



October 11, 2016

CATEGORIES: [Blog Team Manager Tips](#)

## TM Tips: DI Dos And Don'ts

By: Kate Worthington Poitras, Team Manager, Massachusetts

If you've already agreed to be a Team Manager, congratulations! It truly is an amazing opportunity. You are about to go on an incredible journey with what is, I'm willing to bet, a pretty special group of kids. You'll laugh and learn so much in the next few months and at the end of it all, you will experience a sense of pride that is pretty unique.

Being a Team Manager is a pretty big commitment and one that can, at times, seem overwhelming. Here are some pointers to help you and your team have a smooth and successful season.

### DI DOS AND DON'TS

**DO** try to find yourself a Co-Manager or other adult who is willing to step up when you need help. If you have someone willing to share the responsibilities with you, it can make the experience a little less intimidating. If you don't have another adult to help with your team, try to connect with other Team Managers in your town or Region. It helps to be able to chat with other adults who "get" DI.

**DO** tap into your resources. Read all the materials that you're given. Team Challenges, Rules of the Road, Roadmap, the DI website and the blogs are all packed with information. Attend the trainings (no matter how cold it is outside or how early in the morning it is). You'll learn a ton of valuable information at these trainings and meet amazing adults who will blow you away with their commitment, creativity and knowledge – and if you're lucky, they'll have doughnuts and coffee!

**DO** listen to the folks that have been doing DI for years. I remain grateful for the tidbits of information that I learned from seasoned Team Managers and Appraisers whom I met at trainings and tournaments. I was able to reflect on their advice throughout the season and will carry it with me into the next season.

**DO** provide a positive environment (and lots of snacks!) for your team. As Team Managers, we help set the tone for a meeting. Try to keep the environment positive and upbeat. It can be our own personal Challenge to muster enthusiasm and patience (especially in mid-February when the meetings can be long, the days are short and the kids are reaching new levels of frustration). Your confidence in them and your encouragement can make a huge difference in their ability to feel capable.

**DO** know what motivates your team. Time management took us some time to figure out, and what works is going to vary by team. Our team spent a few meetings accomplishing very little and it became clear that they needed some motivation to stay on task. They tried posting a calendar, they tried creating to-do lists on huge poster size sticky notes, and they tried to motivate themselves with snacks. In the end, our team found that a reward system worked well. They set goals for each meeting and when they reached the goals, we would reward them with a game (their favorite being a word-association game) at the end of the meeting. It worked.

**DON'T** sweat the small stuff. These kids have, without a doubt, a magical combination of creativity, intelligence and determination. However, they're probably not as neat as you want them to be, or as focused or punctual or concerned with the looming deadlines. It's important to remember that they're just kids and they're learning huge life lessons. It might not all get done exactly the way they envision it, but they will show up with something on tournament day. It's our job, as Team Managers, to help them feel good about whatever they show up with.

**DON'T** interfere. Please. Just don't. It can be tempting, I know. But you're doing them a favor by not interfering. It has to be all theirs. All of it. The accomplishments, the shortfalls, the obstacles and the lessons. Nothing will make you prouder than watching them figure it all out on their own.

**DO** enjoy the moments between the first meeting and the closing ceremonies. My daughter and I recently looked through our DI pictures (**DO** take a lot of pictures). In every picture my daughter is laughing and smiling. I've honestly never seen such an impressive compilation of happy pictures. Sure there were frustrating moments and tough days, but most of our memories of that first DI season are pretty special. The inside jokes, the silly ideas and even the garage full of DI stuff that I can't seem to part with. I'm so grateful for all of it.

Thank you for reading this. I hope it's helpful as you start out on this journey.

Here's to a great DI season!