



# SCRIMMAGE!

*Student-Athlete  
Edition*

THE EDULETTER FOR SPORT LEADERS

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THE LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #1 ISSUE

## LEADING THE WAY

With your teammates discuss what each of these “values” means to the team.

- ✓ Commitment to principles
- ✓ Individual respect
- ✓ Honor
- ✓ Concern for the good of the team

When you finish the first conversation, explore this question: “How will we provide our respectful support to our team leader(s) in learning what is expected of them?”

After reflecting on the conversations that took place from the questions above, begin exploring how will you hold your teammates accountable for what they said they will do to support you (*and other team leaders*) as you learn what is expected of you in your role as a team leader?

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## Leadership Principle #1

## Do What You Say You Will Do

Imagine a world where all your friends, teammates, family members, educators, coaches, and those you encountered on a daily basis took full responsibility for their actions. In this imaginary world everyone you interacted with did what they said they would do. And people approached interpersonal interactions with a perspective of looking beyond personal goals to consider those of the team or the community.

Trouble is, when it comes to answering for one's word many people see little value in honoring their word.

Accountability entails taking ownership of one's actions (which includes promises and commitments) or the expectation of one's taking action and the consequences that arise from the action or inaction. **By failing to honor our word we signal to others that we are unreliable and unpredictable.**

The problem is that we live in an era where the definition of accountability has become fuzzy and, for the most part, open to one's personal and situational interpretation.

We often encounter issues of “accountability” within emotionally-charged interactions that involve blame, divisiveness, and hostility. Quality interpersonal relationships are essential to any cohesive team. And nothing destroys quality relationships more than losing confidence in the authenticity of someone's promise or commitment.

The First Principle of Leadership is to simply *Do What You Say You Will Do*. Leadership **accountability requires a level of ownership that involves making, keeping, and answering for personal commitments.** Simply put, when you hold yourself accountable those around you *know* you can be counted on to complete your responsibilities or follow through on your promises. When you do what you say you will do you build credibility.

The fastest way to lose credibility with your teammates is to be viewed as someone who people can't trust. Leadership experts James Kouzes and Barry Posner say that, **“When it comes to deciding whether a leader is believable, people first listen to the words, then they watch their actions. They listen to the talk, and then they watch the walk.”** The bottom line is when it comes to trusting you, you want your teammates to know you are a person of your word.

Honoring one's word is a pathway to trust. The qualities of being honest, courageous, inspiring and committed flow from holding yourself accountable and doing what you say you will do. As a team leader coaches and teammates have every right to expect you to be a person who embraces accountability.

The first principle of leadership also holds that **effective team leaders will hold teammates accountable to do what they say they will do.** This includes the leadership role of handling interpersonal conflicts and influencing the shared values, beliefs and patterns of behavior within your team. We'll be exploring these and other dimensions of this leadership principle in future issues of *Scrimmage! The Eduletter for Sport Leaders*. You can hold me to it!