



Guidelines for Players Talking to Officials

This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.

"What are your thoughts on players talking to officials during the game? Are there certain ways in which it is OK for players to question calls? What if a player just wants a better understanding of a rule?"

PCA Response by David Jacobson, PCA Trainer & Senior Marketing Communications and Content Manager

Ideally, players can converse with officials to better learn the game and its rules, while also gaining life lessons in how to communicate with authority figures. Often, the type and amount of discourse will vary by the officials' preferences.

Some officials enjoy interacting with players and see themselves as teachers and protectors of the game, perhaps even character educators, who want to proactively add value to the players' experiences. Others do not.

Coaches may want to meet with the officials before the game and ask their preferences. "If my players have questions about a call may they approach you?" Answers may range from "no" to "only the captain" to "as long as they approach respectfully and ask for clarification without arguing the call itself." These answers also may be tied to the age group of players and level of competitiveness.

Coaches should then inform players about the officials' preferences and advise them to speak with the officials sparingly, if at all. That reduces the chances of players becoming distracted by the conversation – and for real or perceived overstepping of bounds – while still allowing players the maximum learning experience.

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