



Leadership

Lesson Companion

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.

Leadership



If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.
— John Quincy Adams



3 Key Takeaways

— 1 —

A TrueSport leader leads by example with confidence, courage, and compassion



— 2 —

Good leaders focus on solutions, not on problems



— 3 —

In order to achieve a common team goal, good leaders let others shine



The Basics

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.



Swimming Olympic gold-medalist Peter Vanderkaay (PVK) knows as well as anyone how a good leader should lead by example with confidence, courage, and compassion. Instead of focusing on problems, leaders like PVK focus on solutions, and also let others shine in order to achieve a common goal for the team.

You may have heard the phrase “talk is cheap” before, and throughout Peter’s career he’s met many athletes who “talk the talk” but don’t “walk the walk.” Put another way, there are athletes who boast and brag about their accomplishments, hoping they’ll be looked at as leaders, and then there are others whose actions in and around competition speak for themselves. Peter’s coach always reminded him that actions speak louder than words, causing Peter to create a self-described “culture of excellence” around his practicing, competing, and perspective on the sport.

Peter credits his ability to lead by example as the reason he was selected as co-captain of Team USA’s swim team at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. The team set a collective goal to earn over 30 Olympic medals; surpassing this mark would set a new Olympic record. As a leader of that team, Peter had to be completely invested in everyone’s individual success in order to reach the team goal. The team worked together under Peter’s leadership and brought home a record-breaking 31 medals, which represented 30% of Team USA’s total medal count across all sports at the London Games.

TrueSport Talk Questions

1. *What was the main point you took away from the lesson?*
2. *Do you agree or disagree with Peter and his coach about actions speaking louder than words?*
3. *How can you practice being a better leader in your sport?*

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*.*

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.

Activities (PDF)

15 & 20-minute activities: Help your athletes understand why good leaders need to have autonomy, yet also be great teammates with these hands-on activities.

The C.A.R.E. Formula For Leadership (PDF)

Handout: Easily remember the most important traits for a strong leader to have with this simple reference sheet.

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.