

Sports Parenting 101: A Great Sports Experience Checklist

The following is a checklist for parents to help make your child's sports experience a great one. This checklist certainly doesn't cover everything involved in a positive experience but it's a good place to start. The tone that you set as a parent is the single most influential part of your child's sports experience.

1. Do you want them to play and if so, why? If they don't have your total support from the very beginning, their experience will suffer.
2. What are your expectations for them and what do you see as their role on the team? Do your expectations and perceived role match theirs?
3. Release them to the sport. Be willing to let your child go – trust that their coaches will do the very best they can for them.
4. Don't live your experiences through them. This is their sports experience not yours.
5. Know what questions are appropriate to ask the coach. You can always ask about ways to help your child improve.
6. Know what questions are not appropriate to ask the coach. Questions about playing time and strategy are never appropriate. The coach's decisions involve a great deal of time and are based on helping the team be the best it can be. As a parent you will probably never agree with the coach on these issues and you certainly don't have enough insight to question these issues.
7. All questions should come from your child first. It's their experience – let them develop their interpersonal skills by asking questions.
8. Remember your role. This is one of my favorites – when you go to a game there are four roles you can have: player, coach, official, or fan. Pick one and only one. Don't ever try to assume someone else's role.
9. Your child should have one instructional voice. Nothing can do more harm to your child's sports experience than having their coach tell them one thing and you tell them something else. They have a coach and it's not you. Never discuss your opinions of strategy or technique with your child.

Remember, as a parent you are the single most influential contributor to your child's sports experience. I hope that as your child gets set to begin a new season you will take a few minutes to reflect on the items on this checklist.

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