

Learning the rules, picking up skills and getting fit often aren't enough to compete at the highest level of sport.

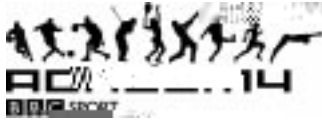
To give Academy members the edge, BBC Sport Academy has tracked down sports stars from across the world of sport for a series of special features giving an insight into the hard work and commitment they've put in to make it to the top of their game.

Below are snippets of the juiciest Sport Academy special features providing additional information from inside the sport, exclusive personal tips and food for thought on levels of motivation and dedication required for aspiring young sports stars.

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Graham Gooch believes "catches win matches" and gives his tips on fielding and position, Alec Stewart reveals his pre-match and professional diet secrets and Shane Warne's bowling coach, Terry Jenner, uncovers the tricks of the trade for excelling at spin bowling.

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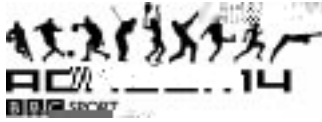
blueprint for a successful international player, England women's captain Paula George applauds the rise of the women's game and rugby league's brothers in arms Danny and Paul Sculthorpe talk about their back-yard tackling.

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The art of defence, the least glamorous but most important aspect of the game, is unravelled by London Towers' Martin Henlan; John Amaechi, the first British player in the American NBA league, talks about his playing career; and Missie Lender, captain of trophy winning Rhondda Rebels, tells it like it is for the girls. Basketball is often perceived as a game only for tall, black men – Brighton Bears' Errol Seaman talks about making it in the game even if you are small and Randy Duck explodes the myth that white men can't jump!

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Winning the Olympic gold medal is the absolute pinnacle of athletic performance – Denise Lewis, gold medal heptathlete, is featured recounting the pain and elation of winning gold in Sydney. Gail Devers gives a video interview on bouncing back from illness and Dean Macey reveals his iron willpower with some inspirational comments. Follow young athlete Amy Spencer as she enters the senior competition arena, and find out about life on the other side with a few words from Steve Cram on being behind the mic.



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Where to play

Once the basics are mastered and it's time to go and hone skills out on the practice court, the track or in a scrum with 14 others, BBC Sport Academy offers a starting point to more information on local courses or finding a place to play.

In each of the nine sport categories there is a contacts link which, through partnerships with major sporting organisations, reveals a clickable map of the British Isles for youngsters to pinpoint where they live and access links to sites with information for finding a local club anywhere across Britain.

The Sports Charter

At grass roots level, it's vital that young people are aware of their rights in relation to the members of their team, their coach and their parents. The Sports Charter does not offer prescriptive advice, but it does offer young people a set of guidelines for reference if they are feeling uncomfortable with any aspect of the sports they are involved with. The ten points of the charter are explained below:

1. You have the right to be treated with respect regardless of race, religion, colour, language, sex and disability.
2. You have the right to a safe environment off the field and to be protected from emotional, physical or sexual mistreatment or abuse from any section – players, coaches, parents etc.
3. You have the right to be protected from violence, bullying and aggression from opponents and teammates on the field.
4. You have the right not to be ridiculed or criticised by parents, supporters or coaches.

5. You have the right to express an opinion and develop ideas providing it is done responsibly.
6. You have the right to play sport for your own reasons and not be the victim of unrealistic expectations from anyone else.
7. You should respect other teammates, coaches and game officials.
8. You should take responsibility for your own actions and behaviour.
9. You should respect the rules of your chosen sport.
10. You should respect your sporting environment and equipment.

Careers guide

Apart from wanting to be the next David Beckham, many young people aren't aware of the depth and breadth of careers and employment within the sports and leisure industry.

Only a small percentage of talented youngsters will go on to make a living out of playing sport professionally, but that doesn't mean the association and enthusiasm has to end for those with less ability.

This section offers lots of ways to make a living in the sport you love, apart from playing, to really get young people thinking seriously about how they can develop and qualify further in the sports environment through coaching, administration or management to make a difference in other ways.