



THE PLAY STANDARD | PILLAR THREE

Attitude

Nine Lessons for Sprouts, Climbers, and Summit

How do I carry myself?

Document 4 of 12 | Version 1.0

Play Academy Foundation, Inc.

10760 Brunello Pl #206, Wellington, FL 33414



About This Pillar

Attitude is the third pillar because it is the most publicly visible and the one where a coach has the most immediate corrective leverage. It is taught after Perseverance and Leadership because it depends on both: sportsmanship taught to a child who cannot tolerate losing is a rule rather than a value, and respect taught to a child with no sense of obligation to the group is compliance rather than character.

Every lesson in this pillar is written as a behavior rather than a feeling. Respect is defined by what a child does with their hands, voice, and eyes. Gratitude is defined by what a child notices and says. This is deliberate. A coach cannot observe an attitude, but a coach can observe a greeting, a handshake, a breath taken before a reaction, and a piece of equipment set down rather than thrown.

The nine lessons move from what a coach can see in a single session to what a child chooses when no one is watching. Lessons one through three are observable behaviors. Lessons four through six are habits visible across several sessions. Lessons seven through nine are internal dispositions.

The Nine Lessons

No.	Value	The Standard
A1	Respect	Respect is shown to coaches, opponents, officials, facilities, and equipment alike.
A2	Sportsmanship	Win in a way that does not cost the other person their dignity. Lose in a way that does not cost you yours.
A3	Manners	Greetings, eye contact, please, and thank you are trained skills, not personality traits.
A4	Gratitude	Someone paid for, drove to, cleaned, and organized this. Say so.
A5	Emotional Control	You will not control the feeling. You are responsible for what you do next.
A6	Response	The event is fixed. Your response is the only variable, and it is entirely yours.
A7	Inclusion	The measure of a group is how it treats the person who is least like everyone else.
A8	Listening	Listening is what you do instead of waiting to talk.
A9	Energy	The energy you bring is a gift to the group or a tax on it.

How to Use a Lesson Page

Each lesson is written three times, once for each age band. Coaches teach only the band in front of them. Do not read from the page during the session. Read the lesson before the session, choose the framing sentence and the question, and carry the three moments in your head.

What Each Section Is For

The Standard. The value in one sentence. This is what the lesson is actually about. It is written for the coach, not for the children.

Why This Lesson Exists. The reasoning behind the lesson's placement in the pillar. Read this once during certification, then not again.

Framing. The printed script for Huddle In. Deliver it as written. Sprouts framings name the word of the day and then define it in one sentence. Climbers and Summit framings are one or two sentences. No framing in this curriculum exceeds thirty words. The standard is not sentence count — it is that the coach adds nothing of their own. Extemporizing is what turns a three-minute Huddle In into a talk, and it is the most common failure in the entire frame.

Huddle-In Question. One question. Take two or three answers, not twelve. The question exists to make children look for the value during play, not to produce a discussion.

Moments to Watch For. Three specific, observable behaviors. During play the coach is watching for one of these. When one occurs, the coach names it out loud, immediately, using the child's name. This is the Call It Out step and it is where the teaching actually happens.

Huddle-Out Prompt. One question at the end of the session. The children answer. The coach does not summarize, correct, or add to their answers. Silence is acceptable and often productive.

Carry It Home. One small challenge, delivered in thirty seconds as the group breaks. It should be small enough that a child can complete it without help and specific enough that a parent can ask about it.

The Frame, in Order

1. Huddle In — three minutes. One sentence, one question.
2. Play — forty to fifty minutes. Run the sport session normally.
3. Call It Out — during play. Name the moment in real time, by name.
4. Huddle Out — five minutes. The children talk.
5. Carry It Home — thirty seconds. One challenge.

Attitude is the pillar parents notice first and the pillar a coach can correct fastest. It is also the one most easily reduced to a list of rules, which is exactly what this curriculum is trying to avoid.

Lesson A1 — Respect

The Standard. Respect is shown to coaches, opponents, officials, facilities, and equipment alike.

Why this lesson exists. Respect is first in this pillar because it is the value that makes a session possible at all. It is also the value most often taught as a rule and least often taught as a behavior, so this lesson deliberately defines it as a list of things a child does rather than a feeling a child has.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. CARE

Framing. "Our word is CARE. We take CARE of people and we take CARE of things, even the ones that are not ours."

Huddle-In Question. "Can you show me gentle hands?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who handles equipment carefully instead of throwing it.
- A child who looks at the coach when the coach is speaking.
- A child who says hello or goodbye to an adult.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who showed CARE today?"

Carry It Home. "Take care of one thing at home that belongs to somebody else."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Respect is not how you feel about somebody. It is what you do with your hands, your voice, and your eyes."

Huddle-In Question. "What does disrespect actually look like here? Describe the behavior, not the attitude."

Moments to Watch For

- Treating a facility or borrowed equipment as carefully as their own.
- Acknowledging an opponent, a partner, or an official directly.
- Listening to a correction without an eye roll or a comeback.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who showed respect today in a way somebody could actually see?"

Carry It Home. "Show respect to one adult this week in a way they will notice — eye contact, a real greeting, a thank you by name."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Respect that depends on whether you like the person, agree with the call, or rate the opponent is not respect. It is approval."

Huddle-In Question. "Who is the easiest person for you to be disrespectful to, and what does that say?"

Moments to Watch For

- Treating a weaker opponent with the same seriousness as a stronger one.
- Accepting a call they believe is wrong without a display.
- Speaking well of a competitor when there is nothing to gain from it.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Where does respect get hard for you? Be specific about the situation, not the person."

Carry It Home. "Identify one person you routinely give less respect than they are owed. Change one behavior toward them this week."

Lesson A2 — Sportsmanship

The Standard. Win in a way that does not cost the other person their dignity. Lose in a way that does not cost you yours.

Why this lesson exists. Sportsmanship is usually taught only after a bad loss, which frames it as a punishment. Teaching it early and in both directions — winning and losing — makes it a standard the group holds rather than a correction the coach issues.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. SHAKE

Framing. "Our word is SHAKE. When the game is over we SHAKE hands, whether we won or we lost."

Huddle-In Question. "Can you find a partner and practice a good handshake right now?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who congratulates the winner.
- A child who does not gloat after winning.
- A child who keeps playing after falling behind.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who was a good SHAKE partner today?"

Carry It Home. "Play one game at home and say something nice to the other person when it ends, either way."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Anybody can be pleasant after a win. The whole test is what you look like ninety seconds after a loss."

Huddle-In Question. "What do you do when you lose? Describe it honestly."

Moments to Watch For

- Congratulating an opponent immediately and specifically.
- Not celebrating in a way aimed at the other person.
- Finishing a lost game or set at full effort.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who handled winning well today? Who handled losing well?"

Carry It Home. "The next time you lose at anything this week, say one true, generous thing to whoever beat you."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "How you conduct yourself in defeat is the part people remember, and it is the only part you fully control once the result is decided."

Huddle-In Question. "Does your behavior after a loss make your teammates want to compete with you again?"

Moments to Watch For

- Managing visible frustration in a decisive loss.
- Giving a competitor genuine credit rather than a formality.
- Refusing to discredit a result with excuses about conditions or calls.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What does poor sportsmanship actually cost, beyond the reputation hit?"

Carry It Home. "Watch one competition this week and notice how the losing side conducts itself. Decide which version you are."

Lesson A3 — Manners

The Standard. Greetings, eye contact, please, and thank you are trained skills, not personality traits.

Why this lesson exists. Manners are included as a formal lesson because they are the most immediately visible output of the curriculum to parents and community managers, and because they are genuinely trainable in a way that most character traits are not. A child can be taught to greet an adult by name in three sessions.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. PLEASE

Framing. "Our word is PLEASE. We say PLEASE when we ask, and THANK YOU when we get."

Huddle-In Question. "Can everybody say please and thank you in their best voice?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who says please or thank you without a reminder.
- A child who greets the coach on arrival.
- A child who waits for their turn to speak.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who used their PLEASE and THANK YOU today?"

Carry It Home. "Say thank you to somebody at home today and tell them what it is for."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Manners are a skill you can practice, and they open doors that talent does not."

Huddle-In Question. "Do you greet adults by name, or do you nod and walk past?"

Moments to Watch For

- Greeting the coach by name on arrival and on departure.
- Making eye contact during a conversation with an adult.
- Introducing themselves to a new participant without being asked.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who greeted somebody properly today?"

Carry It Home. "Greet three adults by name this week with eye contact. Notice how they respond."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Manners are the lowest-cost advantage available to you, and almost nobody your age is using it."

Huddle-In Question. "What do adults conclude about you in the first ten seconds, and are you managing that on purpose?"

Moments to Watch For

- Introducing themselves properly to an unfamiliar adult.
- Thanking a coach, an official, or a facility staff member by name.
- Holding a conversation with an adult without deferring to a phone.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Where have manners already opened a door for you, or closed one?"

Carry It Home. "Write or send one proper thank-you message this week to somebody who helped you and does not expect it."

Lesson A4 — Gratitude

The Standard. Someone paid for, drove to, cleaned, and organized this. Say so.

Why this lesson exists. Gratitude is placed in the habits band because it requires a child to notice things that are invisible by design. The work that makes a session possible is deliberately hidden from participants, and this lesson makes it visible so that thanks becomes accurate rather than performative.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. THANKS

Framing. "Our word is THANKS. Somebody set all of this up for us today, and we say THANKS to them."

Huddle-In Question. "Who brought you here today?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who thanks the coach at the end.
- A child who thanks the adult who brought them.
- A child who notices that somebody set something up.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who said THANKS today?"

Carry It Home. "Thank the person who brings you here. Say what you are thanking them for."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "None of this appeared on its own. Somebody paid for it, somebody drove you, and somebody set it up before you arrived."

Huddle-In Question. "Name one thing that had to happen before you got here today that you did not do."

Moments to Watch For

- Thanking a parent, a driver, or a facility worker without prompting.
- Noticing and mentioning something that was prepared for them.
- Helping put away what somebody else set up.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who should be thanked for today, and did anybody actually do it?"

Carry It Home. "Thank one person this week for something they do so regularly that nobody mentions it anymore."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Gratitude is an accuracy problem before it is a manners problem. Most of what you have was built or paid for by somebody else."

Huddle-In Question. "What is currently being done for you that you have stopped noticing?"

Moments to Watch For

- Thanking somebody specifically for the work rather than generally for the day.
- Acknowledging an advantage or an opportunity they did not earn.
- Taking care of a facility or resource because somebody provides it.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What in your life would you miss most if it stopped tomorrow, and when did you last say so?"

Carry It Home. "Tell one person this month exactly what they have done for you and what it made possible."

Lesson A5 — Emotional Control

The Standard. You will not control the feeling. You are responsible for what you do next.

Why this lesson exists. This lesson separates emotion from behavior, which is the distinction most youth sport gets wrong in both directions — either demanding children not feel frustration, or excusing conduct because they felt it. The standard here is that the feeling is permitted and the behavior is not.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. BREATHE

Framing. "Our word is BREATHE. When we get frustrated, we take one big BREATHE before we do anything else."

Huddle-In Question. "Can everybody take one big breath with me right now?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who gets frustrated and keeps going anyway.
- A child who takes a breath instead of throwing equipment.
- A child who calms down without an adult stepping in.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who took a big BREATHE today when they were frustrated?"

Carry It Home. "Take one big breath at home the next time you feel upset, before you say anything."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Nobody is asking you not to be frustrated. You are being asked not to throw anything."

Huddle-In Question. "What is your tell? What do you do with your body when you are losing control?"

Moments to Watch For

- Recovering composure without an adult intervening.
- Feeling obvious frustration and continuing to compete cleanly.
- Walking away from a confrontation rather than escalating it.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What set you off today, and what did you do with it?"

Carry It Home. "Name your tell out loud to somebody at home so they can point it out when it shows up."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Emotional control is not suppression. It is the gap you build between the feeling and the action, and that gap is trainable."

Huddle-In Question. "What is the most expensive thing your temper has cost you so far?"

Moments to Watch For

- Holding composure in a high-stakes or unjust moment.
- Regulating without visibly withdrawing from the group.
- De-escalating a teammate rather than joining the escalation.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Where is your gap shortest — with officials, with teammates, or with yourself?"

Carry It Home. "Identify the situation that reliably breaks your composure. Plan your first three seconds in advance."

Lesson A6 — Response

The Standard. The event is fixed. Your response is the only variable, and it is entirely yours.

Why this lesson exists. This lesson generalizes A5 from emotion to circumstance and pairs with P1, Effort. Effort is what you control about your input. Response is what you control about your input after something has gone against you, which is where most young athletes surrender the decision without noticing.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. CHOOSE

Framing. "Our word is CHOOSE. We cannot always choose what happens, but we always CHOOSE what we do next."

Huddle-In Question. "What can you choose right now, all by yourself?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who does not get the color, the partner, or the turn they wanted and continues happily.
- A child who changes their mood on purpose.
- A child who makes the best of a station they did not want.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who made a good CHOOSE today?"

Carry It Home. "The next time something at home does not go your way, choose your next thing on purpose."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Rain, a bad partner, a bad call, a bad day. None of those are yours. What you do in the next minute is entirely yours."

Huddle-In Question. "What happened this week that you could not control, and what did you do with it?"

Moments to Watch For

- Adjusting without complaint to a change in the session plan.
- Playing full effort in poor conditions or on the weaker side.
- Accepting an unwanted partner or position and making it work.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What went wrong today, and who responded well to it?"

Carry It Home. "Something will go wrong this week. Decide in advance that your response is the part you own."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Between what happens to you and what you do about it, there is a space, and the size of that space is roughly the measure of your maturity."

Huddle-In Question. "Where do you currently hand over your response to somebody else's behavior?"

Moments to Watch For

- Maintaining standards after an unfair or unlucky outcome.
- Refusing to let another person's conduct dictate their own.
- Reframing a setback into a specific next action within the same session.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who or what currently has the power to ruin your day, and why did you give it to them?"

Carry It Home. "Take back one thing this week that you have been letting somebody else's behavior decide for you."

Lesson A7 — Inclusion

The Standard. The measure of a group is how it treats the person who is least like everyone else.

Why this lesson exists. Inclusion is placed in the dispositions band because it is chosen rather than instructed. A coach can assign partners, but a coach cannot assign welcome. This lesson also directly serves the Foundation's neighborhood model, where the group is whoever lives there rather than whoever tried out.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. INVITE

Framing. "Our word is INVITE. If somebody is standing alone, we INVITE them in."

Huddle-In Question. "Can you look around and find somebody to stand next to?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who invites another child into a game.
- A child who partners with somebody new.
- A child who notices somebody standing alone.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who made an INVITE today?"

Carry It Home. "Invite somebody at home or at school to join something you are doing."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Every group has somebody on the edge of it. In this group, that is everybody's problem, not theirs."

Huddle-In Question. "Who is new, quiet, or on the outside here? You do not have to say the name out loud."

Moments to Watch For

- Choosing a partner who is usually chosen last.
- Bringing a quiet participant into a conversation or a drill.
- Stopping an in-joke or a nickname that excludes somebody.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who brought somebody in today?"

Carry It Home. "Sit with, talk to, or partner with somebody this week who is usually on the edge."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "You are one of the people who decides who belongs here, whether or not anybody gave you that authority."

Huddle-In Question. "Who is currently on the outside of this group, and what part have you played in that?"

Moments to Watch For

- Deliberately including a lower-skilled or newer participant in a competitive context.
- Interrupting exclusion without making a speech about it.
- Making a new participant's first session easier.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What makes somebody feel like they belong here? Name the actual behaviors."

Carry It Home. "Find one person this week who is on the outside of something and bring them in without announcing it."

Lesson A8 — Listening

The Standard. Listening is what you do instead of waiting to talk.

Why this lesson exists. Listening is the enabling behavior for the Huddle Out, which fails entirely when children are composing their answers instead of hearing each other. Teaching it as a distinct value gives the coach a name for what is going wrong when the closing huddle turns into a queue of unrelated statements.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. EARS

Framing. "Our word is EARS. When somebody is talking, our EARS are on and our mouths are off."

Huddle-In Question. "Can everybody show me their listening ears?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who lets somebody else finish speaking.
- A child who follows an instruction correctly the first time.
- A child who repeats back what somebody else said.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who used good EARS today?"

Carry It Home. "Let somebody at home finish their whole sentence before you talk."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Most people are not listening. They are queuing up what they want to say next."

Huddle-In Question. "Can you tell me one thing somebody else said in the last huddle?"

Moments to Watch For

- Referring to something another child said during the huddle.
- Executing an instruction correctly without asking for it twice.
- Letting a slower speaker finish without interruption.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Say back one thing somebody else here said today before you add your own."

Carry It Home. "Have one conversation this week where you ask a second question before you say anything about yourself."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "The quality of your listening determines the quality of the information you get, which determines almost everything downstream."

Huddle-In Question. "When somebody corrects you, are you listening or are you preparing a defense?"

Moments to Watch For

- Taking a correction fully before responding to it.
- Drawing out a quieter teammate rather than filling the space.
- Changing their position after hearing somebody else's reasoning.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What did you hear today that you would have missed if you had been talking?"

Carry It Home. "In one disagreement this week, restate the other person's position to their satisfaction before you argue with it."

Lesson A9 — Energy

The Standard. The energy you bring is a gift to the group or a tax on it.

Why this lesson exists. This lesson closes the pillar because it is the public counterpart of P1, Effort. Effort is what a child gives the work. Energy is what a child gives the room. It is also the fastest lever a coach has for changing the feel of a session, because energy is contagious and children can be told so directly.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. READY

Framing. "Our word is READY. We come in with our READY faces and our READY bodies, because everybody feels it."

Huddle-In Question. "Can you show me your READY face?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who arrives excited and lifts the group.
- A child who claps, cheers, or hustles between stations.
- A child who stays upbeat when the group gets tired.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who brought READY energy today?"

Carry It Home. "Walk into one room at home this week with big, happy energy and see what happens."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "You are going to change the mood of this group today. The only question is which direction."

Huddle-In Question. "Think about the last session. Did you add energy or take it?"

Moments to Watch For

- Hustling between drills rather than walking.
- Lifting the group at the point where energy usually drops.
- Choosing not to join in when the group starts complaining.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who brought energy today, and what did it do to the rest of us?"

Carry It Home. "Bring deliberate energy to one place this week where you usually coast — a class, a chore, a family dinner."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Energy is a choice you make before you feel like making it, and everybody in the room can tell which one you chose."

Huddle-In Question. "Are you someone people are glad to see arrive?"

Moments to Watch For

- Setting the tone in the first two minutes of a session.
- Holding energy through a fatiguing or repetitive block.
- Lifting a group that is visibly flat without being asked to.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who changes this room by walking into it? What exactly do they do?"

Carry It Home. "Decide your energy before you walk in somewhere this week, rather than letting the room decide it for you."

Coach Notes for This Pillar

The Most Common Delivery Errors

- Using this pillar as a discipline system. The moment Attitude becomes the pillar a coach invokes when a child misbehaves, the curriculum turns into a rulebook and the children stop volunteering anything in the Huddle Out.
- Naming only the failures. Attitude is the easiest pillar to correct and the hardest to catch going right, because good manners and steady composure are silent. Make a point of naming the child who recovered from frustration, not just the one who did not.
- Teaching gratitude on a day when nothing visible was provided. Before the session, know one concrete thing somebody did to make it possible — who unlocked the gate, who paid, who drove. Gratitude taught in the abstract teaches children to perform thanks rather than notice work.
- Demanding that a child not feel something. The standard in A5 is the behavior, not the emotion. A coach who tells a frustrated child they are not frustrated has just taught them to hide it, which is the opposite of the lesson.
- Letting the strongest personalities define the group's energy in A9 while calling it enthusiasm. Loud is not the same as positive, and a child whose energy makes the session harder for quieter participants has not met the standard.

When a Child Resists

Resistance in this pillar is usually protest rather than defiance. A child who refuses to shake hands, will not greet an adult, or rolls their eyes at a correction is almost always managing embarrassment, and the correction they are resisting is the one that made it public.

Reduce the audience. Deliver the standard privately, name it once, and then give the child a low-stakes chance to meet it where nobody is watching. Public compliance extracted in front of peers produces a child who performs the behavior and abandons it the moment the coach turns around.

A child who resists by mocking the pillar — treating manners or gratitude as childish — is usually the child who most needs the Summit framing rather than the Climbers one. Move them up a band. The abstract version of these lessons respects their intelligence, and that is frequently the entire problem.

Talking to Parents About This Pillar

The answer for this pillar, worth memorizing: we are teaching your child to treat people and property with care, to win and lose without losing themselves, to notice the work behind what they are given, and to control what they do when they are frustrated. Then give the parent one specific moment you saw their child produce.

This is the pillar where parents most often report change at home first — greetings, thank-yous, and a shorter fuse after a bad result. Ask them directly what they are seeing. A parent who has noticed something is a parent who will keep the child enrolled, and their observation is the most useful outcome data the program collects.

Play Academy Foundation, Inc. is a national nonprofit that brings professional sports, wellness, and recreation programming directly into the neighborhoods where children live.



Roughly half of American high school students attend no physical education in a given week, and fewer than three in ten attend daily, against a national recommendation of daily physical education. That deficit has held for thirty years. The Foundation exists because it is not going to close on its own.