



LIFE SKILLS

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PLAYERS

In all sports, athletes often have to overcome adversity, training setbacks, injury, and even personal tragedy to reach the pinnacle of their sporting careers. Life skills are important for young GAA players in this context as they help individuals to effectively cope with demands of everyday life whilst enjoying our games. This information sheet describes life skills that are important for young GAA players to develop for success on the pitch and in life. The application of these skills will ultimately help contribute to a successful playing career.

GOAL SETTING

Goal-setting is like a map with the big picture being the destination. This life skill will give you direction and help with your motivation, as well as increasing your satisfaction and self-confidence in your performance. Setting goals will also enable you to track development towards reaching your full potential. Effective goal-setting use SMART guidelines:

- **S**pecific – clearly envisage **what** you want to achieve, **why** it is important to do this at this time, and **how** you are going to do it.
- **M**easurable – the way in which your success can be measured. If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to the continued effort required to reach your goals.
- **A**ttainable – the goal is realistic. There must be ways to achieve your goals and they must stretch you slightly so you feel that you can do it.

- **R**ewarding – the accomplishment will result in benefits for you.
- **T**imely – time within the goal should be reached. Without a time limit, there's no urgency to start taking action now.

GOAL-SETTING TIPS

- List your goals
- Set both short- and long-term goals
 - Short-term – complete a food diary for one week
 - Long-term – join a Club or Society in College
- Set sport and life goals
- Visualise yourself achieving your goals
- Review your goals
- Reward yourself upon achievement

“LIFE SKILLS SUCH AS GOAL SETTING AND DECISION-MAKING EQUIP INDIVIDUALS WITH THE ABILITY TO HANDLE THE DEMANDS AND CHALLENGES OF EVERYDAY LIFE.”

DECISION MAKING

- Good decision making will help you achieve your goals and is a key skill to make important decisions in life
- Good decision makers gather the information and follow a process:
 - Identification of problem
 - Brainstorming of solutions
 - Identification of consequences to those solutions
 - Choose a solution
 - Evaluation of choice
 - Try another solution (if necessary)
- An example of a decision faced by a talented young GAA player will be choosing which teams to play for in a given year

SELF-ANALYSIS

SWOT Analysis is a technique used for understanding your strengths, weaknesses, and looking for the opportunities and threats you face. In a personal context, it allows you to enhance your career by taking advantage of your talents, abilities, and opportunities.

ASPECT	EXAMPLE
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What advantages (skills, education, contacts) do you have that others don't?• What personal resources do you have access to?
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What could you improve?• What should you avoid?
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are good opportunities facing you?
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What obstacles do you face?• Is changing technology changing

your position?

NETWORKING

Networking is the art of meeting people and building relationships. Effective networking can help you get a job, meet new people and friends, and gain new ideas. Networking is not complicated and takes little effort. It is relatively easy to create a network that supports your personal and professional success for the future. It is important to have a network across personal (Family and friends), organisational (Committees and councils), professional (Colleagues and peers), and strategic networks (Contacts and connections). You never know when you might need help from someone in these networks. An important skill for effective networking is the ability to clearly and succinctly articulate who you are, what you offer, and what you are looking for.

QUICK TIPS

- Introduce yourself confidently and explain what you are doing or seeking
- Create and practice a 30 second introductory speech
- Ask people for their contact details
- Connect with people online e.g. LinkedIn

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication skills are important to convey yourself and your values effectively. Effective communication can significantly improve your relationships and decision making. Communication is the key to successful personal, sporting and professional relationships. Having healthy relationships outside of sport will help keep you focussed whilst playing. Know how to effectively communicate with key people in your life such as friends, family, coaches, team-mates and teachers as they can help you work through some of the emotions and stress you

may experience, which will lead you to a more confident decision that keeps you focussed on the future instead of being indecisive and looking to the past.

There are three basic categories of communication:

TYPE	DELIVERY	FEATURES
Verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral communication delivered face to face or over the phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pitch Volume Tone of voice Speed & clarity of speech
Non-verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall body language and physical presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posture Hand gestures, Facial expressions Dress style
Written	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-mails, text messages, letters, written documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing style, Vocabulary Grammar Clarity of message

GOOD COMMUNICATION TIPS

Verbal Tips

- Know your audience
- Be aware of your speech patterns
- Read the audience
- Ask for clarification
- Get feedback

Non-verbal Tips

- Present yourself properly
- Be conscious of your body language
- Be a good listener

Written Tips

- Outline what you want to say
- Determine if writing is the best option
- Take care with style
- Review before sending

STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Stress is a mental and physical reaction to a current situation, upcoming event, or people you encounter.
- Young GAA players may develop stress from the pressures of managing playing demands from playing sports and expectations from their peers, managing school/college work, and preparing for exams.
- It is therefore important for them to know how to deal with it, recognise its effect on them and how to reduce stress levels.
- Stress is created when a person feels that they do not have the ability or resources to handle what is ahead of them
- Effects of stress include anxiety, overeating or under eating, sleep problems, lack of motivation or focus, headaches, and muscle pain.

MANAGING STRESS

- Stress can be modified through the following techniques:
 - **Time Management**
 - Important to balance college and sport
 - Devise study schedule, plan your time and set goals
 - Procrastinate
 - **Physical Activity**
 - Reduce stress drastically by exercising
 - Lift weights, jog or swim

- **Listen to Music**
 - Calming music will help relax and focus on tasks

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- Being able to manage, understand, and be aware of your emotions as well as the emotions of others and to recognise the impact of your emotions on others.
- Emotional Intelligence can be improved by understanding yourself, your goals, intentions, responses, and behaviour through:
 - **Self-Awareness** – ability to identify and express motions
 - **Self-Management** – Ability to control emotions and impulses by creating effective strategies to use your emotions to assist you with managing goals, relationships, stress, and communication.
 - **Social Awareness** – Ability to sense, understand, and react to others' emotions.
- This skill will help you manage stress, communicate better, manage relationships and become a leader.

HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

- Be proactive
- Begin with the end in mind
- Put first things first
- Think win-win
- Seek first to understand then to be understood
- Synergise
- Sharpen the saw

TRANSITIONAL SKILLS

Teenagers are in a phase in their lives where there is a distinct change from the fun filled environment of childhood play, to a more structured type of organised training and competition seen at adult level.

Players should always **maintain the enjoyment factor** in sport, and many teenagers will attempt to keep this through trying something different, some tricks or touches that they have developed through individual practice

- *Some of the problems associated with the progression to adult Gaelic Games include:*
 - Your body and mind may not be developed enough for Adult training regimes
 - Your skill levels may not match the demands of performance in adult situations
 - You may not be sufficiently developed cognitively to understand and implement the coach's instructions - especially when dealing with Team Play issues
 - Your commitment and discipline may be questioned if you struggle to come to terms with the more demanding nature of teenage play over childhood play.
 - You may become disillusioned if you do not adequately take notice of the above issues.
 - Remember to keep enjoying what you do and talk to your coaches/friends to find a solution if the enjoyment if this is no longer the case.

MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS

Time management, effective communication, stress management, managing emotions, having high self-esteem and problem solving are all skills for a healthy relationship. Relationships are a necessary part of healthy living, but there is no such thing as the perfect relationship. Relationships from friends to romances have the potential to enrich our lives and add to our enjoyment of life. However, they can also cause discomfort and sometimes even harm. The following are the traits of a healthy relationship:

- Mutual respect
- Trust
- Honesty
- Support
- Fairness/equality
- Separate identities
- Good communication
- A sense of fondness

All of these things take work. Each relationship is most likely a combination of both healthy and unhealthy characteristics. If some of your relationships have negative characteristics which are impacting on you, you should firstly determine how they are affecting you, and then begin to work on improving the negative aspect of the relationships to benefit you. You should talk to family and friends to help work out the challenges in your relationships and find a solution that is healthy for you.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Time management will help you strike a balance between Club, County, College and life commitments which will ultimately help prepare you for sitting exams, meeting deadlines, and attending training sessions without being stressed.

TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Do first things first
- Be task-orientated rather than time-orientated
- Organise and know your calendar
- Set deadlines when possible
- Develop a routine
- Remind yourself that there is always enough time for the important things
- Have confidence in yourself and your judgement of priorities

BALANCING LIFE AND SPORT

Life as a talented young GAA player is challenging on many levels. Balancing the expectations, demands, and pressures of playing on multiple teams simultaneously whilst also studying and/or working is a reality for many young players. Learning skills such as goal setting, decision making, self-analysis, communication skills, networking, stress management, emotional intelligence, transitional skills, time management, and managing relationships will help you cope with the demands of everyday life and contribute to the development of your long-term playing career.

For more information, please visit learning.gaa.ie/player