



# TEAM BUILDING

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Team building activities are a great way to help foster a strong team culture. These activities can range from team building games that require physical and mental challenges to more creative activities such as improvisation exercises, painting, and story writing. Team building activities should be designed to bring out the best in each team member, emphasize collaboration, and encourage problem-solving. By using team building activities as a way to break down barriers and build trust, teams can become more effective and efficient in their tasks.



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## Understanding The 5 Stages of Team Development

Effective teamwork is crucial in any group endeavor, and this is especially true in sports. In youth soccer, coaches play a critical role in nurturing and developing their players' skills, but they also need to focus on building a cohesive team. To achieve this, coaches can benefit from understanding the five stages of team development, a framework originally proposed by psychologist Bruce Tuckman in 1965. The five stages are forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.



**Forming** is the initial stage when team members get to know each other and establish relationships.



**Storming** is the stage where conflicts and tensions arise as team members assert their individual personalities and opinions.



**Norming** is the stage where the team resolves conflicts, establishes norms, and develops a sense of unity.



**Performing** is the stage where the team is highly functional, and everyone is working together to achieve their goals.



**Adjourning** is the stage where the team disbands after their objectives have been accomplished.

By understanding these stages, you can better manage your teams and promote a positive team dynamic. Anticipate the challenges your team may face during each stage and develop strategies to overcome them. For example, during the storming stage, coaches can help their players work through conflicts by facilitating communication and encouraging compromise. During the norming stage, coaches can promote a sense of unity by reinforcing shared goals and encouraging positive team behaviors. Ultimately, by understanding the five stages of team development, youth soccer coaches can create a supportive environment that fosters team cohesion, which is essential for success on the field.



## Creating Experiences

The following is a list of examples of experiences outside of soccer that will help improve the chances of shared jokes and stories. When doing these, think about what the team needs and how you can manipulate the experience to get a certain outcome. An example would be to choose something very challenging to create the sense of "it was hard, and we got through it together". In other occasions, you may want to reduce phone use to encourage communication.

1. Early arrival to practice allowing socializing.
2. Routine of creating a circle to stretch at the end of practice.
3. Away Tournaments
4. Game Night
5. Movie Night
6. Escape Rooms
7. Hikes
8. Scavenger Hunt
9. Other Sports – Mini Golf, Volleyball, Basketball, etc
10. Group exercise class
11. Bake off
12. Bowling
13. Trivia Night

*Culture is the behavior of an individual that is in accordance with the values of the group. Establishing a clear set of values and expectations for the group hold everyone accountable to them. It is important to remember that, as a coach, you can guide the group a certain way, but it is the players who ultimately decide what the group values.*



# Initial Introductions

## Choices

**Explanation:** Set up two opposing areas on the field. You will then give the players two contrasting choices i.e. “Do you prefer cats or dogs”. Players must choose a side. Allow players to “mingle” with the players that chose the same thing. Questions will depend on age and gender.

## Introduce Your Teammate

**Explanation:** You will pair up players that may not know each other. They will have a few minutes to talk and learn about each other. During the session you will ask players to introduce their partner. Encourage them to look for things they have in common.

## Two Truths and a Lie

**Explanation:** Have each player say three statements about themselves. Two of the statements should be true, and one should be a lie. The other players must guess which one is the lie.

## Who We Are

**Explanation:** Players will need to have something to write notes. Divide group into several groups and ask them to come up with answers to the following questions:

1. All successful teams respect and support each other. What are actions that players and coaches must do to show respect and support for each other? Examples below:
  - a. Communication!
    - i. Players communicating with coach (early!) if they will not be attending so that coach can plan practice accordingly.
    - ii. Coaches communicating with players without judgment or emotion.
    - iii. Listening while somebody is speaking (player or coach) without side conversations.
2. Being part of a team means you make a commitment. If you are not there at practice or games, it will affect the team. What are reasons for absence from games and training and potential consequences?
  - a. This will depend on age and level and it’s a hard conversation because not everyone is on the same page. It will minimize problems in the future if you are letting the players dictate what is important to them and establishing guidelines.



# Developing Communication Skills

## Heads Up

**Explanation:** Download the game “heads up” on your phone. A player will have the phone in front of them and try to describe what is written on the screen. The rest of the team will try to guess what it is.

## Line Up!

**Explanation:** Ask the team to line up in a certain way. To make it more difficult you can add the rule that no verbal communication is allowed.

- Line up tallest to shortest
- Line up in birthday month order
- Line up in order of shoe sizes

## Simons Says

**Explanation:** One person is Simon, and the other players follow Simon’s instructions. Standing in front of the group Simon tells the players what they must do.

The players must obey all commands that begin with the words “Simon says”. If Simon says, “Simon says touch your nose” then all players must touch their nose.

However, if Simon says, “jump” without saying “Simon says” first the players must not jump. If they do jump, that player is out until the next game.

## Wink Murder

**Explanation:** Choose one or more murderers (players will close their eyes and whoever gets tapped on the shoulder is a murderer). Players will then walk around and shake hands while making eye contact. Murderers can choose to “kill” with a wink or not at every handshake. If you have been killed, you will shake hands with two more players before “dramatically” dying. Any living player can accuse another player of being a murdered, but they must be supported by another player before making the accusation. If they are right both players win the game. If they are wrong, they will be out of the game.



## Obstacle Course

**Explanation:** In partners players will stand behind a line. In front of them will be cones scattered all over. At the end of the scattered cones is a ball on top of a cone. One player will be blindfolded (a pinnie or hoodie reversed does the trick), the other player will give instructions to the blindfolded player making sure they do not step on a cone on their way to grab the ball and come back. If the blindfolded player steps on a cone, they must go back to the starting point.

## Tallest Building

**Explanation:** Divide the group into smaller groups. Provide them with a certain number of spaghetti and marshmallows. The teams will have to build a tower, the tallest tower after 10 minutes wins.

# Creating Safety

## My Hero

**Explanation:** Players are asked to choose somebody as their hero. This can be a family member, athlete, celebrity, or historical figure. They will then share with the group why this person is a hero. The following questions can aid you to guide the player in their explanation:

- What does this person do (actions) that makes you admire them?
- How do you/ or will you try to adapt these actions to your daily life?

## My Team Lifts Me When I Am Down

**Explanation:** You will need to buy paper bags in advance and write every player's name on one. Bring piece of paper and pens. Players will take turns writing something they admire or a good quality of every teammate and place it in the paper bag with their name on it.

Option 2: Use paper plates and strings so that the paper plates hang on every player's back. The players will go around and write on each paper plate. Once everyone is done players will look at their own paper plate.