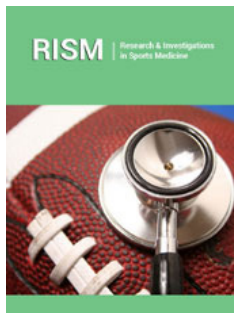


# Communication Skills for Team Building

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ISSN: 2577-1914



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Submission: 📅 December 17, 2021

Published: 📅 January 24, 2022

Volume 8 - Issue 2

**How to cite this article:** Alhassan Abdulshakur. Communication Skills for Team Building. Res Inves Sports Med, 8(2), RISM.000681. 2022. DOI: [10.31031/RISM.2022.08.000681](https://doi.org/10.31031/RISM.2022.08.000681)

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## Introduction

Communication is a fundamental skill in all teamwork organizations. In team sports, the argument is possible to occur, and that might lead to negative consequences on the team. Therefore, it is important to create a healthy environment among team members to avoid issues that might result in poor performance. Building a strong team relies on multiple psychological skills that help athletes to work together in one team. A team sport player is required to collaborate with his or her teammates in order to accomplish team goals. Poor communication skills cause some issues, such as misunderstanding between team members. On the other hand, effective communication skills aid athletes to better understand each other and build a strong relationship between team members. In soccer, the level of the communication reflects the image of the relationships between the team members and this leads to better or worse performance.

Sport communication has been defined as a “process by which people in sport, in a sport setting, or through a sport endeavor, share symbols as they create meaning through interaction” [1]. Pervious research focused on the relationship between athletic performance and communication skills. A study led by Slepicka [2] showed that alliance and the feeling of friendly behavior impacted individual’s performances by generating a better climate for those performances. Another study conducted by DiBerardinis et al. [3] indicated that there was a positive relationship between interpersonal communication skills and athletic performance for team sport players who participated in 12-week sessions to develop their communication skills. A popular study by Kraus et al. [4] found that physical touch or tactile communication was beneficial and helpful for athletes to improve their performance during the 2008-09 NBA season. These studies demonstrate that communication skills play a significant role in team sports, and athletes, in turn, are encouraged to learn and practice these skills in order to enhance their performance. Nowadays, however, it is becoming more complex to build a healthy relationship between team members in a professional level, especially in soccer. To illustrate, some professional players do not work collaboratively with their teammates because they want to concentrate only on themselves since the field of sport became an attractive platform for sport business and economy. It is essential that athletes learn how to effectively communicate with each other in order to create a supportive climate and avoid problems that can be caused by poor communication.

## Purpose

The purpose of this workshop is to provide effective communication skills focusing on building a healthy relationship between team members in soccer. Two communication activities will be used to help the participants understand each other and work together in one team.

## Target Population

The target population for this workshop is professional soccer players. Also, this workshop targets young and unprofessional soccer players who are new members on the team.

## Workshop Schedule of Events

The period of this workshop differs from one environment to another, and it is based on the number of the participants in the group. For example, it might take from one hour

to three hours to learn and practice the communication skills for soccer athletes ranged between 20 to 30 participants in a soccer team, and it can be less or more than that in different soccer teams. Sport psychologists or coaches who have the ability to instruct their athletes, are encouraged to schedule this workshop between once to three times a week before practices. Also, it is necessary to consider other factors in the agenda before scheduling this workshop (e.g., important events, level of communication skills in the team, athletes' schedule). It is better to provide this workshop in a free-stress environment to help athletes work together without pressure.

### Workshop Activities

Notice: Both activities have been taken and modified from ([Griffin & Placek [5]; Jones & Pfeiffer [6]; Sullivan [7]). These activities will be used in this workshop.

#### First Activity: A Team-Building Starter

This activity concentrates on the construction of team building process. A Team-Building Starter activity provides opportunities for the participants to actively interact with each other in the group. The specific purpose of this activity is (a) to design a program for a team-building session; (b) to create engagement to regularly observed obstacles facing the team; and (c) to improve efficient listening skills. Paper and pencil for each player and blackboard and chalk are the required materials for this activity. Sport psychologists or coaches explain the goals of the activity and instruct the players about how to participate in the activity. The players, in turn, are required to work with other players that have not communicated with recently. After that, the players join their small groups in separate spots in the room, and start interviewing each other addressing one question titled "What problem situations should we work on in this team-building session?" Each player in his or her small group has five minutes to talk about the problem that he or she sees it is important to work on it in team-building session while the other members in the group listen carefully to the speaker without taking notes. After each member has participated, each player will be responsible to give a brief summary about what problem was his or her member talked about, "each individual gives only one summary for one person". Then, all players in the room gather in one circle while the coach or sport psychologist is not involved in the circle. Each player summarizes to the team what issue he, or his partner talked about. The instructor writes on the board a list including all the suggestions without modifying, but the player can modify if the summarizer did not give correct information. During this process, the players can ask questions if they do not understand what is written on the board. It is important to make the list clear to understand for all players in the team. Finally, the board should involve a list of problems made by the players. The problems will be ranked by the players, and at the end of the activity, the list should include the problems that deserve the most immediate attention.

Second Activity: Sharing and Supporting Goals

This activity allows the players to help each other, and it increases the communication level in the team environment. The purpose of the activity is (a) to develop the process of team building by using interpersonal commitment, self-disclosure, and feedback; (b) to allow giving and receiving feedback between the team members in order to support the team and personal growth goals; (c) to promote the participants' commitment to toward each other's goals. The required materials for this activity are paper and pencil for each player and blackboard and chalk. The instructor gives a brief explanation of the goals of the activity, demonstrating that a positive team atmosphere involves the principle that each player can reveal team and personal growth goals and then receive feedback and promote those goals. Then, the following words will be written on the board by the coach or sport psychologist: "On the team, I need to improve my ability to .....", and the players are required to complete the sentence on paper. Completing a sample sentence could cause facing other team members complex issues or recognizing the effort of teammates. When all the players complete their sentences, the coach or sport psychologist writes on the board the following questions: (a) In your opinion, how does the sentence completion represent what this team member needs to do for her or his growth? (b) How challenging do you think this undertaking would be for this person? (c) How can the team support this person in her or his efforts to meet this goal? After this phase, the players start taking turns to share their completed sentences with the teammates, and when they finish, the team members give feedback based on the posted questions on the board. Finally, after receiving feedback from the team, each player will be able to decide whether he or she wants to modify, keep, or completely change the goal. At the end of this activity, the players write on paper the final goal that they will be working on.

#### Conclusion

In soccer, building healthy relationships among the team members requires effort and time that must be considered by coaches. Effective communication skills are a tool that coaches are encouraged to use in order to create a healthy environment on the team. Moreover, applying A Team-Building Starter and Sharing and Supporting Goals activities is an appropriate method to provide effective communication skills for the players, and the constructions of these activities help the players to positively interact with each other. It is also important that coaches or sport psychologists provide follow-up workshops to track the players and assess the level of the communication on the team, and the players, in turn, should practice the skills that they learn from the activities. It is essential that the players should participate in this workshop without any pressure. Furthermore, this workshop is beneficial for professional athletes who need to enhance their relationships with their teammates, and it is also helpful for young athletes who do not know how to build a relationship with others on the team. All athletes in all levels must understand the importance of how they communicate with their teammates in which they can help each other to achieve their personal and team goals.

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