

Tips for Starting Practice With an Opening Circle

Beginning practice with an opening circle gives a coach the opportunity to address the team, set the tone, and start practice on a positive note.

When starting practice with an opening circle, coaches can:

- Ensure all athletes are equally in the circle and no one has their back to anyone else
- Keep communication clear and concise and answer any questions that athletes may have
- Check-in with players to see how they are feeling as they arrive to practice
 - Coaches can use a ‘thumb-check’ - thumbs up for a good day, middle for an ok day so far, and thumbs down for a bad day. Let athletes know that any of the three are ok and that you are available to connect if they need after practice.
- Appreciate athletes for showing up to practice
- Encourage athletes to be mindful of and take care of each other
- Review what will be worked on and why
- Give athletes opportunity for input
 - Ex: “We’re working on passing the ball today. Does anyone have a particular type of pass they want to work on - bounce pass, chest pass, overhead pass?”
- Develop and review team agreements
 - Ex: “Our team agreements are 1. Try our best, 2. Respect each other, 3. Have fun. Which should we focus on today?”
- Set the tone - show your excitement and enthusiasm for the upcoming practice

By following these tips, coaches can make sure the opening circle helps athletes feel:

- Safe, welcomed, and valued
- Confident in what is being asked of them and why
- Set up for success
- Included in a supportive team environment
- Excited and engaged in practice

