High School Guide:
How to Start an Ultimate Team in your School

Section 1
Why Ultimate?

Although starting an Ultimate team can be challenging, there are many benefits that result. You will be introducing a brand new sport at your school. Students will learn to love a physical activity that comes with strong values of sportsmanship, respect, and conflict resolution.

Ultimate is inexpensive, and can be played outside or inside, on a field or in a gym. If there is not enough interest from the student body to create a 7x7 team, you can still play with a 4x4 or 5x5 format. You can always adapt the game to the number of players and/or skill level of your team.

Section 2
Getting Started

Gauging interest
The first step in creating a team should be to gauge interest in your school. One way of doing that is to create a short survey for the student body so you can find out, approximately, how viable the creation of the team is. The survey should include contact information of the survey’s creator, a question asking students what their free time slots are, what their experience levels are and how they would like to be contacted. Include somewhere on the survey that training sessions for beginners will be provided so they should not worry if they do not know how to play. Then ask your physical education (P.E.) department if you can create a school wide announcement to hold a meeting for any students in the school who are interested in the formation of this team. At the meeting, give meeting attendees the survey and explain your vision for the Ultimate team. Then wait for the surveys to return so you can gauge the interest students have for the creation of an Ultimate team at the school.

Tip: Give meeting attendees pens/pencils and kindly request that, if possible, they hand the surveys in by the end of the meeting. The more people take the survey home, the less likely they will be to return the survey to you.
Tip: Show a highlight video of Ultimate to capture the imagination of students. Break down their preconception of what Ultimate is. Sell them on the physical and social aspects of the sport.

First, begin gathering information about how the setup of your team will work. Ask your P.E. department or P.E. teachers about your plan to create a team and they will give you the specific details about how you can create it. Things you should find out before asking your school administrators (principals, vice principals, etc) about making the club official are:

- **Have a set supervisor** who will oversee your team’s practices and games (having more than one supervisor is best, so that there is less of a time requirement for each individual supervisor). Supervisors can be teachers or other external supervisors (ask administration about this).

- **A basic plan for the team**, which includes its future goals and how activities will be run. Ask the P.E. department to give you a list of times and locations so that you know when and where the team can have their practices. Consult your supervisor(s) about their schedules then tell your P.E. department so that no other team takes the times and locations you want.

Now that you have these steps completed, you can email administrators to set up a meeting with them to discuss your proposal to make an official Ultimate team.

**Tip:** If the administrators do not accept your proposal for creating a team, ask them if you can create a club.

If your proposal is accepted, your P.E. department will be able to give you the parental forms and the health forms you will later need to give to students who want to be members of the team.

**Section 3**

**Player recruitment**

**Introductory Meeting**

This meeting should be held after your team has become official. It is not the same meeting as the meeting explained in Section 2 about gauging the student body’s interest in the sport. The introductory meeting will be focused on recruitment of members for the team.

Ask your team supervisor(s) to make school wide announcements that inform the student body of the time and location of the introductory meeting for the Ultimate team.

**Tip:** include the word “Frisbee” in your announcement so more students will understand what your announcement is about.

Before the meeting, prepare a few points that you want to announce at the meeting. This should include, but is not limited to, a brief introduction to the sport, the dress code for the game, the
rules of the game, and the times and locations for practices. Also, make sure to give the meeting attendees the player forms and/or health forms that they will need to hand in to the team supervisor before they are allowed to play.

**Tip:** Always be safe when running the club and follow your school’s rules and regulations. If you do not do this, you may run into trouble with the school administration, which can result in a temporary or permanent termination of the team. Do not take any risks in this regard.

**Marketing and Recruitment**

It can’t be said enough: you have to recruit, recruit, and recruit even more. To be honest, you will spend more time recruiting than actually coaching. Find your most motivated players, and have them become ambassadors for the team.

The most effective recruiting technique is the personal touch. Get students to ask everybody they know to join the team. Try to have more than one leader. Have recruits bring a friend to the next practice. Ask P.E. teachers to make an announcement in their classes.

**Tip:** Remind the students when recruiting to be positive. Getting somebody to try Ultimate is no different from any other social situation. Make people feel good about themselves and happy to be involved. Be positive. Initially it might be tough. Nevertheless, after your recruiting starts, others will follow. Before you know it, you will have an Ultimate club.

**Tip:** Don’t underestimate the power of visual advertising. Get permission to put posters around your school and articles in the school newspaper. Carry a disc with you. Ask your players to wear their team jersey around school (if possible).

Another great way to recruit new players for Ultimate is to play/practice when and where people can see you. Watch for students watching your practice and always invite them to join - it’s important to invite them, not wait to see if they come and ask to join as students may be hesitant to approach a group they are not a part of.

**Tip:** Create a relationship with the parents of your players. Some of them will become great ambassadors for your team. Collect parent as well as player email addresses, contact them to introduce yourself, send them the schedule of games and practices, and give them team managing roles like fundraising, preparing snacks for the team and ensuring players are hydrating well. Ensure parents are aware of the governing philosophy of Spirit of the Game.

**Section 4**  
**Practices and Games**

**Plan and run practices**

Your practices should run on a regular schedule (e.g. every Monday at 4pm). For high school, Ultimate Canada recommends one or two practices a week, and one or two tournaments per
season. Players should know ahead of time when practices are scheduled. Keep track of your players’ attendance.

**Tip:** Use online tools to track attendance. Create a private Facebook group for your team so that players can post their availability. Use online managing platform such as Doodle, Happy TC, to track attendance. Create a phone or text chain for players to call/text each other and motivate attendance.

Do not schedule practices when attendance will be low. It is far better to have a fewer good practices than many bad ones. If too few people show up to play a game, do not call off practice. Spread out and toss the disc around. Do drills and small-sided games. Plan how to get more people at your next practice. Contacting people beforehand may be an inconvenience, but it is a great way to ensure a solid turnout.

**Ease people in**
They will get involved and stay involved because of social aspects and connections they make. Sure, the fitness aspects of Ultimate are excellent and the competition can be great, but people keep coming for the fun. A new Ultimate team can be an easy, non-threatening way to meet people and make friends. Keep this in mind and encourage the social aspects of Ultimate.

**Tip:** Bring in a music box to practice. Create team chemistry and cheers. If you do, you will be amazed at how quickly people forget what life was like before Ultimate.

**Curriculum**
Playing games is what Ultimate is all about. But do not forget the fundamentals. Start practices off slowly. First, teach the basic throws and catches. Try to be patient with new recruits. Use positive reinforcement and take time to explain the correct way to perform a skill.

Along with drills, be sure to play a game of Ultimate at each practice. At first, it may look out of control, but players need to get a sense of the game and how much fun it is to play. Players will have fun playing Ultimate no matter how many turnovers occur. For games, make sure that teams are equal in terms of the skill levels of the players.

**Tip:** Be sure to run proper warm-up and stretching exercises before playing. Students will think twice about coming out to practice if their body still aches from the last practice. Have group stretches before and after practice. Stretching prevents injuries so make sure to discuss its importance.

**Tip:** Don’t be afraid to modify the rules in order to play small-sided games with beginner players (4x4, 5x5, on smaller field). Let go of the way adults play Ultimate, and increase the chances of success. The more goals the players score, the bigger the satisfaction and excitement will be.

**Friendly Games**
Try to connect with other schools in order to give your team the opportunity to play against other teams. These games do not need to be part of a tournament, or to mean anything. Having the opportunity to come together as a team will only make your program stronger.

**Coach’s training**

If you want to feel more confident as a coach, we recommend you take some Ultimate coach training. Ultimate Canada has partnered with the Coaching Association of Canada to include Ultimate specific trainings in the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). Start with a one-day community initiation training, or develop your coaching skills through a 2-day competition introduction training. These trainings are available in every province and in both official languages. More information can be found on the Ultimate Canada website: [https://canadianultimate.com/ultimate-coaching-programs](https://canadianultimate.com/ultimate-coaching-programs)

**Section 5**

*Outside the school opportunities*

**Local League and Tournament Opportunities**

You must first gather information regarding opportunities outside school. School boards are continuously changing, so you should talk to administrators and supervisors if you would like to expand the team outside the board. Local leagues sometimes have to work in coordination with the school board, sometimes not, depending on the province. Tournaments, on the other hand, may not require the school board. Information about possible tournaments for secondary school teams can be found on the Ultimate Canada website as well as through your local league website. These tournaments will usually require funding for transportation, entrance fees, and substitute teachers who will be supervising the trips. Therefore, it is greatly encouraged that you talk to school administrators regarding funding aids in this area. Tournaments are a great event to have a team work towards and to hook them on the sport.

**Opportunities for Improving Team Chemistry**

Most importantly, speak to those who are in the team and make sure they are ready and willing to participate in possible tournaments as skill levels may vary. If a tournament is not an option, the team may benefit from going on a trip to see a professional Ultimate game. A professional game can help stir up the passion for the sport within team members as well as help improve the group’s chemistry. This trip can be run with or without school supervision as games are usually held outside of school hours.

**Tip:** Communicating all these suggestions with administrators as well as team members will ensure the satisfaction of all groups and will reduce the risk of problems either administrative or participative.

**Section 6**

*End of season, looking ahead to the next season*

**Strong Suggestion for the End of First Semester**
Create an Executive Committee for the team. This committee should be made up of current team leaders and members who are designated to be leaders of the team the following year. To choose who will be on this committee, consult with the team’s current leaders to decide on who the most committed members have been over the first semester (assuming the club will run over the whole school year). The members chosen to lead the team the following year must be in a grade below grade 12 (such as grade 11s) so that they will be able to carry on the organization and management of the team in future years.

Planning Ahead
The most important goal of starting a new team is survival. Keep recruiting new players. Encourage existing players to keep coming out. They will do this if they are having fun. If you are fortunate enough to have too many players, start a second team.

Section 7
Resources

Leagues in your community
If you wish to connect with other schools, or with other Ultimate leagues and clubs, contacting your local Ultimate association would be a great start.

The National Sport Organization (NSO) for Ultimate is Ultimate Canada: https://canadianultimate.com/

Every province and territory has a Provincial/Territorial Sport Organization (PSO/TSO) for Ultimate. Most major cities have an Ultimate association. You may find a list here: https://canadianultimate.com/where-to-play

Highlights videos
Many great Ultimate videos are available online. The semi-professional leagues’ website are a good place to start. Here is an example of an exciting video: https://youtu.be/HdrfEUlGszw
  American Ultimate Disc League: http://theaudl.com/
  Major League Ultimate: http://mlultimate.com/

Other resources
Many resources for Ultimate are available free online. Have a look at the Resource section of Ultimate Canada: https://canadianultimate.com/resources