

5 WAYS TO HELP AN ATHLETE TRANSITION BETWEEN DRILLS

Small changes that can make practice transitions clearer, calmer, and more efficient.

THE 5 WAYS

1 GIVE A TRANSITION CUE

Don't make the end of one drill and the beginning of the next a surprise. Use a consistent cue so the athlete can finish what they're doing and prepare for what's next.

TRY "Two more reps, then we're moving" or "Last rep, then we're going to indy."

Coaching principle: don't just tell athletes where to go. Tell them what's coming.

2 TELL THEM WHAT'S NEXT

A transition becomes much easier when the athlete knows what they're transitioning to. Give them the basic roadmap: where, who, and what.

INSTEAD OF "Alright, let's go!"

TRY "We're moving to the sleds. Pair up and start with three reps."

You don't need a five-minute explanation. You need enough information to eliminate uncertainty.

3 USE THE SAME TRANSITION ROUTINE

The more predictable the transition, the less the athlete has to figure out. Use the same sequence every practice, then give the instruction.

TRY "Freeze. Eyes up. Here's what's next."

Coaching principle: predictability reduces the amount of information an athlete has to process.

4 GIVE ONE STEP AT A TIME

Coaches sometimes give the entire transition at once. That's a lot to remember, especially for athletes who struggle with multi-step directions or working memory.

INSTEAD OF "Put your equipment away, grab a ball, get with your group, and head to the far field."

TRY "First, put your equipment away." Then give the next step once that's done.

Coaching principle: if the transition has five steps, don't assume the athlete needs all five at once.

5 CHECK THE TRANSITION, NOT JUST THE DRILL

Coaches often check whether an athlete understands the drill, but sometimes the problem happens before the drill even starts. Look for a lost or unsure look.

ASK "Where are you headed?" Or "What's your first rep?"

If they don't know: fix the instruction, not the athlete.

THE TRANSITION FORMULA

CUE Let them know the transition is coming.

PREVIEW Tell them what's next.

ROUTINE Use a predictable transition process.

CHUNK Give multi-step directions one piece at a time.

CHECK Make sure they know where they're going and what they're doing.

WHEN TRANSITIONS KEEP GOING WRONG

If an athlete repeatedly struggles during transitions, ask:

Can they do it?

SKILL ISSUE

Do they understand it?

INSTRUCTION ISSUE

Can they access it?

ACCOMMODATION ISSUE

A transition problem isn't always a behavior problem.

QUICK COACH CHECKLIST

- ☐ Did I tell athletes the transition was coming?
- ☐ Did I explain what's next?
- ☐ Did I give clear, manageable directions?
- ☐ Am I using a consistent transition routine?
- ☐ Did I check that athletes know where to go?

The goal isn't to make every athlete transition the same way. **It's to make the next step clear enough that every athlete can get there.**