



THE PLAY STANDARD | PILLAR FOUR

YOU

Nine Lessons for Sprouts, Climbers, and Summit

Who am I becoming?

Document 5 of 12 | Version 1.0

Play Academy Foundation, Inc.

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About This Pillar

YOU is the final pillar because self-examination requires vocabulary. A child asked at the start of a program to describe their own patterns has nothing to describe them with. A child who has spent twenty-seven sessions learning to name effort, responsibility, and response has the words, and this pillar is where they use them on themselves.

Three of the nine lessons are health literacy: Fuel, Rest, and Body. They are written as performance information rather than instruction, and they cover nutrition, sleep, hydration, daily movement, and breath. Coaches deliver them as facts about how a body works, never as rules about what a child should look like. Any language about weight, size, or appearance is outside the standard and is not to be used in any age band.

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
Y1	Identity	You are not your last result. You are the person who decides what happens next.
Y2	Confidence	Confidence is evidence you have collected about yourself, not a feeling you wait for.
Y3	Fuel	What you eat is the material your body builds itself out of.
Y4	Rest	Sleep is when the training you did actually becomes ability.
Y5	Body	Movement, water, and breath are the maintenance schedule for the only body you get.
Y6	Goals	A goal you have not written down or said out loud is a wish.
Y7	Self-Awareness	Know what sets you off, what settles you down, and what you are actually good at.
Y8	Honesty	The person hardest to be honest with is the one in the mirror.
Y9	Balance	Your attention is finite. Spend it where it builds you.

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.

A child cannot examine their own patterns until they have language for them. The first three pillars supply the words. This pillar is where the child turns them inward.

Lesson Y1 — Identity

The Standard. You are not your last result. You are the person who decides what happens next.

Why this lesson exists. This lesson opens the final pillar by separating a child from their scoreboard. It is the direct extension of P3, Mistakes, moved from the level of a single error to the level of self-concept, and it is the foundation the remaining eight lessons are built on.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. ME

Framing. "Our word is ME. Winning does not make you a good kid and losing does not make you a bad one. You are still ME either way."

Huddle-In Question. "Can you tell me one thing that makes you YOU that has nothing to do with sports?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who is the same person after losing as after winning.
- A child who talks about themselves without mentioning the score.
- A child who does not call themselves bad at something after a miss.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Tell me one good thing about yourself that is not about winning."

Carry It Home. "Tell somebody at home one thing you like about yourself."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "You had a bad session. That is a thing that happened, not a thing that you are."

Huddle-In Question. "What is the difference between "I played badly" and "I am bad"?"

Moments to Watch For

- Describing a poor result without turning it into a statement about themselves.
- Trying again immediately after a failure rather than withdrawing.
- Correcting a teammate who is talking down about themselves.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who talked about a mistake today without making it about who they are?"

Carry It Home. "Catch yourself once this week saying "I am bad at" something. Change the sentence to "I have not learned that yet.""

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "If your identity is built on results, then every bad result is an identity crisis, and you will eventually stop taking risks to protect it."

Huddle-In Question. "If sport ended for you tomorrow, what would still be true about who you are?"

Moments to Watch For

- Competing freely rather than protecting a reputation.
- Speaking about themselves in terms of standards rather than rankings.
- Supporting a rival without treating it as a loss of status.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What are you building your sense of yourself on right now? Is it something that can be taken from you?"

Carry It Home. "Write down five true things about yourself. If more than two are results, write five more."

Lesson Y2 — Confidence

The Standard. Confidence is evidence you have collected about yourself, not a feeling you wait for.

Why this lesson exists. Children are routinely told to be confident, which is advice with no action attached. This lesson redefines confidence as an evidence file that a child builds through repetition, which turns it into something a coach can actually help construct.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. CAN

Framing. "Our word is CAN. Every time you do something hard, you add it to your list of things you CAN do."

Huddle-In Question. "What is one thing you CAN do today that you could not do before?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who attempts something they previously refused.
- A child who says out loud that they can do something.
- A child who reminds another child of something they can do.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Tell me one thing you CAN do now."

Carry It Home. "Show somebody at home one thing you can do that you could not do a month ago."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Confidence is not something you talk yourself into. It is the pile of things you have already done."

Huddle-In Question. "What is on your list? Name one thing you have proved you can do."

Moments to Watch For

- Choosing a harder option based on prior success rather than avoiding it.
- Recovering quickly by referring to something they have done before.
- Volunteering for something they were nervous about last month.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What did you add to your evidence pile today?"

Carry It Home. "Write down three things you can do now that you could not do a year ago. Keep the list somewhere you will see it."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Confidence built on encouragement collapses under pressure. Confidence built on a record of completed hard things does not."

Huddle-In Question. "Is your confidence based on what people tell you or on what you have actually done?"

Moments to Watch For

- Performing under pressure without external reassurance.
- Setting a standard for themselves independent of comparison to others.
- Attempting something publicly with an honest chance of failing.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What is the hardest thing you have completed, and do you use it when you need it?"

Carry It Home. "Build a short written record of hard things you have finished. Read it before your next difficult moment."

Lesson Y3 — Fuel

The Standard. What you eat is the material your body builds itself out of.

Why this lesson exists. This is the first of three health literacy lessons and it is deliberately framed as construction rather than restriction. Children are told constantly what not to eat and almost never told what food is structurally for. The lesson is informational, not moralizing, and coaches are directed away from any language about weight or appearance.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. FUEL

Framing. "Our word is FUEL. Food is the FUEL that makes your body run, the same way a car needs gas."

Huddle-In Question. "What did you eat today that helped you run fast?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who chooses water over a sugary drink.
- A child who talks about a food that gives them energy.
- A child who tries a new food at snack time.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What is one FUEL food you like?"

Carry It Home. "Eat one colorful fruit or vegetable before our next session and tell me which one."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Your body is building itself right now out of whatever you give it, and it cannot build muscle out of nothing."

Huddle-In Question. "What did you eat before you came here today, and how did it feel about an hour in?"

Moments to Watch For

- Arriving having eaten something substantial before a session.
- Choosing water during breaks without prompting.
- Talking accurately about what food does rather than whether it is good or bad.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What is the difference between food that fills you up and food that fuels you?"

Carry It Home. "Notice how you feel during one session after eating well beforehand, and once after not eating. Bring back the difference."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Nutrition is a performance variable you control completely, and most athletes your age are leaving it entirely unmanaged."

Huddle-In Question. "Do you eat on purpose, or do you eat whatever is available at the time?"

Moments to Watch For

- Managing their own pre-session and post-session nutrition without a parent.
- Choosing whole foods over ultra-processed options when both are available.
- Discussing food in terms of function rather than appearance.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What would change in your performance if you ate deliberately for one month?"

Carry It Home. "Plan and eat one deliberate pre-session meal this week. Note what changed in the session."

Lesson Y4 — Rest

The Standard. Sleep is when the training you did actually becomes ability.

Why this lesson exists. Sleep is the most under-taught performance factor in youth sport and the one where children have the most immediate control. Framing sleep as the mechanism by which practice converts into skill gives a child a reason that competes with the reason they are staying up.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. SLEEP

Framing. "Our word is SLEEP. While you are sleeping, your body is busy getting stronger from everything you did today."

Huddle-In Question. "What time do you go to bed?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who has clearly slept well and shows it in energy and mood.
- A child who talks about their bedtime routine.
- A child who says they are tired and names why.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What helps you fall asleep at night?"

Carry It Home. "Go to bed at the same time three nights in a row before we meet again."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "You do not get better during practice. You get better afterward, while you are asleep."

Huddle-In Question. "How many hours did you sleep last night, and how do you feel right now?"

Moments to Watch For

- Connecting their own energy level to how they slept.
- Talking about a consistent bedtime rather than a random one.
- Recognizing fatigue as a reason for a poor session rather than blaming ability.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Who slept well last night, and can the rest of us tell?"

Carry It Home. "Keep the same bedtime every night this week, including the weekend. Notice the difference by the end."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Consolidation of motor learning happens during sleep. Training hard on insufficient sleep is paying for something you then decline to collect."

Huddle-In Question. "What is actually keeping you up, and is it worth what it costs you the next day?"

Moments to Watch For

- Managing their own sleep schedule around training and competition.
- Removing screens from the last part of the evening.
- Prioritizing sleep over a social or digital option and saying so.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What would an extra hour of sleep every night for a month do to your training?"

Carry It Home. "Set a fixed lights-out time for seven nights. Track your session quality against it."

Lesson Y5 — Body

The Standard. Movement, water, and breath are the maintenance schedule for the only body you get.

Why this lesson exists. The third health literacy lesson covers hydration, daily movement outside of sessions, and breathing as a regulation tool, and it connects deliberately back to A5, Emotional Control. It is also the lesson that carries the Foundation's core public argument: children need daily movement, and school physical education is no longer supplying it.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. WATER

Framing. "Our word is WATER. Your body is mostly WATER, and it needs more every single day."

Huddle-In Question. "Can everybody take a drink of water right now?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who drinks water without being told.
- A child who takes a breath to settle themselves.
- A child who talks about moving or playing outside of this session.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What is one way you take care of your body?"

Carry It Home. "Drink water first thing when you wake up tomorrow, before anything else."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Your body has a maintenance schedule: move every day, drink before you are thirsty, and breathe on purpose when you are wound up."

Huddle-In Question. "How much did you move yesterday outside of school and this session?"

Moments to Watch For

- Hydrating during breaks without being prompted.
- Using breath deliberately to settle before a repetition.
- Describing physical activity they do on their own time.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What does your body feel like on a day you move a lot compared to a day you do not?"

Carry It Home. "Move for thirty minutes on a day you have no session. It counts if it is play."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Hydration, daily movement, and breath control are the three lowest-cost, highest-return inputs available to you, and all three are entirely within your control."

Huddle-In Question. "What does your body get from you on the days nobody is watching?"

Moments to Watch For

- Maintaining hydration across a full session without reminders.
- Using a breathing protocol to regulate under pressure.
- Training or moving independently outside scheduled sessions.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What is your body going to need from you at thirty that you should start giving it now?"

Carry It Home. "Choose one of the three — water, daily movement, or breath work — and run it deliberately for two weeks."

Lesson Y6 — Goals

The Standard. A goal you have not written down or said out loud is a wish.

Why this lesson exists. Goal setting is placed in the habits band because it requires the vocabulary built by the previous five lessons and because it is the mechanism that converts P9, Consistency, into a destination. The emphasis is on process goals a child controls rather than outcome goals they do not.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. GOAL

Framing. "Our word is GOAL. A GOAL is one thing you are trying to get better at, and you say it out loud so it is real."

Huddle-In Question. "What is one thing you want to get better at here?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who names something they are working on.
- A child who practices the thing they said they wanted to improve.
- A child who tells somebody else about their goal.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Say your GOAL out loud so we can all hear it."

Carry It Home. "Tell your grown-up your goal tonight and practice it once."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "Pick a goal you control. You cannot decide to win. You can decide to practice your serve four times this week."

Huddle-In Question. "What is the difference between a goal you control and one you just hope for?"

Moments to Watch For

- Naming a process goal rather than an outcome goal.
- Working on their stated goal without being directed to.
- Reporting back on progress from a previous session.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What is one goal you can control completely? Say it out loud."

Carry It Home. "Write down one goal for the next four weeks. Make it something you can do, not something you can only hope for."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Outcome goals depend on other people. Process goals depend only on you, and process goals are what produce outcomes anyway."

Huddle-In Question. "What are you actually working toward, and could somebody else tell by watching you train?"

Moments to Watch For

- Structuring their own session around a stated objective.
- Revising a goal based on evidence rather than abandoning it.
- Holding a training standard that connects to a stated goal.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "State one goal and one measurable thing you will do this week toward it."

Carry It Home. "Write one goal, three actions that serve it, and one date. Give a copy to somebody who will ask you about it."

Lesson Y7 — Self-Awareness

The Standard. Know what sets you off, what settles you down, and what you are actually good at.

Why this lesson exists. Self-awareness sits in the dispositions band because it cannot be assigned. It is the reflective counterpart of A5, Emotional Control: A5 handles the moment, Y7 handles the pattern. This lesson is where the Summit band begins to function as genuine peer mentors, because a child who knows their own patterns can recognize them in someone younger.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. NOTICE

Framing. "Our word is NOTICE. We NOTICE how our body feels, so we know what we need."

Huddle-In Question. "How does your body feel right now — fast, slow, or just right?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child who says they need a break instead of melting down.
- A child who names a feeling out loud.
- A child who knows what calms them.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "How does your body feel now compared to when we started?"

Carry It Home. "Notice one time at home when you start to feel frustrated, before it gets big."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "The people who handle themselves well are not calmer than you. They just know their own patterns."

Huddle-In Question. "What is the thing that reliably sets you off here?"

Moments to Watch For

- Identifying their own trigger before it escalates.
- Asking for what they need rather than acting out.
- Naming a strength of theirs accurately, without inflating or dismissing it.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What is one thing you have learned about yourself in this program?"

Carry It Home. "Name your trigger and your reset to one person at home this week."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Self-awareness is the difference between having a pattern and being run by one."

Huddle-In Question. "What is your pattern under pressure? Not what you wish it were."

Moments to Watch For

- Naming their own tendency accurately, including the unflattering part.
- Adjusting their approach based on self-knowledge rather than instruction.
- Recognizing a pattern in a younger athlete and helping without lecturing.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What do you know about yourself now that you did not know a year ago?"

Carry It Home. "Ask two people who know you well what your pattern is under pressure. Listen without defending."

Lesson Y8 — Honesty

The Standard. The person hardest to be honest with is the one in the mirror.

Why this lesson exists. This lesson is the internal counterpart of L8, Integrity. L8 governs honesty with the group. Y8 governs honesty with oneself, which is harder, unobservable by the coach, and the precondition for any accurate self-assessment. It is taught second to last because it requires everything the previous seven lessons have built.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. HONEST

Framing. "Our word is HONEST. Being HONEST means we tell the truth about how we really did, even to ourselves."

Huddle-In Question. "Did you try your very best today? It is okay if the answer is not yet."

Moments to Watch For

- A child who admits they did not try hard on something.
- A child who gives an accurate answer rather than the one that sounds good.
- A child who says they need help.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Tell me one HONEST thing about how you did today."

Carry It Home. "Tell somebody at home one honest thing about your day, including a part that did not go well."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "You already know whether you gave full effort today. The only question is whether you are going to admit it."

Huddle-In Question. "Rate your effort today out of ten and be honest. Nobody is checking."

Moments to Watch For

- Giving an accurate self-assessment rather than a flattering one.
- Admitting they do not understand something instead of nodding along.
- Acknowledging a weakness without being prompted.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What is one honest thing about today that is not flattering?"

Carry It Home. "Rate yourself honestly after every session this week. Do not adjust the number to feel better."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Self-deception is comfortable and expensive. Every hour of training built on an inaccurate picture of yourself is an hour spent on the wrong thing."

Huddle-In Question. "What are you currently telling yourself that you know is not quite true?"

Moments to Watch For

- Naming a weakness accurately in front of peers.
- Rejecting an excuse that was available and would have been accepted.
- Revising a self-assessment after evidence contradicted it.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "Where are you being generous with yourself in a way that is costing you?"

Carry It Home. "Write an honest one-page assessment of where you actually are. Show it to one person who will not flatter you."

Lesson Y9 — Balance

The Standard. Your attention is finite. Spend it where it builds you.

Why this lesson exists. The final lesson of the curriculum returns to P8, Focus, and raises it from the session to the life. It addresses screens and digital attention directly and without moralizing, and it closes the standard where it began: with the argument that a child who spends their attention on play, people, and effort is building something that a child who spends it elsewhere is not.

SPROUTS | AGES 3 TO 7

Word of the Day. PLAY

Framing. "Our word is PLAY. Real PLAY, with real people, is the best thing you can do with your day."

Huddle-In Question. "What is your favorite thing to play that has no screen?"

Moments to Watch For

- A child fully absorbed in play without needing prompting.
- A child who invents a game or a variation.
- A child who talks about playing outside at home.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What was the most fun part of playing today?"

Carry It Home. "Play outside with a real person before our next session."

CLIMBERS | AGES 8 TO 12

Framing. "You get about the same number of hours as everybody else. The difference is what you spend them on."

Huddle-In Question. "How much time did you spend on a screen yesterday, and how much did you spend moving?"

Moments to Watch For

- Choosing to keep playing rather than stopping when given the option.
- Talking about activities outside of screens without prompting.
- Being fully present in the session rather than distracted.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What is one thing you would do more of if you had an extra hour every day?"

Carry It Home. "Trade one hour of screen time for one hour of moving or being with people. Notice how you feel afterward."

SUMMIT | AGES 13 TO 17

Framing. "Attention is the one resource you spend every waking hour of your life, and almost nobody decides in advance where it goes."

Huddle-In Question. "Where does your attention actually go, and did you choose it?"

Moments to Watch For

- Managing their own device use around training and sleep.
- Being fully present in a session without checking a phone.
- Choosing a demanding commitment over an easier default.

Huddle-Out Prompt. "What are you spending attention on that is not building anything?"

Carry It Home. "Look at your screen time for the last week. Decide what one hour a day should be doing instead, and start."

Coach Notes for This Pillar

The Most Common Delivery Errors

- Turning the health literacy lessons into rules about food or bodies. The standard is how a body works, not what a child should eat, weigh, or look like. A coach who labels foods good and bad, or comments on any child's size, has left the curriculum entirely.
- Letting the Summit reflection questions become therapy. These are reflective prompts delivered in a five-minute huddle at the end of a sport session. A coach who finds a child disclosing something serious should listen, not probe, and should follow the Foundation's escalation procedure rather than trying to help directly.
- Prescribing goals for children in Y6. A goal the coach chose is an assignment. The lesson only works if the child names it, which means accepting some goals the coach considers too small.
- Skipping the Sprouts versions of the health lessons because they seem too advanced. Three-year-olds understand fuel, water, and sleep perfectly well when the words are concrete. What they cannot handle is the reasoning, which is why the Sprouts framing does not include any.
- Treating Y1 Identity as a confidence booster. The lesson is a separation, not a compliment. A child being told they are great after a loss has been reassured. A child being shown that the loss is an event rather than a verdict has been taught something.

When a Child Resists

Resistance in this pillar is usually privacy rather than defiance. The questions here are more personal than anything in the first three pillars, and a child who does not want to answer in front of peers is exercising reasonable judgment, not refusing the curriculum.

Never require an answer in the Huddle Out for this pillar. Offer the question, accept silence, and let the children who want to speak do so. A child who says nothing for six sessions and then says one true thing has been served better by the silence than by being called on.

A child who deflects with jokes is managing exposure. Do not name the deflection in front of the group. Give that child a role in the huddle instead — ask them to run it, or to ask the question of somebody else. Responsibility is an easier place to stand than disclosure.

Talking to Parents About This Pillar

The answer for this pillar, worth memorizing: we are teaching your child that they are not their last result, that confidence is built from evidence rather than encouragement, how food, sleep, and movement actually work, and how to set a goal they control. Then give the parent one specific moment you saw their child produce.

The health literacy lessons will generate parent questions. Coaches answer them by describing what the curriculum covers — fuel, rest, hydration, daily movement, breath — and by referring anything nutritional or medical beyond that to the family's own physician. Coaches do not give dietary advice, comment on any child's body, or recommend supplements, and this holds regardless of the coach's own qualifications.

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.