

9 Steps To An Effective Parent Orientation Meeting



- ★ 1. Introduce The Coaching Staff (5 mins)
- ★ 2. Your Coaching Philosophy (15 mins)
- ★ 3. Coaches Code of Conduct (10 mins)
- ★ 4. Safety and Potential Risks (10 mins)
- ★ 5. Specifics Of Your Program (15 mins)
- ★ 6. Player/Parent Codes of Conduct (15 mins)
- ★ 7. Volunteer Opportunities (10 mins)
- ★ 8. Question and Answer (10 mins)
- ★ 9. Wrap-Up (5 mins)

to share their lives with you and open up the lines of communication.

Remember, your relationship with your team's parents is almost as important as your relationship with your athletes (especially for kids under 15).

Without an open and honest connection, parents can be more likely to heckle you from the sidelines, gossip behind your back or attempt to turn other parents or team members against you.

Win their respect and trust by taking the time to get to know them. This way, they'll be more likely to bring a concern directly to you in a positive way and work with you to find a solution.

The Single Most Important Key To Eliminating Parent Conflict

Before the season starts, you must, must, ***MUST*** have a parent orientation meeting.

This is the single most important thing you can do to avoid parent conflict.

The purpose of the meeting is to establish the roles and responsibilities for all team members, and set out your expectations for everyone's behavior.

This should be a dedicated 1-2 hour meeting which includes the parents, administrators, athletes, and entire coaching staff.



Attendance is mandatory!

If a parent can't make it in person, set up a time to speak with them directly over the phone and do the meeting one on one. An athlete should not be able to participate in your program until the requirements of the parent orientation meeting have been met.

Okay, so what do you discuss during the meeting?

I like to break it up into 9 short sections (see Appendix 1 for a template you can print and use).

Part 1. Introduce The Coaching Staff

Start by introducing yourself and the other coaches. Provide a little background about yourself, your experience in the sport, whether you've coached before, any certifications you've achieved, and why you're coaching.

Have each of the assistant coaches and administrators (if any) do the same.

Part 2. Your Coaching Philosophy

This is the time to discuss the **goals of your program**, and the benefits you expect your athletes to get from participating.

For example:

★ How will you balance:

1. having a winning team
2. helping your athletes have fun
3. developing your athletes physically, socially, and emotionally

★ How will you determine who plays what position, and how much playing time each athlete gets?

- ★ How will you develop positive character traits and values?
- ★ What do you want your athletes to learn in your program?
- ★ What role does academics play in your program?
- ★ Describe your coaching strategies with respect to practice and competition.
- ★ How will you encourage participation from all your athletes?
- ★ How do you adapt your coaching style to athletes of different age and skill level?

And so on.

Part 3. Coaches Code of Conduct

Next, pass out a copy of your coaches code of conduct to each parent. Your entire coaching staff (including you) should sign it.

This document tells players and parents how you will conduct yourself during practices and games, and the moral and ethical standards that you will abide by.

It's a hugely important step towards gaining the trust and respect of your team.

You'll find a great template to use in Appendix 2.

Credibility 101

Your Coaches Code of Conduct outlines the behavior guidelines you the coaching staff will be held to. Sign and distribute a copy to every team member.



Part 4. Safety and Potential Risks

Parents need to understand that all sports and physical activities carry some risk.

Give a brief outline of the common injuries that athletes can suffer in your sport, and the steps all team members can take to minimize those risks.

For example:

- ★ Helping to inspect the facilities prior to each practice or competition
- ★ Ensuring all gear and protective equipment is used properly
- ★ Advising the coach if an athlete has any existing condition which puts him or her at risk (ie. serious allergies, previous injuries etc.)
- ★ Your process for recognizing injuries and providing first aid

And so on.

Next, hand out a copy of your informed consent form and have all parents sign it. I've provided a ready-to-use template which you can find in Appendix 3.

Part 5. Specifics Of Your Program

This is where you get into the nitty gritty of how the team will operate. For example:

- ★ When the season starts and finishes
- ★ The times and places you will practice and compete
- ★ When and where the team will travel, and how travel will be organized
- ★ The equipment required to participate, and where it can be purchased
- ★ The fees to participate, and any fundraising plans you have
- ★ Any conditioning or practice programs the athletes should be doing on their own
- ★ Any nutritional recommendations (ie. pre-game meals, snacks, hydration etc.)

Etc. etc.

Part 6. Player and Parent Codes of Conduct

Pass out a Player Code of Conduct form to each athlete, and a Parent Code of Conduct to each parent.

Go through each of the items and answer any questions.

Have them sign it and return it to you during the meeting.

Important: The athlete CANNOT participate in your program until both of these documents are signed and returned.

I've attached some pre-made templates for you in Appendix 4 and 5. Feel free to use them directly, or modify them to meet your needs.

Part 7. Volunteer Opportunities

One of the most effective strategies for getting parents on your side is to have them walk a mile in your shoes.

Some suggested roles that parents can fill:

- ★ Scorekeeping or taking stats
- ★ Running the snack stand
- ★ Organizing fundraising programs
- ★ Running and maintaining a team website (Sportata.com is my personal favorite)
- ★ Game officiating (referee or umpire)
- ★ Team manager
- ★ Equipment manager

Why Recruit Volunteers?

Not only does it give you some valuable administrative support and make your coaching job easier, parents also have a better appreciation for the time and effort you're putting into the team, and will be less likely to criticize you.



★ Travel manager

And so on.

Take down the names and contact information for each parent and follow up with them within a week.

Try to define their role as clearly as possible and let them know you'll be there to support them if and when they need you.

Here's a simple trick for getting more volunteers...

If you have a parent or two who've already agreed to take on a role with the team, ask them to wait until this point in the meeting... and then "spontaneously volunteer" for the job.

This will "break the ice" for the other parents and set an example for them to follow.

The last thing they want is to be seen as "the guy who doesn't help out."

So they think to themselves "Hmm, if Bob ...and Sandra... and Chris are all volunteering, maybe I should too?"

If you do this correctly, you'll have a steady stream of volunteers to fill any role you need.

Not only will this give you some valuable administrative support and make your coaching job easier, they'll also have a better appreciation for the time and effort you're putting into the team, and will be less likely to criticize you!

Part 8. Question and Answer

I prefer to encourage questions throughout the meeting, so that all team members feel included in the process and have the chance to express themselves.

Still, it's a good idea to have a formal Q&A period at the end of the meeting. Open up the floor to the parents and athletes to discuss any questions or concerns they have.



Remember, when you're fielding questions, keep your body language open and neutral.

Sit down and lean forward if you can. Uncross your arms and legs.

Nod your head and maintain eye contact but don't glare.

Don't cut the speaker off, even if you disagree with what he's saying.

Before you respond, show that you've understood the question by taking notes or repeating back what the person is saying (ie. "So you're concerned about the amount of travel involved?").

Part 9. Wrap-Up

End the meeting by providing parents with your contact information and letting them know the best times to get a hold of you.

If they have an issue they'd like to discuss, it's much better to have them contact you over the phone or set up a time and place to meet that's separate from the playing field.

In Appendix 1, you can print out a step by step template for running your own Parent Orientation meeting.

Remember, it doesn't have to be dynamic... or fun... or super-detailed.

You don't need to be a good "public speaker" (trust me - I can barely make a toast at a wedding without stuttering).

Just keep it informal and relaxed.

Bring some healthy refreshments if you can.

Smile a lot -- don't take yourself too seriously.

The important thing is to inform them about your program and listen to their concerns.

Keep the lines of communication open throughout the season, and you'll be amazed at how much better your parent relationships will be.



Appendix 1: Parent Orientation Meeting Agenda

Part 1. Introduce The Coaching Staff (5-10 minutes)

your background | experience in the sport | why you are coaching | certifications achieved

Notes

Part 2. Your Coaching Philosophy (10-15 minutes)

key benefits for your athletes | process for deciding playing time and positions | importance of winning vs fun vs development | role of academics | your coaching strategy | positive values you will teach

Notes

Part 3. Coaches Code of Conduct (10 minutes)

distribute signed copy to each parent | discuss the agreement

Notes



Part 4. Safety and Potential Risks (10 minutes)

common injuries | facilities safety | equipment safety | parents must notify coaching staff of pre-existing conditions | first aid | distribute consent form

Notes

Part 5. Specifics Of Your Program (10-15 minutes)

season start and finish | practice and competition schedule | travel | equipment | fees | fundraising | at-home conditioning | nutritional recommendations

Notes

Part 6. Player and Parent Codes of Conduct (15-20 minutes)

distribute player code and discuss | distribute parent code and discuss | answer questions or concerns

Notes



Part 7. Volunteer Opportunities (10 minutes)

ask for volunteers to fill administrative and team management positions

Notes

Part 8. Question and Answer (10-15 minutes)

Notes

Part 9. Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

provide contact information | best time to call

Notes
