



# Hazing Prevention 101 - A Coach's Role

**33%**

of coaches said they are aware of hazing within their club/organization.

**82%**

of those aware of hazing feel it is part of team building or the way they do it is okay.

2023 Ontario Coaches Report

This resource provides tools to **RECOGNIZE** and **PREVENT** hazing activities and **ACT** on proven strategies to create a positive and healthy team culture.

## RECOGNIZE: What is Hazing?

Hazing is "any activity expected of someone joining a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers, regardless of the person's willingness to participate."

### Three components that define hazing:

- 1** It occurs in a group context.
- 2** Humiliating, degrading, or endangering behavior.
- 3** Happens regardless of an individual's willingness to participate.

# Consequences of Hazing

## Psychological Impact

Athletes are more likely to develop mental illnesses, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and eating disorders.

## Physical Impact

Documented injuries from hazing range from minor injuries, sexually transmitted infections, concussions, to death and suicide.

## Team/Organizational Impact

Teams experience reduced teamwork and focus, accompanied by an increase in the 'code of silence' concerning hazing and sports abuse.

## Key Stats

Hazing activities can start as young as 12

100% of high school athletes expect to be hazed

64% of post-secondary athletes experience hazing

Females are more likely to experience hazing

1/3 of varsity athletes say their coach was present during hazing

# The Spectrum of Hazing Behaviours

## High Frequency

Less recognized as hazing and often explained away as harmless traditions, jokes and pranks.

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### EXAMPLES

Demeaning Nicknames

Forced Singing or Chanting in Public

Associating Only with Specific People and Not Others

Acting as a Personal Servant to Other Members

Wearing Embarrassing Clothing

Attending a Skit Night or Roast

Being Yelled, Screamed, or Cursed At by Others

Forcing Drinking or Consumption of Vile Concoctions

Pressure to Consume Alcohol or Drugs

Abduction/Kidnapping

Physical and/or Sexual Assault

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## Low Frequency

Most commonly recognized as hazing.

Hazing behavior can vary and evolve over time, occurring at any point on the spectrum and in multiple directions. The most common behaviours are listed above, however any activity that meets the definition on page 1 is hazing.

# Hazing Myths

## Myth #1: Hazing and initiation are essential for team building.



The opposite is true. Isolating rookies negatively affects athlete and team cohesion. Activities focused on working towards a common goal increase team belonging and togetherness.

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## Myth #2: The concept of hazing is such a grey area. Any activity can be considered hazing.



It's all about how an activity is structured. Refer back to the hazing definition and ask yourself if the activity in question is likely to cause mental or physical stress, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule.

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## Myth #3: If someone agrees to participate in an activity, it can't be considered hazing.



Agreeing to participate may not guarantee true consent, due to peer pressure, threats, etc. Anti-hazing laws exist in 44 out of 50 states in the US, and consent cannot be used as a defense. In Canada, there are no laws against hazing.

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## Myth #4: Hazing teaches respect and discipline.



Respect is something that is earned, not forced. Hazing reinforces the existing hierarchical team structure and that the person(s) being hazed is at the bottom.

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## Myth #5: Hazing is okay as long as it is not physically dangerous.



Hazing can lead to severe mental and emotional damage that can last even longer than physical injuries, with the most severe cases at risk for suicide.

# PREVENT – Your Role as a Coach

## Education

To change a hazing culture, it is important to understand it. Hazing thrives due to misunderstandings and secrecy and can be exposed through open communication and knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

Where you can start:

- [NCCP Create a Positive Sport Environment](#)
- [NCCP Make Ethical Decisions](#)
- [Respect in Sport](#)

## Communication

Athletes may not report hazing incidents due to trust issues. Coaches can build trust by setting clear expectations, checking in with players regularly, and sharing personal experiences to foster transparency.<sup>5</sup>

Where you can start:

- [Create a team code of conduct](#)
- Ensure the code of conduct is signed by players, coaches and parents
- Set monthly player check-ins

## Implement Policies

Coaches' attitudes towards hazing influence player behavior. Implementing clear anti-hazing policies with strict consequences is crucial in creating a healthy and positive sport culture.

Where you can start:

- Develop and distribute a club-wide anti-hazing policy
- Develop clear procedures for reporting a complaint
- Enforce sanctions for any violations

## Plan Positive Team Building Activities

To promote teamwork, choose group activities that emphasize communication, collaboration, and cohesion. Avoid activities that reinforce veteran/rookie hierarchy. For examples, see page 6.

# ACT: Choose Positive Team Building Activities

## Focus on Team Bonding

Activities that will help your athletes get to know one another and build relationships.

### Sporting Event

Attend a game together. Pick your own sport, or, try one most of your team may have not seen in-person before. Consider post-secondary, semi-pro, etc. to minimize costs.

### Craft Night

Get together for an evening decorating team t-shirts, or signs for family and friends to cheer you on with. Or have everyone contribute a square for a quilt or a page for a scrapbook.

### Other Ideas:

- Movie Night
- Board Games/Trivia
- Player Interviews
- Day Trip or Retreat
- Baking/Art Class
- Team Dinner

## Focus on Problem Solving & Communication

Activities that emphasize critical thinking and time management as well as effective communication between participants.

### Blindfolded Games

Set up your obstacle course and pair participants. One partner must verbally guide the other blindfolded partner through the course. TIP: This can also be done with video games where the blindfolded partner is guided through each level.

### Human Knot

Have players stand in a circle, crossing their arms and holding the hand next to them. The challenge is to untangle the knot without letting go of each other. This is a great, cost-effective activity for all ages, sports and skill levels.

### Other Ideas:

- Ropes Courses
- Canoe/Kayaking
- Hiking
- Escape Room
- Scavenger Hunt
- Paintball
- Capture the Flag

## Focus on Responsibility & Leadership

Activities that promote accountability, empathy and self-awareness.

### Volunteering

Volunteer as a group at a local charity, like a food bank, shoreline clean up or meal service. Helping those in need will deepen the group's connection to the community and emphasize the importance of working together for a greater good.

### Rookie Mentorship

Match new players with a veteran team mentor. This empowers veteran players to share their expertise, while also providing support for rookies. Have your veterans pass the torch at the end of the season to reinforce the importance of this role.

### Other Ideas:

- Guest Speakers
- Team Fundraiser
- Role Playing
- Tree Planting
- Community Garden Maintenance
- Training for a Race or Obstacle Course

# Team Building vs Hazing Checklist

After reflecting on the information throughout this resource, use the checklist below to evaluate some of the team building activities you currently use.

## General Activities

Yes

- Are activities planned that only rookies/new players must do?
- Are team members expected to keep the planned activities a secret?
- Is intimidation or perception that veterans are in control used to ensure new players participate?
- Is there physical risk involved in any of the activities?
- Is there risk of emotional distress in any of the activities?
- Would you be concerned if outside stakeholders (parents, administrators, etc.) find out what is planned?

## Activities Where Alcohol Is Present

- Are there games that use alcohol as a reward/punishment?
- Is there the expectation that rookies will drink alcohol?

If you answered YES to any of these questions, your activity meets the definition of hazing. See page 6 for positive team building activities that you can use instead.

## References

2023 Ontario Coaching Report; Coaches Association of Ontario.

2017 Sport Canada Research Initiative Conference - Investigators: Jay Johnson, University of Manitoba; M. Holman; J. Chin-San; E. Allan; M. Madden.

Anti-Hazing Toolkit (2018) University of Windsor; J. Johnson; M. Holman; M. Havey.

Jeckell, et al. (2018) The Spectrum of Hazing and Peer Sexual Abuse In Sports: A Current Perspective. Sports Health, 10(6), 558-564.