



VARA YOUTH HOLIDAY WEEK SUGGESTIONS (U10-U12 GROUP)

Holiday week is great because it allows coaches to spend more than a day or two consecutively with the athletes but it also has its challenges with crowds and Mother Nature doesn't always cooperate with us. Therefore, this time can be a great opportunity to go over some of the important topics and issues that need to be discussed with the athletes so they can optimize their performance. Perhaps when the crowds or conditions are tough, do an indoor session. Many parents rush home on a Saturday to tune skis for the following day or need to get on the road on Sunday afternoon so this might be a good time to schedule a short 20-minute end of the day session.

Suggestion of topics for discussion.

- **Rules:** Go over the [USS&S rules](#) and the "what if's" Can I hike in GS? In SL? How do I hike? What happens if I catch the racer in front of me? What if a gate is out or broken? What if my ski comes off? What if I hit the start wand before it's time to go? What if the lift breaks? What if a dog runs in front of me? What if I miss my start? What if I forget my bib? What does a provisional re-run mean?
- **Time Management:** Between school, homework, sports, travel, ski practice, sleep, family time and obligations the winter is hectic and goes by fast. Talk to athletes about setting time aside each day for the things that need to be done. Ask athletes to share how they manage their time with the group.
- **Nutrition:** Not every coach is a licensed nutritionist and that's ok! By being involved in athletics it should be safe to say that you know a thing or two about eating healthy and making good food choices. It's important to talk about food choices in the base lodge on race day and the negative impact of having a lunch high in fats and sugars. Why your body will have difficulty performing during the second run. How important it is to fuel your body with a good breakfast each morning. Here is a link to a website with some fun recipes, snacks, ideas and facts on healthy choices for young athletes. <https://food4youngathletes.com/>
- **Sleep:** Everyone needs it! Sleep helps reduce injury, helps reaction time, prevents mental errors and boosts overall performance. Take a few minutes to talk about the importance of sleep. [Read here](#) Or good bedtime routines. [Read here](#).
- **Hydration:** Think water is overrated? Think again. Athletes need to be hydrated and it can be difficult to do in the winter with the cold weather. However, it is still important and being dehydrated affects performance. [Read here](#) for reasons why athletes need to drink water and the consequences of being dehydrated. You could include in your nutrition talk why opting for water over sugary sports drinks is the best choice. Here is a [List](#) of thumbs up and thumbs down drinks.
- **Kids teaching kids:** One of the best ways for kids to learn a drill is for them to have to teach it themselves. Assign drills to your athletes or groups of athletes and have them present it on snow to the group.

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Keep sessions short and interactive. Have athletes participate by asking what they think or what they currently do and is it working. You shouldn't assume that athletes are learning about these topics in school or other sports so go for it! They will appreciate the help.

Keep browsing through the [SkillsQuest](#) videos and the [Center of Excellence TV](#) for drills to do with your athletes.

Next time: Race Day Prep

Alexandra Krebs: VARA Youth Coordinator
<https://www.vara.org/resources/youth-coordinator/12/>
Email: Alex@vara.org

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