates, and who model the responses and behaviors to challenging situations that you want to see.
- Give athletes input in the selection process. Have them vote whether they want season-long captains or weekly captains. Ask athletes to privately nominate a teammate they think would be a great fit.

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## ✓ CLEARLY COMMUNICATE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Captains should contribute to the positive team culture that coaches want to establish. They should understand what you expect of the team and help hold others accountable.
- Captains can represent players' points of view on game strategy, practice plans, or team codes. Encourage captains to engage in conversations with other players to get a feel for their suggestions or concerns and bring them to the coach.
- Captains can also lead in a variety of routine ways, such as:
  - Leading stretching and warm-up/cool-down sessions
  - Communicating with referees on behalf of other athletes
  - Organizing off-field team building activities
  - Finding ways to create a sense of belonging for all teammates - especially those who are less integrated into the team
  - Helping settle disagreements among teammates
  - Assigning tasks to other team members - such as carrying equipment or preparing the practice fields, making sure to rotate these responsibilities and take their turn to lead by example.