

TEACHING ULTIMATE – JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL

Below are six 50 minute lessons for junior high or high school phys. ed. classes. If you are teaching Ultimate to younger grades, you may only get to the game of keep-away at the end of lesson 3. You can adapt lessons for younger grades by trying some activities with a ball first, then trying them with a disc. You may also want to use smaller discs with smaller children.

LESSON 1: INTRO TO ULTIMATE

Specific Objectives: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the 'travelling' rule. Students will demonstrate skills necessary to throw a backhand. Students will demonstrate skills necessary to catch a disc.

Materials Required: One disc per 2 students, whistle, large playing area (like a soccer field).

Delivery and Activity Outline:

Introduction - 5 minutes

Ultimate is rooted in the rule of Spirit of the Game. This foundation focuses on sportsmanship and rules awareness. It is the responsibility of every player to know and understand the rules, and to play by them at all times. There are NO referees or officials, so players on the field make their own calls and officiate themselves. This is the most important and unique aspect of ultimate.

Ultimate is played on a field that is as long as a soccer field and about $\frac{2}{3}$ as wide. There are 2 endzones on either end of the field. To score a point, a player must catch a pass while they are in the endzone. You cannot run with the disc, so once you catch it you must set a pivot. You have 10 seconds to throw the disc to a teammate in order to advance up the field.

Warm-up - 5 min.

Start with a light jog, then work through a series of dynamic stretches for legs and arms.

Catching - 10 min.

The best place to receive the disc is in front of your body. Move your feet in order to try to get your body in front of the disc. Spread your fingers wide and catch the disc with one hand underneath and one hand on top of the disc. Your hands and forearm should make a right angle; your hands should not be pointing in the same direction.

If the disc is above your head, catch the disc with both thumbs pointing down and grabbing the rim of the disc, and your fingers clasping the top of the disc. Your hands should be at 4 and 8 o'clock.

If the disc is below your knees, catch the disc with both thumbs pointing up and clasping

the top of the disc, and your fingers grabbing under the rim of the disc. Your hands should be at 4 and 8 o'clock.

Activity - Have students stand in a line behind a point about 10 yards from the teacher. Throw easy passes to the student at the front of the line, having them focus on catching with two hands in the middle of their bodies.

Setting a Pivot and Throwing a Backhand - 30 min.

When you catch the disc, you must immediately stop and set a pivot foot. In ultimate, the pivot foot is the opposite of your throwing hand; so, if you are right handed, your left foot will remain planted, and vice versa.

To throw a backhand, you should grip the disc with your fingers under the rim and your thumb stretched on top of the disc and pressing down on the grip rings. Step forward with your free foot so that your throwing shoulder is facing your target. Keep the disc flat as you pull it from behind you to toward your target, with the back of your hand facing your target. Once your arm is straight and pointing toward your target, flick your wrist and let go, keeping the disc flat as you release. The flatter the disc remains, and the more flick you give it, the further and faster the disc will fly.

Activity- Have students pair up and stand about 10-15 yards apart. Students should walk through the steps of throwing a backhand until they are comfortable enough to put it all together. They should continue to catch with 2 hands. Have them do this until all students have had some success.

Activity- With their partners, have them run around the field, completing passes back and forth. Have them focus on stopping as soon as they catch the disc, establishing a pivot foot, and throwing a backhand.

Summary/ Exit Activity - 5 min.

Summarize all major points covered this class. Ask students questions about what they learned.

LESSON 2: FAKE, PIVOT, AND THROW

Specific Objectives: Students will demonstrate skills necessary to throw a forehand. Students will demonstrate skills required to establish and utilize a pivot foot while faking and throwing.

Materials Required: One disc per 2 students, whistle, large playing area

Delivery and Activity Outline:

Warm-up - 5 min.

Review Catching and Throwing a Backhand- 10 min.

Activity - Have students throw backhands with a partner, focusing on the techniques they learned last class.

Throwing a Forehand - 20 min.

To throw a Forehand (Flick), hold the disc so the rim of the disc is between your middle finger and ring finger, with your thumb reaching around the disc and pressing on the grip rings. If you make a peace sign with the fingers under the disc, your middle finger along the inside of the rim, you will have more stability when holding the disc. This throw comes from the same side of your body as your throwing arm, with the front of your arm facing your target. Step out to the side with your free foot so that your chest is facing your target. Keep the disc flat by keeping your elbow close to your hip. Your arm should not move much during this throw. Cock your wrist back and then 'flick' your wrist forward, letting the disc spin off the tip of your middle finger toward your target. Again, the flatter you release the disc, the further and straighter it will go.

Activity - Have students pair up and stand 10-15 yards apart and throw forehands to each other. Students should walk through the steps of throwing a forehand until they are comfortable enough to put it all together. They should continue to catch with 2 hands. Have them do this until all students have had some success.

Pivoting and Faking - 10 min.

Activity - Expand on the last activity by having students pivot back and forth a few times before throwing either a backhand or a forehand throw. To add a fake, they just need to make the beginning motion of throwing the disc, but not follow through. Make sure they are keeping their pivot foot planted and throwing flat.

Summary/ Exit Activity - 5 min.

LESSON 3: TURNOVERS, CUTTING (GETTING OPEN)

Specific Objectives: Students will demonstrate an understanding of possession rules. Students will develop the skills necessary to make controlled cuts to get open for the disc.

Materials Required: Set of cones, whistle, about one disc per 3 or 4 students, large playing area.

Delivery and Activity Outline:

Review Mechanics of Pivoting and Throwing- 5 min.

- *Can you run with the disc?* No
- *What foot should be your pivot foot?* Left if right-handed, right if left-handed
- *What is the proper grip for a backhand?* Have a student try to demonstrate it to the class.
- *Which way should you step when throwing a backhand?* Toward your target so your throwing shoulder is facing them.
- *What is the proper grip for a forehand?* Have a student try to demonstrate it to the class.
- *Which way should you step when throwing a forehand?* Perpendicular to your target so your chest is facing them.
- *At what angle should you release the disc so it flies straight to your target?* Flat
- *How should you catch the disc?* Have student try to demonstrate the 3 two-handed catching techniques for the class. ALWAYS TWO HANDS

5 Ways to Turnover the Disc - 5 min.

A turnover is when the team that threw the disc loses possession of the disc and the other team gains possession of the disc. (Possession refers to which team gets to throw the disc.) A turnover can happen in 5 ways.

- 1. The thrower makes a bad pass and it hits the ground, or the receiver drops the disc.*
- 2. The receiver catches the disc out of bounds.*
- 3. Someone on defense knocks the disc to the ground.*
- 4. Someone on defense catches the disc.*
- 5. The thrower does not release the disc before the marker counts to 10.*

In all of these instances, the team that was on defense can take the disc from where the disc rests, where the disc crossed to out-of-bounds, or where the stall down occurred.

Give demonstrations of each of these instances so it is very clear what happens in each case. Students will tend to believe that whoever touched the disc last does not get to pick up the disc, so clarify that defense can just knock the disc out of the air and pick it right up to start play.

So... it is very important that you get far away from your defender so your thrower has a clear throw between them and you, with no defenders in the way! The only way to do this is to run hard and strategically.

Warm-up - 5 min.

Cutting (Getting Open) - 20 min.

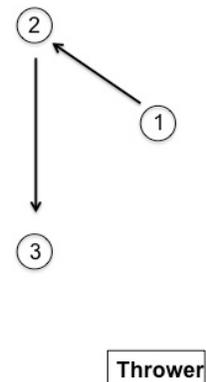
Set up three cones. Cone 1 is about 15 yards in front of the thrower, cone 2 is 5 yards to the left (backhand) and 5 more yards away from the thrower, cone 3 is 10 yards straight ahead, which will end up being about 5 yards to the left and 10 yards in front of the thrower.

There are 3 parts to a cut:

1. The fake - this part of the cut is to take your defender away from where you actually want to catch the disc. (cone 1 to cone 2) You will turn quickly to bid once you determine that you have moved them out of the way and you will have an easier chance to receive the disc than they will.

2. The bid - this part of the cut is where the thrower will make a decision to throw to you or not. (cone 2 to cone 3) It is important that you run in a straight line to provide an easy target for the thrower and to keep your body in between the thrower and your defender. If the thrower throws the disc to you, continue running hard until you have the disc in your hands. Your cut does not stop once the disc is in the air, it stops once the disc is in your hands.

3. The clear - If the thrower decides they do not have a clear throw to you, then you have to recognize that you are not receiving the disc and you must get out of the way for the next cutter. (cone 3 toward the forehand sideline) Cut hard toward the opposite side of the field until you are out of the way of the thrower, then return to the back of the stack. Do not come any closer to the thrower than cone 3.



Activity - Have students line up behind cone one. You are the thrower. One by one, they will run through the cut pattern: fake out, bid in, clear toward sideline, jog to back of line. It is important that all three parts of the cut are at full speed, even the clear. Do not throw the disc to them yet. Remind them not to get too close to the thrower as this 'clogs the lane.'

Activity - Have students continue this pattern, but this time you will be throwing the disc to them. Remind them to keep running as hard as they can until they have caught the disc. This is called 'running through the disc.' If you want to allow them to be throwers, have a few start in a throwing line where you are. Once they have thrown, they will go to the back of the cutting line. Once they have caught the disc, they will go the back of the throwing line.

Practicing Cutting and Turnovers - 10 min.

Activity - Set up a few large square playing areas and split the students up into groups of 3 or 4. In these squares, they will play a game of keep away against the other team. Remind them that you cannot run with the disc, you have 10 seconds to throw it, the turnover rules discussed earlier (as they occur in Ultimate) apply in this game, and you cannot be within touching distance of the person throwing the disc. The team with the highest consecutive number of passes wins.

Summary/ Exit Activity - 5 min.

LESSON 4: STACKING AND HANDLING

Specific Outcomes: Students will demonstrate an understanding of a vertical stack. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the role of the handler.

Materials Required: One set of cones, one disc per 4 or 5 students, pinnies, whiteboard, whistle, large playing area.

Delivery and Activity Outline:

Warm-up - 5 min.

Review - 5 min.

- *What are the 5 ways to turn over the disc?*
- *What are the 3 parts of a cut?*

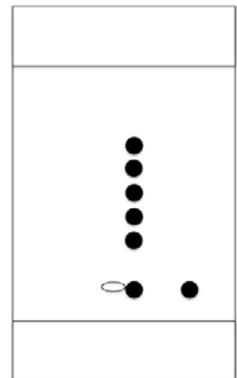
Vertical Stack - 15 min.

On a whiteboard, draw the field and a vertical stack down the center of the field. *A vertical stack is the easiest way to organize players when they are on offense. They line up in a line, 5-10 yards apart, and take turns cutting out of the stack. Players must communicate with each other so they don't all cut at the same time; communication can be verbal or non-verbal, where the player behind the cutter watches and waits to begin their cut until the cutter has begun clearing or the disc is on the way to them. The stack will move down the field as the disc advances down the field. Player who have cleared return to the stack, and players that have caught the disc will return to the stack once they have made a pass.*

Activity - Set up 5-7 cones, 10 yards apart, in a vertical line down the field, forming a stack. Students will form even lines to the forehand side of each of the cones. The disc starts at one end of the stack. The student at the front of the line at the next cone will make a cut, receiving the disc during their bid. While the disc is in the air, the student at the front of the line at the next cone will begin their cut, then receive the disc during their bid. The disc continues down through the stack until it reaches the student cutting from the last cone, at which point the disc will work its way back down the stack.

Handling and Stacking - 20 min.

Go back to the whiteboard and add 2 handlers on a line perpendicular to the stack and about 10-15 yards below it.. *Most teams operate a vertical stack with two handlers and 5 cutters. When a cutter receives a pass, they have their backs facing the stack, so they can't see what is going on behind them. Handlers are always facing the stack, so they have the best perspective of what is happening on the field. The most efficient throw for a cutter to make is a short 'dump' pass back to a handler. When this happens, the stack repositions themselves further down the field in front of the handler with the disc.*



Sometimes the cutters cannot get open out of the stack and the handler is running out of time to make a pass. In this case, the handler with the disc should turn to face the other handler and make a 'swing' pass across the field to them. When this happens, the players in the stack reposition themselves in front of the handler with the disc. The disc works its way down the field from handler, to cutter, to handler, to cutter.

Activity - Split students up into groups of 7. The disc will start with one of the handlers (handlers can wear pinnies if it makes them easier to distinguish). The student at the front of the stack will make a cut and receive a pass on their bid. The handler that did not make the throw will run toward the receiver to catch a dump pass, trying to catch the pass beside the cutter, rather than behind them. The stack will reposition themselves so they are about 15 yards in front of that handler while the cutter who just dumped the disc clears and returns to the back of the stack. The cutter now at the front of the stack makes their cut, receives the disc on their bid, passes to the other handler who is running up for a dump pass, then clears and returns to the back of the repositioned stack. Eventually, the stack will reach the end of the field, at which point the group should choose 2 new people to act as handlers and head the other way down the field.

Summary/ Exit Activity - 5 min.

It would be beneficial to do this summary in front of the whiteboard.

LESSON 5: ADDING DEFENSE

Specific Outcomes: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the terms 'force,' 'home,' 'away,' and 'marker.' Students will develop the skills necessary to play man-on-man defence.

Materials Required: One disc per 3 students, one set of cones, whiteboard, pinnies, whistle, large playing area.

Delivery and Activity Outline:

Warm-up - 5 min.

Review - 5 min.

- *What are the two roles in a stack?* Handler or cutter
- *How far apart should cutters be in the stack?* At least 5 yards
- *How far in front of the handler should the front of the stack be positioned?* 10-15 yards

The Marker- 20 min.

On the whiteboard, draw the field and place the words 'HOME' and 'AWAY' along either sideline. *The person defending the player with the disc is called the 'marker.' Their job is to make it difficult for the thrower to get the disc to another player. If the marker were to set up directly in front of the thrower, the thrower could pivot around either side of the marker, making both the backhand and forehand throws an option. Instead, the marker should pick one type of throw to defend, and allow the other throw to go up. This is called a 'force.' The marker usually forces the other player to throw a forehand, since this is the more difficult throw to execute, or will force in the same direction a strong wind is blowing.*

In case the other team has a left-handed player on the field, and because the forehand side changes after we switch directions, we use 'home' and 'away' to clarify the sideline toward which the marker is forcing. Whichever sideline our bench is on is considered the 'home' side, and the opposite sideline is considered the 'away' side. The marker faces the sideline called in the force; so if the force is away, the marker faces the away sideline when defending the thrower.

The marker must count the stalls out loud while the thrower has the disc. The counts should be one second apart. If the marker is counting too fast, the thrower calls 'fast count' and the marker goes back one number in their count and continues counting. The thrower has until the marker reaches ten to throw the disc or it is a turnover.

(The next part is optional, especially for beginners or younger students. You can just state that the marker cannot be close enough to touch the thrower while they are counting. If they do get in this space or touch the thrower, the count starts back at 0.)

The closest two points on a marker's body must be the width of a disc away from the thrower. The marker cannot intrude upon this space. If they do, the thrower may call 'disc space' and the marker must back up and go down one number in their count. If the

marker touches the thrower or the disc while they are pivoting or throwing, it is a foul on the marker. The thrower calls foul, and the marker has an opportunity to agree or disagree with the call. If the marker agrees that they touched the thrower or the disc before it was released from the thrower's hand, they say 'no contest,' the thrower gets the disc back, and the count starts back at zero. If the marker thinks that contact was made after the disc was released, they say 'contest,' the thrower gets the disc back, and the count starts where it left off, or at 6 if it the count was higher than 5.

Activity - Have students get into groups of three. One student will start as the thrower, one as the marker, and one as the receiver about 10 yards down the field from the pair. State that the force throughout this exercise is to one side of the field. The marker will set up facing the force side. The thrower will pivot and make the available pass to the receiver. Once the receiver catches the disc, the thrower runs to become the marker, the receiver is now the thrower, and the marker is now the receiver. Students will cycle through the drill as follows: throw, mark, receive, throw, mark receive, etc, being sure to set a force to the same side of the field throughout the drill, regardless of which direction the thrower is facing.

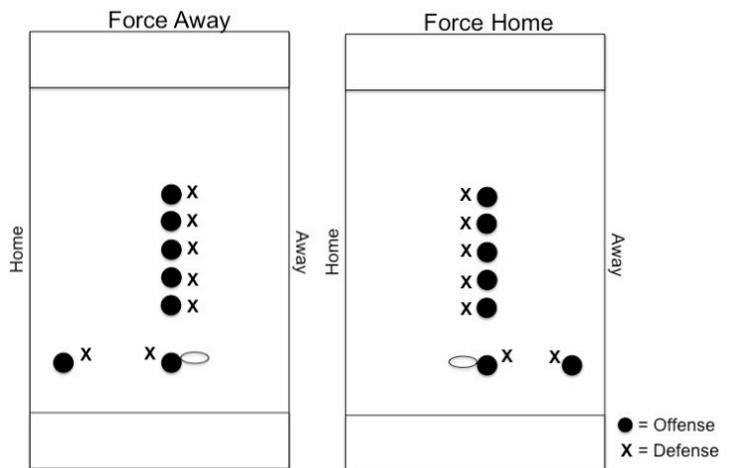
Defending the Stack - 15 min.

On the whiteboard, add the vertical stack. Show where the thrower and the marker are, and state which way the marker is forcing. *It is the job of the defenders of the stack to defend the side of the field that the marker is allowing the throw to go to. It is the job of the marker to not allow throws to be made to the un-forced, or 'break,' side of the field.*

When you are defending a cutter, always start in a position between your player and the force side field. The player defending the person at the front of the stack should position themselves slightly in front of the cutter to avoid allowing a quick, short pass. The player defending the person at the back of the stack should position themselves slightly behind the cutter, in case the handler decides to throw the disc past everyone and toward the endzone. As the cutter moves out of the stack, the defender should try to reposition themselves so they are between the possible throw and the cutter.

Defenders guarding the handler without the disc should start in a position between their player and the thrower, regardless of which way the marker is forcing. They should try to remain directly between the person they are guarding and the thrower, at all times.

Activity - Divide students into 4 or 6 equal groups, trying to have as close to 7 students in each group as possible. Two groups will 'play' each other, so give half the groups pinnies and pair them



up with a group that doesn't have pinnies. During this activity, one team will be offense and the other will be defense. They are not allowed to run. Have the offense set a stack with two handlers, then have the defense set up in the proper position, making sure every offensive player is being guarded. Remind students that they will always be guarding the same person- the person who was guarding them. Students on offense will try to complete one throw without running, and defense will try to remain in position to guard their person without running. When a throw is made or turnover occurs, the defense becomes offense, play changes direction, and they remain at a walking pace. If they show that they understand the concepts of switching possession, setting up, and defending with a force, allow them to run.

Summary - 5 min.

LESSON 6: PLAYING A GAME OF ULTIMATE

Specific Outcomes: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic rules in ultimate. Students will demonstrate an understanding of using the 'pull' to start play.

Materials Required: 2 sets of cones, 2 discs, pinnies, whistle, whiteboard, 2 large playing areas (two small fields can fit on one soccer field)

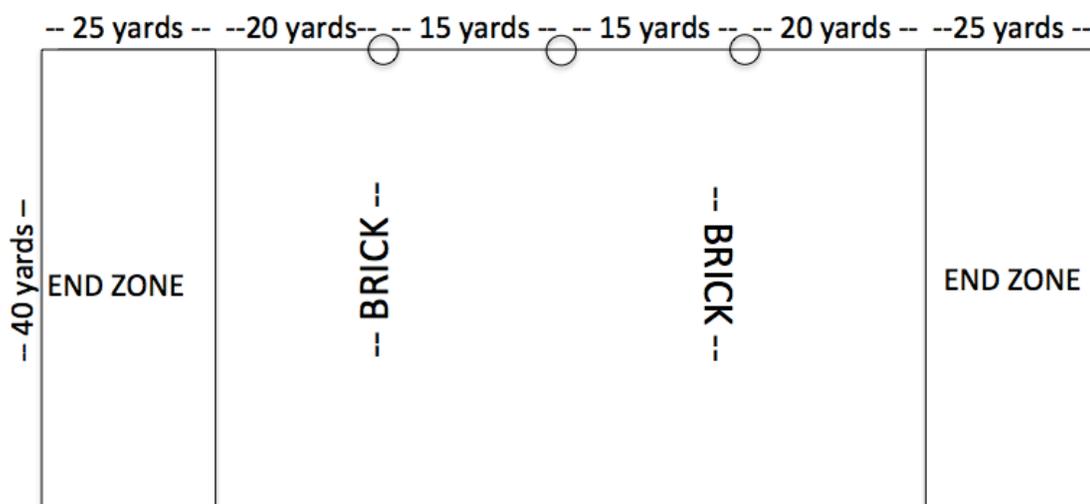
Delivery and Activity Outline:

Warm-up - 5 min.

Review - 5 min.

- *What does force mean?* The direction the marker is allowing the thrower to throw.
- *Which sideline is home and which sideline is away?* Home is the side the bench is on, away is the other side.
- *What happens if the marker touches the thrower before the disc is released?* The thrower calls foul, the marker says 'no contest,' and the stall count starts back at 0.
- *What side of the cutter should the defender stand on?* The same side as the force called.

Rules of the game - 30 min.



To start the game or a point, the teams line up on opposing endzone lines. One team 'pulls' the disc from behind the endzone line (like a kick-off in football) and the receiving team runs up to pick up the disc and set up their play. If a player attempts to catch the pull and drops the disc, it is a turnover and the pulling team takes the disc from there. If the pull goes out of bounds before touching the ground, the receiving team takes the disc from the middle of the field 20 yards in front of the endzone if it passed that point (the 'brick'), or perpendicular to where it went out of bounds. If it lands in bounds, the receiving teams starts from where the disc came to a stop on the field or where it rolled

out of bounds on the sideline. Play continues, using the turnover rules, until one team catches the disc in their endzone. When a team scores, they remain in the endzone they scored in and set up to pull from there. The other team must walk to the other endzone to receive the pull. When a member of the receiving team raises their hand to signal readiness, or after 90 seconds has elapsed since the point was scored, the pulling team may pull the disc.

Activity - Split up students into 4 even teams. Give two teams pinnies and set up two games. Remind students that the number one rule is spirit of the game. All players are responsible for knowing the rules and not intentionally breaking the rules at any time.

Summary/ Exit Activity- 10 min.

After every ultimate game, the two opposing teams mingle and play a spirit game. This is just a fun and silly game that allows the teams to do something fun with no real competition.

Activity - Have all students stand in a circle. When you say look down, they look down. When you say look up, they must look directly at another person in the circle. If two students are looking at each other, making eye contact, they must pretend to die a dramatic death and then remove themselves from the circle. The circle will get smaller and smaller until there are only one or two students left. If it comes down to two students, have them play 'Bear, Ninja, Cowboy.' The Bear mauls the Ninja, the Ninja knocks out the Cowboy, and the Cowboy shoots the Bear. They stand back to back, take three steps out and draw. Declare a winner!