

US Youth Soccer Parent Guide

How to be a Supportive Soccer Parent

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

Why Do Players Play?

1. To have fun
2. To make new friends
3. To improve and learn
4. To feel good
5. To wear the stuff

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

Six Guidelines for Soccer Parents

1. Cheer
2. Relax and Let Them Play
3. Yelling Directions = Distraction
4. Remember, They Are Your Genes
5. Have Reasonable Expectations
6. Meet with the Coaches when you have a concern or question

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 Players Quit?

1. Criticism and yelling
2. No playing time
3. Over emphasis on winning
4. Poor communication
5. Fear of making mistakes
6. Boredom
7. Not learning

“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.”

Four Red Flags for Parents

1. Living Out Dreams-A parent who is continuing to live personal athletic dreams through his/her child has not released his/her child to the game.
2. Too Involved-If a parent tends to share in the credit when the child has done well in sport or has been victorious, the parent is too involved.
3. Trying Too Hard-If a parent is trying to continue to coach his child when the child probably knows more about the game than the parent does, he has not released the youth athlete.
4. Too Serious-A parent should realize that he/she is taking everything too seriously and has not released the child to the activity when the parent:
 - is nervous before his/her child's game.
 - has a difficult time bouncing back when the player's team suffers a defeat.
 - makes mental notes during a game so he can give his child advocate the conclusion of the game.
 - becomes verbally critical of an official.

Find out why YOUR child wants to play soccer! Ask the real questions?

- Why do YOU want to play soccer?
- What is fun about soccer for YOU?
- What do YOU like to hear from ME before, during and after YOUR GAMES?

"Everyone forgets today's score before the end of the season, but decades later the children still remember the adults whose affection and support remained steadfast regardless of the scoreboard."
Abrams, 2002

92% of student-athletes believe participating in sports helps them to be a better person.

97% of student-athletes say the main reason they play sports is because it is fun and exciting.

Being a Good Soccer Parent

- Encourage your child regardless of his or her degree of success or level of skill.
- Ensure a balance in your student athlete's life, encouraging participation in multiple sports and activities while placing academics first.
- Emphasize enjoyment, development of skills and team play as the cornerstones of your child's early sports experiences.
- Leave coaching to coaches and avoid placing too much pressure on your youngster about playing time and performance.
- 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.
- Be there when your child looks to the sidelines for a positive, calm, supportive role model.

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. Sports Done Right™ The Maine Center for Sport and Coaching