



TCYBA Parents Guide

An introduction to Youth Basketball



“The spirit of a child knows no bounds until limited by adults.”

Welcome to the TCYBA...

You have just signed your child up to play the great game of basketball. Now what do you do?

Relax and Prepare for FUN!

Kids love Basketball because it is FUN!

- From a very early age children love to have a ball in their hands
- Basketball is just playing with the ball, except with others, a hoop and a few simple rules
- The rules for youth basketball are very simple: share the ball with your teammates; keep the ball away from your opponents; "Play Fair; work as a team to put the ball in the basket and everyone has FUN!

"Make sure she knows that you are there because it is fun for you to watch her participate, not because you want to criticize."

- Caroline Silby, PH.D,
Author of Games Girls Play: Understanding and Guiding Young Female Athletes

Be a Good Basketball Parent...

1. Encourage your child, regardless of his or her degree of success, level of skill or time on the court
2. Ensure a balance in your child's life, encouraging participation in multiple sports and activities while placing academics first
3. Emphasize enjoyment of the game, development of skills, continual learning and improving, as well as team play, as the cornerstones of your child's early sports experiences
4. Leave coaching to coaches and refereeing to officials
5. Avoid placing pressure on your child about playing time and performance.
6. Be realistic about your child's future in sports, recognizing that only a select few earn a college scholarship, compete in the Olympics or sign a professional contract. Let them play and have fun!
7. Be the person your child looks to a positive role model on the sidelines

"Most children play to have fun and be with their friends. They do not play to entertain the adults, boost the adults' egos or improve the family's social status in the community."

- Abrams, 2002

Why do Kids Play Basketball?

1. To have fun
2. To be with their friends
3. To make new friends
4. To be part of a “Team”
5. To improve and learn
6. To feel good – be active
7. To wear the cool basketball gear!

The greatest gift that you can give to your children throughout their sporting involvement is support. When asked what it is that they would most like from their parents in terms of support, most children suggest encouragement and acceptance of their choices.

- Australian Sports Commission

Why do Kids Quit Sport?

1. It ceases to be fun
2. Too much pressure too young – over-emphasis on winning
3. Criticism and yelling
4. They don't get to play in games
5. Fear of making mistakes
6. Boredom
7. Not learning or improving

“Adult spectators, coaches and league administrators are guests at the children’s games. We are guests because if no adult attended, our hosts, the children, could still have a game.”

- Douglas E. Abrams, University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law

Emotional Needs of Players

Children have four basic emotional needs in organized sports:

1. To play without unhealthy pressure to win imposed by parents and coaches
2. To be treated like children, not miniature professionals
3. Adult role models whose sportsmanlike behavior helps make participation fun
4. To play without adult-imposed pressure for financial gain inspired by professional or big-time collegiate sports

“Athletic participation must be healthful, positive and safe for everyone involved, conducted in an environment that teaches values and ethics, strengthens the community, promotes competition without conflict and enriches the lives of the athletes.”

- Douglas E. Abrams; Villanova Sports Journal, 2002

Six things you can do to show your child (and other parents) what being “a good sport” means:

1. Cheer for all the children, even those on the other team. What a surprising difference it can make on the sidelines and in the stands when parents make an effort to applaud a good effort, fair play or just a great basketball play - no matter who makes it.
2. Talk to parents of the other team. Enjoy the social aspect of sport! They are not the enemy.
3. Be a parent, not a coach - resist the urge to critique. Children dread their parents going over their performance in detail, pointing out all their mistakes. Sometimes just being there shows your children what being a good parent is all about. Leave the coaching to the coaches: this includes motivating, psyching your child for practice, post-game critiquing, setting goals, requiring additional training, etc.
4. Thank the officials: Find a few moments to compliment the officials for their hard work after a game (win or lose) and you will be rewarded with the pleasure of seeing a surprised smile in return.
5. Keep Basketball in its proper perspective: Basketball should not be larger than life for you. If your child's performance produces strong emotions in you, suppress them. Remember, your relationship will continue with your children long after their youth sport days are over. This is not about you, it is about your child.
6. Have fun: That is what the children are trying to do!

“Show up for practice. Every parent is time-crunched, but try to make room in your schedule to attend at least a few of your child's team practices as well as the big games. This sends the message that you value his hard work and appreciate the process of playing sports, not just the outcomes.”

- Hannah Storm, CBS The Early Show

Sideline Behaviour

- Children want adults to applaud their success, not adults yelling instructions. Think of the basketball court as a playground and not as a sports venue. Let the kids play, sit back and enjoy!
- What's appropriate at a sport stadium with adult athletes is NOT appropriate for young children at play
- Focus on the process of playing and not the outcome
- Cheer ANY and ALL success on the field. It DOES NOT matter what player OR team. They are all kids and they want you there to see them play
- Don't keep score; the kids don't regard it as that important
- Don't care who wins or loses; they are having fun and that is the objective, NOT winning or losing

“Asked what embarrasses them most, every single child surveyed listed parents hollering plays or instructions from the sideline or stands.”

- Mom's Team.com

“Youth sports provide an ideal avenue for early exposure to setback and allows supportive adults to offer guidance with the stakes not nearly as high as they will be sometimes later on in life.”

- Abrams

The Ride Home!

- Never reward what you perceive as success
- Never punish what you perceive as failure
- Don't evaluate your child's performance, he or she is playing to have fun, not to earn a grade! If he or she had fun, the day was a success
- Meet your child's needs by remembering why they play sport

“The youngsters are a captive audience in the back seat on the way home, but they deserve to ride in peace without being unwilling victims of their parents' “station wagon syndrome.”

- Abrams, 2002

“If parents receive one-word answers or silence, they can be sure that their child feels trapped with no way out.”

- Silby, 2000

“Parents need to understand that the period following practice and competition is a crucial time for a young athlete. It's important she be given the freedom to process it on her own.”

- Silby, 2000

Working with the Coach

- Let the coach do the coaching and you do the parenting!
- You can ask the coach his or her coaching philosophy, team rules and guidelines.
- Don't ask questions during a game or in front of a small group that you wouldn't want asked of you
- Ask the coach how you can help during practice and games - Get involved
- Be supportive - Always role model positive behavior, support the program

“What often happens in the parent-coach relationship is that the parents become critical of the “poor job” the coach is doing. They complain to their spouses and other parents, often in front of their children. This serves to undermine what authority and “expert” knowledge the coach may have had in the beginning. This results in greater challenges for the coach. In such a case, those engaging in vociferous complaints are contributors to the problems challenging the coach.”

- Aicinena, 27

What about Referees?

Referees deserve respect and support too!

- Being a referee is not as easy as it appears. Recognize that the referee is doing his/her best. So do not criticize!
- Remember, many referees are brothers and sisters of basketball players or basketball players themselves. Others are fellow parents just trying to help youth basketball players have FUN!
- Helping the referee to call fouls only confuses children
- Disagreeing hurts you child's respect for the referee, and may hurt the view of the referee towards your child's team
- Criticism causes referees to quit rather than become better. Many referees quit due to being yelled at by parents
- As you cheer for the players, cheer for the referees too

Resources and Credits

Special thanks to Coach Sam Snow and the US Youth Soccer Association

US Youth Soccer Parent Education Program

“The Parents Guide: An introduction to Youth Soccer”

“The Challenges Facing Parents and Coaches in Youth Sports: Assuring Children Fun and Equal Opportunity”, Douglas E. Abrams, Villanova Sports and Entertainment Law Journal

“Through the Eyes of Parents, Children, and a Coach: A Fourteen-Year Participant-Observer Investigation of Youth Soccer”, Steven Aicinena

“Games Girls Play”, Caroline Silby, PhD.

“Sports Done Right” ™ - The Maine Center for Sport and Coaching

“Developing Decision Makers”, Dr. Lynn Kidman

“Teaching Character through Sport: Developing a Positive Coaching Legacy” by Bruce Brown

“A Guide for Parents” – Florida Youth Soccer “Parent Booklet”

The Australian Sports Commission - “The Cheers and Tears”, Shane Murphy, PhD.