

# **FEMALE BASEBALL DEVELOPMENT MANUAL**

**for DELIVERY of  
GIRLS PROGRAMMING**



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# History

**Baseball** is a [bat-and-ball game](#) played between two opposing teams who take turns [batting](#) and fielding. The game proceeds when a player on the [fielding team](#), called the [pitcher](#), throws a ball which a player on the [batting team](#) tries to hit with a bat. The objective of the offensive team ([batting team](#)) is to hit the ball into the field of play, allowing its players to run the bases, having them advance counter-clockwise around four bases to score what are called "[runs](#)". The objective of the defensive team ([fielding team](#)) is to prevent batters from becoming runners, and to prevent runners' [advance around the bases](#).<sup>[2]</sup> A run is scored when a runner legally advances around the bases in order and touches home plate (the place where the player started as a batter). The team that scores the most runs by the end of the game is the winner.

The first objective of the batting team is to have a player reach first base [safely](#). A player on the batting team who reaches first base without being called "[out](#)" can attempt to advance to subsequent bases as a runner, either immediately or during teammates' turns batting. The fielding team tries to prevent runs by getting batters or runners "out", which forces them out of the field of play. Both the pitcher and fielders have methods of getting the batting team's players out. The opposing teams switch back and forth between batting and fielding; the batting team's turn to bat is over once the fielding team records three outs. One turn batting for each team constitutes an [inning](#). A game is usually composed of nine innings, and the team with the greater number of runs at the end of the game wins. If scores are tied at the end of nine innings, [extra innings](#) are usually played. Baseball has no game clock, although most games end in the ninth inning.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baseball>

**Women's baseball** is played in several countries. The strongest and most organized women's [baseball](#) leagues are in the [United States](#), [Australia](#), [Japan](#), [Taiwan](#), [Cuba](#), [Hong Kong](#), and [Canada](#). Those countries have national governing bodies that support girls' and women's baseball programs. Other countries/regions that currently have organized women's baseball are [France](#), the [Netherlands](#), [India](#), [Korea](#), [Venezuela](#), [Argentina](#), [Puerto Rico](#), [Colombia](#), [Brazil](#), the [Dominican Republic](#), and [Pakistan](#).

Internationally, the [World Baseball Softball Confederation](#) is the world governing body for women's and men's baseball, as well as women's and men's softball. The WBSC was created in 2013.<sup>[2]</sup> ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_baseball#cite\\_note-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_baseball#cite_note-2))

## Important Events and Milestones in Women's Baseball:

**1875** – The first women's baseball game for which fans were charged and women players were paid was played between the Blondes and the Brunettes in [Springfield, Illinois](#), on 11 September.

**1880** – A [Smith College](#) team was disbanded after disapproving mothers complained about the children playing the sport, saying it was not appropriate for women to play.

**1880s** – The [Dolly Vardens](#), an all-female, African-American team from [Chester, Pennsylvania](#), was assembled by barber-turned-sports entrepreneur John Lang in the 1880s<sup>[3]</sup> as a team that played for the entertainment of spectators.<sup>[4]</sup>

<sup>[3]</sup> ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_baseball#cite\\_note-3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_baseball#cite_note-3)) <sup>[4]</sup> ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_baseball#cite\\_note-4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_baseball#cite_note-4))

**1920s** – Philadelphia had factory teams for women, women's leagues, and the Philadelphia Bobbies for non-working women.

**1930s** – The "Bold Years" for women's baseball; women baseball players toured internationally, played junior baseball, and signed minor league contracts.

**1943–54** – The [All-American Girls Professional Baseball League](#) (AAGPBL) was started by [Philip Wrigley](#), owner of the [Chicago Cubs](#) and [Wrigley's Chewing Gum](#). See "*Many Canadians Played in the 'All-American' Women's League*" below.

**1944–54** – The [National Girls Baseball League](#) was founded by [Charles Bidwell](#), owner of the [Chicago Cardinals](#). The league consisted of teams in Chicago and operated for 11 seasons.<sup>[5]</sup> ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_baseball#cite\\_note-5](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_baseball#cite_note-5))

**1946** – [Sophie Kurys](#) set the stolen base record for the AAGPBL with 201 stolen bases in 203 attempts; this record continues to be unequalled in baseball history, as [Rickey Henderson](#) is second in stolen bases with 130 (1982).

**1948** – [Dottie Wiltse](#) pitched for the AAGPBL up until she was four months pregnant.<sup>[6]</sup> ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_baseball#cite\\_note-6](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_baseball#cite_note-6))

**1950** – The Racine Belles and Junior Belles folded due to lack of money.

**1955** – Bill Allington formed two women's teams called Allington's All-Stars which barnstormed the U.S. playing men's town and semi-pro teams, and lasted until 1957.

**1984** – Former Atlanta Braves executive Bob Hope founded the Sun Sox, an all-women's team, and tried to enter them into the Class A Florida State League; however, the league did not award Hope the franchise.

**1988** – American Women's Baseball Association (AWBA) founded in Chicago; first organized women's league since AAGPBL.

**1990s** – American Women's Baseball League (AWBL; also known as American Women's Baseball, AWB) was founded by Jim Glennie in an effort to unite women's baseball teams and leagues around the country and to provide support to them.

**1992** – [\*A League of Their Own\*](#) movie about the [AAGPBL](#) was produced by [Penny Marshall](#).

**1994** – [Bob Hope](#) formed and [Coors Brewing Company](#) sponsored the [Colorado Silver Bullets](#) women's baseball team which played men's college and minor league teams; the team existed for 4 years.

**1994** – Women's National Adult Baseball Association (WNABA) formed; 16 women's teams played in a women's world series in [Phoenix](#) in 1994.

**1995** – WNABA had 100 affiliated women's baseball teams in 16 states in the U.S.

**1997** – [Ladies League Baseball](#) was formed by [San Diego](#) businessperson Mike Ribant.

**1998** – After beginning its second season, the [Ladies League Baseball](#) expanded to 6 teams and went nationwide, but folded shortly after "due to lack of attendance".

**1998** - Canadian-Born AAGPBL (1943-1954) Players inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame.

**2001** – The first Women's World Series (WWS) was played at the SkyDome in Toronto, Ontario, Canada; countries that participated included the United States of America, Australia, Canada, and Japan.

**2004** – The first-ever [Women's Baseball World Cup](#) was played in [Edmonton](#), Alberta, Canada; the event was sanctioned by the International Baseball Association and Federation (IBAF) and was hosted by [Baseball Canada](#). Eight [Women's Baseball World Cup](#) tournaments have been held biennially, most recently held in Florida in August 2018.<sup>[7]</sup>

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_baseball#cite\\_note-PE001-7](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_baseball#cite_note-PE001-7))

Baseball Canada has created a number of memories for not only its own players, but for teams across the world. The organization has consistently been a driving force in women's baseball on the international scene, and the first country to host a World Cup.

"Baseball Canada was one of the big fighters to get an official women's championship started," said Jim Baba, the executive director of Baseball Canada, and the chair of the WBSC tournament commission. "There were all these haphazard events and it wasn't organized at that time and we really pushed it with IBAF, which is the [World Baseball Softball Confederation] now. Baseball Canada really pushed to get it happening and organized, and we even volunteered to have Edmonton host the very first [World Cup]."

(<https://tbt.fangraphs.com/the-present-and-future-of-canadian-womens-baseball/>) by Alexis Brudnicki

**2004** – John Kovach, manager of the South Bend Blue Sox Women's Baseball Club, director of the Great Lakes Women's Baseball League, and AAU Women's Baseball Youth Baseball Chair, worked out a proposal with [Little League Baseball](#) to use the Michiana Girls' Baseball League as a model league to develop girls' Little League baseball programs around the country; Although Little League started a boys' softball program in 2000 because 500 boys were playing in Little League softball leagues around the U.S., the organization has not started a girls' baseball program despite the thousands of girls playing baseball in Little League baseball leagues across the United States.

**2011** – The first ever members clubs are announced for Southern Ontario's Women's Baseball League. Those clubs are located in London, Guelph, St Catharines and Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. This would be the first ever professional league for women, aged 18 and over, in Ontario and would start playing in 2012.<sup>[8]</sup>

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_baseball#cite\\_note-8](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_baseball#cite_note-8))

**2015** – Women's baseball was added to the [2015 Pan American Games](#) (held in Toronto, Ontario).

**2016** – Twelve teams competed in the [7th Women's Baseball World Cup](#), the most in history.

**2019** - Women's baseball was removed from the Pan Ams.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_baseball](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_baseball))



## Many Canadians Played in the 'All-American' Women's League

Made famous by the 1992 movie *A League of Their Own*, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League began as a replacement for the men's game during the Second World War and operated until 1954. It drew heavily on Canadian talent to fill its rosters; indeed, the central character in the movie, played by Geena Davis, is said to be based on Mary "Bonnie" Baker of Regina.

An outstanding athlete, Baker was the first Canadian signed to the league and soon became its face, appearing on the cover of the June 4, 1945, edition of *Life* magazine. Vancouver's Margaret "Marge" and Helen "Kelly" Callaghan were the first sisters to play in the AAGPBL.

Pitcher Helen Fox from Alberta was the league's all-time leader in both wins and games pitched. Three-time all-star Eleanor Callow from Winnipeg had the most home runs and triples in league history and ranked third for career runs batted in. In 1950, Baker was briefly the first female manager in professional sports, until the league's owners changed the rules to exclude women from such roles.

A disproportionately large number of the sixty-four Canadians in the league came from Manitoba and Saskatchewan; but wherever they called home the women jumped at the chance to play the sport they loved, even if they had to go to charm school and wear short skirts while doing so.

As Helen Callaghan told *People* magazine in 1987, "We were supposed to play like men and look like women." The Canadian-born players were inducted as a group into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in 1998, and Baker entered Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in 2018.

<https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/arts-culture-society/play-ball-eh>

## WOMEN'S BASEBALL WORLD CUP

The inaugural Women's Baseball World Cup was held in [Edmonton](#), Canada from July 30 to August 8, [2004](#) after having been chartered by the [International Baseball Federation](#) in [2002](#). Before this tournament the only other international women's baseball tournament was the [Women's Baseball World Series](#), which usually involved only three or four nations, usually [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [Japan](#) and occasionally the [USA](#).

Results:

YEAR	HOST	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	FOURTH
2004	Edmonton	US	Japan	Canada	Australia
2006	Taipei	US	Japan	Canada	Australia
2008	Matsuyama	Japan	Canada	US	Australia
2010	Maracay	Japan	Australia	US	Venezuela
2012	Edmonton	Japan	US	Canada	Australia
2014	Miyazaki	Japan	US	Australia	Canada
2016	Busan	Japan	Canada	Venezuela	Chinese Taipei
2018	Florida	Japan	Chinese Taipei	Canada	US
2021	Tijuana				

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_Baseball\\_World\\_Cup](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_Baseball_World_Cup)



# INTRODUCTION

The information provided at the beginning of this manual proves that women's baseball is a part of our history. This manual is a portal to assist you in taking charge of our future and directing the outcome of girls/women's baseball in Alberta and ultimately, Canada.

The purpose of this Manual is to provide support and guidance for Associations to **recruit** and **retain** girls in baseball.

## Why Should Girls Play Baseball?

First, parents, coaches and administrators must understand and believe that sport is very important for the personal growth and empowerment of girls. There is a multitude of research demonstrating the power of sport in girls' lives. Creating equitable opportunities has shown benefits beyond the playing field.

Girls in sport have higher self-confidence, do better academically, develop greater teamwork, leadership, coping and goal setting skills and overall are healthier with better careers. By committing to equality and fairness, baseball can offer girls these life-changing benefits and help more female players reach their full potential, both on the field and off.

(Baseball BC Female Baseball Development Manual)

## The Issue

Girls are participating in sport at rates much lower than those of their male counterparts. (**26%** of 5-17 year old girls average 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity everyday vs. **48%** of 5-17 year old boys\*). It is important that everyone running girls-centered programming feels confident about the WHY of girls in sport – specifically WHY create girls-centered programming/teams. (\*Jays Care Girls At Bat Program Report 2019, page 5)

- Only **2.5%** of adolescent girls between 12-17 are getting enough physical exercise to benefit their health. Based on the Canadian physical activity guide, 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day benefits health. (Stats Canada)
- In Canada, only one in ten high school girls will enroll in physical education classes. (Canadian Women and Sport, 2015)
- In Canada and globally, 5 to 19 year old girls say lack of enjoyment, feeling they are not good enough to play and an increase in family and intrapersonal stress were the most common reasons for dropping out of sport. (CAAWS, 2018)
- In a 2020 study, one in three girls reported poor perceptions of belonging and feeling unwelcome as a factor preventing them to continue in sport. (Canadian Women and Sport, 2020)
- If a girl hasn't participated in sport by the age of 10, there is **only a 10%** chance that she will be physically active as an adult. (CAAWS, 2016)
- By the age of 14, girls are 1.5x more likely to drop out of sport than boys. (Girls in Sport Study, Gatorade, 2017)
- Girls participate in sport at lower rates than boys at all ages. Girls tend to start involvement in sport later than boys do and they drop out sooner. These disparities are especially acute in urban communities and among girls of color. (Nike Coaching Girls Guide) [http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/go\\_out\\_and\\_play\\_exec.pdf](http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/go_out_and_play_exec.pdf)
- Sport has huge potential to benefit girls, but it has to be done well. While many factors contribute to whether or not a girl keeps playing, it is clear that girls need great coaches. The Women's Sports Foundation found that how a girl feels about her coach is one of the most important factors related to if she keeps playing the sport. (Nike Coaching Girls Guide) Coaching Through a Gender Lens: Maximizing Girls Play and Potential, [https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/articles\\_and\\_report/coaching-gender-lens-maximizing-girls-play-potential/](https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/articles_and_report/coaching-gender-lens-maximizing-girls-play-potential/)
- A coach who believes girls participate in sport primarily to "be with their friends" may not focus on girls' skill development as much as they would if coaching boys. ....these behaviours, while not necessarily intentional, could influence how fulfilled and challenged a girl feels from their sport experience. Becoming more aware of biases about the role of women and girls in sport and using strategies to overcome them is fundamental to changing the way girls are treated in sport. Coaches also might simply be unaware of ways that girls are feeling unwelcome in the sport context or

are facing barriers that they need extra support to overcome. Since coaches are at the core of how girls experience sport, we want to give coaches tangible tools they can use to create more girl-friendly sport and play environments.

Nike Coaching Girls Guide



In July 2020, the Girls/Women's division of Baseball Alberta hosted two events: "Why Should Girls Play Baseball?" and "How Do We Support Communities To Offer Girls Baseball Programming". Former and current Team Alberta/Team Canada female athletes were interviewed for their perspectives. Following are their comments:

### Why Should Girls Play Baseball?

"Discipline, you'll grow your confidence and you can do anything. There were tough times, but there were lots of supporters along the way; you will learn to deal with disappointment; you just get to the ball diamond and it doesn't matter anymore" – *Heather Northcott*

"Baseball is my ticket to travel the world. I was able to transfer my attitude to other sports" – *Kelsey Lalor*

"Baseball helps with problem-solving; helps you to understand people, helps relationship building" – *Samantha Ostrom*

"You'll make life-long friends, when you have a whole group of girls, it's extra special" – *Heather Northcott*

"Baseball helped me realize that even though if I wasn't good at it from the start, it was ok, because I learned to work hard" – *Kandi Wyatt*

"Girls need to see it to be it" – *Alexis Brudnicki*

### How Do We Support Communities To Offer Girls Baseball Programming?

*Tara Sliwkanich* - "Some things that we can do [are] a bit bigger than baseball...sometimes girls' sports get 'pinkified' and it doesn't allow our young players to be competitive, but still be nice".

*Nicole Luchanski* - "I've got a list of some things to help communities offer girls programming:

- 1) "Registration advertising to say "baseball for boys AND girls"
- 2) "Once you have girls involved; communicate with them all the events that are happening – advertise the opportunities available....provincial team, etc."
- 3) "Associations to host Girls Days - don't pinkify it – it's baseball and there are all girls...that's all it needs to be"
- 5) "If you don't have a lot of girls registered, focus on the those that are there (tweet pictures, etc) and more girls will see it"
- 6) "If we build the teams, the girls will come, at the start if you only get six girls put them all on the same boys' team; let them grow, more girls will come. Keep same talent levels together. It won't happen overnight, but they will come."

*Heidi Northcott* – "We need to normalize that girls can play [baseball] too, and we're good and competitive".

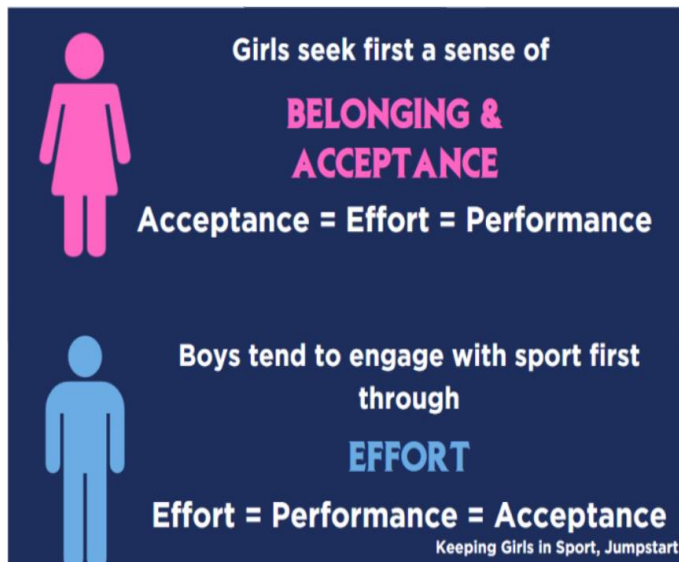
*Madison Willan* – "The environment I was in was very supportive and safe and it made a huge difference and created a breeding ground to gain confidence".

*Chris James* (Female Technical Director, Baseball Alberta) - "The first thing Associations need to do is include a **Female Program Director** on their Board, it's the pipeline for communication".

## Why We Need to Change Our Delivery of Programming

Statistics show that 41% of girls between ages 3 and 17 don't participate in sports, and 84% of adult women don't participate in sports at all. We know that if a girl hasn't participated in sport by age 10, there is only a 10% chance that she will be physically active as an adult. Research on what motivates girls has demonstrated that we can curb these trends if we change the way we engage girls in sports programs.

(<https://img.mlbstatic.com/mlb-images/image/upload/mlb/lloo0fhbjavyagdh38ah.pdf>, pg 5 Jays Care Girls At Bat Program Report 2019)



### When girls play sports...



#### DID YOU KNOW?

Girls who play sport are **11 percent more likely** to say they're "happy the way they are" (Girls' Index Impact Report, Ruling Our Experiences, 2017).



#### DID YOU KNOW?

Girls who participate in sport **are less likely to be depressed**, more likely to **reach higher academic goals** and more likely to **demonstrate improved self-confidence** (Merkel, 2013).

## Why Girl-Centred Program Design Is Important

**Girls-centered program spaces have great outcomes:** Girls, who are engaged in positive, female only programs, are more likely to complete school, attend college, serve their communities, and reach their potential for future success than their peers who engage in risky behaviour.

**Girls have unique body image concerns that are hard to address in the presence of boys:** The Canadian Women's Foundation has published reports on the need for girls only programs: over 50% of all girls say they wish they were someone else: 9 out of 10 girls say they feel pressure from the media to be thin: 50% of girls in grade 6 are on a diet: 36% of girls in grade 6 say they are self-confident and 14% of girls in grade 10 say they are self-confident. These facts show us how important it is to provide girls centered programs.

**Girl's self-esteem decreases with age:** A study entitled "Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America" demonstrated, among many other things that girls' self-esteem decreases with age, while boys' self-esteem stays the same. The same study also notes that many studies have been done of the education system, where it is clear that girls get less attention from teachers and participate less in class.

**Girls benefit from girl-centered curriculum:** An article, "Gender-Responsive Programming as a Pathway to Quality," indicates that girls' programming gives young girls a more productive outlet as the curriculum is designed with girls' experiences and interests in mind.

Many girls with migrant backgrounds who participate in sport do so because they are offered girls-only activities (Andersson 1999; Amara and Henry 2010).

**The Canadian Women's Foundation reports many reasons for providing girl-centered programming:**

- Boys and girls have different needs and interests
- Girls are more likely to be themselves in front of girls
- Girls are especially reluctant to discuss certain topics in front of boys ( e.g. sexuality, eating disorders, self-esteem, body image)
- Girls worry less about their appearance in front of other girls
- Girls worry less about being teased/bullied in front of other girls
- Female role models show girls they can be smart and powerful
- Girls find girls only groups to be more positive and fun

(Baseball BC Female Baseball Development Manual)

***A key to ensuring a successful program is to access as many resources as possible. Jays Care "Girls At Bat" and Nike "Coaching Girls Guide HOW TO GET (AND KEEP) GIRLS PLAYING are resources quoted and included in this manual. Both are invaluable.***

### Jays Care Girls at Bat

Girls At Bat (GAB) is a girls-only softball/baseball program that uses baseball as a tool to enhance social and emotional skills of athletes, focusing on the four primary goals of: increased connection, courage, leadership and love of sport. The program is designed using significant research focused on motivation and girls in sport. Jays Care Foundation developed the curriculum with the help of Plan International Canada and has piloted adapted versions of it for the last three years with grass-root organizations, schools and associations across the country. The program has proven to have tremendous results when it comes to increasing female participation rates and reversing the growing issue of low retention in girls-only sport programs.

GAB is designed to change the way girls are coached, prioritize the creation of safe spaces and foster a sense of belonging so they want to join and stay in sport and recreation programs **for life**.

### How Does The Program Work?

Girls At Bat is tailored to best fit the needs of the three most common pathways for girls to engage in sport:

- 1. Through grassroots and community-based organizations:** Jays Care partners with grassroots, not-for-profit organizations and communities to run the Girls At Bat program with girls they serve. Staff receive comprehensive training, resources and equipment to run an 8 week program either at an introductory level or offering opportunities for more formalized game and practices.
- 2. Through baseball and softball associations:** Jays Care works with established baseball or softball leagues/associations to support coach development through training, resource creation and program support visits or clinics. The goal is to equip coaches with tools and strategies to better engage girls on their teams to increase retention and promote further female participation in sport.
- 3. Through schools:** In 2020, Jays Care is thrilled to offer training, resource development, and end of season celebrations for schools across the country to implement Girls At Bat. This easy to run program is designed to equip teachers with the skills and confidence to offer 8 consecutive weeks of programming for girls in their respective schools.  
(Jays Care Girls At Bat Program Report 2019, page 5)



### Partner with Jays Care for Coach Training

Associations selected to participate in Girls At Bat training will receive:

1. Free, comprehensive virtual coach training-workshop.
2. A coach manual and innovative coach resources for all training participants
3. Access to monitoring and evaluation tools
4. Opportunity to request a virtual visit if outside Ontario
5. Opportunity to nominate players for a Girls At Bat Leadership Program
6. Access to Jays Care rewards program for all-star athletes and coaches

*Baseball Alberta Girls/Women's Program endeavours to coordinate a yearly Girls At Bat Coaches Training program for all interested.*



The best organizations are diverse and inclusive. Expanding opportunities for girls and women, as participants and leaders throughout the Alberta baseball system, is essential to building stronger associations and a stronger sport as a whole. Our stats suggest that of the total number of registered players in Alberta in 2019 (15,215), only about 1,901 are female (12.5% of all registered players).

*Therefore, the opportunity for growth is vast and there's no better time for balance than now...*

(Baseball BC Female Baseball Development Manual/Baseball AB 2019 Stats)

"Baseball Alberta is committed to providing an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect. Baseball Alberta prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation."

These words come directly from the Baseball Alberta Code of Conduct for participants. They embody perhaps the most important ideal of Baseball Alberta as a sport governing organization and that is to provide a safe, respectful environment for athletes to be able to learn, compete, have fun, and create great memories of their experience in baseball. One of the most critical aspects of providing a safe environment for athletes is to create a sport environment that is free from sexual abuse.



### **Coaching Association of Canada Safe Sport Training**

Creating a culture where everyone can thrive is a shared responsibility. The Safe Sport Training module developed by the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) will help anyone involved in sport identify and prevent situations of maltreatment.

For all information regarding Safe Sport, as well as a free training module, go to.  
<http://www.baseballalberta.com/content/safe-sport>

### **Safe Sport Resources/Links**

Below are links to some of the initiatives that Baseball Alberta has taken, along with educational pieces, as we strive towards creating a sport environment that is safe for everyone. (available through <http://www.baseballalberta.com/content/safe-sport>).

[24/7 Reporting Hotline](#)

[Sterling Background Checks](#)

[Responsible Coaching Movement](#)

[Concussion Resources](#)

[Concussion Ed App](#)

[Respect in Sport](#)

[Making Ethical Decisions](#)

<http://www.baseballalberta.com/content/safe-sport>

## How Your Association Can Champion Girl's Baseball

Starting and maintaining a girl's baseball program takes hard work and dedication. Even before you advertise that your Association will be providing female programming, your attention should be on building a program to ensure sustainability. Plan for the best outcomes. If you build it, THEY WILL COME!

You will require parental support, coaches, umpires, managers, scorekeepers, equipment manager, and groundskeepers. Your volunteers will need to possess passion and commitment to the vision.

- Include a **Female Baseball Director** on your Executive. This person fills the role of advocate and liaison.
- Education and training will go a long way to ensure success of your program.
- **Consider covering the cost of registration for NCCP Coach and Umpire Training for your volunteers.**

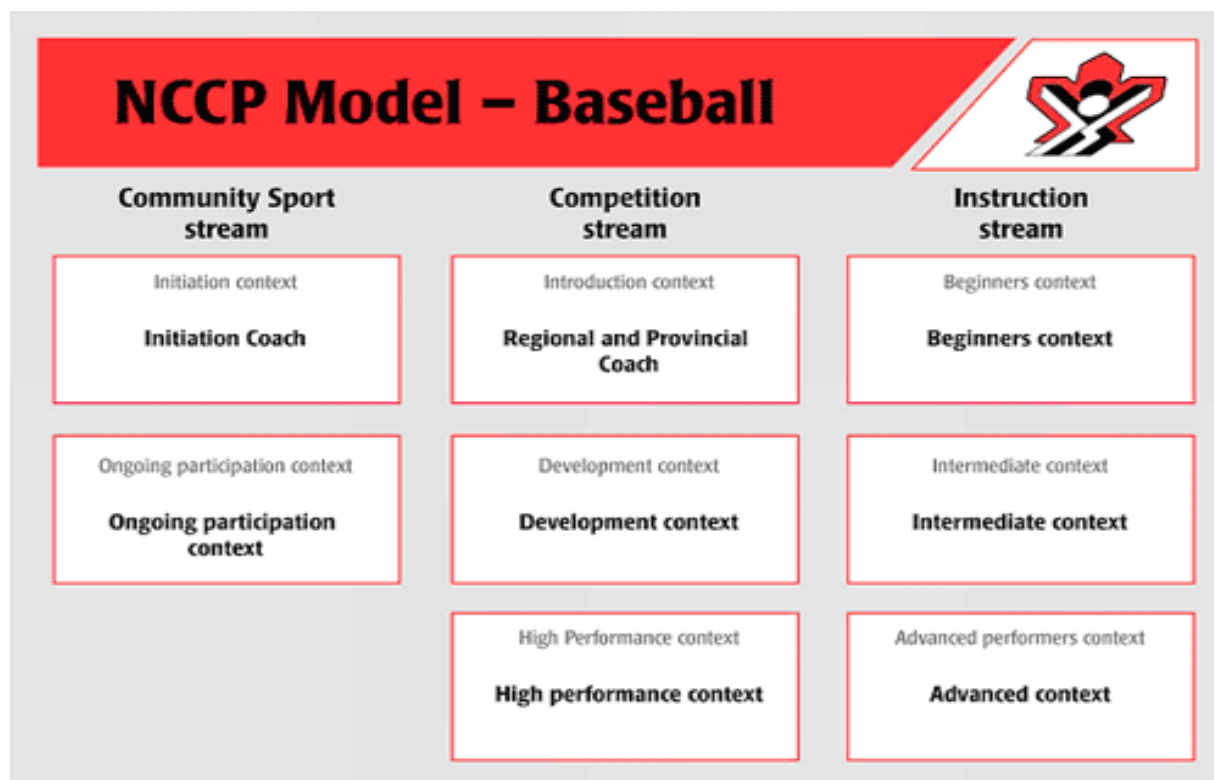
Following is the National Coaching Certification Program [NCCP] and National Umpire Certification Program [NUCP] training information:

The NCCP is a training and certification program for coaches, offered across Canada in more than 60 sports. The program was designed to meet the needs of a wide range of coaches - from those who introduce youngsters to sport to those who work with Canada's high-performance athletes. Since its inception, more than 875,000 coaches have taken part in NCCP activities that have helped them to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to coach effectively.

*The NCCP prepares **coaches** to:*

- better meet the needs of all participants in sport
- provide a positive sport experience to participants
- provide opportunities for participants to achieve their full potential in and through sport.

### The NCCP Model



The NCCP model is made up of three streams and a total of eight contexts, each with its own coaching requirements.

## **Umpires**

### **NUCP Certification Path**

Under the current structure of the National Umpire Certification Program, the certification path is based on yearly attendance of a clinic. Umpires must progress through the yearly system of clinics to complete each level and advance their skills. Umpires start at Level 1 and must attend a Level 1 clinic for two years before advancing to the Level 2 clinics. Level 2 umpires will progress through 3 years of clinics for offense, defense and game management before advancing to Level 3. The level 3 umpires only have to attend a clinic every third year, but are required to complete an online exam every year there is no clinic.

### **Level 1 Umpires** *(must be at least 12 years of age to start)*

**Year 1** - Offence (odd numbered years)

**Year 2** - Defense (even numbered years)

### **Level 2 Umpires**

**Year 1** - Offense (2021)

**Year 2** - Defense (2019)

**Year 3** - Game Management (2020)



### **Level 3 Umpires**

**Year 1** - Online Exam Only

**Year 2** - Online Exam Only

**Year 3** - Level 3 Clinic

### **Level 4/5 Umpires**

Invitation only to the Baseball Alberta Superclinic.



## PROGRAMMING – What Are The Options?

### General Information - 7U - Rally Cap Program

The **Rally Cap Program** is an initiative to enhance players and coaches first experience with the game. The program helps teach players the five FUNdamentals of baseball in a fun and safe environment. Players have the opportunity to perform different tasks in order to earn a colored Baseball Canada Rally Cap. Cap colors correspond with various levels of achievement. The program is designed for young baseball players (ages 4-7).

### Goals

- Create a fun environment in which children and adults are actively engaged together in the game of baseball.
- Develop fundamental motor skills, teach baseball skills, and basic rules to our players.
- Experience success with an emphasis on good sportsmanship.
- Promote increased self-esteem among Rally Cap aged children and adults.
- Recruiting new coaches and volunteers.

Resources and information available at [www.baseballalberta.com](http://www.baseballalberta.com)

### Example Resources

[Rally Cap Instructor Manual - White Cap](#)

[Rally Cap Report Card - Individual](#)

[Rally Cap Practice Plan - White & Grey Caps](#)

### Additional Information

[Rally Cap Program General Information](#)

[Rally Cap Order Form](#)

For more information on how to incorporate the Rally Cap Program into your Association, please contact [Sheen Bromley](#) at 780-427-8943.



If in your first year, you do not have enough girls register, offer co-ed programming. When doing drills in breakout groups, keep girls together for the first few practices. Once girls are comfortable (after two or three practices), create co-ed breakout groups.



### *General Information - 9U - Rookie Ball*

The 9U - **Rookie Ball Program** is designed to promote physical development of children through the game of baseball. The program helps develop physical literacy by using a modified game to teach the basic baseball skills to children and ensure success. The program is designed for children ages **eight and nine**. See below a booklet that outlines the recommended programming for 9U designed by Baseball Alberta, Lacombe Minor Baseball, and Darcy Warawa.

### **Goals**

- Create a healthy environment in which children of various levels of ability find pleasure in learning baseball
- Initiate or pursue the development of basic baseball skills and strategies for players
- Teach and develop sportsmanship in a context of healthy competition
- Develop and promote self-esteem in children



### **Resources**

[9U Recommended Programming](#)

For teams interested in purchasing Grand Slam Manuals, which include practice plans for this age category, please contact the Baseball Alberta Office at 780-427-8943.



*For co-ed teams in the younger divisions, keep the girls together for the first few practices when breaking into groups. Once girls are comfortable, after two or three practices, break into co-ed groups.*

### *General Information - My First Pitch Program*

**My First Pitch** is the official introduction to Baseball Canada's pitching program. The program is designed for all young baseball players **ages 10 and 11** and aims to increase interest in baseball at the Learn to Train stage of development. My First Pitch introduces topics such as grips, pitching mechanics and proper throwing techniques while demonstrating multiple drills to identify and correct major pitching flaws. The program also helps coaches, athletes and parents understand the rationale behind Baseball Canada's pitch count approach.

### **Goals**

- Reduce the number of young athletes with arm injuries by teaching them proper throwing mechanics
- Provide athletes with the necessary skills to play baseball in order to increase fun
- Prevent coaches and athletes to specialize in one position at this age group
- Increase awareness of pitch count and the negative effect of overuse
- Help parents realize the importance that this is the most important stage for the development of baseball specific skills



### **Example Resources**

Physical Literacy Warm Up: Age 11 and up

Lift and thrust drill

Hit the hat drill

<http://www.baseballalberta.com/content/my-first-pitch-program>





### ***General Information - Winterball Program***

The primary focus of **Winterball** is to introduce children to the fundamentals of baseball in a fun manner that is non-competitive and that provides a positive learning experience for all involved. Held indoors in your school's gymnasium this program is designed for students aged **6 to 12 (K - 6)**. Winterball progresses through activities set out in nine different lesson plans, taught in three sets to ensure students learn at an appropriate skill and ability level. All students following the teacher's lesson plans detailed in the Winterball program will exhibit proficiency in movement skills while gaining social skills by working and getting along with others. Best of all, the Winterball Program can be installed in any elementary school **FREE** of charge. Baseball Alberta will even come out to your school for the first day to launch the Winterball program to all classes.



### **Goals**

- To promote an active and healthy lifestyle to children while encouraging them to participate in sport.
- Help increase participation in baseball locally, provincially and nationally by introducing the sport in a fun and exciting program.
- To teach the fundamentals of baseball while promoting a safe and non-competitive environment that provides children with a fun sport experience that is inclusive of everyone, regardless of gender or physical ability.
- To give students the opportunity of working in a teamwork setting, teaching them the importance of working together to achieve a common goal.
- To develop a program that helps students realize individual progress on a continual basis.

### **Example Resources**

[K/Grade 1/Grade 2 - Lesson 1](#)

[Grade 3/Grade 4 - Lesson 1](#)

[Grade 5/Grade 6 - Lesson 1](#)

[Teacher Support Material - Throwing](#)

[Baseball Worksheet](#)

### **Included Equipment**

Winterball Kit

Fan Guides

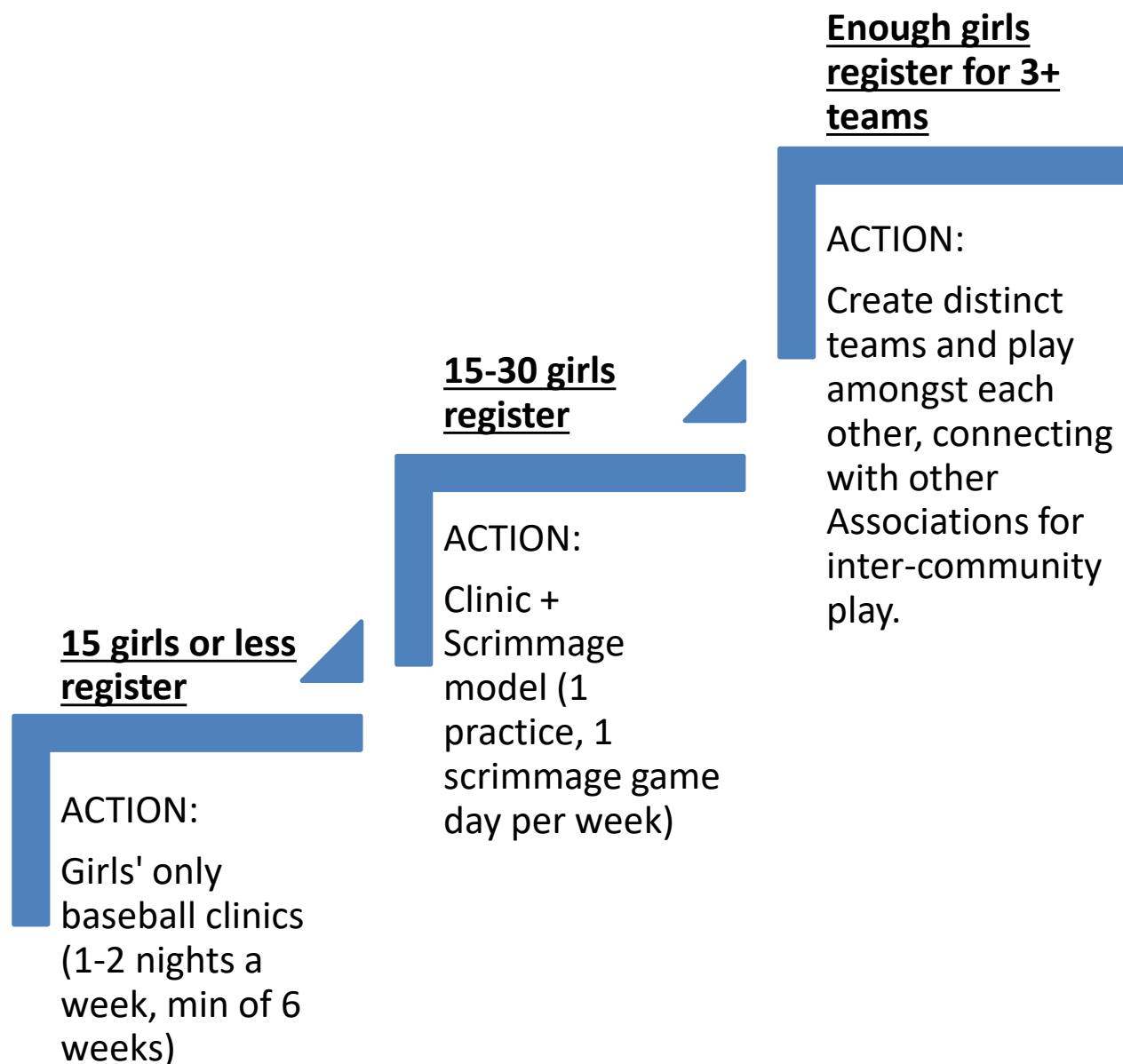
### **Additional Information**

For more information or to request your Winterball Launch Day and **FREE** Winterball kit, please contact [Sheen Bromley](#)

# Building Your Plan to Deliver Girls Programming

Jays Care Foundation Girls At Bat

What is your ultimate reach goal? What does that look like?



## WALK BEFORE YOU RUN.

BE TRANSPARENT WITH PARENTS/ATHLETES  
HAVE A PLAN. INDICATE ALL SCENARIOS: SCENARIO ONE: ENOUGH GIRLS REGISTER TO OFFER ALL FEMALE PROGRAMMING.  
SCENARIO TWO: IF NOT ENOUGH GIRLS REGISTER, CREATE CO-ED TEAMS.  
REFER TO YEAR ONE & TWO ON NEXT PAGE FOR GREATER DETAIL.

# Building Your Plan to Deliver Girls Programming - Athletes

Advertise boys and girls programming at Rally Cap, Rookie Ball level.

## YEAR ONE

When doing drills in breakout groups keep girls together for the first few practices. Once girls are comfortable (after two or three practices), create co-ed breakout groups. Continue this practice through all levels.

Building on year one, advertise boys and girls Rally Cap, Rookie Ball programming. As well offer 11U all girls programming.

## YEAR TWO

As the girls age through to 11U it is important to be prepared with programming options.

If there are not enough girls for one team, create co-ed 11U teams; splitting the number of girls between the teams. Scenario: 8 girls and 16 boys register. Put 4 girls and 8 boys on each team. Refer to Key Coaching Strategies & Key Considerations for Mixed Gender Teams.

**REMEMBER:** Baseball Alberta allows an *extra year of eligibility* for female athletes in each of the divisions from Rookie up to 15U. In the 18U division, female athletes are allowed three years of extra eligibility, up until age 21.

Focus on creating sustainability and a feeder system.

## BUILD SUCCESS

Suggestions:

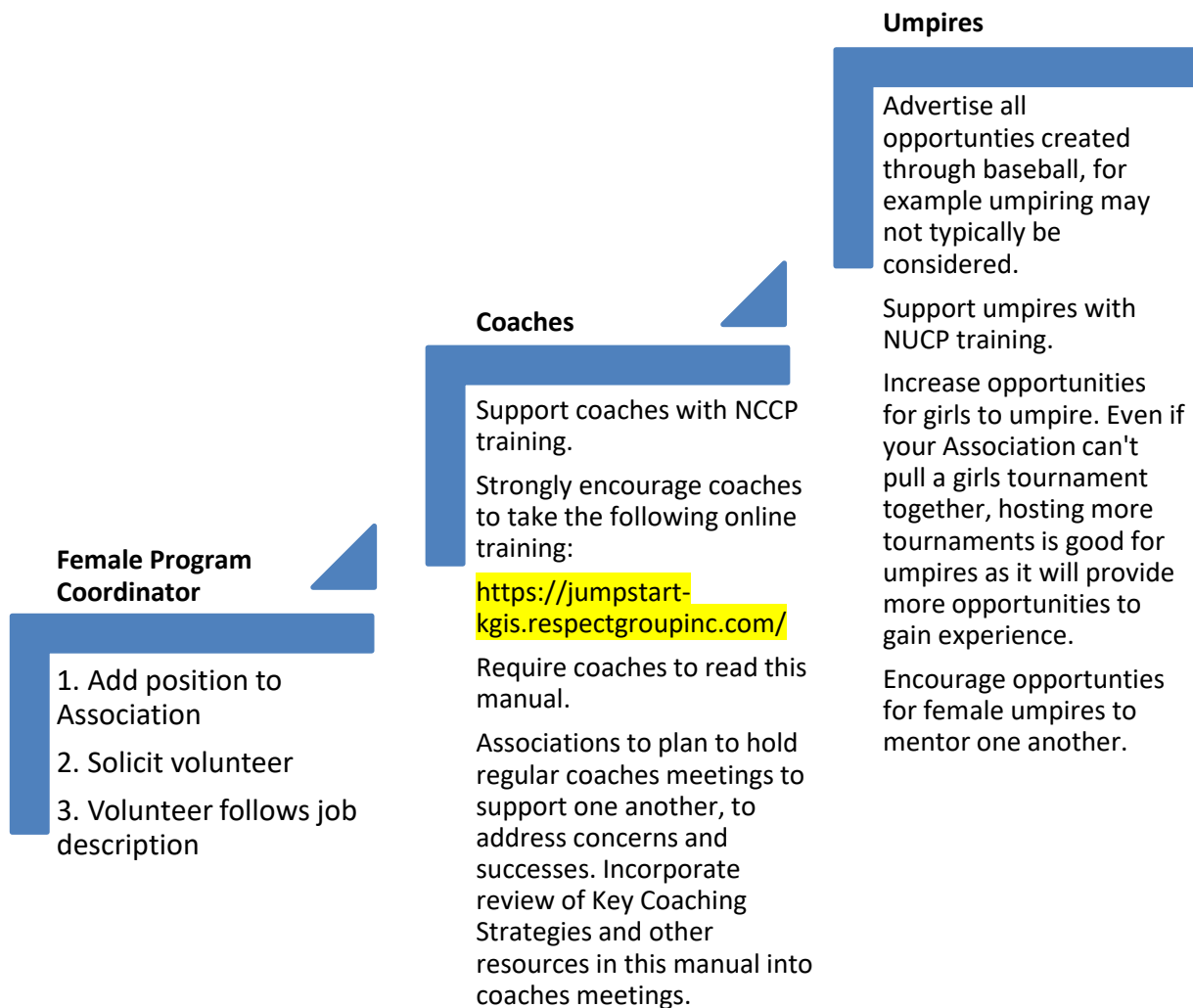
Continue to concentrate on the grassroots levels ensuring coaches are certified.

Support neighbouring communities in building their programming to work toward having all girl leagues throughout Alberta.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Encourage girls who wish to play high performance. There are opportunities with Baseball Alberta for provincial teams at 14U, 16U and 21U and Womens.

## Building Your Plan to Deliver Girls Programming – Administrative



# High Performance Opportunities That Your Association May Not Be Aware Of

## **14U Team Alberta & 16U Team Alberta Open Division**

Tryouts are advertised on Baseball Alberta's website ([baseballalberta.com](http://baseballalberta.com))

Coach applications are accepted each year. Must be certified.

**14U** competes at a Western Canadian Championship, hosted in various locations, typically BC or Alberta, held in August each year.

**16U** and **Open Division** both compete at a National Championships, host province varies each year. Typically Championships are held in August.

see [baseballcanada.ca](http://baseballcanada.ca) for more info

## **2025 Canada Summer Games (16U)** is proposed; decision is pending.

Games will be held in Newfoundland & Labrador. Each province will send a team.

Tryouts will be organized. Watch the Alberta Amateur Baseball Council website ([albertabaseball.org](http://albertabaseball.org)) and the Baseball Alberta website ([baseballalberta.com](http://baseballalberta.com))

For more info on the Canada Summer Games, check out [canadagames.ca](http://canadagames.ca); this is the largest multi-sport event in Canada for up and coming amateur athletes.

**TEAM CANADA** - team is selected by Baseball Canada ([baseball.ca](http://baseball.ca)) coaching staff from the Open Division National Championship Tournament.

Baseball Canada Prospects - The Top 40 prospects communicate /check-in with coaching staff during the offseason. Athletes may attend a development camp in Cuba.

NOTE: Not every step on the ladder has to be achieved.....plenty of women have gone straight to Team Canada from Team Alberta without ever playing on the Prospects team. And lots of girls make 16U Team Alberta without ever playing on the 14U Team Alberta team.

## FEMALE PROGRAM COORDINATOR DESCRIPTION

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>[Name of Association] Female Program Coordinator</b>  <b>Roles and Responsibilities Description</b>  <b>Date: (Date) Review Frequency: Yearly Review Date: "One year from approval"</b></p>
<p><b>Key Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure the development of female athletes.</li> <li>• To provide opportunities and support to female athletes and their families.</li> <li>• To support the establishment of female leagues across all age divisions.</li> <li>• To ensure the development of coaches for female athletes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reports To</b></p> <p>The [Name of Association] Female Program Coordinator reports to the President of the [Name of Association], in consultation with the Baseball Alberta Girls/Women's Baseball Director and Female Technical Director.</p>
<p><b>Responsibilities and Duties</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve a two-year term or a term consistent with local Association's bylaws.</li> <li>• Oversee the development, operation, and enhancement of the [Name of Association's] female program.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all female athletes are made aware of Girls Day in Baseball programs, winter development camps, female Provincial programs, etc. and encourage Association to support all female teams within the Association.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide direction and support to the Association in the marketing and promotion of female baseball.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all Association promotion and marketing (website, social media, advertisements, etc.) support the inclusion of female athletes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In general, supervise and control the affairs of Association all-female teams.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure communication is timely and consistent to the BA Girls/Women's Baseball Director.</li> <li>• Ensure communication from Baseball Alberta, re programming, is shared with all female athletes within the Association in a timely manner.</li> <li>• Ensure coaches are identified and certified in a timely manner.</li> <li>• Liaise with other Associations to support in-coming transfers to all-female teams.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In general, support the development of female players within the mainstream baseball community.</li> <li>• Monitor the [Name of Association's] female player registrations.</li> <li>• Liaise between the [Name of Association] and Baseball Alberta for all matters pertaining to female baseball. Assist the BA Girls/Women's Baseball Director to pursue financial support for the ongoing development of female baseball.</li> <li>• Participate in the Player Affiliation process, if requested by the President</li> <li>• Participate in the Player Transfer Process, if requested by the President</li> <li>• Any other duties as assigned by the President or by the Board</li> <li>• Continuously advocate for women in sports and LTAD's "active for life"</li> </ul>





## Key Issues to Consider:

**1. HOW YOU RECRUIT**

**2. HOW YOU ENGAGE WITH  
ANYONE IDENTIFYING AS A GIRL**

**3. YOUR IMPLEMENTATION  
STRATEGY**

## HOW YOU RECRUIT .....COACHES

### Tips and Advice:

- Coach should (could) have baseball experience
- They could have some coaching (or umpire, board, executive, etc.) experience
- Confident in teaching and demonstrating the skills and strategies
- Passionate and dedicated about working with girls
- Great with people (ability to connect with parents, families, other coaches (umpires, etc.)

### Styles / Techniques to Recruit Coaches

- Passive Recruitment (social media, web, posting flyers, advertisements, etc.)
  - Can reach a wide audience
  - May not find the candidate you are seeking
  - Relies on that ideal role model to see the flyer or ad and respond to you
- Active Recruiting (Getting out in the community - face to face)
  - Tends to have a high rate of finding the best people
  - Can be more time and labour intensive
  - Pay specific attention to recruiting females (pivotal in girls' development)
    - Encourage former players
    - Local women's sports leagues
    - Connect with local women athletes
    - Invite mothers/grandmothers to participate
- Combination of both Passive and Active Recruiting is likely to be most effective.



### Development and Retention of Coaches

In addition to supporting coaches through formal education, Associations should consider the following "How To Train Coaches" from Nike. Although you will notice references to American statistics, the information is an excellent resource for building a coach training program.



# HOW TO TRAIN COACHES

## PROGRAM LEADERS

Now that you know what girls need out of their sports environment, how do you make sure that your coaches are delivering it? Below is a list of four high-impact changes to consider as you build a coach training program:

### 1. CREATE AN EXPERIENCE

You can't give what you don't have. We find this to be particularly true for coaches, who most often coach the way they were coached. And since we're asking most coaches to coach differently than the way they were coached, they have to know what it looks and feels like. This means modeling the kind of coaching we want to see. Here are some ways to do that:

#### How to Create Connection

- Ask questions: Start debriefs with questions, ask coaches to say more when they have something to offer, create structured opportunities for them to answer questions with a partner or in a small group.
- Debrief or instruct in circles so that everyone is at the same level and part of the circle.
- Treat our teammates the way we want them to treat their co-coaches and the way we want the girls they coach to treat each other.

#### How to Encourage Coaches to be Brave, Not Perfect

- Always give encouraging answers – avoid criticizing someone's contribution and thank them for sharing.
- Invite, never force, participation: allow coaches to have some control over their experience so that they will allow players some control over theirs.

#### How to Focus on Progress, Not Outcomes

- Establish a baseline: Provide coaches with the opportunity to reflect on where they are starting.
- Ask coaches what new things they are committed to trying.
- Follow up: reminding coaches of the new things they've tried and asking them, "How did you do that?"

#### How to Let Coaches Compete

- Model different ways to be competitive (against a goal, as a personal or team record, or against another team) during training.
- Create fun competitions for the not-fun parts of coaching, such as turning in timesheets or lesson plans on time.

And most importantly, if what we're doing isn't working for a coach, then it's on us as program leaders to change, not on them to "get with it." If we aren't reflective about how we're setting up the program and supporting coaches, we can't expect them to be reflective about how they are setting up practice and supporting players.



# HOW TO TRAIN COACHES

## PROGRAM LEADERS

### 2. START WITH A COMMON LANGUAGE

If you can, it's great to get all your coaches referring to the same materials before the official kick-off meeting or training. Having something to reflect on and refer to ensures everyone is speaking the same language and sets a tone that learning is encouraged and expected.

Nike and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee recently collaborated to build How to Coach Kids ([howtocoachkids.org](http://howtocoachkids.org)), an online coaching hub with a series of modules that create this common language and fundamental knowledge base. Have your coaches take the [How to Coach Kids](#) course and the Coaching Girls module to kickstart the season.

### 3. ACTIVELY RAISE AWARENESS OF BIAS

Remember, it's been just about 50 years since race organizers tried to physically stop Katherine Switzer from running the Boston Marathon and fewer than 25 years since the start of the WNBA and growth of other professional leagues. Therefore, it's not hard to see why many coaches (and athletes) show up to practice with preconceived notions of women's roles and value in sports. So, while it's natural to have biases, we also know that these biases can impact the behavior of coaches and interfere with their ability to create the best possible sports experience for the girls on their teams.

The good news is that simply being aware of and reflecting on bias is a great place to start. A Harvard study of teen girls and leadership bias found that simply being aware of bias is a critical part of challenging those biases<sup>12</sup>. Creating an open dialogue with coaches, encouraging them to be reflective

and challenge some of the things that “have always been done” (like referring to groups of girls as “guys”) are good first steps. If you have more time, you can kick-start the reflection process with an activity in this toolkit or use other activities<sup>13</sup> that help start conversations on unconscious bias.

### 4. PRIORITIZE LEARNING

Like any educational process, coach training works best when the conversation doesn't stop after one training. Coaches and athletes flourish in cultures where learning isn't just a bonus, it's a fully integrated expectation. Learning shouldn't be one-way, from programs to coaches. We can't expect coaches to spend time getting feedback from their players if we don't spend time getting feedback from them. To really prioritize feedback is to do more than just send out a survey at the end of the season. It means creating feedback loops where coaches receive specific and personalized feedback and are asked to provide the same kind of detailed, thoughtful feedback to the program or league administrators. Feedback can't be an after-thought; it should be part of the season plan and implemented consistently in formal and informal ways.

To best prepare coaches, we need to create as many touchpoints as possible that reinforce the kind of coach we want them to be and encourage them to be reflective about their growth. Making small changes to interactions – asking the right questions and sharing the right information – can have an outsized impact.





# HOW TO TRAIN COACHES

## PROGRAM LEADERS

These touchpoints don't need to be resource- or time-intensive. They can be as simple as text messages that remind coaches to do something to help girls be brave and not perfect. It can be as easy as replacing "What was the score?" with one question that causes them to stop and reflect on how they supported or challenged their girls to take risks, or one thing that really worked well (or didn't work at all) at practice that week.

Programs might try some of the following to build good learning habits:

- Schedule a short one- to three-question survey to arrive at a coach's email or phone at the end of every practice where they reflect on what worked and didn't work at practice. Run a contest with a significant reward for the coach who has the best answer rate.
- Send a text message that reminds coaches to do something to help girls be brave and not perfect or another reminder from the behavior bank in this toolkit.
- Replace "What was the score?" with one question that makes a coach stop and reflect on how they supported or challenged their girls to take risks, like "Who surprised you today?"
- Implement "Think Tank Tuesday" where you share a video, podcast or article that would be interesting to the coaches and highlights ways that girls and women are defying expectations.

- Make trainings mandatory and, if applicable, pay or incentivize coaches for their time. If you work with volunteer coaches, incentivize participation with an in-kind item like gear, food or the chance to win some kind of prize.
- At every meeting or training, ask coaches to shout-out another coach for something they saw or heard that the coach did well.

The best thing we can do to train coaches is to think critically about how we want them to interact with their players. What kinds of relationships do we want them to have with their players? What should their priorities be? How should they handle adversity and what should they do to create supportive but challenging environments? We have to start by modeling all of these things in the ways that we interact with them.



<sup>12</sup> <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/reports/leaning-out>

<sup>13</sup> Activities for addressing bias: [https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/tt\\_sports\\_gender\\_stereotypes\\_09.pdf](https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/tt_sports_gender_stereotypes_09.pdf)  
(gender bias in sport) <https://cultureplusconsulting.com/2018/08/16/a-ha-activities-for-unconscious-bias-training/> (general biases)

# BEHAVIOR BANK: HOW TO USE

**THIS SET OF BEHAVIORS CAN BE USED BY  
PROGRAM LEADERS TO INSPIRE THEIR COACHES.**

## TIP OF THE DAY

Provide one of these tips for every active day of the season so that a coach is reminded to attend to girl-specific needs every time they interact with their team (this might be printed on practice plans, in a coaching manual, or might be delivered via email, text, app, etc.)

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## ESTABLISH COACH EXPECTATIONS AND HELP WITH THE OBSERVATION

Choose the behaviors that are most relevant to your program or the areas in which you think your program most needs to grow. Share these behaviors with coaches directly to illustrate your expectations. This can include creating a tool that allows administrators or coach developers to observe the coaches while coaching. Use these observations to start an ongoing conversation with coaches about how to build their skills, so they deliver on every expectation.

---

## BUILD THE HABIT OF REFLECTION

To help coaches reflect and create consistent feedback loops, require coaches to answer a few short questions related to the behavior bank after every practice. They will be reminded of what is important and build the habit of asking themselves what worked and didn't that day.





# BEHAVIOR BANK

## LEGEND



CREATE CONNECTION



BRAVE, NOT PERFECT



PROGRESS, NOT OUTCOMES



GIRL CHECK



LET HER COMPETE

### 1. LEARN NAMES

Players should have the chance to identify what they want to be called. Quiz coaches to make sure they know the names of every player they work with.

### 2. LISTEN FOR LANGUAGE

Track the number of times you hear coaches say “guys” to refer to the group on a given day. It’s probably more than you think. Create a competition for the staff and challenge them to insert a different term like “friends,” “y’all” or “athletes.”

### 3. ESTABLISH A LIST OF “WE BELIEVES”

Require coaches to submit a set of team “norms” or “we believes.” Make sure there is explicit language about how important it is to take risks and try new things.

### 4. ASK QUESTIONS

Coaches who ask their players questions engage them in learning and help them practice using their “thinking brain.” When observing coaches, see how many interactions with players involve coaches asking questions.

### 5. BUILD BELONGING

Encourage coaches to have their teams create an identity symbol for their teams, like a team flag or a team mascot. Try to dedicate a small amount of funds to print that symbol on stickers, pins or plastic bracelets. It shouldn’t cost much and can go a long way.

### 6. TAKE A ROLE MODEL ROLL CALL

How many female coaches are part of your program? Is it equal to the number of men? How many girls’ teams are coached by women? How many boys’ teams? Are there women in leadership roles? Do the girls (and boys) have the chance to see these leaders in action?

### 7. CIRCLE UP

Watch coaches to see if they talk to their team in a circle. A circle puts everyone on the same level, encourages connection and creates safety because everyone’s got each other’s backs.

### 8. DIFFERENTIATE DEBRIEFS

Encourage coaches to mix it up! They shouldn’t always ask their team to report back about their experience in big groups. Encourage “pair shares” and small group chats.

### 9. EXAMINE EXAMPLES

When coaches give an example of a successful athlete, are they always men? Are there pictures of female athletes around? Does the program highlight the background of accomplished female coaches as much as male coaches?

### 10. PLAY DOWN PERFECTION

Do coaches focus on the result or on the courage it takes to try something new? Remind coaches to offer specific praise for taking risks and learning from mistakes.



# BEHAVIOR BANK

## 11. MAKE CONTRIBUTION COUNT

Can every girl identify what she brings to the team? Ask three players what they think they are contributing to the team.

## 12. SET THE TONE

Have you shared an example of a time you tried something new and failed recently? If we want coaches to be vulnerable and share their experiences so that girls feel safe to try new things, we have to make the coaches feel safe to be vulnerable. Make trying something new the topic of the next coaches' newsletter or meeting.

## 13. FIND OUT WHO'S ON HER TEAM

Make a list of the coaches in your program. Can you and the other administrators identify a positive connection in that coach's life? If you can't, prioritize getting to know more about those coaches. Encourage coaches to do the same for their players.

## 14. ENCOURAGE "GOOD GOSSIP"

Ask a coach every time you see them to share something positive about one of the girls on their team first. You can get to challenges after, but it's always good to start with positive.

## 15. DO A BATHROOM CHECK

Are the spaces clean and well lit? Do all the bathrooms have garbage cans for the girls to use if they need to? Be sure to ask coaches to report on what's going on with the facilities.

## 16. GIVE SHOUT-OUTS

Make sure to end every coach gathering with shout-outs, and give the coaches a chance to shout each other out. Check that they are doing the same at every practice.

## 17. DO SHOUT-OUTS FOR COMPETITION

Encourage coaches to specifically focus shout-outs on the girls who competed the best that day – either with herself, among her teammates or for her team.

## 18. CREATE GIRL SPACES

Look intentionally at the program's schedule. Is there ever a time in the day when girls get to be in a space by themselves, without boys? Can you carve time out to make that happen? Is it at a time that is convenient for the girls? Some girls need that protected space to feel more confident and comfortable.

## 19. LET GIRLS CHOOSE

Remind coaches every few weeks to let their girls work together to plan the day. They'll feel ownership and the coaches will learn what the girls like most about being part of the team.

## 20. GET FEEDBACK FROM GIRLS

Build a culture of feedback by formally and informally asking coaches to reflect on how the season is going. Share with coaches your plan to formally solicit feedback directly from the girls and parents, so they know what to expect. Encourage coaches to solicit feedback regularly in different ways.

## 21. USE NAMES FROM WOMEN'S TEAMS

If the program has set tournaments or standings, encourage all the teams to be named for professional women's teams, even the boys' teams.



# BEHAVIOR BANK

## 22. FIND OUT WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED

Tell coaches at the beginning of the season that you'll be periodically asking girls what they have gotten better at this season. Pick a few dates, come to practice and ask girls what they've learned. Challenge coaches to make sure that every girl can identify something they've gotten better at doing this season

## 23. ESTABLISH TEAM TRADITIONS

When you visit practice, do you see players participate in something that makes them feel like part of the group like a team cheer, a team name or some kind of activity that they always do together?

## 24. UNLEASH THE POWER OF "YET"

What happens when a girl says "I can't"? Does the coach answer with encouragement? Adults that help young people focus on the fact that they can get better at something help them build more confidence. Have your staff add "yet" to the sentence every time a young person says they can't.

## 25. USE A FEEDBACK BOX

Encourage coaches to give girls the chance to give feedback in private by writing down their feedback and putting it in a box. All players should submit something so all girls feel safe to offer ideas as it will be hard to tell who the feedback came from.

## 26. GET EVERY GIRL A WIN

Every girl has something positive to contribute and it's a coach's job to make sure that she has the chance to offer it to the team. Ask coaches how they encouraged girls to take risks, try new things and discover what they, uniquely, bring to their team.

## 27. ESTABLISH A WORD OF THE DAY

Set a word of the day for the whole club or program. Focus on words, such as strong or hard-playing, that girls don't always get rewarded for. All coaches should call out the things they see their players doing that day that illustrate the word of the day.

## 28. MAKE TIME TO REFLECT

Remind coaches to carve out dedicated time for players to reflect on the day. It should be a time when they are encouraged to share whatever is on their mind in an open way..

## 29. CREATE A "TRY TALLY"

Create a form called the "try tally" and slip one to your coaches today. Have them keep track of the times they see a girl try something new and call them out during shout-outs at the end of the day.

## 30. FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

Require coaches to spend time every day on a routine that stresses the fundamentals of the sport. Have a routine you can provide to coaches if they want, or they can choose their own. What matters is that the girls get to practice those movements every day as a transition into practice and so they can see themselves get better over time.

## 31. ASK "HOW DID YOU DO THAT?"

Build the habit of asking, "How did you do that?" by asking your coaches that question regularly. Unpack for them how the question forces them to take ownership of their accomplishments and think about the process they went through in order to achieve it. Then encourage them to do it with their players.



# BEHAVIOR BANK

## 32. SET PERSONAL RECORDS

Encourage coaches to push girls to achieve personal records (and not compare themselves to their teammates) and try to beat those records. Celebrate coaches when they help girls set a new best!

## 33. SCAFFOLD UP...AND DOWN

Train coaches to understand the power of dialing up and down the pressure when teaching skills. When learning a new skill, coaches dial up the pressure in order to stretch girls beyond their comfort zone in order to begin the process of mastery. What we don't do is scaffold back down after we've pushed girls outside their comfort zone. If we dial back the pressure, even for a few repetitions, girls can regain that sense of control and achievement and be ready to take on the next challenge.

## 34. THINK ABOUT GROUPINGS

Ask coaches during planning or reflection time how they are being intentional about groupings. Remind them to give girls lots of opportunities to work with different members of the team so that they can start to feel safe with all of their teammates. Safety promotes learning!

## 35. USE GROUPINGS TO ENABLE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Groupings can also be used to help develop skills. Parity helps drive skill development, so encourage coaches to have girls at similar levels challenge each other and, when there is a big gap in skill, ask the girls who have mastered the skill to help support the girls who are still learning.

## 36. CELEBRATE A "GIRL OF THE GAME"

Find a way to publicize each team's Girl of the Game. Announce it on the website, via email or by providing some kind of award or certificate.

## 37. SET UP SOME FAMILY FUN TIME

Have a program-wide family day so you can really celebrate the important people in every player's life. This is a great way to build culture but also tips the scales when it comes to girls' participation – the more the family invests in her experience, the more likely she'll be to stick with it.

## 38. TEACH NEW SPORTS AND NEW SKILLS

Bring in experts in other sports to teach new sport clinics to your participants. The cross-training they get will help them develop as all-around athletes and a brand new sport allows kids who aren't the most skilled in their sport the chance to shine at something else.

## 39. FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON OFF THE FIELD

Try to keep a finger on the pulse of what's going on for athletes and be supportive. Ask coaches what's going on in their lives and what's going on in their player's lives. Highlight accomplishments that you hear about on any program-wide platforms.



## Additional Tips and Advice:

- Training and Support
  - Jays Care offers Girls at Bat coaches' clinics
  - NCCP (National Coach Certification Program) courses that all coaches should participate in
  - Engaging parents can be a key to the success of female programming
  - If the coach is a young mother, support them at the field, by offering childcare for example
  - Build a network of females to support one another. It can be lonely as the only female coach or umpire; form a female coach and female umpire group.
  - If your head coach is a male, include women in team leadership roles, ie: Assistant Coaches, Team Manager, etc. They can be a great support to girls in co-ed environments.
  - A male coach can also be that coach who plays a key role in a girl's development.
  - Contact your Baseball Alberta Zone Director for additional support.





## HOW YOU RECRUIT.....ATHLETES

**Offer programming** to invite young girls [see Rally Cap Programming] to be involved early; they are more likely to stay with baseball as they mature. With well-thought out and quality programming, girls will demonstrate they are interested in learning and competing in the sport of baseball.

It's best to use a wide variety of strategies. Social media can be effective; administered proficiently and consistently Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. will create awareness and compliment additional recruiting methods, but it will not work alone. Active recruitment may take more time and effort, but in the long run it proves to be much more successful in attracting girls to baseball. Talk to female hockey teams, dance classes and other groups where females are already gathered.

### **Tips and Advice:**

- Set up information booths at Community multi-sport events and locations (arenas, schools)
- Connect with schools and community centres
  - Tell girls about the program, what it will be like, what they will learn
  - Older girls or players can share experiences and hand out flyers with program and registration information
- Use "Girl" networks as a means of spreading the word
  - One of the most effective ways of getting more girls involved is by players telling friends. Have them share their experiences, etc. because girls will be more comfortable trying something new if they're supported by friends
  - Have players hand out flyers to their friends
- Run a baseball demo or "Come Try Baseball" session
  - Keep it fun and festive
  - Have as many props and appropriate practice aids as possible
    - Hoops and targets to throw balls and beanbags at
    - Big plastic bats and balls (for very young athletes)
  - Have as many female role models present as possible
    - Coaches, moms, players, executives, etc.
- Get to Know the Parents
  - Parents probably have the biggest influence and are more likely to allow or encourage their daughter's involvement when they are aware of the benefits, understand and see the environment as fun, know and like the coaches, role models, etc.
  - Have flyers available to hand out containing this information
- Be Persistent
  - Creating a successful girl's program usually takes patience and perseverance, lower numbers in the beginning does not mean failure; it just means you need to keep actively recruiting...
  - Follow up with phone calls to all the contacts you have made from your booths, demo sessions, players friends, etc.

Development and Retention of Athletes - please refer to the following information from Nike.



# 1. MAKE SURE THE PLAYING SPACE & TEAM CULTURE WORK FOR GIRLS

There are some basic things that coaches can do ahead of time to make sure that they are creating girl-centered environments. Some of these things have to do with the physical space, the language we use, the examples we elevate and the way we model behaviors. In some cases, like with facilities, coaches may not have direct control over these things. Regardless, it's important for them to understand and advocate to program administrators for the needs of the girls on their teams.

## CREATE A SAFE, WELCOMING SPACE AND PROVIDE APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT

Coaches should make spaces as safe and welcoming as possible to all girls. This means coaches should prioritize girls-only spaces that are supervised, hazard-free, well-lit and have accessible restrooms. Coaches should strive to create an environment that celebrates differences and is free of discrimination and judgment, so girls aren't simply included but welcomed into their sports experience. Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility, and coaches should always prioritize the safety, security and well-being of young athletes.

## USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Without meaning to, we are all responsible for perpetuating a culture of masculinity in sport through language. One of the most common ways we do this is by referring to all young people as "guys." Girls are not "guys." In fact,

in one study of classrooms where teachers called all the students "guys," researchers found that girls were significantly less likely to raise their hands because they thought the teacher wasn't talking to them. We also tend to provide sport examples that feature men. When making team names, don't just rely on the Red Sox, Raptors and Red Wings. Be sure to also include the Storm, Spirit, Sky Blue FC and other women's teams.

## THINK ABOUT HOW YOU INCLUDE GIRLS

Make time to reflect on how you include girls a part of your everyday approach. Talk to other coaches, program administrators and the girls on the team about successes and challenges. Think about what kind of biases you might have when it comes to girls' participation in sports and find ways to include players and parents in conversations about perceptions and misperceptions of female athletes. Check out the Conversation Starters on page [34](#).

## COACH'S CORNER

### LET GIRLS MAKE THE SPACE THEIR OWN

Coach Sally from [PeacePlayers](#) in Brooklyn has all of her girls write their name and draw a picture of themselves on a piece of paper. Then they write things on the paper that they like about themselves. They pass it around and their teammates also write something nice about them (not about their physical appearance) on the paper. She says "we hang these up in the gym and the girls really like seeing them everyday."

### NEUTRAL AND OBJECTIVE LANGUAGE MATTERS

Coaches and kids from [KIDSPORTS](#) in Eugene, OR recognize the importance of inclusive language and are witnessing what they call the "Sabrina effect". Basketball player Sabrina Ionescu is helping to transform basketball language to be more gender neutral. Instead of talking about Sabrina as a woman shooting the ball "like a guy," they refer to Sabrina shooting the ball as a "basketball player." This vernacular shift is a powerful reminder of why language matters, for all kids.



## 2. CREATE CONNECTIONS WITH GIRLS

One of the most important things a sports program can do to promote girl-friendly policies is to invest in the people who will be part of that girl's experience. A healthy relationship with a caring adult, like a coach, can make a girl feel like they belong in sports, and help fuel her positive development. Coaches can model good decision-making, provide support when things are hard and share their own experiences so that girls understand that what they are going through is normal.

**Most importantly, a coach can help show a girl what is possible through sport!**

Teammates can also be a source of inspiration and drive engagement for girls. Peer influence is important, especially during adolescence, and it can be a powerful tool to get girls excited about sports, and help girls feel welcome and safe in a sports environment that might otherwise feel new and different. Relationships with peers are also more likely to stay with a girl outside of sport – to provide a protective layer of support off the court, as well as on.

Because girls aren't always supported to play sports in the same way boys are, creating connections with parents and other adults in the girl's life is also important. Every time we help the adults in a girl's life see how valuable sport can be for them, the more likely they are to support her when she wants to play.



### COACH'S CORNER

#### GIRLS RECRUIT GIRLS

When Coach Jill was starting a new program at Philly Girls in Motion, she engaged a group of girls to be in charge of recruiting. They created flyers and encouraged girls in their schools and community to participate. They had the best attendance of any new PGIM initiative.

#### FAMILY MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO INSPIRE (AND PLAY!)

At PowerPlay NYC, Coaches encourage each girl's family members to get involved by hosting kids vs. adults scrimmages and hold a celebratory banquet at the end of the year (with plenty of good food).



### 3. LET GIRLS COMPETE

Competition has not been viewed as one of the primary motivations for girls to play sports. The myths that girls are there to lose weight or socialize have existed for decades. And, while it's true that girls prioritize relationships in sports, this has come to be understood as somehow in conflict with the idea of competing. The two are not mutually exclusive. It turns out girls are most motivated by coaches who can do both – create meaningful relationships and challenge them to improve and compete.<sup>10</sup>

Competition comes in many different shapes and sizes. Coaches have the ability to set up sports experiences so that girls have the chance to experience, become comfortable with and excel at all of them. Competition can be motivating for girls and coaches should not shy away from challenging girls to improve as individuals, as a team, and against others. When a coach's approach to competition focuses on individual and team improvement and not just the final score, their feedback to players is more personalized and engaging.



<sup>10</sup> Women's Sport Foundation

## COACH'S CORNER

### PLAYERS TRACK AND CELEBRATE PROGRESS

Coach Claire from [We Coach](#) has her girls keep a team score for free throws using a fun game that they play every day. Over the course of the season, the team sees its progress and supports each other in getting better.





## 4. FOCUS ON PROGRESS, NOT THE FINAL OUTCOME

Girls want coaches who create positive environments that encourage safety, fun, skill-building and healthy competition. They want feedback that is relevant to their development and not only based on the team's win-loss record. In a mastery approach, coaches focus on the effort and process behind learning a skill, not the outcome. It focuses on the things that are within an athlete's control – the progress and not the performance of the athlete and team.

The process of seeing yourself get better at something is incredibly powerful. Unfortunately, though, that power is wasted if girls aren't conscious of the fact that they've improved. It's our job as coaches to make sure they see their progress and undergo the transformation from feeling like they "can't" and start believing that they "can."

When coaches focus on progress and not performance outcomes, the definition of success changes. Not only are girls rewarded for winning games, but they are also celebrated for making progress on key sport and life skills that help them perform. Being celebrated for their improvements helps build their confidence and encourages them to try new things and take risks, something that girls really like about participating in sports.



### COACH'S CORNER

#### A MASTERY APPROACH FOCUSES ON THE PROCESS OF LEARNING A SKILL

Coach Marti uses the [Positive Coaching Alliance's ELM](#) tree of mastery, which encourages coaches to 1) focus on effort (E), 2) look at all experiences as a chance to learn (L), and 3) help kids bounce back from their mistakes (M)!

#### IMPROVEMENT TAKES INTENTION AND TIME

Coach Alecia from [Girls in the Game](#) in Chicago starts every season by asking each girl to pick one skill she wants to improve that season. They take two minutes every practice to work on the skill and Coach periodically records how each player is doing. At the end of the season, each girl sees how she's improved.





## 5. ENCOURAGE GIRLS TO BE BRAVE, NOT PERFECT

For many girls, there is significant pressure to portray themselves in a positive light. Girls feel a lot of pressure to be perfect, from adults who reward them for accomplishments only, or from social media where the pressure to have the perfect look and life is intense. Girls are socialized not to take risks and try new things, which means that they are less likely to engage in things where they aren't sure they will be successful. You can't learn something without being willing to take a risk.

For girls to be willing to try something new, we have to create environments that reward bravery, not perfection. Girls have to feel safe to take risks, knowing that they won't be judged and that the courage they use to take a risk will be rewarded. They have to know that what they bring to the team is valued and that their contribution matters. Coaches do this by setting expectations, giving their positive attention to, and shouting out girls who try new things even more than those who perform skills well. When everyone understands that trying, even if they fail, is among their team's most important values, you see girls who feel safe to take risks.



### COACH'S CORNER

#### TEAMMATES ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO TRY NEW THINGS

Coach Lindsey from [Soccer Without Borders](#) always has her team do shout-outs at the end of practice. To start, she always asks "Who wants to shout-out a teammate for trying something new?" before she moves on to general shout-outs that can be about anything.



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# **TOOLS FOR COACHES & PROGRAM LEADERS**

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# GIRL-CENTERED ENVIRONMENTS CHECKLIST

## HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST (PROGRAM LEADERS)

Set up a regular schedule to run through the checklist – e.g., before the season, mid-way through the year and at the end of the year. Share the tool with coaches and create a two-way dialogue about successes and challenges. Coaches should share how they think they are doing and what support they need from the program leaders. Program leaders should share feedback about where they see coaches being successful and ask how they can be more supportive.

## HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST (COACHES)

Use the tool to check in regularly about how successful you are at providing the right environments for girls. Be sure to ask them to weigh in on what they see working and what could be improved. If something needs to change that is outside of your control, advocate to your supervisor or the league administrators about making a change.

### SAFE, WELCOMING SPACE & TEAM CULTURE

- ☐ Girls are safe when arriving at practice or games. Entrance and activity space are hazard-free, well-lit and appropriately supervised.
- ☐ Girls' bathrooms are accessible and appropriately stocked. Garbage cans and hygiene products are accessible.
- ☐ Girls are actively and intentionally welcomed to the space and included in activities.
- ☐ Girls see pictures of female role models or other girls being active in their sport spaces.
- ☐ Girls see grown women who look like them when they participate in sports.
- ☐ Girls have the opportunity to be active in space that is reserved just for them.

### APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT

- ☐ Girls have access to sports equipment that works for them: the right size, appropriate to the rules of their sport, etc.
- ☐ Girls have access to personal items, like sports bras, hair ties and sneakers or cleats, which enable them to participate in sports. If they don't have these items, the coach or program leader attempts to secure these items on their behalf.

### INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- ☐ Girls (and boys) are referred to in gender-neutral terms. Coaches don't refer to all players as "guys."
- ☐ Girls hear coaches refer to positive female athlete role models – when naming teams or giving examples of great performances.
- ☐ Girls hear coaches acknowledge important female sports events, like WNBA playoffs, the U.S. Open, or the Women's World Cup.

### TIME TO REFLECT

- ☐ Girls have the chance to reflect on their experiences in formal and informal ways.
- ☐ Girls have the chance to provide feedback to the coaches about their experiences.
- ☐ Girls see their coaches reflect on their bias about girls in sport and actively work to change it.
- ☐ Girls see their coaches intervene when they hear comments or see actions that minimize girls' ability to participate in sports.





# KEY COACHING STRATEGIES

## 1. LEARN NAMES

As simple as it sounds, too many coaches don't learn their athletes' names, take too long to learn them or simply don't use them. Coaches should have a strategy for learning names and shouldn't be afraid to admit to their team that they are working hard to learn all the names. But it's not enough to just learn the name. Use them for every player at every session.

## 2. CIRCLE UP

Circles create inclusion and safety. Circles put everyone on the same level, including coaches. Girls are more likely to connect with one another and with their coaches when they feel equally valued and heard. Circles also help players feel safe – there's nothing going on behind them, someone's watching their back – so they can relax and pay attention to what's happening with the team.

## 3. ASK QUESTIONS

Show you're interested in girls and engage them in their learning by asking questions instead of always giving instructions. When a young girl answers a question, she is building her still-developing rational thinking and decision-making skills.

## 4. CELEBRATE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONTRIBUTIONS

High-performing teams get contributions from every player, not just the coach, captain and best athletes. Not all athletes contribute in the same way. Some do it through encouraging comments, some do it by modeling a great work ethic, some do it by rising to the challenge during competition. Encourage your athletes to find the unique things that they can contribute to the team. Be sure to highlight and reward contributions that don't always get attention. It's important for the team to see that

everyone's contribution is not just nice, but necessary.

## 5. LET GIRLS SET THEIR OWN GOALS

Encourage girls to set their own goals for what they want to accomplish and help them identify goals that are within their control. They may not be able to control the outcome of a game on their own, but they can control how they prepare for that game and the kind of effort they put out for the game. Helping girls focus on things that they can influence, like working hard, sticking with something and trying to be brave, will also result in better team and individual performance.

## 6. CREATE A COMPETITIVE CULTURE

There are lots of ways to be competitive. Be sure to mix up your practices so that girls have the chance to compete against themselves, and with and against their teammates. Have them try and set "personal records" – which will encourage them to focus on their own progress as much as their progress against their teammates or opponents. Giving girls the chance to practice being competitive in lots of different ways will set them up for success when the big game comes!

## 7. PRAISE THE RIGHT THINGS, THE RIGHT WAY

As coaches, we have tremendous power to set the tone and priorities of the team. The things we reward become the things that the players will care about. Don't just say, "good job." Be sure to call out and specifically acknowledge the behaviors that your players exhibit that contribute to the team. These should be things that players have control over, so they start to believe that they have the power to get better and learn new things.

## 8. PRIORITIZE BRAVERY

Many girls feel pressure to be perfect at whatever they do. That focus on perfection can keep them from trying new things, especially when they don't know if they'll be able to master it. In order to encourage girls to take risks and try new things, make a conscious effort to reward bravery. Make being brave the most important thing a player on your team can be by calling it out and having girls celebrate it in each other. You could even go from having a Most Valuable Player to a Bravest Player award.

## 9. LET MISTAKES GO

If girls are too scared to try new things, they will never have the chance to experience the confidence and joy that comes from tackling something new. Nothing is more powerful for girls than to know that you are not perfect. It means that they don't have to be. Share your mistakes so that they feel safe to make their own. Encourage girls to move on from mistakes by engaging in a physical gesture that she can use to remind herself that mistakes are ok and to get ready for the next play.

## 10. MAKE TIME FOR GIRLS TO TALK

Coaches should carve out time at the end of every practice where girls get to talk about what they want to talk about. Give girls the chance to have their voices heard and learn more about and connect with their teammates.



# KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MIXED-GENDER TEAMS

For many coaches and programs, thinking about how to create great environments for girls starts with creating single-gender opportunities, especially for girls. We know there can be value in this approach (particularly where marginalized girls have the chance to participate without the glare of the boys that sport favors). However, there's no reason these strategies can't be applied to a mixed-gender teams.

The Women's Sports Foundation recommends that prior to puberty – when variation tends to be among individuals, not genders – that they should compete with and against each other on mixed-gender teams. Further, they go on to recommend that, under the right conditions, there is value to continuing this practice even after puberty.<sup>11</sup>

The strategies in this toolkit focus on the things that research shows are most important to creating a good experience for girls in sport. Many of them address historical barriers that women and girls have faced in sport and support coaches in overcoming typical pitfalls that come from centuries of bias about female athletes. However, there's no reason these strategies can't be applied to mixed-gender team.

**Strategies that work well and enable a great experience for girls are often strategies that work well for boys and mixed-gender teams too.**

At the core, the strategies are about prioritizing relationships, encouraging young people to take risks, focusing on the process of learning and providing every athlete the things they need to be successful. And while we may need to work harder to ensure that every female athlete has the tools she needs to be successful, providing these supports does nothing to diminish the experience of male athletes.



<sup>11</sup> <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/issues-related-to-girls-and-boys-competing-with-and-against-each-other-in-sports-and-physical-activity-settings-the-foundation-position.pdf>





# KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MIXED-GENDER TEAMS

Girls and boys often experience sport differently. Boys may be more inclined (and encouraged) to try different things. Some players may find it easier to access opportunities to play than others. Bullying and teasing can be a problem. Parents, caregivers, coaches and even players themselves can have conscious and unconscious biases that affect the experience. As the coach of a mixed-gender team, here's what you'll want to think about:

## 1. PAY ATTENTION TO GROUPINGS

As with any team, a mixed-gender team will have a natural range of skill and competency. The environments that best support the development of young people at every level are those that consciously group participants around their skill and experience level, not by grade, gender, size or age.

## 2. AVOID DIFFERENT STANDARDS

Many programs think they are “leveling the playing field” by changing the standards for girls. They double the points scored by a girl or set a minimum number of minutes a girl has to play. Rather than elevating the girls' role, this serves only to call attention to differences. Instead, make the requirements the same for boys and girls. For example, in a mixed-gender basketball league, require that in the first half, each team must play with 3 girls and 2 boys; in the second half, 3 boys and 2 girls.

## 3. WATCH WHAT YOU CELEBRATE

Our natural biases often show up in the form of rewarding behaviors that we think of as characteristic to a specific gender identity. When coaching girls and boys together, it's even more important that we avoid reinforcing these stereotypes and praise everyone for the things we prioritize most. For example, a coach should cheer just as loudly when a male or female player tries something new as when they score a point or win a race.



## GENDER SPECTRUM

As norms around gender identity change and young people bring a more fluid approach to identity, it becomes even more important for coaches to acknowledge sports' history of binary characterizations and male preference. Considering skill and experience over gender identity creates a more inclusive environment for young people on all parts of the spectrum.



# PRACTICE PLAN

## HOW TO USE THE PRACTICE PLAN (PROGRAM LEADERS):

One way to ensure that coaches remember some of the key concepts you shared at the training is to use a standard practice plan template that reinforces those concepts. Share the template below with coaches so that they can find the right moments to integrate the strategies we know will help girls make the most of their sport experience. A great practice focuses on building sport skills and essential life skills that girls can use on and off the field.

## HOW TO USE THE PRACTICE PLAN (COACHES):

As a coach, you're in control of each practice. And creating a consistent structure for practice will help you build the right coaching habits and the best environment for your players to thrive in. A practice plan will help ensure you find the right moments to integrate key coaching strategies that will help girls make the most of their sport experience. A great practice builds both sport skills and essential life skills that girls can use on and off the field.





TIME (90-min practice)	PRACTICE COMPONENT	COACH FOCUS
5 MIN	<b>CIRCLE UP</b> Establish a routine, so girls know what to expect (e.g., how practice will start every day). Give players an outline for the day and let them share anything that they are thinking about before practice!	Always form a circle: Circles put everyone at the same level and make us feel safe – someone's always got your back!  Ask Questions: Check-in and see how players are doing!
10 MIN	<b>WARM-UP</b> Make your warm-up consistent, active and focused on connection. It's even better if it's something the girls take control over after the first few practices. This is the time when girls can shake off whatever's been happening during the day and get focused on practice.	At the beginning of the season, use this time to focus on learning names!
15 MIN	<b>TEAM BUILDING</b> This should be a high-energy, physical activity that really gets the blood pumping. It should also be a time when players have the chance to work with different teammates and solve problems together or get to know something about one another.	Catch players doing something good and call out their contributions: <u>Offer specific praise to players for things they can control, like supporting their teammates, working hard, and most importantly, trying new things!</u>
15 MIN	<b>SKILL BUILDING</b> Introduce your skill of the day. Start with a simple drill and add difficulty. Provide challenge by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Increasing speed (e.g., dribble the ball faster)</li><li>2. Adding pressure (e.g., dribble against a defender)</li><li>3. Introducing fatigue (e.g., dribble after an intense activity)</li></ol>	Help girls set goals for themselves!  Remind players that mistakes are part of learning and, instead, encourage them to focus on the progress they've made by asking, "How did you do that?"
30 MIN	<b>GAMES</b> Transition into games that reinforce the skill you are working on. Get creative and plan for lots of activity!  Make sure you leave time to scrimmage – tweak the rules of the game to highlight the skill you are working on!	Mix up the competition- challenge players to beat personal records, combine for a team record, or find the day's winning team.  Remember to call out players who are being brave, taking risks, and trying new things! It matters that you focus on this when it counts!
15 MIN	<b>COOL DOWN AND CIRCLE UP</b> Consistently follow your end of practice routine to cool down from the day's activities and get ready to transition out of practice.  Give the players time to connect with each other and talk about whatever is going on for them.	Instead of telling players what you thought of the day, ask questions – What did they notice about the day? What did they like? What would they do differently?  Let them talk about what they want to talk about!



## Gender Inequity in Sports

Associations can challenge themselves to break down the barriers to gender inequity within their own Association by employing the following “Conversation Kick-Starters” in Association meetings; workshops, etc.

The Conversation Kick-Starters are for coaches to learn about the experiences of their female athletes and for adults to learn about their unconscious biases.





# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

One bias that we often run into with coaches is the assumption that sport access is closer to equal than it really is. Despite the best efforts of Title IX in the U.S. and the growth of opportunities at all levels of sport for girls to play, we are still nowhere near parity, particularly when it comes to leadership opportunities and coaching. This misunderstanding about the reality of the experience for girls and women in sport can result in misguided assumptions from both male and female coaches, as well as program administrators and parents.

One way to illustrate the differences between men's and women's experiences is to let girls tell you about it. Encourage them to reflect on their experiences and see the similarities and differences by using the activities and speaking points below:

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## STEP IN / STEP OUT

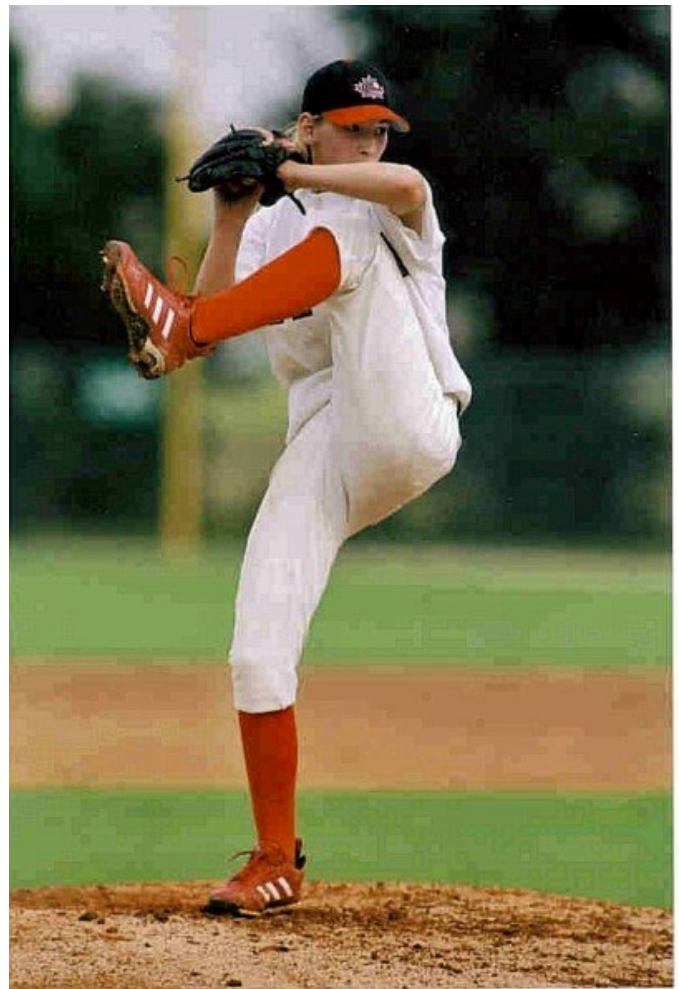
### Set-Up

Participants should be standing in a circle or square (use the lines of the gym or field if you can or set up lines using cones).

### Introduction

I'm going to read a series of prompts to you, with instructions to step in to the circle if the first answer best reflects your experience, and to step out of the circle if the second answer best reflects your experience. There are no right or wrong answers and what other participants are doing shouldn't influence whether you step up or step out. There will definitely be similarities and differences between your experience and the experiences of the group. Try to notice some of those as we go, and we'll talk more about it at the end.

We'll be talking about single- and mixed-gender programming and about the amount of time your gender identity matched with the gender identity of the other people playing on or coaching your team. When we refer to "your gender," you should choose the gender you most strongly identify with.



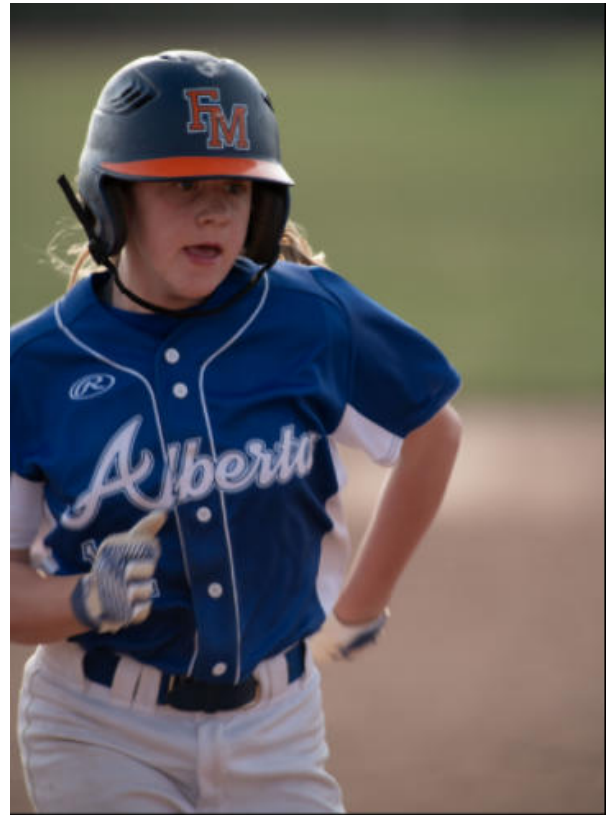




# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## Prompts

- For this question, think about your experiences in non-structured active play, like recess, pick-up games, or camp.
  - **Step in** to the circle if most of the time (more than 50% of the time) the majority of the people you played with were the same gender as you; **Step out** if the majority of the people you played with were a different gender as you.
  - **Step in** to the circle if you were ever the only person of your gender playing during a game or activity; **Step out** of the circle if you were never the only person of your gender playing during a game or activity.
- For this question, think about your experience in structured youth sports (if you didn't play structured youth sports, you can just keep standing where you are).
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time you played on a single-gender team that matched your gender; **Step out** of the circle if the majority of the time, you played on mixed-gender teams.
  - **Step in** to the circle if you were ever the only person of your gender on a team; **Step out** of the circle if you were never the only person of your gender on a team.
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time, you played on a team where the coach was the same gender as you; **Step out** of the circle if the majority of the time, you were coached by someone of a different gender.
- For this question, think about your experience in competitive sports – playing at the high school, college or professional level.
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time you played competitive sports, your head coach was the same gender as you; **Step out** of the circle if most of the time, your head coach was not the same gender as you.
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time you played competitive sports, at least one coach was the same gender as you; **Step out** of the circle if most of the time, none of your coaches were the same gender as you.





# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## Debrief

### 1. Ask: What did you notice?

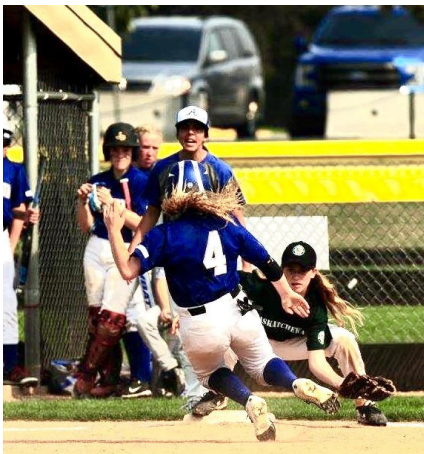
You will likely see a variety of experiences, but answers could include:

- That most of the men usually had male-dominated experiences (if you have men participating)
- That many women share the experience of being in the minority (or even the only woman)
- That many women were not coached by women most of the time, whereas the vast majority of men were almost always coached by men (if you have men participating)

### 2. Ask: If all of this is true, what does that say about who sport is created for? What does it say about who's experience, boys or girls, are most likely to be represented?

Answers could include (and the facilitator can help support participants in seeing these disparities):

- Sport is primarily created for and caters to men and boys. When girls are primarily playing with or coached by men, their experiences may not be as readily represented as those of boys and men.
- Girls often don't have opportunities where they can be in the majority and have access to positive female role models as coaches.



### 3. Ask: If sport was created for and primarily caters to men, and women are not equally represented in leadership or coaching roles, what kinds of biases or assumptions might this cause coaches (men and women) to make?

Answers could include (and the facilitator can help support participants consider these assumptions):

- Assumptions that women and girls don't belong
- Assumptions that there are some things in sports that women and girls shouldn't do
- Assumptions that what motivates and challenges girls about sports is the same as boys
- Assumptions that girls and boys want the same things out of sport

### 4. Ask: What kind of impact could these assumptions have?

Answers could include (and facilitator can help support participants to understand):

- We miss opportunities to create the best sports environments for girls – those that prioritize the things that most motivate and challenge girls, where they can develop relationships with other girls and learn from powerful positive female role models.

It's our job to understand that we all have biases and that those biases can influence our behavior. To minimize any negative outcomes that come from those biases, we have to keep reflecting on our actions and decisions as coaches and commit to learning as much as we can about what research establishes, and more importantly, girls tell us about what they really need from sports.



# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## ATHLETES ARE...

### Set-Up

Split your group into two and separate them so they can't hear or see what the other group is doing. If the group is mixed gender, try and split the groups evenly. Each group should have access to some flip chart paper, a whiteboard or some other way to record their brainstorm. Assign a "scribe" from each group who can write quickly and (relatively) neatly.

### Introduction

You'll have one minute to come up with as many words as you can to describe a certain group of people. Feel free to yell out your answers, but also give some time to your scribe to record everything.

We're trying to get as many words as we can in our 1-minute timeframe.

### Prompts

- Have one group start their minute brainstorm by providing words to complete the sentence "Male Athletes Are..."
- Have the other group start their minute brainstorm by providing words to complete the sentence "Female Athletes Are..."

Have both groups bring their brainstorms back and share them with the whole group.







# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## Debrief

### 1. Ask: What do you notice about the two lists?

Answers could include (but will reflect a variety of answers)

- That there are some similarities (ask the participants to estimate what percentage of the activities they think are similar)
- That there are some interesting differences (ask the participants to name which words they heard exclusively on one of the other lists.

### 2. Ask: Is it fair to say that we might have at least slightly different perceptions of what it means to be a female athlete and what it means to be a male athlete? (Participants should agree) If so, what might those assumptions mean for coaches as they approach working with girls?

Answers could include:

- We have different expectations and may treat girls differently
- Our unconscious biases, which are normal, might influence how we behave
- We might assume that the things that work for boys will work for girls when boys and girls may have different needs
- We might assume that girls and boys have different needs in cases where they actually want the same things
- We might assume that the differences between kids have to do with their gender identity when it's really just about individual differences among kids

It's our job to understand that we all have biases and that those biases can influence our behavior. To minimize any negative outcomes that come from those biases, we have to keep reflecting on our actions and decisions as coaches and commit to learning as much as we can about what research establishes, and more importantly, girls tell us about what they really need from sports.

### Modifications to this Activity May Include

1. Split the group separating men and women. Have both groups complete both prompts and then compare the lists.
2. Split the group and have both groups only complete the "Female Athletes Are" prompt to see how many of the words they use match up what research tells us about what girls want from their sports experience. Highlight words that illustrate that girls are strong, they like to compete, they are brave and try new things and focused on connection.







# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## PAIR SHARES AND SHARE BACKS

### Set-Up

Have each participant find a partner and discuss one of the following questions. Once the pairs have a chance to chat with each other, ask if anyone would like to share back with the whole group. Follow up after you hear some of the share backs with questions that get the group to think about how different genders experience sport.

### Introduction

With your partner, take turns answering this question. Make sure you leave time for both of you to answer.

#### Prompt 1:

- Tell your partner about a time when a coach made a positive difference for you. What did they do, what did they say, how did it impact you?
- Report out to the group about the impact a coach had on your sports experience.

#### Prompt 2:

- On a piece of paper, write down as many of your coaches as you can think of. Once you're done, draw a check or a star next to each of the coaches that you would consider a "good coach" – they supported you, you learned something from them or you had a generally good experience playing for them.
- Talk with your partner about what percentage of the coaches you've had in your life were "good" coaches and why you think they were good.
- Now go through and circle each of the coaches who were the same gender as you.

- Raise your hand if all of the coaches you circled were the same gender as you. Raise your hand if most of the coaches you circled were the same gender as you. Raise your hand if most of the coaches you circled were NOT the same gender as you. And finally, raise your hand if NONE of the coaches you circled were the same gender as you. (You'll likely see a gender difference with men having more male coaches; if your group is just women, you'll likely see some similarities in that fewer of their coaches reflected their gender, although there will be a range).

#### Prompt 3:

- Think about the best coach you know about – it doesn't have to be someone who coached you, it could be a coach who you admire and who's career you've followed. Write down the top five reasons why you think that coach is so great. When you and your partner are done, talk about why you think that coach is so great. Any similarities?
- Report out to the group on any things your coaches had in common that made them great.





# CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

## Follow Up Questions

### 1. Ask: Raise your hand if you were talking about a female coach

If a small percentage of the room raises their hands, ask: Do we think there are so few women coaches because women coaches are not as good as men? NO! Then why are we talking about so many fewer great female coaches?

- Because there are fewer women coaches
- Because the media doesn't tell as many stories about great women coaches
- Because most of us had more men as coaches than women, particularly at the higher levels of sport
- We have biases that keep us from thinking of women as great coaches

## Debrief

Any coach can have a positive impact on a young person, but this difference in gender is worth noting – girls are far less likely to have female coaches than boys are to have male coaches. And boys are even less likely to have female coaches. This means that most of the good lessons we're learning from adults are coming from men. Don't we want our kids to see women in positive leadership and mentoring roles?



## SUPPORTERS

*Coaches, Umpires, Board and Committee Members, Female Baseball Directors, Coordinators, Executive, Provincial Staff and most importantly - Parents*

Including women throughout your Association is important as young girls benefit from positive and empowering female role models. **YOU HAVE TO SEE IT TO BE IT!!** It helps girls realize they can overcome barriers and be successful in sport. Females in such prominent positions are best to help girls grow, develop and reach their potential, and most influential, **coaches** have the power to change lives. A great coach not only develops skills needed to play baseball but also teaches perseverance, selflessness, loyalty, cooperation, and tolerance. They assist the athletes with the development of taking risks, standing up for herself, improving self-confidence and by providing support throughout her journey.

A quality girls' baseball program is only as strong as its coaches, umpires, leaders and role models.

Parents, teach your daughter the skills to be successful and baseball will be a great source of enjoyment

- Watch baseball on TV as an avenue to learn some rules, pick up some of the baseball lingo
- Watch other girls playing baseball
- Create a plan, make goals and track progress to stay engaged

Chris James, Female Technical Director for Baseball Alberta has years of experience coaching female athletes. Paige Wakefield, a Team Alberta athlete has this to say, "He was the first serious coach who treated me like a high-performance athlete, I stayed in baseball because of him". Chris shares "Educating our coaches that first and foremost, they are athletes and they are there to play baseball. If you take the time to have good values and standards on your team, it creates a good environment. The more we work with coaches and Associations to understand that, the better experience it is for these female athletes to be baseball players."

Be sure to investigate the numerous social media accounts of those who promote women in baseball and women in sport.

Here are a few:

- Canadian Women In Sport (Twitter – @WomenandSportCA)
- IWBC (Twitter - @IWBC4Me)
- Alberta Dugout Stories (Twitter - @ABDugoutStories)
- Alexis Brudnicki (Twitter - @baseballexis)
- Women's Sports Foundation (Twitter - @WomensSportsFdn)
- Nike (Twitter - @Nike)
- Baseball Alberta (Twitter - @BaseballAlberta)
- Baseball Canada (Twitter - @baseballcanada)
- Girls Baseball Alberta (Twitter - @GirlsBaseballAB)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**Barb Northcott – Baseball Alberta – Girls/Womens Director**

**Scott Mackenzie - Baseball BC - Provincial Director of Female Operations and Development**

**Jays Care**

**Nike Engaging Girls in Sport**

Scott Mackenzie and Baseball BC deserve a large amount of credit in providing the basis for this Baseball Alberta manual. It is extremely encouraging our provinces were able to work together to provide a manual that promotes baseball for girls and women. You will find many references to the Baseball BC Manual throughout this document.

A further thanks to each of the Associations that are already offering all-girls baseball programming and to the ones that are promoting and supporting female participation. Also, to the many volunteers, leaders, coaches, managers, parents, promoters and the many before us who have paved the way. Female baseball is where it is and where it's going because of you.

A project of this magnitude cannot be completed without a vision from passionate people who have completed research and have knowledge of female baseball. Thank you to organizations such as Canadian Women in Sport who formally launched in 1981, Canadian Women & Sport was founded to advocate for progressive change within Canada's sport system. Its goal was to see the enhanced presence of girls and women at all levels and in all areas – as athletes, participants, leaders, officials, coaches and trainers. [<https://womenandsport.ca/>]

***TO EVERYONE INVOLVED AND TO THOSE HELPING GROW THE GIRLS GAME,  
THANK YOU...!***

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