

HYDRATION BREAK TIMER

A Practice-Friendly Rhythm for Coaches and Athletes

THE PROBLEM WITH "DRINK WHEN YOU'RE THIRSTY"

By the time you feel thirsty, you're already behind. Dehydration doesn't announce itself — it shows up as slower reaction times, foggy decision-making, and legs that feel heavier than they should. For athletes, that's not just uncomfortable. It's a performance issue.

The fix isn't complicated. **It's rhythm.**

THE 15–20 MINUTE RULE

Research consistently supports a simple window: one hydration break every **15 to 20 minutes** during moderate-to-intense activity. That's roughly 3–4 breaks per hour of practice — enough to stay ahead of sweat loss without turning practice into a water fountain parade.

The goal isn't to stop and chug. It's to take short, scheduled sips that keep the body in balance throughout the session.

BUILDING IT INTO PRACTICE (FOR COACHES)

The key is making breaks feel like part of the flow — not an interruption to it.

Anchor breaks to transitions, not a clock.

The most natural moments for a hydration break are already built into practice: the pause between drills, the switch from offense to defense, the reset after a rep. Map your break windows to those transitions and nobody notices the clock.

Use a consistent cue.

Pick one signal — a whistle pattern, a hand signal, a verbal call — and use it every time. Once athletes associate that cue with a quick water break, it becomes automatic. No confusion, no debate, no lost time.

Keep it short and purposeful.

A hydration break should be 60–90 seconds. Athletes grab their bottle, take 3–4 steady sips (roughly 4–6 oz), and come back ready. If it stretches past 2 minutes, the rhythm is gone and energy drops.

Plan your session around it.

For a 90-minute practice, you're looking at something like this:

TIME INTO PRACTICE	BREAK ACTION
0–20 min	Warm-up / no break needed
20 min	Break #1
38–40 min	Break #2
55–60 min	Break #3 (halftime or mid-session rest)
75 min	Break #4
90 min	Post-practice recovery

Adjust the window based on heat, intensity, and your sport. Hot weather or heavy conditioning? Move to every 15 minutes.

WHAT ATHLETES SHOULD KNOW

You don't need to wait for the coach to call it.

If you're in an individual training session or self-directed workout, set a timer for 15–20 minutes on your phone and make the break a non-negotiable.

The 4–6 oz guideline matters.

Most athletes either skip breaks entirely or guzzle too much at once. Small, consistent sips throughout practice are more effective than a big drink at the end. Aim for 4–6 oz per break — roughly 4–6 solid sips from a standard bottle.

Pre-hydrate before you start.

If you're starting practice already slightly dehydrated, you're playing catch-up from the first whistle. Drink 16–20 oz of water or an electrolyte mix in the 30–60 minutes before practice begins.

Watch for the signs.

Mild headache, mental fog, or cramps mid-practice often aren't fitness issues — they're hydration issues. If you notice those, don't wait for the next scheduled break.

ELECTROLYTES MATTER MORE THAN WATER ALONE

Water replaces fluid. It doesn't replace what's lost in sweat — sodium, potassium, and magnesium that your muscles and brain depend on to function. A sports drink or electrolyte mix taken at one or two breaks per practice (especially in longer or hotter sessions) helps your body actually absorb and retain the fluid you're drinking.

Plain water is fine for short sessions under 45 minutes. For anything longer — or any session in heat — pair at least one break with an electrolyte source.

QUICK REFERENCE FOR COACHES

SCENARIO	BREAK FREQUENCY	HYDRATION TYPE
Indoor, moderate intensity, <45 min	Every 20 min	Water
Indoor, moderate intensity, 45–90 min	Every 15–20 min	Water + electrolytes at 1–2 breaks
Outdoor, warm/hot weather	Every 15 min	Electrolytes recommended at every break
High-intensity conditioning	Every 15 min	Electrolytes recommended

HYDRATE THE BODY.
SHARPEN THE MIND.