



# PLANNING A SEASON

**Intentional Program Design** is an important element of creating a supportive team environment where all players feel engaged, welcomed, and safe. Planning out a season in advance can help your team accomplish sport focused and social emotional focused goals. While things may change over the course of a season and it is important to stay flexible, a basic layout can help keep you on track. Here are some tips to plan your season.

---

## Fitness Development

Your players will start the season at varying fitness levels. Many may not have had much opportunity to be physically active. Assess fitness levels at the beginning of the season. Consider running the Pacer (Beep) Test to get a baseline fitness reading for each player. Then, at the end of the season, test the players again to see their improvement. No matter where they start the season, all players should improve their fitness by the end of a season.

## Skills Development

**Sports Skills** - Think of your sport's fundamental skills (e.g. soccer has dribbling, passing, receiving, and shooting.) Plan when you will introduce each of these skills over the season. Return to these skills over and over during the season so players can work on their mastery. Players develop at different rates, so remember to support each player around individual needs.

**Social Emotional Skills** - Be intentional about integrating youth development elements into your program, such as empathy, safety, team building, youth engagement, persistence, optimism, and self-regulation, to name a few.

## Connection

Creating a welcoming, supportive team atmosphere takes time. Start the season with 'get to know you' activities that build friendships and trust between players. As the season progresses, encourage your players to support each other and problem solve together. Don't forget that your connection with players is important as well - how will you build relationships with them?

## Game Day!

If your team doesn't participate in a league which plays games on a regular basis, incorporate a game day at the end of the season. This gives players a chance to show off the skills they have developed over the season. Make it a true community event by inviting parents and families!

## Recognition and Celebration

After a great season coaching your team, celebrate your experience - you deserve it! Hold a team party and hand out awards that recognize the efforts and fun contributions of players; host a family potluck where the team and their families celebrate the season; write a short note to each player about their contribution to the team; or give each player a participation certificate. Use one of these strategies or create your own!

