

TrueSportPARENT Shortcuts



It's human nature to want to do things faster and with less effort. But, taking shortcuts rarely pans out in the long run, especially when it comes to sports.

The line between doing something more efficiently versus taking a harmful shortcut is not always a clear one. In this regard, youth athletes can have an especially difficult time trying to decipher good decisions from bad ones.

To help them learn how to make more decisions, teach them the six steps of the decision-making model:



Athletes who think through these steps before making a big decision will be sure to make ones that don't cause long-term harm or damage their reputations.

Shortcut Misconceptions and Truths

There are many misconceptions that youth athletes, their parents, and coaches share about how to gain an advantage in sports. Many of these shortcuts are damaging in the long-run and it's the responsibility of parents and coaches to steer athletes straight.

Misconception: *Energy drinks and sport drinks are the same thing and a great way to get an added boost of energy.*

Truth: Sports drinks contain water, minerals, electrolytes, and some sugar that help hydrate and replenish glucose after long workouts (although plain water is still preferential). Energy drinks contain high amounts of sugar, caffeine, and other ingredients that can cause anxiety, an accelerated heart rate, and even seizures.

Misconception: *For youth athletes to reach their full potential, they must take supplements.*

Truth: While it's true that not every supplement is harmful, focusing on eating real food (and ample amounts of it for certain sports) carries the benefits of supplements with no risk of harmful side effects.

Misconception: *All performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) are steroids.*

Truth: Illegal PEDs can also appear in the form of diuretics, (such as weight loss pills), stimulants (like some cold medicines), ADD or ADHD medicine, or asthma inhalers. Athletes who enter a junior competitive program should be aware they can be tested for these and other performance-enhancing drugs. For more, visit USADA.org/substances.

To learn more about how to teach athletes to avoid taking harmful shortcuts, check out:

- Learn.TrueSport.org for insightful articles and videos full of shortcut-related advice
- Teach.TrueSport.org for an entire lesson plan surrounding shortcuts
- Play.TrueSport.org (app available on the App Store and Google Play) for fun shortcut-focused activities you can complete with your athletes