**Lesson Companion**

**Tight on time?** Stick with the 3 Key Takeaways and The Basics. These will help your athletes understand why taking shortcuts just cheats themselves.

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

**Extra time?** Continue through to Tips & Applications for more valuable information about decision making, PEDs, supplements, and energy drinks that you can share with your team.

**Looking for more?** Explore the Downloads & Additional Resources, which offer additional conversation starters and fun activities to our lesson.
**Shortcut:** A route that is shorter or more direct than the one usually taken, or a way of saving time and effort in doing something.

Every day in life we face temptations of possible shortcuts and opportunities to get somewhere with less effort.

Efficiency will certainly make the journey easier, but make no mistake—anything worthwhile takes diligence and hard work. If you want to be a writer you must write. If you want to be a successful athlete, you must train.

Sometimes athletes may take shortcuts like skipping a tough practice, taking medications that are not prescribed to them, or they may not give 100% in a workout. They may even turn to performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) to try and add muscle quicker or recover faster.

Typically, athletes who live ethically with solid values will make the appropriate decision not to take shortcuts and recognize that they do not have to ‘cheat you’ to beat you.'
In sports, there are ample opportunities to take shortcuts when no one is watching. Team USA skeleton athlete, Veronica Day, knows shortcuts are not the way to success.

In the sport of skeleton, athletes are permitted only a finite number of runs they can take on the ice per day, so Veronica has learned to take full advantage of the few runs she has.

In addition to taking advantage of the opportunities she is provided for on-ice training, she also recognizes the importance of doing the more mundane tasks like sled maintenance, sanding runners, visualization exercises, and general studying.

It would be easy for her to skip these steps, but without them, she knows she can’t maximize her time on the ice, nor expect to progress.

She knows she cannot cheat herself by taking shortcuts, because in the end she would lose. She doesn’t have time to do it over, so she has to do it right the first time. TrueSport athletes find their unlimited potential through hard work, respect, integrity, and without shortcuts that often rob others of the authentic victory they deserve.

**AMBASSADOR STORY QUESTIONS**

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

2. Can you think of other shortcuts that athletes might take in your particular sport?

3. How can you practice not taking shortcuts in your sport and in life?

4. “Hard work beats talent when talent doesn’t work hard.” What does this quote mean to you?
Quick Tools for Decision Making

Teenagers are very oriented towards ‘the now’ and tend to be more reactionary than judicious when it comes to decision-making. Scientists have discovered that a human brain reaches maximum size during the teenage years (ages 12-14), yet development of the brain continues for approximately ten more years.

Since an adolescent’s brain is “under construction,” it’s worth noting that their choices and behaviors during this critical time can “fine tune” the brain. These three decision-making exercises can help shape their minds and future decisions:

**Spotlight Test:** Before making a decision, imagine a beam of light shining on you that allows the important people in your life to observe your actions. Would you still make the same choices?

**Role Model Test:** A role model is someone you know and trust to do the right thing, like a parent, sibling, teacher, coach, or friend. Before you make a decision, ask yourself what your role model would do in the same situation. Would you still make the same choice?

**Pause First:** When faced with a tough decision, it’s important to pause and think about the consequences before reacting to the situation. Often the mere presence of time offers an opportunity to ponder all possibilities, evaluate the emotional influence, consider your reputation, and make a wise choice.

The Red Flags of Dietary Supplements

Although millions of Americans use vitamins, minerals, and other dietary supplements, they may not know that supplements are NOT reviewed, approved, or tested by the Food and Drug Administration before being sold.

Just because a product claims to be natural does not make it safe to use. Some supplement companies make claims about their products that are unproven or false, and many products may contain ingredients that are not listed on the label. To be safe, always check a supplement’s label for additional info and beware of these common ‘red flags’:

- **Products that advertise to be anabolic (muscle building).** These might list ingredients that end in -ol, -idiol, or -stene, or have numbers in their name
- **Products that promise to quickly provide large amounts of energy**
- **Products that list proprietary blends, as the ingredients and/or quantities may be unclear or left off altogether**
- **Claims to treat diseases (cancer, arthritis) or prevent the common cold and enhance the immune system**
- **Claims to be safe simply because they have been used for thousands of years or are considered to be ‘traditional medicines’**
Side Effects of Energy Drinks

Energy drinks might seem like a simple way to give the body a boost of energy. However, these ‘boosts’ are far from natural or healthy and can do significant damage to the body.

They often have a high concentration of stimulants as well as novel ingredients that have not been proven safe, are possibly prohibited in competitions where drug testing takes place, and that could possibly result in a positive anti-doping test.

They also come with several nasty side effects, including:

- Anxiety
- Nervousness
- Tremors
- Insomnia
- Nausea
- Seizures
- Aggressiveness
- Increased risk of stroke, heart attack, cardiac arrhythmia, and sudden death

Additional Resources

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

Chalk Talk (PDF)
15-minute activity: Understand your athletes’ attitudes about taking shortcuts by leading a discussion with these conversation starters.

Review Handout (PDF)
10-minute quiz: Test your athletes’ knowledge of decision making, shortcuts, energy drinks, and PEDs. (answers included)

TrueSport Certificate (PDF)
Handout: Celebrate your groups’ completion of the Shortcuts lesson with this special certificate.
To reinforce the lesson and put TrueSport into action, lead your athletes in the following Chalk Talk.

Instructions

Ask your athletes to think of a time they were confronted with a decision related to taking a shortcut (such as skipping pushups at practice or cheating on homework). If they are comfortable doing so, ask for volunteers to share the shortcuts they took and how it shortchanged them in the long run. Then, lead a discussion with the following questions:

1. Do you agree with this quote: “Genius is 1% talent and 99% effort?” (Albert Einstein)

2. Are all shortcuts necessarily harmful? What are some examples of definite bad ones, or even definite good ones that people take?

3. How does it or would it make you feel if you won a game by taking an unfair shortcut? If you lost?

4. How do you feel when you see a teammate take a shortcut at practice?

5. Do you think taking shortcuts has an impact on your long-term potential?
To reinforce the lesson and put TrueSport into action, lead your athletes in the following Chalk Talk.

Instructions

Ask your athletes to think of a time they were confronted with an ethical decision related to taking a shortcut (e.g., skipping out on reps while working out, looking up too many homework answers online, taking a supplement before practice to gain more energy). If they are comfortable doing so, ask for volunteers to share the shortcuts they took and how it shortchanged them in the long run. Then lead a discussion with the following questions:

1. What are some other examples of shortcuts (unethical or otherwise) that an athlete could take in sports?
2. Are all shortcuts necessarily harmful? What are some examples of definite bad ones, or even definite good ones to take?
3. How does it or might make you feel when you achieve success by taking an unfair shortcut?
4. How do you feel when you see a teammate take a shortcut at practice?
5. Is it possible to take shortcuts in life that are ethically sound?
Review Handout
Middle & High School

Review The Basics and the Tips & Applications for this lesson with your athletes, then read the following questions as an oral quiz OR print the second page of this document and let your athletes fill out on their own, then discuss as a group.

Answer Key

1. The first step of making good decisions is to: **c) Identify the problem**

2. A supplement’s nutritional label will always tell you exactly what is inside the product: **False**

3. Most energy drinks have high amounts of: **b) Caffeine and sugar**

4. If a vitamin, mineral, or other dietary supplement is being sold in a pharmacy, it has been tested and approved by the Food and Drug Administration: **False**

5. When a famous athlete endorses a product, that doesn’t mean they use it or that it’s safe to use: **True**

6. A supplement that claims this should be avoided: **d) All of the above**

7. Which of the following ingredients on a nutrition label is a sign that the product might not be safe: **a) Proprietary blend**

8. Which is NOT a possible result of taking steroids: **c) Greater cardiovascular endurance**

9. All natural ingredients are safe for consumption: **False**

10. Finish this sentence: If you don’t have time to do it over...: **b) Do it right the first time**
Read the following questions about decision making, shortcuts, energy drinks, and PEDs, then circle your best guess.

**Question 1**

The first step of making good decisions is to:

- a) List of the consequences of each choice
- b) Make a decision and take action
- c) Identify the problem
- d) List the possible solutions

**Question 2**

A supplement’s nutritional label will always tell you exactly what is inside the product

True
False

**Question 3**

Most energy drinks have high amounts of:

- a) Fiber and vitamin C
- b) Caffeine and sugar
- c) Fat and protein
- d) Cholesterol and creatine

**Question 4**

If a vitamin, mineral, or other dietary supplement is being sold in a pharmacy, it has been tested and approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

True
False

**Question 5**

When a famous athlete endorses a product, that doesn’t mean they use it or that it’s safe to use.

True
False
Question 6

A supplement that claims this should be avoided:

a) Can treat or prevent serious diseases  
b) Is safe due to being made from all-natural ingredients  
c) Will give you endless amounts of energy  
d) All of the above

Question 7

Which of the following ingredients on a nutrition label is a sign that the product might not be safe:

a) Proprietary blend  
b) Cellulose  
c) Xanthan gum  
d) Water

Question 8

Which is NOT a possible result of taking steroids:

a) Increased aggression (roid rage)  
b) Deeper voice in girls  
c) Greater cardiovascular endurance  
d) Breast growth in boys

Question 9

All natural ingredients are safe for consumption.

True  
False

Question 10

Finish this sentence: If you don’t have time to do it over....

a) Take a shortcut  
b) Do it right the first-time  
c) Don’t even bother  
d) See if someone else will do it for you
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 **avoid taking shortcuts**, you have gained skills to be a leader both on and off the field.