

TOP 10 TIPS FOR COACHING YOUR OWN KIDS

(According to Kids)

How should you coach your child's team? Here's some advice on that topic, gleaned from comments by Sports Illustrated For Kids readers.

10. Know the game. So, you think your son or daughter will be delighted to have you for a coach just because it means you can spend some "quality time" together? Wrong! If you don't know what you're talking about on the field or the court-and you don't make the effort to learn -- they would rather you just stay home.

9. Listen to your players. Kids like to feel respected. Yes, you need to establish your authority -- to keep both kids and parents in line -- but players are people too. "My mom listens to us and our ideas. That's why she's a great coach," wrote one kid.

8. Don't play favorites. For most kids, being the coach's pet is bad enough; being one just because of bloodlines is unbearable. On the other hand, no child wants to be singled out for extra harsh treatment because Dad's the coach. As hard as it may be at times, treat your child like any other player. "Nobody is more important than anyone else," wrote a child in an SI For Kids readers' poll.

7. Get everyone in the game. All kids like to win. But more than winning, kids like to play. Make sure all of your players get plenty of playing time and opportunities to try different positions.

6. Make it fun, Part I. The No. 1 reason kids play sports is to have fun. You can help. Turn repetitive drills into good-humored contests. Make games exciting, not terrifying. Treat the team to pizza or ice cream after a game now and then.

5. Make it fun, Part II. Enjoy yourself. Kids don't want to feel like a burden. "My dad's a great coach because he always has a good time," one child reported.

4. Don't baby them. No kid wants to do 100 sit-ups or run 50 laps, but players expect the coach to make them do whatever they need to do to be ready for the game.

3. Be a teacher. Kids play sports for fun, but if they don't improve, they'll eventually get bored or frustrated, and perhaps quit. Help them learn skills, rules, and strategy so that they can maximize their abilities.

2. Act your age. It's embarrassing for kids when their parents argue with officials and yell obscenities. It's even worse when the parent is the coach. Keep your anger in check and your language decent.

1. Care -- but not too much. Kids want their activities to be taken seriously, but not too seriously. "She did not care if I won or lost" and "He's not too emotional" were the most common reasons kids gave for why their mom or dad was a great coach.