Teaching this lesson? Here are some tips:

Tight on time? Stick with the 3 Key Takeaways and The Basics. These will help your athletes understand how to become effective leaders.

Have more time? Share the TrueSport Talk and discuss how an Olympic athlete can relate to this lesson.

Extra time? Continue on through to Tips & Applications for more valuable information to share with your group.

Looking for more? Explore the Downloads & Additional Resources, which offer additional conversation starters and fun physical activities to support each lesson.
What is leadership?
Leadership is the act of organizing and energizing a group of people in order to achieve a common goal. A couple of points about what it takes to be a good leader:

- Just because somebody is an effective leader doesn’t necessarily mean they are a good one. Case in point: dictators.

- There is an ongoing debate as to whether good leaders are born or made. According to research, leadership is approximately one-third genetic and two-thirds learned. In other words, you can learn to be a good leader even if it doesn’t come naturally to you.

Although many qualities form an effective leader, there is always one common theme: their choices, behavior, and perspective make everybody around them better.
Former Team USA volleyball player, Candace Vering, learned the importance of leading by example with confidence, courage, and compassion firsthand. As a freshman in high school, she was put onto the varsity volleyball team and became one of the starting players. While on the varsity team, she got the opportunity to watch the best leaders on the team hold themselves accountable for their work ethic and discipline, showing her how to respond when she got anxious or nervous before a game. She learned to channel their leadership and let her instincts take over on the court.

Candace discovered that great leaders not only hold themselves highly accountable but are also encouraging and let others shine in order to achieve a common goal. Following the guidance of the leaders around her, Candace developed a goal of becoming a great teammate, leader, and athlete. She knew her decisions could affect others around her, so she worked hard to make sure she was focused on solutions instead of problems, win or lose. By staying humble and bringing a positive energy to the court, Candace was able to fulfill her goal of becoming a great leader, even as a freshman.

AMBASSADOR STORY QUESTIONS

1. What was the main point you took away from the ambassadors story?

2. Do you agree or disagree that leader’s actions speak louder than words?

3. What are some characteristics of a good leader?

4. Are there different styles of leadership? Explain.

5. How can you practice being a leader on your team?
The Three Styles Of Leadership

Discuss with your athletes the pros and cons of these different types of leadership and the qualities they think make up a good leader.

AUTHORITARIAN
A commanding style of leadership that is based around the power of a position. This type of leader independently makes decisions for the team without their input. Even though authoritarian leaders may be effective in certain situations, people generally dislike being around them.

This style is useful when: Decisions need to be made quickly, or when the situation ahead will be intense.

Example: The last play of the game or when setting the starting line-up.

DEMOCRATIC
A participation-based style of leadership that encourages equality between the leader and the followers. Through a group discussion, the leader asks for the opinions and feedback of others and makes decisions accordingly. They also encourage others to take initiative.

This style is useful when: Time isn’t limited and everybody’s opinion on an issue can be heard and taken into account.

Example: What color a new team’s jerseys should be, or whether or not to enter a tournament over a holiday weekend.

LAISSEZ-FAIRE
A hands-off style of leadership that allows for complete freedom and self-rule. Simply put, followers do their own thing with little control from the leader. There is little analysis or feedback.

This style is useful when: Structure isn’t important and individual needs are the focus.

Example: An end-of-practice ‘fun’ game like HORSE in basketball, or during a pre-practice warm-up when you work on your weaknesses.

Characteristics Of A Good Leader

You don’t have to be a coach or a team captain to exhibit strong leadership skills. Here are some traits of a good leader:

- Leads by example
- Is respectful of others
- Is accountable for their own actions
- Is committed to achieving the team’s goals
- Has a strong sense of vision
- Helps create an environment where learning is the focus
- Is assertive, not aggressive
- Guides instead of rules
- Fosters independence in their teammates
- Shares responsibility when things go wrong
- Instills confidence, enthusiasm, and a positive energy in those around them
- Has a sense of humor, especially when things aren’t going their way
The C.A.R.E. Formula

To be a regular and reliable leader for your team, use the C.A.R.E. Formula. This is an easy way to remember the most important leadership traits.

**EXAMPLES:**

**C:** Compliment. Tell your teammates what they’re doing well; thank the coach for their time and effort.

**A:** Act. You may personally want to work on your offensive soccer skills, but your team’s defense is weak. If a whole practice is dedicated to defense, you should still engage fully and try your hardest.

**R:** Respect. Teams are naturally made of players of differing abilities. Everybody—not just the top players—bring something important and necessary to the team; be sure to acknowledge that.

**E:** Extend. Volunteer to pick up the cones after practice; help a teammate with her throw to home plate before practice.

The CARE Formula was adapted from Craig Hillier’s book, Playing Beyond the Scoreboard.
Additional Resources

Be sure to check out these additional resources available for download:

Chalk Talk (PDF)
15-minute activity: Identify with your athletes real-life examples of both positive and negative leadership in this quick group discussion.

Leadership: Positive + Effective Leadership (PDF)
Handout: Have your athletes think about and identify with the characteristics of a positive leader on this short worksheet.

TrueSport Certificate (PDF)
Lesson Certificate: Celebrate your group’s completion of the TrueSport Leadership lesson with this special certificate.
In order to reinforce the lesson and put TrueSport into action, do the following Chalk Talk with your athletes.

Instructions

Ask your group for examples and stories of effective and positive leadership. These examples could be from a coach, teacher, parent, teammate, or someone else (they can keep the stories anonymous if necessary). After each story, ask, “What was it that made that person such an effective leader?” Make a list of the positive leadership characteristics on a white board.

Next, ask for stories or examples of negative leadership. Again, these could be from any aspect of their lives and this time they should remain anonymous. After each story, ask, “What was it that made that such a negative experience?” Make a list of negative leadership characteristics next to the positive ones.

Suggested Questions:

1. What characteristics seem most prevalent in positive leadership?

2. What characteristics seem most prevalent in negative leadership?

3. Can negative leaders be effective? Do you want to follow them?

4. What qualities do you want to show when you’re playing your sport and interacting with your team?

5. How do different styles of leadership affect your experience on a team?
If you have time, work on this handout together. If you need to, send it home and have your athletes bring it back so you can have a group discussion about it.

Instructions

Have your athletes think about characteristics of positive and effective leaders, then have them write these traits outside the blue circle on their page. Some of these we have discussed in this lesson, and others they may be able to think up on their own. Then, have them write the leadership qualities they identify with most inside the blue circle.

Do the same for yourself on this page, then go over the follow-up questions below with your group.

Follow-up questions:

1. What did you learn about yourself from this activity?
2. What traits do you want to work on in order to become a positive and effective leader?
Think about all the characteristics that positive and effective leaders have. We’ve discussed some in this lesson, and others you may already know. Write all the traits you can think of outside the blue circle. Next, consider yourself as a potential leader and write all the qualities that you can think of that describe you inside the blue circle.
Congratulations! You have demonstrated that you know how to be a TrueSport Champion!

TrueSport, powered by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), is a movement that seeks to ensure a positive youth sport experience for athletes like you. In learning how to practice leadership, you have gained skills to be a leader both on and off the field.