



TEAM SPIRIT: TRUST AND COMMUNICATION UNDERWATER

Thinking together, moving together and reconnecting after mistakes in Underwater Rugby

TRUST

ROLE

COMMUNICATE

Why was this guide prepared?

Underwater Rugby is one of the sports in which individual ability is never enough on its own. A player may reach the ball, but if the positions of teammates are unclear, the decision can still be delayed. Strong individual defence is also insufficient when the team does not recognise the same threat at the same time.

Team spirit is more than liking one another or feeling motivated before a match. It is the ability to understand roles, predict teammates' actions and reorganise after mistakes without blame.

This guide explores trust, brief communication, shared role understanding and rapid recovery after errors through examples specific to Underwater Rugby.

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What does team spirit mean?

Team spirit does not mean that everyone has the same personality. It means that different athletes can act within a shared goal, shared role understanding and shared safety language. In Underwater Rugby, team spirit is most visible under pressure.

SHARED GOAL

Knows the plan beyond the score.
Players see the same direction.
Team success comes before display.

PREDICTABILITY

Trusts teammates' roles.
Knows who should be where.
Decision time becomes shorter.

RECONNECTION

Less blame after mistakes.
Roles are rebuilt quickly.
The team moves to the next play.

“Team spirit is not everyone doing the same thing; it is everyone knowing what the others will do.”

A strong team is not only a group of skilled athletes. It is a group that makes one another's decisions easier.

The three layers of trust

Trust within a team is not a single feeling. Safety trust, task trust and relational trust reinforce one another.

SAFETY TRUST

My teammate will notice me in a risky situation.

TASK TRUST

I know my teammate will perform the role on time.

RELATIONAL TRUST

I know I will not be humiliated after a mistake.

When one layer weakens, the others are affected. An athlete who is repeatedly criticised may know the correct role yet avoid calling for a pass or asking for help.

Why role clarity matters

Role ambiguity can send several well-intentioned players toward the same ball or leave gaps in defence.

1

DEFINE THE ROLE

When does the athlete move forward and when should they recover?

2

SET THE BOUNDARY

Going for every ball is not always the task; sometimes the role is to protect space.

3

NAME THE PRIORITY

Ball, basket or opponent? The priority must be clear.

4

PLAN THE HANDOVER

How is the role transferred after fatigue or an error?

5

REPEAT IT

Roles become automatic when rehearsed under pressure.

BRIEF RULE

As role clarity increases, athletes guess less and decide faster.

Brief communication underwater

EYE CONTACT

Shared attention for the next action

TOUCH CUE

A safe, agreed tactile signal

POSITION

Showing intention through body position

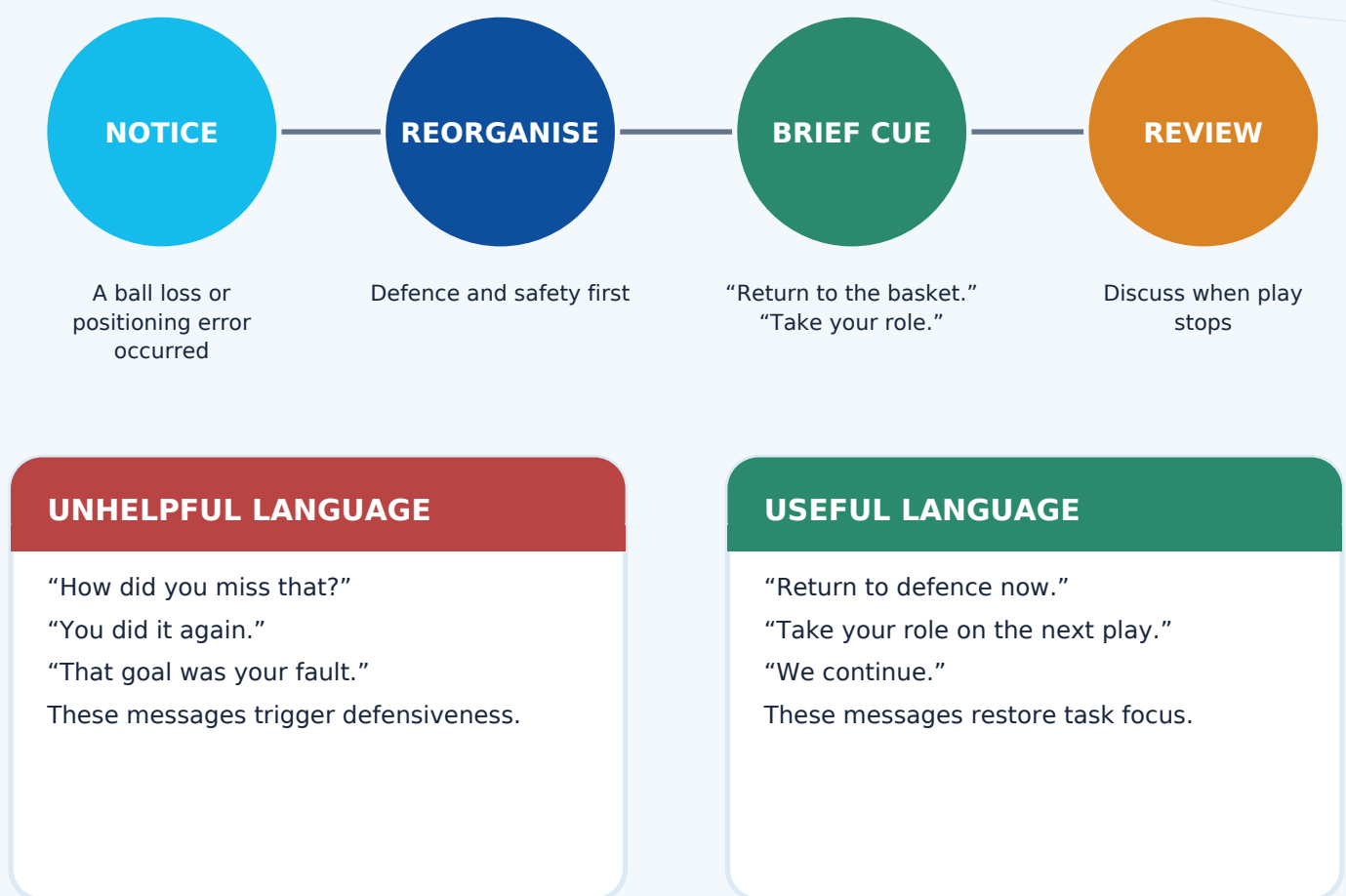
SURFACE LANGUAGE

Brief, clear messages between shifts

The fewer and clearer the cues, the easier they are to remember under pressure. Every player must interpret the team's shared language in the same way.

The team response after mistakes

The first few seconds after an error reveal the team culture. Blame pulls attention into the past; task language reconnects the team with the game.



Errors should be discussed, but at the right time, in the right tone and with a solution focus.

Managing conflict and tension

Competition, fatigue and role ambiguity can create tension within a team. The aim is not to eliminate all conflict, but to prevent it from becoming destructive.

DISCUSS BEHAVIOUR, NOT CHARACTER

Replace “You are selfish” with “We expected an earlier pass on that play.”

MAKE IT SPECIFIC

Discuss one play instead of making general accusations.

DEFINE THE SOLUTION

Agree on what should happen next time.

CHOOSE THE TIME

Use an appropriate break rather than arguing during play.

PROTECT THE TONE

Correct content loses value when delivered harshly.

A safe team is not one without difficult conversations, but one where they can happen without humiliation.

Trust in youth teams

Children and adolescents may be especially sensitive to acceptance and criticism within the team. Team language therefore shapes development as well as performance.

BELONGING

Feeling that one's place is secure.
Not being excluded after errors.
Small contributions are noticed.

LEARNING SAFETY

Being able to ask questions.
Trying a new role.
Not fearing mistakes excessively.

BOUNDARIES & RESPECT

No humiliation.
Physical and emotional safety.
Clear, consistent rules.

- Discuss behaviour after an error, not the child's character.
- Do not link team membership only to results or achievement.
- Do not use shame, ridicule or comparison as motivation.
- Make progress visible: "You took your position earlier today."

Coach and parent language

The messages young athletes hear before and after matches can directly affect trust within the team.

INCREASES PRESSURE

SUPPORTS TRUST

"Do not make a mistake."

"Remember your role; if an error happens, reorganise."

"The team needs you, stay down."

"Protect your safety limit and follow the team plan."

"Why were you not braver?"

"What information did you see in that moment?"

"You were poor today."

"Which part was difficult and what can we improve?"

Supportive language does not remove expectations; it makes them clearer and more actionable.

Seven-day team practice

Team spirit develops through repeated small behaviours, not through speeches alone.

DAY 1

Role round

Each athlete describes the role in one sentence.

DAY 2

Brief cue

The team rehearses three shared underwater signals.

DAY 3

Error language

Choose two task-focused phrases for use after mistakes.

DAY 4

Safety

Review surfacing and help signals.

DAY 5

Recognition

Each player names one teammate's contribution.

DAY 6

Pressure drill

Play a short pressured game while preserving roles.

DAY 7

Review

What worked, where did connection break, what will continue?

NOTE: The aim is not artificial harmony, but safe, clear and sustainable team habits.

Final note

In Underwater Rugby, team spirit is more than winning together. It means noticing when a teammate is struggling, returning to the next task after an error and creating an environment in which every athlete can perform the role with trust.

Trust does not appear instantly through motivational speeches. It grows through consistent behaviour, respectful feedback and shared habits rehearsed in training. When players can predict one another's decisions, mental load falls and the game becomes faster.

Ask yourself: "How can I make it easier for my teammate to make the right decision today?" Team spirit often grows through the daily answer to that small question.

Selected references

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This guide is for general information and does not replace individual psychological or medical assessment.