



# Coaching Girl Wrestlers: Best Practices



There are currently thousands of male coaches who coach female wrestlers across the country.

While there are more similarities than differences when coaching males and females, for those new to coaching girls, we recognize there may be questions. Here are the Best Practices from coaches who were once in your shoes.



## Getting Started [MORE...](#)

**Begin with the basics, take it one step at a time and stay flexible.**

- **Get support** from your AD & school boards by developing a proposal.
  - Examples from the [PA Taskforce](#).
- **Choose** coed or girls vs. girls-only practices and competitions.
- **Recruit a female coach** or mentor.
- **Recruiting:** Invite every girl to your first girls' team through [fliers](#), [invitations](#), and meetings.
  - [USAW Starting a Girls Program](#)
- **Support** and educate girls' parents using meetings and resources.
  - [WLAG Guide for Parents](#)
- **Review & edit team rules** to apply equally to a coed team & use inclusive communication.
- **Ensure representation** on school media communication platforms.
- **Gear:** Set guidelines for practice attire for a coed team and [review NFHS Rules](#).
- **Girls cut singlets** and high neck or high cut sports bras are recommended.

[Coach Eric Video](#)



## Why it Matters [MORE...](#)

- **Wrestling benefits female athletes** in a multitude of ways: instilling in them leadership skills such as confidence, grit, and resilience. Creating opportunities in higher education and the workforce.
- **Coaching girls is rewarding** as they can be very attentive, focused, and engaged asking technical questions and retaining information.
- **Women's wrestling benefits Men's wrestling** - No four-year institution with women's wrestling has ever dropped men's wrestling.
- **Wrestling is Inclusive by Nature** - Wrestling does not favor any particular gender, race, culture, size, or stature.

**Resources:** [Coach Stusse's Why](#) - [Leigh's Why](#) - [Steiner's Why](#)

## [MORE...](#) Protecting Athletes & Coaches



- All coaches, in any sport, working with the same sex or with the opposite sex must engage professionally with athletes at all times.
- You can best protect yourself and your athletes by consistently following national, state, and district guidelines for coach conduct.

[National Guidelines](#) - [Athlete's Bill of Rights](#) - [www.SafeSport.org](#)

There are currently no additional regulations that are specific to coaching female wrestlers.

[Coach Kriebel Video](#)



## Supporting Diversity & Inclusion [MORE...](#)

Wrestling has the potential to be one of the most inclusive sports as it doesn't favor any race, gender, culture size, or stature.

- Minority girls are fighting multiple battles; make your wrestling room a haven of acceptance and inclusivity.
- Educate yourself on diversity & inclusion. Have a conversation. Be curious; what are your athletes' passions and challenges off the mat?
- Set a clear code of conduct for your team and be a mentor or ally.

*"Just be true to who you are. What works for you might not work for someone else, what works for someone else might not work for me."*

Helen Maroulis, Olympic Champion.



## Team Dynamics

**A positive team culture will increase retention of female athletes on your team.**

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- Powerful things come from a group of girls who have shared goals; the opposite can tear a team apart.
- Set a culture of acceptance with a welcoming, positive, and inclusive tone.
- Chatting, braiding each other's hair, & befriending opponents are common to female wrestlers. [Embrace it.](#)



Looking for more?

Each section has a MORE button for extended information.



# Coaching Girl Wrestlers: Best Practices

Find the full extended doc at:

[wrestlelikeagirl.org/coaching-girlwrestlers](http://wrestlelikeagirl.org/coaching-girlwrestlers)



## Female Health

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- **Menstruation** - Wrestling during menstruation is possible. It's even advantageous. The [App Fitr Woman](#) is a great resource to help individuals track and learn about their periods.
- **Nutrition** - Consistent fueling, quality nutrition, and hydration are key to success. Performance [Nutritionist Erin Sparrold explains](#). It is not just what to eat; it is the athlete's relationship to food and nutrition that benefits your athlete.
- **Weight Management** - #1 is choosing the appropriate weight class for your athlete. #2 Adapt your weight adjustment strategies to support female physiology. Understand it will take more time to reduce weight in a female athlete. Recognize that technique is a better equalizer than cutting weight to bridge the strength gap between male and female wrestlers.

[Performance Nutritionist Erin Sparrold Video](#)



## Female Specific Technique

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- **Notable physical differences** for male and female wrestlers include the athlete's center of gravity, strength, and flexibility. [Coach Kroll explains](#) how this transfers to the mat.
- **Reduce likelihood of common injuries** (shoulder and ACL) in female wrestlers. [Coach Jacque explains](#) more on injury.
  - Neck strengthening helps reduce the likelihood of concussions.
- **Freestyle** - teach folkstyle while keeping in mind that freestyle is the future for your girls. Example: teach a tight-waist tilt on top to make it easier to learn gut wrench later.
- **Expect to explain the "why"** during technique; the female brain tends to process information in a 'whole-brained' or 'big-picture' way. Understanding the reasoning behind technique will increase comprehension and buy-in. [Coach Jacque Video 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7](#) [Coach Kroll Video](#)



## Emotions

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- Girls are not more emotional than boys; they are simply more willing to be emotionally vulnerable with people who support them.
- Listen, validate, and teach positive emotional management skills to your athletes.
- Your coaching efforts will go further with female athletes when you can be comfortable with emotions and recognize them as an important factor in the process.



## Motivation and Confidence

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- **Motivation:** Generally, female athletes follow the coach that they trust; male athletes follow the coach that they respect.
- **Confidence:** Boys tend to be more confident and inflate their abilities, whereas girls tend to doubt their abilities and have perfectionist tendencies. While this means girls are very coachable, intense criticism can sometimes inhibit their confidence.
- **Keep in mind:** Some girls' initial motivation for joining wrestling is for the recreational side of the sport: making friends, building confidence, etc. Accepting the recreational athlete will support athlete retention.



*"It's a lot bigger than wrestling on the boys team. It's about women living out an athletic dream and getting to do something amazing with their lives."*

Adeline Gray, 5X World Champion.

