



children ⁱⁿ sport

A FUNdamental skills development program



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



SPORT IT'S MORE
THAN A
GAME TM

**The members of Sask Sport Inc.
are pleased to provide you with this Guide for
Parents and information on the Children in Sport
program. For more information on Sask Sport
members, please visit www.sasksport.sk.ca.**

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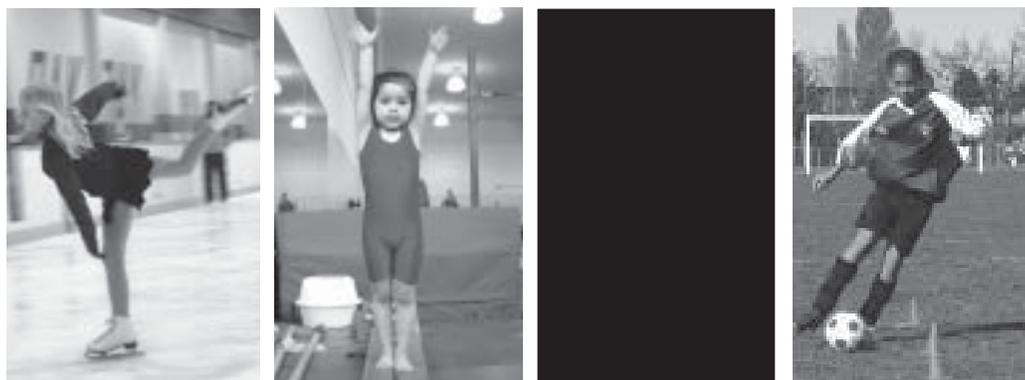
INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on choosing sport for your child! Sport can be a powerful vehicle for developing life skills such as teamwork, dedication and goal setting. In a positive sporting environment, children have the opportunity to make new friends, learn new skills and develop new interests. It takes parents, children and coaches working together to provide this type of environment, and parents are an integral part of this sport team.

Children in Sport is a program designed to ensure that children receive the most positive experience possible from sport. The focus of this program is on learning the fundamental skills before entering more competitive sports, providing an opportunity for children to have life-long positive experiences in sport. Focus on process - not outcome.

Children in Sport also aligns perfectly with the principles of *Canadian Sport for Life* – a national movement to change the role of sport in Canadian society to allow both the pursuit of excellence and healthy, active-living for all children through sport and physical activity

This *Guide for Parents* is designed to assist parents who want to ensure their child has the most positive experience possible with sport. Part of your responsibility as a member of the sport team is to be informed about healthy sport practices. This guide is designed to provide tips and information on creating a positive environment, and should help you learn first-hand how sport can be a terrific life-long experience for your children.



CANADIAN SPORT FOR LIFE

Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) is a national movement to increase sport's contribution in Canadian society recognizing sport as an important part of everyone's life by promoting each child's healthy and logical development in a sport or physical activity.

CS4L values and believes:

- Every child is an athlete; therefore, is genetically predisposed to be active if the environment encourages participation and skill development.
- Physical Literacy is the basis of life-long participation and excellence in sport and health-enhancing physical activity.
- Life-long participation and excellence in sport are best achieved by participating in a variety of sports at a young age, then specializing later in development.
- Life has significant stages of development that include transitions from infant, to child, to adolescent, to adult, and then to senior, resulting in changed capabilities. Sport and recreation programs must reflect these stages.
- CS4L is participant/athlete centered, coach-led and organization/community/family supported.
- A focus on holistic development – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual - for each individual.
- The integrated efforts of community sport, school sport, school physical education, municipal recreation and families will have mutually positive benefit for all.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO WWW.CANADIANSPORTFORLIFE.CA.

FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS

As a parent, remember that sport programs for children under the age of 12 should be designed to help your child gain a love for participating in sports and physical activity. For children first starting in any sport, emphasis must be placed on practicing and developing the **fundamental movement skills and sport skills** that are common to many sports, not just one.

Running, jumping, balancing, catching, kicking, throwing and striking something with a stick or racquet are considered fundamental movement skills. Add in swimming, sliding and skating and you have the building blocks of most sports played by the vast majority of people on Earth. A person who can perform these fundamental skills well can learn to play many sports with ease and confidence AND are much more likely to be physically active through-out their lifetime.



COMPETITION

Competition can be a good way for children to apply their new sport skills in a game situation. But competition for children must be adapted to match their needs as growing, developing individuals. Parents must remember that superimposing adult competition schedules - with many games and fewer practices - or adult rules of play can be detrimental to children's long-term athletic development. Additionally, over-emphasis on the outcome of competitions (winning or losing) is far down the list of reasons why children want to play sports.

As entertaining as it may be for a parent to watch their child play in a game, rather than practice, it is important that children not be rushed into levels of competition beyond their maturation and skill sets. No parent would expect their child to learn to write by continually taking grammar tests with very few lessons or instruction. As such, parents and coaches need to overcome the desire to frequently measure their children (or themselves) in the competitive arena.

(Adapted from Canada Basketball-Steve Nash Youth Basketball Parents Guide.)



PHYSICAL LITERACY: WHAT IS IT?

Physical literacy is the acquisition of fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills that permit a child to move confidently and with control, in a wide range of physical activity, rhythmic (dance) and sport situations. Physical literacy also includes an individual's ability to "read" what is going on around them in an activity setting and react appropriately to those events. Physical literacy development begins at birth and is best acquired in childhood, when your body is most adaptable and "ready to learn". Parents, coaches and teachers play critical roles in ensuring that ALL children are given the opportunity to become physically literate.

Physical Literacy is the basis of life-long participation and excellence in sport, as well as the foundation of healthy, active-living for all Canadians.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO WWW.PHYSICAL-LITERACY.CA



FINDING GOOD SPORT PROGRAMS

To encourage your child in sport and physical activity, your first step is to identify activities that suit your child's interest. (These might not be the same as your interests.) Do some research into programs available in your community and plan to ask organizers some or all of these questions:

- Does the program emphasize learning skills or competition?
- What is the ratio of practice/training to competition?
- Are activities or competitions modified to match ability levels of the participants?
- How is playing time determined? Do all children get equal time?
- Do they get to play all the positions?
- Are coaches and officials trained and/or certified? What type of training do they receive?
- Is there a focus on skill development and **FUN** for all participants, not just a gifted few?
- Are competition and practice areas safe and well maintained?



BE A POSITIVE SPORT PARENT

- Stress fun while learning new skills.
- Build your child's self-esteem by focusing on improved social, physical and technical skills, and not just the outcome of games or competitions.
- Support the principles of fair play – respect players, opponents, officials, rules and coaches.
- Encourage non-sport identities so sport is only a part of your child's life.
- Get interested in your child's sport. Learn the rules; attend pre-season meetings, practices and competitions.
- Be a good spectator and remember that you are the guest. This includes cheering positively for your child and all participants.
- Encourage your child to choose professional sport role models carefully.
- Be cautious in discussing scholarships and professional aspirations with youth, as it may produce unneeded pressure.
- Support honest competition. Be critical of cheating in all forms, including the use of performance enhancing drugs.
- Avoid making or condoning racist comments. Remember that silence can often be interpreted as approval.
- Discuss coaching concerns you may have away from players.
- Reinforce the coach's instruction when practicing at home with your child.

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD FOLLOWING COMPETITION

Encourage your child to talk about his/her favorite part of a game or competition. Invite them to retell the story of personal success.

- Be realistic. Children don't want to hear they played great when they know they didn't.
- Don't blame other players, coaches or officials for losses. This teaches children to abandon responsibility by laying blame or making excuses.
- Don't say the event was not important – it may have been to the child.
- Pick out something positive and discuss either skill or sportsmanship. Also be sure to ask questions:
 - How do you feel about what happened?
 - Is there anything I can help you work on?
 - What did you like best or least about the event?
 - Did you have fun?
 - Were you a good sport?
 - What did the coach say to you after the game?
 - How do you feel about your play today?

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN A PRACTICE OR GAME

- Practices are well organized with plenty of variety.
- Coach pays attention, provides feedback to all participants, and makes all kids feel worthy.
- Competitions have high levels of involvement by all participants.
- Coach communicates clearly, enthusiastically and consistently.
- Specific instruction is given in a positive manner.
- Questions are encouraged.
- Children are happy.
- Coach is skilled at teaching the fundamentals of the sport.
- Attention is given to values, including respect, responsibility, discipline, co-operation, kindness, honesty and fairness.
- Emphasis is on improvement, effort and fun, not just on winning.
- Coach puts needs of youth ahead of personal recognition.
- Coach models, as well as preaches, appropriate behaviour.
- Coach communicates positively with parents.

KEEP SPORT IN PERSPECTIVE

Choose age and developmentally-appropriate programs.

Have fun playing with your child away from organized sport.

Instill a fair play attitude in your child.

Let the coach “coach” and show your support.

Don’t coach your child on the way to or from sporting events.

Respect all participants in the activity, including opponents and officials.

Encourage – Don’t push.

Nothing can be learned without making mistakes along the way.

Self-esteem is developed through positive reinforcement.

Shout praise – whisper criticism.

Provide a good example.

Offer to help out in “non coaching” ways.

Remember, the main priority is your child’s enjoyment – not your entertainment.

Take the emphasis off winning and put it on process.

Skill development is the primary goal.

FAIR PLAY CODE FOR PARENTS

(Adapted from Fair Play – It's Your Call)

- I will remember that my child participates for his/her enjoyment, nor for mine.
- I will encourage my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility and violence.
- I will teach my child that doing one's best is as important as winning, so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game/event.
- I will make my child feel like a winner every time by offering praise for competing fairly and trying hard.
- I will never ridicule or yell at my child for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- I will remember that children learn best by example.
- I will applaud good plays/performances by both my child's team and their opponents.
- I will not force my child to participate in sports.
- I will never question the officials' judgement or honesty in public.
- I will support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from children's sport events.
- I will respect and show appreciation for the coaches who give their time so my child can play.
- I recognize I have a responsibility to be a part of my child's development and positive sporting experience.

**With a supportive environment and quality programming,
a lifetime of physical and emotional good health
awaits the child who actively participates in sport.**

*(Dr. Louise Humbert, University of Saskatchewan;
President, Physical and Health Education Canada)*



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Why do children play sports?

- 1. To have FUN!**
- 2. To improve skills**
- 3. To make new friends**
- 4. To be good at something**
- 5. For excitement**
- 6. To get exercise**
- 7. To play as part of a team**
- 8. For the challenge**
- 9. To learn new skills**
- 10. To win**

Research shows children always put FUN at the top of their list!



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**If you're a parent or coach,
remember why children participate.
By putting fun and development
of the child first, our children
will end up winning ... for a lifetime.**

**LEARN MORE
AT WWW.SASKSPORT.SK.CA**