

# How to Tell Your Coach That You Are Quitting

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Quitting a sport can be a difficult decision, but you should not feel afraid to break the news to your coach. You may need more time for school work, or an injury may have left you in too much pain to continue. Whatever the reason, stand by your decision, and you may be happier in the long run.

Part  
1

## Part 1 of 3: Building Confidence Before the Discussion



**1 Determine why you want to quit.** Talking to your coach will be easier once you have defined the reasons why you need to leave. Perhaps you have an obvious reason, such as a medical condition. Maybe you're just overwhelmed or stressed out by your duties. Being able to put your feelings into words will help you talk to your coach. Some reasons might be:

- You have a medical condition or injury
- You need more time to focus on school or work
- You're not having fun anymore
- You no longer have the time
- You have family or personal reasons
- The coach or teammates are bullies<sup>[1]</sup>



**2 Identify other solutions.** If you are upset about quitting or if you are uncertain about your decision, there may be factors that can help you stay on the team. Think about your situation. Are there compromises that you and your coach can work out to help you stay on the team?

- If you are quitting because the sport takes up too much of your time, perhaps the coach can cut back on practice hours, or perhaps practices can be rescheduled to fit more easily into your schedule.
- If you have problems with other people on the team, ask the coach to mediate your arguments. Perhaps you can work out a solution together.
- If you are injured, you can ask the coach if you can still attend practices and events on the sidelines until you have recovered. If you are not certain you will be able to play again, you can volunteer for other, non-intensive tasks such as water duty.<sup>[2]</sup>



- 3 Find moral support.** If you can, it may help to ask others to back you up on your reasons for leaving. Perhaps they can provide you moral support while you talk to your coach, or maybe they can give you a signed note that explains your reasons for leaving.
- If you are quitting for medical reasons, ask your doctor or therapist for a signed letter detailing your condition. They may state in the letter that they recommend you to stop the sport.
  - If you are quitting to focus on your studies, you can ask a teacher or professor to write you a note, stating that you need to spend more time on your schoolwork.
  - If you are in middle or high school, your parents might come with you when you talk to your coach. Explain to your parents why you want to quit, and ask them if they would be willing to help you break the news to your coach.



- 4 Write what you will say first.** You can prepare to talk to your coach by writing an outline of what you plan to say. You do not need to write a script; rather, jot down why you are quitting and how you might introduce the topic to your coach.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Think about how your coach might respond to you quitting. Do you think they will be understanding? Are you worried that they will be mad? Try to plan for that reaction as you write your reasons. How might you respond to their objections?
  - Keep a confident but polite tone. Emphasize that you want the best for the team, but that leaving is the right thing for you to do now.



**5 Practice with a friend or family member.** A good way to build confidence before you meet with your coach is to practice your speech on a family member or friend. Ask them if they would be willing to talk you through the process.

- If you cannot find anyone to listen to you practice, you can talk to yourself in the mirror.
- You may not want to tell your teammates that you are quitting before you tell your coach. You want your coach to hear the news from you, not from locker room gossip.

[4]



**6 Give yourself a pep talk beforehand.** You may be nervous about telling your coach about your plans to quit. Before you have the talk, energize yourself with motivational sayings. These can give you confidence and ease your nerves.

- You can say, "You've got this. Just tell them what's up."
- You might remind yourself, "You will feel so much better once you have done this. You can do this."
- Try to frame the discussion in a positive light.<sup>[5]</sup> You might tell yourself, "Imagine how relieved you'll be when this is done. You won't have so much stress every day to worry about."



## Part 2 of 3: Confronting Your Coach



**1 Ask your coach if you can talk after practice.** It is good to set aside time when you and your coach can talk one on one. At the beginning of practice, ask your coach if they have a few minutes afterwards to talk. This will give them a heads up that you need to discuss something, and they will not leave immediately.<sup>[6]</sup>

- You can say, “Hey coach, can we chat after practice today? I have something I need to discuss with you.”
- If your coach tries to ask you what you want to talk about, tell them, “I’d like to discuss my future on the team. We can talk more after practice.”



**2 Tell them that you are quitting.** When the time comes, you should let your coach know directly that you want to quit. By stating it in a clear, confident tone, you will demonstrate that you are serious. You might want to let them know that you have thought this decision over carefully and that this is the right decision for you.

- You can say, "I've been thinking this over for several weeks now, and I think I have to quit."
- Another way you can say it is "It's time for me to move onto other things. I need to leave the team."





**3 Explain why you need to quit.** You should give your coach reasons why you want to quit. While they may want to change your mind, by stating why you want to leave, you will demonstrate that you have thought this decision through completely.

- You might say, “I have to focus on my other work right now. My grades have been slipping, and I need to focus on my GPA so that I can get a good job.”
- You can say, “I’ve been having pains in my leg, and I went to the doctor. I have a torn meniscus, and I won’t be able to play for a while. I think this will give me some time to pursue some other interests in my life.”
- If you have a doctor’s or teacher’s note, now would be the time to present it. Say, “I have a note from my doctor if that would help explain the issue.”



**4 Let them know how you might consider staying.** Perhaps you are quitting because of a problem on the team or maybe your coach can accommodate some of your needs. If there is a reason why you might stay, you should inform your coach what it is. They may be willing to work with you to fix the issue.<sup>[7]</sup>

- You might say, "I will be honest. I've had some arguments with members of this team, and unless we can work out something between us, I think it is best for us all if I go."
- You can say, "I need more time to study so that my grades do not slip. Maybe if I didn't have to go to that extra weight training session on Friday, I'd be able to manage my time more effectively."
- If you have a "bully coach," it may be best not to tell them that they are the problem. They may redirect their anger at you. Instead, let them know that you are quitting for personal reasons, and do not provoke them.<sup>[8]</sup>



**5 Tell them when you plan to stop.** It is good to let your coach know how much longer you are planning to be on the team so that they can prepare accordingly. Give them a date when you will no longer be on the team.

- You can say, "I'm planning on staying for the rest of the season, but I will not be returning after that."
- Alternatively, you might say, "I can only stay on for another two weeks. I'm sorry that I have to leave in middle of the season."



**6 Thank them for their help.** Make sure that your coach knows you appreciate their hard work since you've joined them. A sincere thank you can show that you are grateful for their influence and help while you have played the sport.<sup>[9]</sup>

- You might say, "It's hard for me to leave, and I really appreciate all that you have done. Thank you so much for believing in me up until this point."



**7 Write the coach an email if you cannot meet.** If you cannot tell your coach in person, an email is the best way to get in touch. You may find your coach's email on a school, university, or league directory. If you cannot find your coach's email, you might try writing them a letter. Give that letter to a teammate, who can pass it onto the coach.

- It is not a good idea to quit in writing unless you are unable to talk to your coach in person.<sup>[10]</sup> Perhaps you must quit suddenly and can't go to another practice. Maybe you're receiving treatment and cannot see your coach.
- A letter might read: "Dear Coach, It's hard to say this, but I have to quit the team. I'm sorry I could not tell you in person. I have to go home suddenly for personal reasons, and I will not be able to continue on this season. I'm not sure if I will be able to continue playing. Thank you for all of your support and hard work. I will always appreciate it. Sincerely, Trent."
- If you are in middle or high school, you might CC your parents on the email. Alternatively, your parents might write the email for you.



## Part 3 of 3: Dealing with a Bullying Coach



**1 Bring someone with you.** If you have a coach that is known for abusive or insulting behavior, you should bring someone along with you. The coach may be encouraged to use more polite language if someone outside of the team is there. You might consider bringing a parent, teacher, or friend.



**2 Use I statements.** Avoid blaming the coach or using accusatory language. This might incense them further. Instead, use "I" statements to focus on your needs. "I" statements are sentences that start with "I", instead of "you." They can help defuse the tension.

- For example, instead of saying, "You always make us stay an hour late after practice," you can say, "I do not have time to spend on my homework, and I need to focus on my studies."



**3 Stand your ground.** Some coaches might try to persuade you to change your mind. Let them know that you are serious about quitting. Let them know that you have thought the issue over very carefully and that unless they can make serious accommodations, you will not be able to continue.

- You might say, "I appreciate all this team has done for me, but I feel as though my time here is coming to an end. With my family situation the way it is, I need some space to handle my own personal life."





**4 Ignore abuse.** If your coach reacts with anger or abuse, try to shake off their insults. They may try to call you a quitter or guilt you into staying. Be firm and confident in your decision to leave.<sup>[1]</sup> Say, "I am not a quitter. I just know my limits, and I have other things in my life I need to focus on."

- Some coaches might try to tell you that you are making a mistake or that you will regret your decision. You can respond, "I know this is the right decision for me now. While I might regret leaving, I also might regret not leaving."



## Community Q&A

### Question

**What if my best friend is on the team?**



Community Answer

Remember, it's your choice to do this. If you decide that it's time for you to leave, weigh your options. If it's truly what you want, then go through with it.

Helpful 32 Not Helpful 5

### Question

**I'm afraid. What should I do?**



Community Answer

Take a deep breath, and remind yourself that everything will be all right. The conversation will be over before you know it, and you will feel relieved and relaxed after it has taken place. Try not to focus on the reaction of your coach or teammates. Think instead about how this will benefit you. You will have more time to relax. You will not be as stressed. Perhaps you will be able to heal from an injury. By looking at the positive side, talking to your coach will seem less scary.

Helpful 49 Not Helpful 3

#### Question

**What if I am quitting for academic reasons? Is that OK?**



Community Answer

Academic reasons are a common reason for people to leave a sport. Remember that school is very important. Very few athletes become professionals. Your schoolwork will help you prepare for a successful and fulfilling career, which is also important in your life. This does not mean that your sport isn't important; it just means that you are prioritizing something else in your life.

Helpful 30 Not Helpful 2

#### Question

**How do I say I quit?**



Community Answer

Be direct and straightforward. You can say, "I need to quit the team" or "I think it is time for me to leave the team." You might even say, "I need to move on to other important things in my life." As long as you are firm and clear, your coach will get the message.

Helpful 16 Not Helpful 3

#### Question

**Is it OK to quit because you don't like it?**



Community Answer

Yes. What matters is that you tried it, and realized it's not your cup of tea.

Helpful 46 Not Helpful 5

#### Question

**What if your coach is a reason you're quitting?**



Community Answer

Still follow the same guidelines. It's up to you whether you want to share this piece of information or not. If you want them to know, you can tell them that their coaching style makes you uncomfortable (or whatever it makes you feel), or you can ask your parents to address the coach about this for you.

Helpful 20 Not Helpful 3

#### Question

**What do I do if telling my coach that I am quitting is awkward?**



Community Answer

Conversations like this are always awkward, but they still have to happen. Just remind yourself that it's a quick conversation and you'll be done with it in 5 minutes. Then go get it over with.

Helpful 11 Not Helpful 1

#### Question

**I need to quit because I am injured, but I get emotional every time I talk about it, how am I supposed to talk to my coach if I start crying before I can get any words out?**



Community Answer

First of all, it's okay to quit because you're injured, it's not your fault, and your coach will definitely understand. Secondly, it's okay to be upset and even to cry about this. Your coach will also understand that. Ask your coach to speak with you in private somewhere so that others can't observe the conversation. If you really can't stand the thought of crying in front of them, send an email or text message.

Helpful 9 Not Helpful 0

#### Question

**What should I do if I want to quit because the team isn't good enough?**



Community Answer

I would try to remember that the team can only get better if good players make the choice to join and stay. If you still want to leave, then just explain to your coach that you're dissatisfied with the team's performance and don't feel inspired enough to continue.

Helpful 17 Not Helpful 8

#### Question

**What if I want to switch coaches?**



Community Answer

Talk to your parents about it first. If they're okay with you switching, then talk to the coach. Let them know that you appreciate everything they've done for you, but that you think you have a lot to learn from the other coach.

Helpful 5 Not Helpful 0

[See more answers](#)



### Tips

- Shake hands with your coach when you're done. This shows respect and, in a way, says thank you.
- It is better to quit early in the season rather than procrastinate and disappoint your team.
- If the coach tries to persuade you, don't listen. Try to stay focused on quitting or the coach will still think you like the sport.
- If you quit, do it somewhere private so you can work through it alone.



### Warnings

- It can be difficult to quit a sport, especially if you have devoted years of time and effort to it. See this as an opportunity to pursue other interests.
- There is nothing wrong with quitting a sport. If your coach tries to call you a quitter,

reaffirm your strengths and skills. Stay positive, and remind yourself of what is good about yourself.[12]

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