

PARENT
help line



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Proud to support more than 12,000 volunteer
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CHILDREN **in sport**
A fundamental skill development program

A Resource Guide
for Parents

SPORT **IT'S MORE THAN A GAME**
for families • for fun • for life

Brought to you by the membership of Sask Sport Inc. a comprehensive network of non-profit organizations striving to improve the well-being of Saskatchewan residents by ensuring that all people can participate in sport.

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Saskatchewan Baseball Association
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Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association
Saskatchewan Amateur Wrestling Association

Physical activity among children may be increased by promoting regular physical activity for parents. Children who have physically active parents are more likely to participate in physical activity, than children who do not have physically active parents.

(Freedson, P.S. and Evenson, S. (1991). "Familial Aggregation in Physical Activity". Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport. 62 (4):384-389).

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The members of Sask Sport Inc. are pleased to provide you with this information on the Children in Sport program. For more information on the program, please contact us at:

1-800-319-GAME or
www.sasksport.sk.ca



KIDS HELP PHONE
1 800 668 6868
kidshelp.sympatico.ca



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 into more competitive sports and on providing an opportunity for children to have life-long experiences in sport. The focus is on process - not outcome.

This *Resource 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 our children.

WHAT KIDS WANT ... *to keep it fun!!*

- K** eep it positive
- I** nstil laughter and humour
- D** evelop team spirit
- S** tep into their shoes

- I** nvolve yourself
- N** otice any and all progress

- S** how excitement and enthusiasm
- P** raise specifics
- O** ffer a good example
- R** emember to have fun
- T** each skills
- S** et reasonable expectations



*Children who live with criticism,
learn to condemn*

*Children who live with hostility,
learn to fight*

*Children who live with fear,
learn to be apprehensive*

*Children who live with encouragement,
learn to be confident*

*Children who live with praise,
learn to be appreciative*

*Children who live with approval,
learn to like themselves*

*Children who live with recognition,
learn to have a goal*

Children who live with honesty value trust

(From *Motivating Kids Through Play*. Bunker, Johnson, Parker; 1982)

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THAN A
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A CHILD'S COMMANDMENTS TO PARENTS *(Author Unknown)*

- My hands are small; please don't expect perfection whenever I make a bed, draw a picture or throw a ball. My legs are short, please slow down so I can keep up.
- My eyes have not seen the world as yours have. Please let me explore safely; don't restrict me unnecessarily.
- My feelings are tender; please be sensitive to my needs. Don't nag me all day long. You wouldn't want to be nagged for your inquisitiveness.
- I need your encouragement and praise to grow. Please go easy on criticism, remember, you can criticize the things I do without criticizing me.
- Please don't do things over for me. Somehow that makes me feel that my efforts didn't quite measure up to your expectations. I know it's hard, but please don't try to compare me with my brother or sister.

Children who are regularly active are less susceptible to stress, perform as well or better academically, exhibit positive attitudes about school and themselves, are less aggressive and play better with other children.

(The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 1992).



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A SPORT PROGRAM ...

Your child deserves:

- Trained and certified coaches and officials
- Emphasis on learning skills through game-like activities rather than competitions
- Activities and competitions modified to match ability levels of participants
- Focus on **action, skill development** and **fun** for all participants, not just for a gifted few
- Safe and well maintained play areas
- A positive atmosphere where children are actively learning and having fun
- Adherence to fair play principles
- Reasonable time demands, unstructured playtime and encouragement of involvement in other activities

Children need 30 minutes of physical activity every day to improve fitness and health levels. About 90% of Canadian children participate less than that.

(The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 1992).



HOW TO 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. Also be sure to help your child set specific, realistic *performance* goals rather than outcome goals
- 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. Negativity will undermine morale, whereas positive reinforcement will encourage further improvement
- Encourage your child to choose professional sport role models carefully
- Be cautious in discussing scholarships, Olympics and professional aspirations with youth, as it may produce unneeded pressure
- Refrain from tobacco or alcohol use at youth sport events



FAIR PLAY CODE FOR PARENTS

(From *Fair Play – It's Your Call*)

- I will not force my child to participate in sports
- I will remember that my child participates for his/her enjoyment, not 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 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



HOW TO KEEP SPORT IN PERSPECTIVE

- C**hoose age-appropriate programs
 - H**ave fun playing with your child away from organized sport
 - I**nstill a fair play attitude in your child
 - L**et the coach “coach” and show your support
 - D**on’t coach your child on the way to or from sporting events
 - R**espect all participants, including opponents and officials
 - E**ncourage – Don’t push
 - N**othing can be learned without making mistakes
 - S**elf-esteem is developed through positive reinforcement
-
- S**hout praise – whisper criticism
 - P**rovide a good example
 - O**ffer to help out in “non-coaching” ways
 - R**emember, the main priority is your child’s enjoyment – not your entertainment
 - T**ake the emphasis off winning and put it on process
 - S**kill development is the primary goal



- Support honest competition
- 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.

Sport programs that **minimize competition, de-emphasize winning, and emphasize motor skill development are the most appropriate for children under 12 years of age.**

(Nelson, M.A. (1991). “Development Skills and Children Sports”. [The Physicians and Sports Medicine](#). 19(2):67-79)

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COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILD FOLLOWING COMPETITION

- 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. (Be realistic.) 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?
 - Did you thank the coach?
 - How do you feel about your play today?

Children who participate in sports and the arts gain some protection from emotional and social problems. The advantages: better use of time, increased self-esteem, opportunities to bond with adults who can be role models.

(David Offord, Ellen Lipman and Eric Duku. October, 1998 by Human Resources Development Canada)



WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN A PRACTICE OR GAME ...

- Practices are well organized with plenty of variety
- The coach pays attention, provides feedback to all participants, and makes all kids feel worthy
- Competitions have high levels of involvement by all participants
- The coach or coaches communicate clearly, enthusiastically and consistently
- Specific instruction is given in a positive manner
- Questions are encouraged
- Children are happy
- 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
- The coach puts needs of youth ahead of personal recognition
- The coach models, as well as preaches, appropriate behaviour
- The coach communicates positively with parents

