

Introducing Ultimate

Ultimate has grown worldwide and within Australia at significant rates over recent years. Many Australian's now understand that there is a team sport that can be played with a flying disc. However, challenges remain in that many people are still yet to participate in their first game of Ultimate and are unfamiliar with the rules of play and the necessary skills that are involved. Therefore, an Ultimate Coach must have both the skills to teach the fundamentals of the sport to new participants, as well as an ability to explain and teach a sport that an entire group may not have played before.

Holding a "what is Ultimate?" session

A cricket coach does not need to explain the basic rules of cricket to new players because they will definitely have seen the game on television and have probably been to a live game. New Ultimate players are not likely to have seen a game. Therefore, if you have a completely new group of players, the best thing to do in your first session with them is to show them a game on Youtube, arrange a demonstration game or take them to see a game (e.g. local league.) There are a significant number of high profile games on Youtube now and they can be sourced through the AFDA's Youtube channel.

Ultimate Australia on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/UltimateFrisbeeAustralia>

Just watching the game is probably not enough however. New groups will need the game to be explained at the same time. It is best to provide them with a simplified version of the rules and to talk through the rules as the game is being shown on the screen. Appendix C contains an example of a simplified version of the rules.

If you do not have the luxury of internet access at your coaching venue, then a whiteboard session is the next best option. With magnetic pieces and a drawn-up field you can completely describe the game. With a completely new group using both techniques in successive sessions is an effective way to reinforce the rules. Knowledge of the rules is essential to the game because it is self-refereed. All players on the field need to know the rules to make the game work.

Introduce the rules slowly

When you are teaching the rules it is not necessary to introduce all the rules at once. In fact this will overload your new players. Rather provide them with the simplified rules so that they can play a game and gradually introduce a new rule every couple of weeks after that.

Self-refereeing

Making calls

Novice players will not have a complete understanding of the rules of Ultimate Disc. It is part of the coach's role to teach them the rules and the application of the rules. This requires coaches to have a thorough understanding of the rules. A copy of the rules is an essential part of any coaching kit, as this will allow you to refer to rules and offer them to players to study.

The main issue with novice players is that they do not know how to make calls or often understand what is happening on the field. In training situations it is always important to explain to your group what rule is relevant and what the outcomes of the call are. Where you have a group of mixed experience, it is often a good learning experience to charge the experienced players with assisting novice players with calls.

A drill to use in the early stages of teaching the rules, is to act as a semi-referee and use a whistle to stop play and explain violations. This should be used sparingly, but can also be useful to stop players who because of their size and speed may injure others. The main goal is to educate players on the rules and to give them the confidence to make calls and to understand calls made against them.

Getting novice groups started

Here are a few tricks that can make your group's first foray into Ultimate more enjoyable and successful:

Throwing, throwing, throwing

Initially weight their sessions with as much throwing as possible. Try to have them throw in pairs and small groups as much as possible, as this will maximise the number of throws they get per session. Have them throw to stationary targets, to moving targets and to as wide a variety of receivers as possible.

As a coach focus on their technique rather than their completion rate. Look for things like spin on the disc, the angle of release and their throwing stance. If they throw enough with these things correct, they will become good throwers. You will often see a player's throwing get worse after you provide them with a throwing tip. It is best to give them time to practice the new tip. You will usually find that 10 minutes later that their throwing has improved.

Play modified games

Playing games on smaller fields and with fewer players is easier for new players. The smaller fields will stop them from tiring as quickly. Playing with fewer players makes it easier for people to start to organise their team offence, to get open and to know where to go on the field. Many senior teams still struggle with organising 7 players on the field, so it is unlikely that new teams will have immediate success.

As the group gets fitter and more experienced, start to expand the field and increase the number of players on the field. In an ideal world you would give them 4-6 weeks at 5-a-side before moving up to 6 and 7-a-side.

If fitness is an issue for a beginner group, allowing unlimited substitution during a point can help to avoid player distress. Set up a substitution box at the side of the field and allow substitution by the on-field player "tagging" the off field player.