



Time Management for Student-Athletes

This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.

“With my kids headed back to school, can you provide any tips, guidelines or frameworks that can help student-athletes establish good time management skills?”

PCA Response by Ray Lokar, PCA Trainer–Los Angeles

The easy answer is to tell the student-athlete to take advantage of absolutely every free second they may possibly have. There are precious minutes found during breaks or lunch, after school, before practice, while waiting for a ride home after practice or games, and bus rides to and from games. Use those minutes to read a chapter, knock out a few problems, or think through an assignment to organize your thoughts. Every minute counts!

The important thing in any of these instances is to be prepared to take advantage of those moments. Always bring books you may need, a notebook or a notepad everywhere you go. Throw these things in a backpack and, just like the commercial says about that credit card, don't leave home without it.

Another good idea is to make sure you have a planner and get in the habit of using it. Writing things down tends to “lock them in” much more than entering them somewhere electronically. Review the planner two or three times a day (morning, lunch, evening) and stay on top of what's next. This is a technique that will be useful throughout life to track tasks and appointments.

At home make wise use of time and limit TV and phone time. Eliminating distractions and having a good place to do your work will enable work to be completed as efficiently as possible.

Perhaps most important, is to work hard at staying healthy. It is important to be at your best on the fields of play – and in the classroom. Try to eat well, have a balanced diet, and stay hydrated. Often times very busy student-athletes forget to take the time to have a good breakfast, stop and eat in the middle of the day, or sit down at dinner. Taking time to rest and getting the appropriate amount sleep will provide the rejuvenation to do it again tomorrow.

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When any assignment is being explained, listen in class so the task is clear, ask questions, and take your time to do them correctly – the first time. In academics, as in sports, it is important to “Be quick – But don’t hurry!” That is one of the late Coach John Wooden’s most famous quotes, but one of my favorite quotes of his is, “If you don’t have time to do it right, when will you find the time to do it over?”

Ray Lokar has coached a variety of sports for over 25 years at the youth, high school, and college levels, including his son and two daughters who have gone on to play college athletics, as well as an 8-year-old son playing youth sports. Ray was the Head Basketball Coach of the 2002 California Interscholastic Federation Champions while at Bishop Amat High School and is a Past-President of the Southern California Interscholastic Basketball Coaches Association.

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