

Creating a respectful culture in community sport



Get to know your players as individuals. Ask about cultural and family backgrounds, interests outside sport, and anything they would like you to be aware of as their coach. This can be done through an online form or one-on-one conversations.



Learn and use every player's correct name and pronunciation. Check in with players when you are unsure, and encourage the whole team to model this respect.



Set clear expectations around respect and behaviour. Discuss these with players, families, and volunteers. Co-create team norms together, behaviours you want to promote as a team and what behaviours are unacceptable. Support players to reflect on racism in sport and agree as a team that it will not be tolerated.



Create opportunities for players to share information about themselves with team mates. Use warm-up spotlights, icebreaker activities, or rotating pair discussions during training so players learn more about each other and build connections.



Rotate groups during training. Mix players regularly in drills and activities so they interact with a variety of teammates rather than only those they already know.



Learn about your players' cultural backgrounds. Once you have more information, take time to research relevant cultural practices. Use this knowledge respectfully in conversations, it helps players feel recognised and valued.



Be attentive to social dynamics. Notice if some players seem isolated or are participating less in side conversations. Encourage players that are looked up to in the team or captains to intentionally include quieter or less-connected teammates.



Acknowledge important cultural and religious celebrations. Recognise events that matter to your players, and invite them (if they are comfortable) to share their significance. This helps others learn about practices different from their own.



Be aware of cultural or religious practices that may affect participation. Work with players to identify ways you and the team can support them. For example, players who are fasting during Ramadan may need adjustments to training intensity or game time. Let players guide what support they need.



Plan inclusive social events. Ensure food options cater to diverse dietary needs and that alcohol-free choices are available so all players feel welcome.



Consider language diversity in your communication. If English is not the first language for some players, provide clear, simple instructions and use visual supports such as demonstrations, diagrams, or videos when explaining drills.



Offer translated information where possible. Use tools like Google Translate to provide basic information in the languages most commonly spoken by players and their families.



Assign a 'buddy' to new players. A peer can help a newcomer navigate team expectations, provide guidance, and support their inclusion in conversations and team activities.



Seek regular feedback. Ask players and their families about their experiences and whether there is anything that would help them feel better supported and included.



Reflect on your own biases and consider how they might influence your actions as a coach. For example, do you give more time and attention to particular players? Do you give more game time to particular players? What factors influence team selection? Do you make assumptions about the skills and abilities of a player based on their cultural or racial background? Do you make judgements about a player's attitude or commitment based on their cultural or racial background?



Be proactive about cultural or religious requirements that may affect participation. For example, check whether uniform policies accommodate modest clothing or items such as hijabs. Address potential issues with the club or league early so individual players are not left to resolve them.

Community sport enables diverse cultures to come together and pursue a shared love of sport. Inclusive and welcoming experiences can make sporting clubs important settings for community cohesion, social connection and feelings of belonging.

Coaches play an important role in creating environments that welcome and celebrate diverse cultures. These are some actions you can take to create a respectful culture with your players and athletes and embraces diverse cultures and backgrounds.