

So, You Have Joined Shoreline Lacrosse Club, Now What?

Tips and tricks that may keep you sane this season.

These notes are from a mom who is also a coach, if you are new to lacrosse these tips might make your life a little easier.

Equipment. Get an equipment bag. Preferably one that will hold all of your child's gear. That includes the stick. Write your kid's name in all their gear. Random gloves, water bottles, and even cups are often left after practices and this makes it easier to get it back to you. Proper gear is important. It does not have to be new. Used lacrosse sticks often need restringing and we can provide resources to help with that. Parents often aren't aware that a good string job and pocket on their child's lacrosse stick will make learning the fundamentals quicker, more enjoyable and more effective.

Hydrate. A water bottle is an essential piece of equipment, also remember to label it. The Gatorade squirt style is good. Kids don't have to take off their helmets to drink from it. It is a bit messy but if another kid grabs it, they are less likely to touch it to their mouth. Alternatively, the hockey style with the firm and slightly pointy straw is also easy for quick water breaks. Remember, hydrating should begin the day before a big game day or tournament.

Let's talk cups. All boys need to wear one. Sizes are generalized and they often come in a set pack. This includes the cup and the cup underwear. The underwear is what makes it work. Buy underwear that has a sleeve that holds the cup. Under Armor and Nike are the easiest to find. Kids will sometimes add an extra compressive layer over this underwear, like training tights or compression shorts. Kids who show up to practice and games with a cup tucked into their regular underwear get to experience what I call the "Cup Pop". It's just as it sounds. It will pop out of their shorts and land on the turf.

Weather. The first part of lacrosse season is rough. It is often cold, raining or windy. Proper layering will get your player through practice without shivering and complaining. UA Heat Gear or any good base layer for outdoor sports is the place to start. Over that add another shirt if it is cold out, remember – it is easy to remove layers. Just be sure the base layer is not cotton. Remember that shoulder and elbow pads will have to slide over the layers. My son uses a thin balaclava under his helmet and keeps it in his bag for additional warmth, when needed. Big sweatshirts can go on top and over everything followed by a practice pinnie and that completes the layered look.

Gloves and cold hands. The oldest trick is the nonlatex gloves worn under the lacrosse gloves. Usually the hands get cold and sweaty, but the fingers don't freeze. If you can find them, the super thin glove liners that runners use will work. It's a preference thing too. Most kids really don't like anything that makes it harder for them to feel their stick so be prepared for cold hands and keep a few hand warmers in the car.

Stink. Don't leave wet gear in your bag. Have your player set out wet gear to dry as their last task of practice. Once your kid puts on mildewed and stinky gear that was left wet in the bag, it will make it hard to inhabit the same car together. You will also feel bad for other parents who you may have arranged carpools who end up smelling your kid all the way home.

Snacks. Kids often don't get to finish their lunch at school. If you are running late have healthy snacks in the car for the ride to practice and after. It will fuel them through practice and make your ride home more pleasant.

Cleats Please. Cleats are a much better option for wet turf and grass fields. Soccer and football cleats are fine but no metal baseball style cleats are allowed. Sneakers worn at school will not provide good traction. There is another option called Turf Shoes. They feel more like running shoes and provide traction as well. Cleats should be kept near or in the equipment bag and left out to dry after rainy days. If your child is playing more than one game on a wet Saturday pack an extra pair of dry socks for the later game.

Turf "crumbs". What can I say that will adequately convey the amount of rubber turf crumbs you will find in your house in the coming months? They will be everywhere! You have been warned. You can complain about it to me later.

Mouthguard. Get a good fitting mouthguard. I prefer the ones that come with a helmet strap. They stay secured to the front of the helmet and kids don't lose them. The SISU brand is another great option because players can talk to each other on the field and be understood while wearing it. The SISU is thin and can also be reformed many times without decreasing its protectiveness. It also has a great warranty. The cost and style of the mouthguard doesn't matter. What matters is that your player keeps it in while playing. I would also recommend that you have a backup mouthguard in your equipment bag.

Timing. Practice time is precious, so getting there and geared up on time is important, but if you are running late DON'T sweat it. Life is too short to stress out rushing through traffic to get to practice. On game days try to get to games 10-15 minutes before the time the coach requests (so ~45 minutes before game time is a good rule). It allows you and your child a moment to talk before the game. Or they can visualize lots of great plays and goals while quietly meditating, or whatever. When your game is over try staying and watching the next game your club is playing. It is really exciting to see how much faster and more accurate the next age group up plays. Kids can learn a lot from watching other games and the high school games are amazing to watch.

Be positive. Always give positive feedback. Tell your child the good things they did. Lose the criticism.

Concussion. Pay close attention for signs of Concussion. If your player complains of a head ache, light or noise sensitivity, nausea, dizziness, visual changes or just "not feeling right" after practice or a game, follow up with your health care provider as soon as possible. Coaches, officials and athletic trainers will be watching for these signs as well. If a concussion is suspected your child will need to be cleared by a qualified medical professional before returning to play. Our absolute highest priority is player safety in all its forms.

If you have concerns or questions about practices or games, ask your coach or the Board.

Volunteer. Coach. Get Involved.

