



FAQs and FACTS for Parents

1. Why don't the grade 2/3 groups play 5 on 5 games?

- a. It is more important to work on a child's movement skills at this age. Therefore the focus will be on developing your child's physical literacy. Coaches at this age group will be focusing on developing your child's ABC'S - Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed.
- b. 5 on 5 games mean ten kids and one basketball. This is not fun for young children as there are not enough "touches" of the ball. Instead the children will be playing "small-sided" games that provide more "action", more "skill development" and more "fun" for young athletes.
- c. During these early years, kids need to be busy and active while participating in the sport. Sitting on the bench never touching the ball is no fun at any age.

2. According to the Positive Coaching Alliance what are the top five reasons kids quit sport?

1. It ceases to be fun
2. Too competitive too soon
3. Too much pressure
4. I am not improving
5. I never get to play

3. In the early years of youth sports (ages 5-12) what should parents and coaches be emphasizing?

These are the formative years when kids discover their passion for a sport. And this passion comes not just from trying to win, but also from experiencing the sheer joy of the sport. As we all know as parents, kids at this age are at varying levels of development physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially. How many of us have sat in the bleachers and commented how an opposing team has some players who are incredibly tall for their age and others who are so small for their age. It's just the nature of this growth period for kids. Just getting muscles coordinated and staying focused is tough at this age. Patience and understanding from adults is key to nurturing the passion for the sport.

4. What kind of feedback and communication will help my child to enjoy his/her youth sport experience?

Effective communication between parents, coaches, and sport participants is very important in helping children reach their performance goals. Three basic types of feedback are usually given as one learns a skill. Encouragement given when the athlete does something correctly is called "**positive feedback.**" Telling a child that he or she has performed a skill incorrectly without giving any further guidance is called "**negative feedback.**" Constructive criticism focusing on what an athlete needs to do to correct errors and improve their performance is called "**corrective feedback.**" While all of these types of feedback can be important to the learning process, *research has shown that a 4:1 ratio of positive and corrective feedback to negative feedback is most effective in shaping children's behavior. Keep it positive!*

5. What does my child need to do to get a scholarship to play sport at University?

The importance of keeping youth sport participation in proper perspective is illustrated by the following example. Millions of elementary children play basketball in North America on a yearly basis. There is a **6% chance an elementary child** will become a high school basketball player! There is a **3% chance a high school basketball player** will become a University basketball player! There is a **1% (1 in 100) chance a University basketball player** will become an NBA rookie! The chances of a **high school senior becoming an NBA rookie are .04% (1 in 2,500)**, and the chances of a child playing **elementary school basketball becoming an NBA rookie are .0025% (1 in 40,000)**! The odds of getting a college scholarship for athletics are even less. ***A child has a much greater opportunity to become successful in life due to the intrinsic values learned through sport participation than through the skills they acquire through such participation!***

6. My child's team does not win many games and the losing frustrates me. What can I do to help my child through losing games?

An overemphasis on winning has become a major concern in youth sports. *Having fun, being with friends, developing physical fitness, learning skills, learning to give total effort, enjoying the excitement of sport participation, and developing self-confidence are only a few of the true benefits of sports participation.* Focusing on performance goals rather than outcome goals can emphasize these benefits. Performance goals are based on improvements in personal and team performance rather than winning a contest. Performance goals help motivate children to improve and experience success.

7. How can I be a supportive basketball parent?

- a. Give consistent encouragement and support to your children regardless of the degree of success, the level of skill or time on the field.
- b. Stress the importance of respect for coaches through discussions with your children and highlight the critical nature of contributing to the team and its success.
- c. Serve as role models, see the "big picture" and support all programs and all players.
- d. Leave coaching to coaches and do not criticize coaching strategies or team performance.
- e. Avoid putting pressure on children about playing time and performance.

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How you can be a positive sports parent

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Positive parenting in sports is a choice parents make that allows sports to be about kids and not about parents. Parents who are out to relive their playing careers through their kids are the source of a lot of negative parenting in sports. The choice to be positive is not easy because of the emotional ties involved. Parents want their kids to do so well and, of course, a parent's role is to help youth avoid mistakes that they may have made. Additionally, it is very difficult to see your kids struggle, so it is easy to become overbearing with advice and criticism.

Does this mean parents should just sit back and do nothing? Of course not, but parents are there to help kids deal with the physical, mental and emotional issues that occur in youth sports without forcing kids into decisions that are not mutual ones. Like most things, this positive choice requires practice and review, because it can be difficult to know if parents are placing their wishes and decisions on kids or not. With that in mind, following are some points to practice and review so everyone involved has a positive sports experience.

Positive parents should:

1. Objectively evaluate player's effort and not just their results when the preparation and effort is given, parents must learn to accept the results. When the effort is not there, parents should point that out in a compassionate manner and try to determine ways to help the child's interest and effort levels.
2. Allow kids to set their own goals and be realistic about their son's or daughter's potential. Unrealistic expectations are another common reason for drifting into negative parenting.
3. Communicate in a way that does not incite players and that does not attack them as people. Communication is a two-way street where parents should listen to their kids, understand their perspective, and try to determine the best course of action based on their kids' feelings.
4. Know when to talk to their kids about their sports play not continually, and at a time when kids do not feel bad enough, already.
5. Display the necessary patience to remain positive, with the understanding that pushing kids and teaching with negativity does not work.
6. Never forget the F-word Fun is the key to youth sports; and that does not mean just saying, "have fun" every time kids get upset. Finding ways to make sport fun and finding coaches that know how to do that is another responsibility of sport parents.

Finally, all parents of athletes want the best for kids. Unfortunately, the negative parents do not realize that their words and actions are causing a "disconnect" between them and their kids. Getting through to these type parents is necessary with better education of parents and youth sport coaches by our sport leagues, organizations and schools. Passing on positive parenting in sports information, even in an anonymous or subtle way, is necessary. I have seen parents change their attitudes with such information.

Jack Perconte played 12 years of professional baseball. After retiring from professional baseball in 1987, Perconte opened a baseball training academy in Naperville, Ill. The hitting drills, mental training and coaching tips found in "The Making of a Hitter" were culled from the 60,000 hitting lessons Perconte estimates he gave while operating the academy. He has also written, "Raising an Athlete," and writes for the blog Positive Parenting in Sports at www.jackperconte.com.