

TIMELY TIPS

Photography

Capturing Fall Sports – Best Practices & Positions

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn where to stand, what equipment and settings to use, and how to anticipate key plays for fall sports (volleyball, football, soccer, softball, tennis, cross country, lacrosse). By the end of the lesson, they will understand how positioning and preparation lead to better sports coverage.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Camera bodies (DSLR or mirrorless)
- Lenses: 50mm, 70–200mm, 300mm+ (if available)
- Monopod (optional for heavier lenses)
- [“Game On” poster from 2026 Walsworth Planning Kit](#) (printed or projected)
- A whiteboard and dry-erase markers (for drawing game plans)

PART 1

INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

Begin by showing the [“Game On” poster from 2026 Walsworth Planning Kit](#)

Discuss: “Why does where you stand matter when covering sports?”

Emphasize that settings, lens choice, and position all affect whether the photos capture faces, emotion and peak action. Look through these [sports photos](#) and pinpoint where the photographer was positioned. Which kind of lens was used and what settings (f-stop, shutter speed and ISO) were most likely?

PART 2

INSTRUCTION (15 MINUTES)

Review the Photo Instruction Guide on page 2

PART 3

GUIDED PRACTICE (15 MINUTES)

Assign each student a sport from the poster

Have them mark on the poster where they would stand for their assigned sport. Students should explain why they picked that spot and what equipment they would use. Encourage peers to give feedback and refine positioning.

PART 4

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Students will attend a fall sporting event and apply the positioning, settings and lens guidelines.

They must submit 5 photos showing:

- A peak action play
- An athlete’s face/expression
- A reaction shot
- A wide “scene-setter”
- A storytelling detail (hands, ball, equipment, fans, etc.)

PART 5

ASSESSMENT

Evaluate based on whether students followed best practices (angles, settings, positioning) and demonstrated variety in coverage. During the next class or meeting period, host a peer critique session to highlight strong examples.

PART 6

CONCLUSION

Review the importance of anticipation, safe positioning and storytelling in sports photography.

Remind them: “Your goal isn’t just to get the ball — it’s to tell the story of the game.”

PHOTO INSTRUCTION GUIDE

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Camera bodies (DSLR or mirrorless)
- Lenses: 50mm, 70–200mm, 300mm+ (if available)
- Monopod (optional for heavier lenses)
- [“Game On” poster from 2026 Walsworth Planning Kit](#) (printed or projected)
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SPORT	WHERE TO STAND	WHAT TO AVOID	LENS	TIPS
VOLLEYBALL	Opposite end of the court facing your team, alongside the net, high in the stands.	Standing directly in front of the net or too close to officials.	70–200mm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture digs, sets, serves and reactions from sidelines. Shoot blocks and kills from ends of court. • When photographing your team from the opposing side, place your focal point on the players stomach (below the net). This will help you get cleaner shots. • Take a lot of photos. You’ll have a lot of photos come out blurry because of the net, so take more than you think you’ll ever need.
FOOTBALL	Along the goal line, on sidelines between goal line and 25-yard line, near student section.	Coach/players’ box on sidelines.	70–200mm is fine, 300mm+ preferred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay about 5-10 yards in front of the line of play to get passes. Stay behind the line of play to get pass-offs. • Go to practice and study the line formations. Knowing what your quarterback is doing will help you understand if this is going to be a pass or throw. Anticipating plays will help you know where to point your camera.
SOCCER	Either side of goal on endline, along sidelines.	Areas near sideline referees.	70–200mm okay, 300mm+ best.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the ball in frame. To do this effectively, keep both eyes open to track where the ball is going. This allows you to point your lens where the ball will end up, then shoot, shoot, shoot. • Lay on the ground to cut out the grass. • Soccer involves a lot of interaction with an opponent, so don’t be too zoomed in. Back off a little so both players are in frame. Zoom in or out to the point where important players are in frame.
SOFTBALL	Along first or third baselines (inside the dugout), behind home plate (photographing through fence).	Standing directly behind umpire or blocking spectators.	70–200mm okay, 300mm+ better.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get into the dugout (before the game), walk up to the coach and introduce yourself as a member of the yearbook staff. Tell them you will be at the far end of the dugout (out of the way), but ask if there’s any area of the dugout they’d like you to specifically avoid. • Keep both eyes open so you can see the ball coming your way. This also helps you track the throw from the passer to the catcher, allowing you to point your lens at the right player to capture the action.
TENNIS	Baseline corners, along sideline next to the net	Standing directly behind server or in umpire’s line of sight.	70–200mm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate serves, volleys and player reactions. Use a fast shutter to freeze motion.
CROSS COUNTRY	Start line, first turn, mid-course hills, finish line.	Photographing directly in athletes’ lanes.	70–200mm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture bursts at start, emotion at finish. Use wider shots for team pack running. • Get there early to get alternative shots like race bib number pinning, stretches, show lace-ups and pre-run interactions.
LACROSSE	Behind goals (safe distance), along sidelines near offensive end.	Photographing in shooting lanes.	70–200mm okay, 300mm+ for field-wide shots.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch for face-offs, shots on goal and defensive checks. • Keep both eyes open for passes. Practice photographing the throw and the catch.

TIMELY TIPS PHOTO SETTINGS

These answers are estimates and not the exact settings and equipment.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

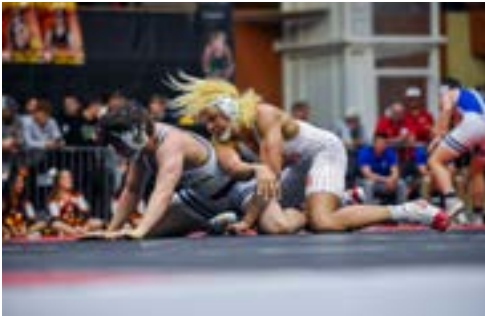
- Camera bodies (DSLR or mirrorless)
- Lenses: 50mm, 70–200mm, 300mm+ (if available)
- Monopod (optional for heavier lenses)
- [“Game On” poster from 2026 Walsworth Planning Kit](#) (printed or projected)
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Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/800
F-stop: f/5
ISO: 1600
Zoom Lens: 100-400mm or 55-300mm

Location: Sidelines (standing or crouching slightly)
Photo by Taryn Bon



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/500
F-stop: f/4
ISO: 2500
Zoom Lens: 28-400mm lens

Location: Edge of mat (laying down - worms eye view)
Photo by Mikayla Michael



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/640
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 3200
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: End of the lane (sitting or laying down – worms eye view)
Photo by Abigail Wirth



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/500
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 8000
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: Outer edge of baseline (kneeling)
Photo by Yaneira Mendoza



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/640
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 1000
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: End line (kneeling or sitting)
Photo by Reese Mallett



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/500
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 200
Zoom Lens: 120-300mm or 300mm prime lens

Location: Opposite end of green (sitting or crouching down – worms eye view)
Photo by Caden Jackson



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/1250
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 1600
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: Behind home plate – photographing through fence (kneeling)
Photo by Anna Grace Redd



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/1000
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 200
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: On the field just inside the cheer and band line
Photo by Madilyn Benson



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/250 (See the blur in the ball and hands? Higher shutter speed would have cleaned that blur).
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 1600
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm
Location: Opponent sideline opposite of player benches (standing or crouching)
Photo by Melisa Rodriguez



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/1250
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 125
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: Sidelines (sitting or kneeling)
Photo by Hailey Iken



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/1000
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 2500
Zoom Lens: 17-55mm

Location: End line (sitting down – worms eye view)
Photo by Landon Joy



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/1000
F-stop: f/4
ISO: 200
Zoom Lens: 12-24mm

Location: Inside line next to lane 1 (sitting or crouching down – worms eye view)
Photo by Anna Haley



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/2000
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 400
Zoom Lens: Either a 400mm prime lens or a 100-300 zoom using the in-camera crop feature or they are using a lens extender.

Location: Dugout (kneeling)
Photo by Hob Carleton



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/500
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 1600
Zoom Lens: 24-70mm or 70-200mm

Location: Endline (sitting down – worms eye view)
Photo by Latrell Brown



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/2500
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 1000
Zoom Lens: 100-300mm

Location: Sidelines between the two team benches at the halfway line (sitting or laying)
Photo by Will Griffith



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/500
F-stop: f/3.5
ISO: 3200
Zoom Lens: 24-70mm

Location: Sidelines, opposite of team benches (sitting down - worms eye view)
Photo by Olivia Flowers



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/320
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 1600
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: Endline (standing)
Photo by Bertrand Edwards



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/800
F-stop: f/5
ISO: 2500
Zoom Lens: 55-300mm

Location: Sideline alongside the player bench (standing)
Photo by Reece Gaines



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/400
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 1600
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: Sidelines alongside the yard line the boys are kneeling on
Photo by Mariah Hamilton



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/160
F-stop: f/4
ISO: 1000
Zoom Lens: 18-55mm

Location: Sidelines (kneeling or crouching next to team)



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/2000
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 125
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: Sidelines (kneeling – lower point view)



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/640
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 3200
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: Edge of mat (sitting or laying down – worms eye view)



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/1000
F-stop: f/4
ISO: 125
Zoom Lens: 12-24mm

Location: Outer edge of base line (kneeling)



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/1000
F-stop: f/4
ISO: 400
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: Likely the sideline or if the team is in the center of the field, the photographer could be on the field surrounding the team.



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/640
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 3200
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: End line photographing towards the bench



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/1250
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 1600
Zoom Lens: 100-300mm

Location: Sidelines (standing)
Photo by Diego Cruz-Castruita



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/250
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 2500
Zoom Lens: 12-24mm

Location: Sidelines (crouching down for a lower angle viewpoint of player)
Photo by Kayla Tran



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/400
F-stop: f/4
ISO: 200
Zoom Lens: 12-24mm

Location: Sidelines (crouching down for a lower angle viewpoint of player)
Photo by Kaiah Tong



Information:

Shutter Speed: 1/1000
F-stop: f/2.8
ISO: 100
Zoom Lens: 70-200mm

Location: Outside and down the landing sector line (kneeling/sitting) – the photographer chose to be on the left side of the throwing (find out if your thrower is left or right handed so you know which side to stand on)
Photo by Michelle Lopez