

Some parents attending games can be the source of great concern to the coach, children and other parents watching the game. Parents spoil the experience for all when they are verbally abusive, intoxicated, critical of the coach or referee or consistently late in dropping their children off and picking them up for games or practices. Think about the example you set for children and try to be a positive role model.

Remember to keep it fun!

1. Focus on effort, not outcome.
2. Praise your child for trying hard, making a good play, etc.
3. Take time to practice the sport with your child.
4. Get interested by following a team's record, going to games, collecting cards, etc.
5. Read stories about legendary sports figures and/or events.



Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

All young athletes have the following rights,

- To participate in sports
- To participate at a level equal to each child's maturity and ability
- To have qualified adult leadership
- To play as a child and not as an adult
- For children to share in the leadership and decision making of their sport participation
- To participate in safe and healthy environments
- To proper preparation for participation in sports
- To an equal opportunity to strive



Parenting is hard. We can help.

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WINNING WAYS WITH YOUNG ATHLETES

Tips for Parents and Coaches



Athletics can provide children with the opportunity to learn, grow and succeed. Parents and coaches play a big part in a child's sports experience. Many have genuine concerns and interest, but it's no secret that some adults put too much pressure on children or are overly critical of children's sports performance. This negative approach to youth sports can have a damaging effect on a child's self esteem.

Athletic contests, games and sporting events are at their best when children learn the importance of team work, effort and friendly spirited play. They are at their worst when children feel defeated as people, quit trying to improve, and think of themselves as losers. When that happens, we all lose. The following information may help both parents and coaches make the most of youth sports for children by practicing a healthy philosophy of winning and an emphasis on encouragement and rewarding effort, not just performance.



A WINNING PHILOSOPHY

Keep winning in perspective. The philosophy, "athletes first, winning second" is essential to helping children develop a positive overall self-image through sports.

- **Winning isn't everything.**
Winning is important, but other objectives, like improved skills and better self-esteem are more important.
- **Losing is not the same thing as failure.**
Teach children that losing a game does not reflect on their self-worth or mean a person is a failure.
- **Success is not the same as winning.**
The score of the game decides who wins and loses, not who succeeds and fails. Success is mastering or improving a skill, striving to win, or giving one's best effort.

Ready? On your mark...Get set...Go!!!

Many children are pushed into playing sports long before they have the necessary physical, emotional and intellectual capabilities to successfully participate. Such early childhood failures often create frustration with one's own abilities, reinforce feelings of failure and inadequacy and lead to dropping out. To know when a child is ready to participate in sports, consider these factors:

MATURATION — *the ability to perform the fundamental skills of the sport. For example, holding the baseball bat and being able to swing the bat at the ball.*

LEARNING — *the ability to understand the demands, tasks and rules of the sport. For example, throwing the ball to first base to get the runner out.*

MOTIVATION — *the desire to learn how to play the sport. Without proper motivation, children aren't likely to succeed at a sport even if they have the maturity and learning skills.*

If your child is capable of performing the skill of the sport, is able to understand the rules of the game and has a desire to learn how to play the sport, enroll him or her in an athletic program. If not, wait a year.

REWARDING EFFORT

Make the most of good plays by rewarding the behaviors you want to develop in youth. Young athletes have not yet developed the self-confidence to cope with harsh criticism.

- Punishing a mistake can lead to fear of failure and harm a future performance.
- Criticism actually lowers self-esteem, confidence and motivation in young athletes.
- Reward effort, not just performance.
- Reduce their fear of failure by stressing that there are no losers if you have given your best effort.

DISCIPLINE VS. PUNISHMENT

Maintaining discipline is a must in youth sports. Discipline teaches children by helping them to know what is expected. They learn to control and change their own behavior and become responsible for their own actions.

Some discipline techniques include:

- Setting limits on behavior
- Making rules simple, few and consistent
- Being a role model for appropriate behavior
- Ignoring annoying behaviors that do not cause real problems

Punishment, on the other hand, emphasizes athletes' failures and may lead to resentment and frustration, destroying self-esteem and self-confidence.

Some punishment techniques to avoid:

- Yelling
- Threats
- Lecturing
- Sarcasm
- Use of physical force