THE TALKING SPLIT LIBRARY · FULL GUIDE

PARENT COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT

All five templates in full: the pre-season philosophy letter, the 24-hour rule policy, the post-trial feedback script, the playing-time conversation framework and the sideline-behaviour scripts, plus a quick reference. Copy them and adapt them to your voice. The overview has the short version.

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INTRODUCTION

The podcast's most consistent practical observation about parent management: almost every difficult conversation is the result of expectations not set clearly enough before the season began. This toolkit gives you the tools to set those expectations, in writing, in advance.

> *"Put it in writing. Everyone hears verbal communication a little differently. The parent who remembers a casual comment as a promise is not acting in bad faith. They heard what they heard."*
>
> Justin Shuler, Season 2

TEMPLATE 1: PRE-SEASON PHILOSOPHY LETTER

Send this before your first session. Keep it to one page. The goal is clarity on the things that matter most.

> **Pre-season welcome: [team name] [age group] [season year]**
>
> Dear [Player name] and family,
>
> Welcome to [Team Name] for [Season Year]. I am looking forward to working with [player name] this season. Before we start, I want to share a few things about how I coach and what you can expect from our program.
>
> **OUR GOAL THIS SEASON**
>
> Our primary goal is development: helping every player improve their skills, understand the game better, and enjoy being part of a team. We will compete in every game and work hard to win, but we measure our success by the improvement we see in each athlete across the season, not just the scoreboard.

PLAYING TIME

Every player will receive meaningful court time in every game. In development games and the first three quarters of competitive games, time will be distributed as equally as possible. If you have questions about court time, I welcome that conversation. Please see the feedback process below.

TRAINING

Sessions are on [days/times/locations]. Athletes should arrive five minutes early and bring water and their basketball gear. Please let me know in advance if your child will miss a session.

FEEDBACK AND COMMUNICATION

If you have a concern, please reach out via [email/message] rather than immediately after a game. I will always respond within 24 hours and we can find a time to talk properly.

SIDELINE BEHAVIOUR

I ask all parents and spectators to cheer for effort and positive play. Please leave tactical instructions and referee commentary to me. Your support means everything. Please direct it toward encouragement.

I am genuinely excited about this season. Let's make it a great one.

[Your name], Head Coach

TEMPLATE 2: THE 24-HOUR RULE POLICY

A shorter document that can be distributed alongside the welcome letter or posted on your team communication channel.

Our feedback policy

Coaching decisions (including playing time, team selection, and in-game choices) are made with the whole team's development in mind. If you have a question or concern, here is how we handle it:

1. **Wait 24 hours** after a game before raising a concern. Emotions are high immediately after a game, for coaches, athletes, and parents alike. The conversation we have the next day is always more productive.

2. **Contact me directly** via [email/phone/message]. Please do not approach me at the venue immediately after a game.

3. **Ask your child first**. Before raising a concern with me, ask your child what they think. Their perspective is the most important one.

4. **Expect an honest answer**. I will tell you what I see and what I am working on. I will not tell you what you want to hear if it isn't accurate.

5. **Trust the process**. Development takes time. A player who is working hard and improving steadily is ahead of a player who plays more minutes but is not growing.

Thank you for your partnership in your child's basketball journey.

TEMPLATE 3: POST-TRIAL FEEDBACK SCRIPT

Use this as a guide for any conversation with a player or parent after a trial, whether the athlete was selected or not.

Post-trial feedback conversation guide

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION:

Ask the athlete to self-evaluate first. 'What do you think went well? What do you think you need to work on?' Listen carefully: their self-perception tells you as much as your evaluation.

FOR ATHLETES WHO WERE NOT SELECTED:

Thank them for their effort at the trial.

Acknowledge what was good: 'Here is what I thought you did well: [specific observation].'

Name one or two specific development areas: 'Here is what I'd encourage you to work on: [specific, actionable items].'

Close with a door open: 'Keep working on those things. We'd love to see you back next season.'

FOR ATHLETES WHO WERE SELECTED:

Congratulate them briefly. Don't over-celebrate.

Set an expectation: 'You've earned your spot. Now the work starts.'

Name one thing to improve: 'The one area I want to see you develop this season is [specific].'

LANGUAGE TO USE:

'What I observed was...' (not 'you always' or 'you never')

'Here is what I'd like to see more of...'

'The next step for you is...'

LANGUAGE TO AVOID:

'You just didn't have it' (not specific enough)

'You'll get it next year' (empty without specifics)

TEMPLATE 4: THE PLAYING TIME CONVERSATION FRAMEWORK

Playing time conversation framework

OPENING:

'Thank you for raising this. It's important and I want to address it properly.'

[Show your rotation records if you have them.]

IF THE ATHLETE IS GETTING ROUGHLY EQUAL TIME:

'I can see this might not feel like enough. Here is what I'm seeing in training and games: [specific observations]. Here is what [athlete] can work on to get more opportunities: [specific, actionable items].'

IF THE ATHLETE IS GENUINELY UNDER-USED, OWN IT:

'You're right that [athlete] hasn't had as much court time as they should have. Here is why that happened: [honest explanation]. Here is what I'm going to do differently: [specific commitment].'

IF IT'S A PERFORMANCE ISSUE:

'Playing time in our program is connected to what I see in training and games. Here is specifically what I need to see from [athlete] to earn more minutes: [specific, observable behaviours].'

CLOSING EVERY CONVERSATION:

'I am genuinely invested in [athlete]'s development. I'm always happy to talk through this further.'

TEMPLATE 5: SIDELINE BEHAVIOUR, AND WHAT TO SAY WHEN IT HAPPENS

In-game approach

During a stoppage, walk to where the parent is seated and say quietly:

'I really appreciate you being here. I want to ask one thing: [athlete] is getting instructions from both of us right now and it's splitting their attention. If you can hold the tactical stuff for me, I'd really appreciate it. Encouragement is great. Keep that coming.'

Then return to the bench. Do not make it a scene.

POST-GAME FOLLOW-UP (if it was a recurring issue)

Find a private moment, not in front of other parents or athletes.

'I wanted to follow up on tonight. I noticed [athlete] was receiving instructions from the sideline during the game. I've seen this a few times now and I want to be direct about it, because I think it's genuinely affecting their performance.

When [athlete] hears two sets of instructions in a possession, they freeze. The uncertainty costs them more than the instruction helps. What I need from you is encouragement only, not tactical coaching.

I understand you know this game and you want to help. The best way you can help [athlete] right now is to be their loudest supporter, not their second coach. Can we agree on that?'

QUICK REFERENCE: THE FIVE CONVERSATIONS EVERY JUNIOR COACH HAS

CONVERSATION	KEY PRINCIPLE
'Why isn't my child playing more?'	Be specific and honest. Show your records. Name what they need to work on.
'Why wasn't my child selected?'	Stop-start-keep framework. Ask them to self-evaluate first. Two specific development items.
'The referee was wrong about...'	'I hear you. My job is to coach our players. Let's talk about something I can actually change.'

'Your coaching decision was wrong when...'	Wait 24 hours. Then: 'Here was my thinking. I may have got that wrong. Here is what I'd do differently.'
'My child doesn't want to come anymore'	This is the most important conversation. Ask why, listen carefully, and take it seriously.

RELATED GUIDES

Part of The Talking Split Library. See also the Trials Playbook and Coaching Under-12s, or browse all coaching resources. Back to the toolkit overview.

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