

ADVOCACY PACKETS

# SUSTAINABILITY IN SPORTS

How to make your sports team more eco-friendly!

## INTRODUCTION

As young individuals, we see environmental issues in our community and on the news and want to take action to protect our future. Often it can be difficult to know where to start or how to enact lasting change as a student. But students around the globe are working to change the world one step at a time - and so can you.

This series of advocacy packets, created by students for students, provides introductory knowledge on these ideas and concepts and walks you through steps on how to begin invoking change from your classroom, home or community.

This specific packet on sustainability in sports will focus on the ways that your sports team can become more environmentally friendly.



## IMPORTANCE

When discussing how to become more environmentally friendly, sports are often left out of the conversation. However, climate change will and already has far-reaching impacts on our lives, and sports are no exception. Most sports are outside, and athletes need to take care of the land they play on in order to ensure it will be there for future seasons and future teams.

With changes in climate, athletes will be impacted in ways that they may not even realize. An increase in global temperatures will make it too dangerous to practice outside — it is estimated that by 2050 teams will have to cancel 30-50 total outdoor practices due to extreme heat. Poor air quality caused by more frequent fires will also prevent outdoor practices from happening. The Air Quality Index is from 0-500, with anything over 200 considered very unhealthy. Air above the 200 range will make athletes feel as if they are running through a smoke-filled bar. Winter sports are also in jeopardy. Increased temperatures will result in a reduction of quality snow by 10-20% around the world by 2050, making it difficult for athletes to ski, snowboard, or practice any other snow-based sport.

Sports practices and events generate significant waste and pollution, from the food players and fans eat to the emissions produced by the cars and buses that transport them. One statistic from Michigan State University estimates that tailgates produce enough trash to fill two 40 yard dumpsters with trash or over 16,000 gallons of trash. Sports teams, especially professional and collegiate ones also have an extreme level influence on society and serve as role models in their communities. Ensuring that sports are more sustainable can have the potential to inspire fans and the general public to become more conscious of their impact on the environment.

# STAKEHOLDERS



## Team Members

You should first begin by speaking with your fellow teammates to develop ideas on steps to be more sustainable as a team. This could include something as small as pledging to use reusable water bottles instead of plastic ones.

## Other Sports Teams

- Meet with other sports teams at your school or in your area. You can work together to come up with ways that sports teams and events can be more environmentally friendly in your community.
- Create a **joint resolution** that all sports teams in the community can sign to pledge sustainability measures.



## Coaches

Speak with your coaches about your desire to be more sustainable during practices and competitions. Encourage them to **host a teach-in** about climate change or other related issues with the team.

## School Administrators

The best way to make a large-scale change in your school or university is by contacting your school's principal, president, or dean. Have your team work together to send an **email or petition** to the administration urging them to take action, such as changing all the lights on fields to LEDs to be more energy-efficient or about sustainable practices to maintain fields such as minimizing pesticide and herbicide use. Your school administration can also commit to buying carbon offsets for your team's travel.



## Family and Friends

Talk with your loved ones about carpooling with others to sporting events to reduce carbon emissions. Host a sustainable tailgating challenge against the other team to see which fans can reduce the amount of waste produced at a game.

## Financial Partners

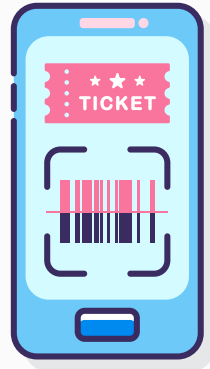
Becoming more sustainable can sometimes be costly. Building connections with financial stakeholders such as local companies or partners can help cover the cost of items such as reusable water bottles for the whole team or sustainably made uniforms.



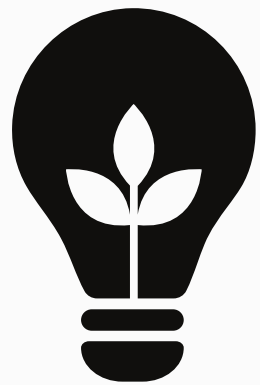
# IMPLEMENTATION

Below are some starting ideas for how your team can be more sustainable. Brainstorm more ideas with your team!

- Use digital tickets to sporting events to reduce paper waste
- Have food sign-up sheets for team celebrations or events to reduce food waste



- Use compostable or reusable utensils and plates at the food tent to prevent harmful litter
- Have a tree planting event every season to offset the carbon emissions from driving to practice or sporting events



- Use reusable water bottles instead of plastic ones
- Have the school implement LED lights on sports fields to be more energy efficient
- Set up collection bins to donate old sports materials such as tennis balls instead of throwing them away
- Discuss making more plant-based options available at practices or events
- Learn more about being an Athlete for the Earth
- Participate in Earth Day with your team and register your event on the map

Bring the ideas from the team brainstorm to your coaches and school administration to let them know that being environmentally friendly is important to you!

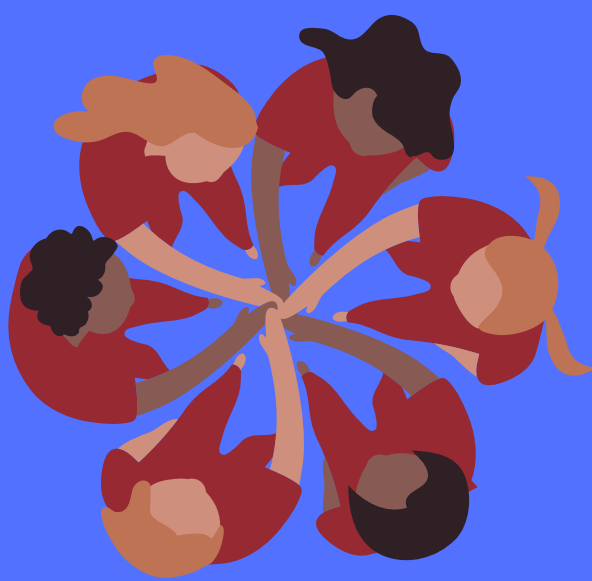


Use these ideas to start raising awareness on the importance of making your sports team more sustainable:

- Use this [template](#) to start a petition and collect signatures from fellow athletes, students, parents, and faculty members
- Present a [resolution](#) to your team
- Use this [template](#) and conduct a letter-writing campaign to your school's principal or administration to advocate for your program
- Host a [Teach-In](#) about climate change or other related issues to educate your community on the importance of making positive environmental changes with your sports team
- Host fundraisers to raise money and reach out to local businesses and potential financial supporters who could be interested in supporting your project



After these steps your team can take many more to be more sustainable. Commit to holding each other accountable and having monthly check-ins about your progress and what you can do next. Set goals, track your success and support each other!



As your team takes new steps to become more sustainable, spread the word! Invite local newspapers to write a story about your efforts, challenge another school to join you and post on your successes on social media. Your community will be cheering for you on and off the field!

