

Activity: Communicating Nutrition Information to an Athlete

Purpose:

As a practitioner, it's important to understand how to develop unique education materials that communicate sports nutrition information to your athletes. The purpose of this activity is to learn best practices for creating sports nutrition handouts for athletes and then practice designing a handout for a high school or college sports team of your choice.

Materials:

A software application that allows you to design/create visual content. Examples include: Desktop apps, like Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Publisher, and Adobe Illustrator
Free online platforms, like Canva, DesignBold, Piktochart, etc.

Best Practices:

When creating a sport nutrition handout for your athletes, please consider the following best practices:

1. Determine your topic and objectives

Before creating any content, determine the specific topic and objective[s] of your handout.

Examples: *protein for recovery, how to hydrate during training, pre-practice/competition fueling, fast-food nutrition, etc.*

What is the intended outcome you want to achieve? What do you want your athletes to know or do?
Is the purpose of your handout simply for the sake of their knowledge, or is it intended to encourage a certain action?

2. Understand your audience

- Who are the athletes that you're developing the material for? Consider the following in order to best tailor your approach:
- Age, sport, sex of the athletes
- What is their level of sports nutrition knowledge?
- Are there any potential language or cultural barriers?

3. Organize key messages and content

- Ensure your content is organized in such a way that it helps you achieve your intended outcome.
- Place your most important messages in highly visible areas.
- Properly segment your info using headings, subheadings, outlined text boxes, etc.
- Balance the right amount of text and visuals. Use enough text to get your message across, but not so much that the athlete misses the key message. Visuals help attract the reader, make sure they enhance your message. Icons are a popular way to highlight key points.
- When using photos, make sure you have the rights to use the photo, and consider ease of printing.

4. Use clear/concise language and visuals

- Use words and phrases that are easy for your athletes to read and understand.
- Use as few words as possible to clearly state your messages. A good practice is to edit your handout and cut out any unnecessary words.
- Use common terms; avoid using jargon (example: use “eat or drink” instead of “consume”).
- Use the “active voice”, as if you’re speaking directly to the athlete (example: “Drink XX of fluid ~1 hour before you go to practice”).
- Use examples (when relevant) to help facilitate understanding.

5. Determine best method of delivery

What communication channels do your athletes already use? What communication channels are they most receptive to? Consider channels such as:

Print (if you plan to hand out your material to athletes or place as a poster)

Digital (if you have access to placing your material on a screen in a facility)

Multimedia (this could include the use of either direct message via smartphone or social media)

Consider partnering with other sports staff to help you reach your athletes through the optimal communication channel.

Your Turn!

Choose a sports nutrition topic, and using the best practices provided above design a handout for a high school or college sports team of your choice. Assume the piece will be printed and distributed to the athletes.