

How to Be a Great Team Player

An Elevation Guide from www.ElevatingAthletes.net

Most athletes are pretty good team players most of the time. But very few athletes are great team players every day. Being a great team player every day requires a special kind of commitment that not enough athletes are willing to take. Successful coaches will tell you that those who do make the commitment are the most valuable athletes on the team.

1. Be Committed

The first step toward becoming a great team player is to commit to the team. This is not as obvious as you might think. Many athletes join teams without being fully committed. They have trouble sticking with their team throughout the ups and downs of athletic life. Great team players stay committed to the team no matter what.

2. Be Informed

Your team most likely has a set of values, goals, and strategies established by the coach. Values are the character traits your team values most (e.g. play hard, play smart, have fun). Goals are things you want to accomplish (e.g. improve, win, etc). Strategies are things you are going to do to achieve your goals. Great team players always stay informed so they know what the team is trying to accomplish at any given time.

3. Be Adaptable

Every team member plays a role on the team. Sometimes the team needs us to play the exact role we would choose for ourselves. Sometimes we have to sacrifice by playing a different role for the good of the team. Great team players are selfless enough to adapt their role to the team goal. They look to add value wherever they can.

4. Be Positive

Every team goes through its share of ups and downs. The only question is how you will respond. Great team players try to stay positive no matter what. Their example elevates their teammates who may be losing heart.

5. Be Dependable

It is one thing to talk about commitment. It is another thing to deliver. Great team players say what they mean and mean what they say. They show up on time and prepared to perform every day. They fulfill all of their team duties. Their coaches do not have to worry about them.

6. Communicate

Being a teammate means relating to coaches and teammates. This does not always mean being best friends with everyone on the team – although that is nice if it happens. But it does mean relating to people well enough to work together effectively. Great team players take the initiative to communicate with their teammates and coaches.

7. Collaborate

Average teams do what they are told to do by their coaches. Great teams do what they are told – and more. They work together to find creative approaches to winning. We call this collaboration, and great team players always look for ways to win through collaboration.

"Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships." -Michael Jordan

8. Be Supportive

Every team needs leadership from their coaches. Every team also needs leadership from the athletes themselves. Great team players know that leadership is necessary for team success. They support their coaches and team leaders.

9. Be Solution-Oriented

Every team has challenges and problems. We can look at these as burdens or as opportunities. Great team players choose to see opportunities where others see burdens. They use their creativity to think up creative solutions, and they encourage their teammates to do the same.

10. Represent

Every team member represents their team in the arena and in the community – the school, the neighborhood, and beyond. Great team players never do anything which would embarrass or bring dishonor to themselves or their teammates. Like a good ambassador, they always represent the team with honor.

Elevation *(For reflection and discussion)*

1. What do you think of the quote from Michael Jordan? What is it about teamwork and intelligence that wins championships?
2. Which of the ten winning practices are you already good at? Which need more work?
3. How can the ten winning practices of teamwork help you outside of sports?
4. Can you give an example of someone on your team or in your community who is a great team player? Which winning practices do they show?