

How to Make Traveling By Bus with Your Team an Easy and Pleasant Experience

1. Before You Meet

Fax your team itinerary to the bus company one week in advance. Although you cannot guarantee that it will reach your bus driver as early, it will allow him/her to review their upcoming schedule before they meet you and your team. This will illustrate to the bus driver that you're organized, considerate and responsible. Be sure to include the addresses of all of your locations as many people make the assumption that your driver will be familiar with the destination city. If by chance the driver is unfamiliar with your destination, they will appreciate your foresight in helping them navigate the upcoming travel routes.

2. Handshake and Hello

Before boarding the bus, locate the driver. While it's ok for your athletes to be loading and jockeying for seats, as the Coach you want to make face-to-face contact with your driver, introduce yourself with a firm handshake, eye contact and sincere hello. The main reason for this meeting is two-fold; 1. learning your driver's name and 2. it sets the foundation for clear communication, which is critical. Commit their name to memory and be sure to use it as often as possible.

3. Information Swap

Exchange personal contact information (cell phone number) with the driver, so that should there be unforeseen issues with the schedule, you both will be able to notify the other and maintain contact. For example, "What's the best place for me to reach you, should we be running late or have a change to our schedule?". Posing a question like this shows the driver that you recognize and consider their interests and time.

4. Review the Itinerary

After introductions, review the itinerary. Ensure that both you and the driver have the same schedules. If there have been any changes or a need for changes this is your best opportunity to do so. Your driver will appreciate your consideration and organization.

5. Synchronize Time

Lastly, be sure to synchronize your watches so that you are both are operating on the same clock. This also illustrates your commitment to respecting their time, while stressing the importance of both groups maintaining the set schedule.

6. Checking into Hotel

Upon arriving to the hotel, the Coach should de-board the bus first to check the group in. As you de-board reassure the bus driver that you will personally return with his room information and key. Be sure to ask if they expect a smoking or non-smoking room. When you return with their room key, be sure to exchange room numbers and end the conversation by reinforcing the time and location you expect to see them next. For instance, “Thanks for the ride Rick, have a good night and see you back here, outside the front doors, in the morning at ten!”.

TIP: Before calling it a night, ask to board the bus so that you may personally ensure your team has left it clean and free of garbage in the seats. The driver will be blown away by the respect you’re illustrating for their bus and will save them the hassle of having to do it themselves.

7. Boarding the Bus

As my team and I collect in the lobby and await to board the bus for the first time of the day, I ensure all of my athletes are aware of the driver’s name. As the team boards the bus, they are all trained to be polite and greet the driver with a, “Good morning Rick!”. I have learned that this brightens and warms even the earliest and coldest of mornings. Consistently, my coaches and I will remind the athletes of the driver’s name and we insist they use it.

TIP: When one of your athletes, shouts from the back, “Coach its too hot can you ask the driver to turn the heat down?” I reply, “His name is Rick, he’d love to hear from you, why not come down and ask him yourself?”. By me publicly addressing the issue of

using his/her name, both my athletes and driver learn that we are a team that values mutual respect and consideration for all others.

8. Disembarking the Bus

When arriving to a destination location, my athletes are also trained to use their manners and say, “Thank you”. With each athlete taking the time to say thanks, the driver further begins to feel appreciated and a part of the team. These small pleasantries go a long way and when they have routinely been practiced, your bus driver will feel more a part of your team, as opposed to an outsider. They may even become more flexible and accommodating to you and your team. For instance they may let you play loud music on the way to a game or approve a last minute, non-scheduled pit stop on the way home or after a practice or game.

Miscellaneous TIPS...

- Publicly assign one athlete to garbage check upon each day’s final disembarks.
- Offer, invite and share. As treats, goodies and food are being shared or orders placed, include the driver. Invite the driver to team meals, many restaurants often cover the cost of the drivers the meal. It also gives the driver an opportunity to meet you and your athletes, and gives them the chance to socialize in what can be a lonely profession.
- Always use “we” instead of “you” when asking for favor. As far and you are concerned, they are a part of your team. Illustrate this point by speaking to drivers as though they are members of your squad.

Phrases to Live By...

- “I know it’s not on the schedule, but the girls were wondering if you would mind stopping at the grocery store so that they can grab some fruit for the morning?”. Recognize that you’re asking for something that’s not scheduled, so it’s important you explain what and why you are asking of them.

- “Would it be a problem for us to leave 10 minutes earlier today because the girls would like to get to the gym a little bit earlier tonight to get in some extra shots before the game?”
- “Rick, could you tell me where the garbage bags are? I want to start collecting some of the garbage in the back.”
- “Thanks again for coming and watching our game, we really appreciate the support. Do you think that we could...”
- “Would it be alright with you if we put in a movie once we’re outside of the city?” Many drivers dislike putting up with the noise of a video system while driving and navigating the tight quarters of a bustling city. Waiting until you are on the highway is your safest bet.

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