

Top 10

Benefits of Playing a Sport

Information & Tips for the Parents of Athletes

There are many great reasons to play a sport. Here are ten of the best.



1. Health

Playing a sport improves fitness, reduces stress, and helps students stay strong and healthy.



2. Sportsmanship

Sports teaches athletes how to win, lose, and compete with respect and integrity.



3. Discipline

Athletes learn how to follow rules, take instruction, be responsible, and persevere through setbacks.



4. Friendships

Playing a sport gives students the opportunity to meet new people and develop lasting friendships.



5. Time Management

Balancing practices with homework and more teaches athletes how to manage their time.



6. Athletic Skills

Playing a sport improves flexibility and coordination, as well as the skills needed for a specific sport.



7. Leadership Skills

Athletes have the opportunity to take on leadership roles and learn how to be effective leaders.



8. Teamwork Skills

Athletes learn how to cooperate, communicate, and work together to reach a common goal.



9. Academic Success

Studies show that playing a sport often improves a student's academic performance.



10. Fun!

Sports are fun! And sometimes that's the only reason needed to make playing a sport worthwhile.

Dealing with Stress and Setbacks



Info and Tips for the Parents of Athletes

When it comes to performance, an athlete's mental health is just as important as his/her physical health. Here's how you can help your athlete deal with stress and setbacks, and stay healthy in mind and body.

Dealing with Stress

Too much to do...pressure to win...not playing well...dealing with an injury. These are just a few of the things that cause athletes stress. Successful athletes learn how to deal with stress in healthy ways. *Here's how you can help your athlete deal with stress.*

Help confront stressors.

Help your athlete make a list of the things that are stressing him/her out, and work together to determine how each can be dealt with.

Explore ways to relax and stay calm.

- ▶ Deep breathing is an easy, effective way to relax. When feeling stressed, encourage your athlete to close his/her eyes, slowly breathe in, count to four, and slowly exhale. Repeat.
- ▶ Your athlete might enjoy doing tai chi, yoga, or meditating. Guided meditation apps like **Calm** and **Meditation Studio** can also be helpful.
- ▶ Encourage your athlete to think about what has made him/her feel calm or happy in the past (e.g., going for walks, listening to music, playing with a pet, spending time in nature).

Dealing with Setbacks

Whether it's missing an important shot, losing a starting position, or getting injured, setbacks and disappointments are part of being an athlete. *Here's how you can help your athlete deal with setbacks in a positive way.*

Acknowledge your athlete's feelings.

Don't diminish or ignore your athlete's feelings of disappointment or frustration. Respond with understanding and empathy. *"That was a tough game. I can see why you're upset."*

Stay calm.

Sports can be stressful for parents, as well as for athletes. If you're feeling stressed, upset, or frustrated over a disappointment or setback, take several deep breaths and relax. You don't want your feelings to impact your athlete's state of mind or athletic performance.

Listen.

There may be times when your athlete will want to vent about a disappointment or setback. Hold off on giving suggestions or advice until your athlete works through these feelings.

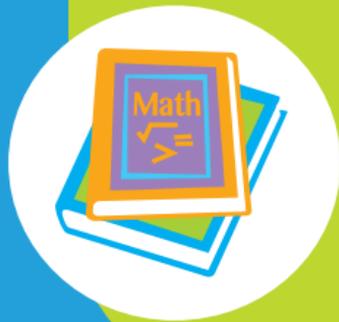
Be supportive.

Your athlete may love a sport, but may not be as good as he/she (or you) would like. Remind your athlete that while not everyone is a star, every member of a team is important. Be sure to also let your athlete know that you are proud of him/her. *(The only two things a parent should feel disappointed with are lack of effort and poor sportsmanship.)*

Share your concerns.

If you feel that your athlete is struggling in some way, share your concerns and let your child know that you are there to help and support him/her any way you can.

Provide Academic Support



Info & Tips for the Parents of Athletes

Academic success needs to be a top priority for all student-athletes. Here are some ways you can help your athlete succeed in his/her classes.

Provide tools for success.

- ▶ Make sure your student has a place to study that's quiet, well-lit, and comfortable.
- ▶ Provide your child with the necessary school supplies (notebooks, folders, calculator, etc.).

Share your expectations.

Parents who expect good effort usually find that their children live up to their expectations. Make sure your student-athlete knows that you expect him/her to do the following:

- ▶ be in school, on time, every day
- ▶ complete all homework assignments
- ▶ work hard in all of his/her classes
- ▶ let you know if there's a problem

Help your child get organized.

- ▶ To help your student keep track of assignments, tests, practices, activities, etc., encourage him/her to regularly use a planner.
- ▶ Make sure your child has a system for organizing papers (class notes, handouts, homework, etc.). There should be a specific place for each paper.
- ▶ Remind your student to get everything ready for the next day before going to bed.

Teach time management.

Having good time-management skills will help your student get everything done on time, and with less stress. Help your child prioritize tasks, create a daily schedule, and get homework done early enough to get a good night's sleep.

Monitor progress.

See all midterm reports and report cards. If you don't see one, contact the school and request a copy. Don't just assume that someone will contact you if there's a problem.

Be interested and involved.

- ▶ Regularly talk to your student-athlete about what's happening at school and at practices. Be a good listener.
- ▶ Be informed. Attend parent conferences and programs, read school newsletters and bulletins, and regularly check your school's website.

If there's a problem...

If your child is having a problem with a class, contact the teacher. If he/she is having a problem with several classes or with school in general, contact your child's counselor.

Know academic eligibility requirements.

In addition to state eligibility requirements, many schools have their own academic requirements that athletes must meet before they can play a sport. For example, athletes may be required to maintain a minimum GPA.

If you have questions about your school's eligibility requirements, talk to a counselor, coach, principal, or athletic director.



Support Your Coaches

Info & Tips for the Parents of Athletes

As the parent of an athlete, there are a number of things you can do to support your coaches and help your student-athlete have a great season.

Communicate. Regularly talk to your athlete about how things are going at practices and with teammates. If your child has a question or concern, encourage him/her to talk to the coach. The coach will appreciate your athlete coming forward, and it's important for students to learn how to take care of things on their own. Of course, you need to be available to help if there's ever a serious concern.



Respect the rules. Coaches and athletes are expected to know and respect the rules of the game—and the same goes for parents. Coaches also have their own rules and expectations that they hope their parents will respect and support.



Set realistic goals. Goals provide focus and give athletes something specific to work toward. Help your student-athlete set some realistic athletic and personal goals (e.g., improve a skill, have all homework done by 9:00, etc.).



Be involved. Coaches are better able to focus on their players, and on having a successful season, when parents are engaged and involved. Here are some ways you can get involved and help your coaches.



- ▶ Make sure your athlete has the correct equipment, is on time to practices, and ready for games. Also make sure your athlete is eating a good diet and getting adequate sleep.
- ▶ Volunteer your time. Whether it's organizing fundraisers or working in the concession stand, the more you can take off the coach's plate, the better. Ask your coach how you can help.
- ▶ Learn about your athlete's sport, attend as many of his/her sporting events as possible, and support your athlete any way you can.
- ▶ Help your athlete deal with disappointments and setbacks. Learning to stay positive in the face of adversity is an important skill that will serve your athlete well throughout his/her life.

Let your coaches coach.

Coaches consider their athletes' strengths and weaknesses and make decisions based on what's best for the team. Respect your coach's decisions, and teach your athlete to do the same.



If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns, contact the coach privately—but know that issues such as playing time are not negotiable.

At the end of the season, congratulate the players, and thank the coaches and AD. They'll appreciate it!

Dealing with Injuries



Info & Tips for the Parents of Athletes

It's important for parents, coaches, and athletes to do everything they can to prevent injuries, and to properly take care of them when they happen.

Types of injuries

Acute injuries are the result of a single traumatic event, such as a fall or hit. Common types of acute injuries include sprains, dislocations, and fractures.

Overuse injuries happen when there is repetitive trauma to one's bones, joints, or tendons (e.g., tennis elbow). These injuries tend to develop over time.

Ways to prevent injury

- ▶ Make sure your child has proper-fitting equipment.
- ▶ Encourage your athlete to drink plenty of water.
- ▶ If your athlete plays year-round sports, try to take one season off a year.

Things to watch for

Most athletes will let you know if they are hurt, but in case your child tries to "tough it out," be on the lookout for the following symptoms:

- ▶ avoiding putting weight on a part of the body or favoring one side (i.e., limping)
- ▶ pain when using a particular body part
- ▶ trouble sleeping
- ▶ muscle and joint stiffness

For minor injuries

- ▶ Remember RICE – Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation.
- ▶ Don't hesitate to contact the trainer for advice.

If your athlete is injured...

Recovery from your child's injury is what's most important. *Do not rush returning to play.* If your athlete is injured, work with his/her trainer and/or physician to ensure that your child receives the necessary treatment—and that any rehab program also helps your athlete stay fit while recovering.

An athlete's return to sports should be a gradual process that's closely monitored by a trained health-care professional.

Keep your athlete engaged

When athletes must "sit out" because of an injury, it's important that they stay engaged with their sport and their team as much as possible.

Encourage your athlete to support their team members, keep the coach and trainer updated on their progress, and if they're able, assist the coaching staff in some way (keep stats, help out in the training room, etc.).

Encourage a positive attitude

Help your athlete understand that he/she can choose how to respond to his/her injury. Life is full of ups and downs, and learning how to stay positive and strong in the face of adversity is something that will help your child succeed in all aspects of his/her life.

Help prevent concussions

Talk to your child about the seriousness of concussions and reinforce your coach's rules regarding safe, fair play. Stress the importance of staying aware, and of avoiding hits to the head. Also, make sure your athlete understands that a helmet is not a substitute for safe play.

BULLYING AND HAZING

INFO AND TIPS FOR THE PARENTS OF ATHLETES

If you played a sport, you may remember being picked on or teased by teammates. You may have even engaged in “initiation activities” or hazing at some point. It was generally seen as part of growing up and being part of a group.

But the world is different now. Too many of today’s young people are dealing with bullies during the school day and online—and hazing continues to be a concern.

BULLYING

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, hurtful, and repeated.

TYPES OF BULLYING

Physical: pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking
stealing or damaging another’s property

Verbal: teasing or name calling
making insulting or embarrassing comments

Social: spreading rumors, lies, or gossip
intentionally damaging another’s social status

Cyberbullying: using technology to bully

HAZING

Hazing is any activity that harasses, humiliates, or endangers a new person joining a group.

Hazing can happen in any social group, but it is particularly prevalent in sports.

EXAMPLES OF HAZING

- ▶ Forced alcohol consumption
- ▶ Stealing and/or destroying property
- ▶ Public humiliation
- ▶ Physical or sexual abuse

THE DANGERS OF HAZING

Hazing is often seen as a harmless bonding activity that's different from bullying and harassment. However, group bonding should never be done at someone's expense. Make sure your athlete is aware of the following dangers, and that he/she understands that hazing is never okay.

Hazing can be harmful. Because many common hazing activities involve risky behavior, it can become dangerous. Hazing can also negatively impact an athlete's physical and/or psychological health—and his/her athletic performance.

Hazing creates distrust, not respect. Research shows that hazing does not increase bonding, but in fact, often breeds resentment, fear, and distrust.

Hazing can be illegal. Most states outlaw or penalize hazing activities. It's just not worth it.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Coaches and other athletic staff work hard to keep your athlete safe, but parents also play a crucial role in preventing and stopping bullying and hazing.

Be aware. Regularly talk to your athlete about how things are going at practices and with teammates. Make sure your athlete knows that he/she can always come to you with any concern or problem.

Take it seriously. If your child mentions that bullying or hazing is going on, report it to the coach.

Tell your athlete to trust his/her instincts. If an activity doesn't seem right or feels uncomfortable, encourage your athlete not to participate.

Hold your athlete accountable. If your athlete participates in bullying and/or hazing, talk about what has happened, and allow your child to experience the consequences.

Encourage Healthy Habits

Info & Tips for the Parents of Athletes

Athletes need to make healthy choices and maintain a healthy lifestyle in order to be at the top of their game.

Here are some tips for encouraging your athlete to develop healthy habits and make smart choices. (These tips apply to off-seasons as well.)

Get enough sleep

Teens need eight to nine hours of sleep each night; but with their busy schedules, it's not surprising that many athletes don't get enough sleep.



Help your athlete create a daily schedule to ensure that he/she is able to get to bed on time and get a good night's sleep.

Eat healthy

Eating a balanced diet will provide your athlete with the nutrients he/she needs to stay strong and healthy.



- ▶ Keep healthy snacks at home (e.g., fruits, vegetables, and nuts).
- ▶ Make sure your athlete drinks plenty of water and stays hydrated.
- ▶ If your athlete pays close attention to his/her weight, make sure it doesn't go too far, or cause unhealthy eating habits. If your athlete wants to put on weight and muscle, talk to his/her trainer or doctor.

Avoid drugs and alcohol

Drug and alcohol use can have a devastating effect on an athlete's body and life.



Because athletes know there will be consequences for drug or alcohol use, playing a sport is in itself a deterrent. Parents, however, still need to take an active role in seeing that their athlete refrains from using alcohol or drugs.

Talk to your student-athlete about the dangers of alcohol, drugs, smoking, and vaping. Make sure he/she knows where you stand on these issues.

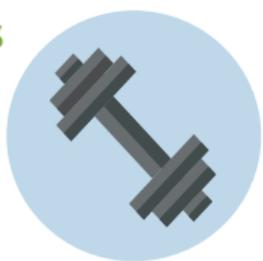
Deal with stress

Competing in a sport can be stressful, and athletes need to have positive ways to deal with stress. Whether it's listening to music, going for walks, or hanging out with friends, make sure your athlete has healthy ways to relax and deal with stress.



Never go to extremes

Sometimes athletes feel the need to go to extremes to excel in their sport. If you have a concern about extreme dieting, excessive exercise, or possible steroid use, share your concerns, and remind your athlete that his/her health and safety are what's most important.



Keep an eye out for mood swings, drastic changes in your athlete's body, and acne. Emphasize healthy eating habits and make sure your athlete's level of exercise is appropriate for his/her sport.

Sports-Life Balance

Info and Tips for the Parents of Athletes

While it can be difficult for student-athletes to find time for things other than school and sports, athletes should try to create as much balance in their lives as possible.

Here is some information on why a sports-life balance is important, along with some tips on how you can help your athlete stay healthy in mind and body—and have a good sports-life balance.

When athletes focus entirely on their sport...

- ▶ sports take on more importance than it should.
- ▶ there's little time or desire to develop other skills, talents, and interests.
- ▶ an athlete's identity and self-esteem are too attached to their sport and how well they perform, which can add a lot of pressure.
- ▶ there's a greater chance of burnout, and of an athlete losing his/her love for their sport.

Ways to create a sports-life balance

Encourage your athlete to do the following:

- ▶ Have something else you enjoy. Whether it's art, hiking, music, or reading, have a hobby or activity you like that doesn't involve your sport.
- ▶ Leave your sport "on the playing field." Once you leave the court, field, arena, or locker room, focus on your hobbies, schoolwork, family, and friends—things other than your sport.
- ▶ Take time to relax and recharge. Take walks, enjoy nature, meditate, do yoga, listen to music, and spend time with family and friends.

Help improve time management

For many student-athletes, improving their time management skills makes it possible for them to play a sport, succeed in school, and still have time for hobbies, friends, and family—the very things that help them have a good sports-life balance.

Here are some time-management tips to share with your student-athlete.

- ▶ **Schedule classes wisely.** If possible, have your student schedule a study hall during the semester he/she is playing a sport—and to schedule any less demanding courses then as well.
- ▶ **Make the most of study time.** When doing homework, encourage your student to silence his/her phone and eliminate distractions.

- ▶ **Create a form and make a weekly schedule.**

At the beginning of each week, have your student write in practices and activities, and block off times for studying. Your athlete can then see when he/she has time for friends, hobbies, and other activities.

Week of: _____	Weekly Schedule			
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Th
3:00				
4:00				
5:00				
6:00				
7:00				
8:00				
9:00				

- ▶ **Look for times that are wasted.** Encourage your student to use any free time during the school day to get started on homework—and to also make good use of times that are often wasted (e.g., before practice, travel times).
- ▶ **Use weekends to get ahead.** If your student uses the weekend to work ahead (read, study for tests, etc.), he/she will have more time (and less stress) throughout the following week.
- ▶ **Control time wasters.** Social media, TV, and video games can take up huge amounts of time. Encourage your athlete to schedule small chunks of time for these activities.

Understand the Sports Commitment



Info & Tips for the Parents of Athletes

Your school's athletic department and coaching staff have made a commitment to teach and coach your child—and to do everything they can to help your athlete have a positive sports experience.

They, in turn, expect their athletes to work hard, play fair, and do their best. Coaches also hope that parents will be engaged and involved, and support their athlete, the team, and the program.

Your involvement and support are important

Here are some things you can do to support your athlete and the coaching staff.

- ▶ Provide your athlete with the proper equipment.
- ▶ Make sure your athlete is available for all training sessions, practices, and games/matches/meets.
- ▶ Support and encourage your athlete.
- ▶ Attend as many of your athlete's sporting events as you can, and show good sportsmanship.
- ▶ Support the coaches and their decisions.
- ▶ Have nutritious food for your athlete and make sure he/she gets adequate sleep.
- ▶ If there is a problem, talk to the coach.
- ▶ Know that your child has made a season-long commitment—quitting should not be an option.

Encourage your athlete to honor their sports commitment

When an athlete chooses to participate in a sports program, he/she is making a commitment to that sport—and to the coaches and his/her teammates.

Encourage your athlete to honor that commitment by doing the following.

Work hard and do your best

- ▶ Be at every practice on time, ready to go.
- ▶ Follow the coach's rules and instructions.
- ▶ Be committed to improving your skills and developing your talents.
- ▶ Have good sportsmanship. Be respectful to coaches, trainers, teammates, officials, and opponents. Be a good winner and a good loser.
- ▶ Always give your best effort during training sessions, practices, and games/matches/meets.
- ▶ Take care of your equipment and respect the facilities, at home and away.
- ▶ Support your teammates in the classroom, in the locker room, and "on the field."
- ▶ Let your coaches know if there is a problem.

Behave responsibly

- ▶ Be smart online. Don't post inflammatory or unkind remarks about other athletes or rival teams.
- ▶ Take care of your mind and body. Don't drink, use drugs, smoke, or vape. Get adequate sleep and eat a healthy diet.
- ▶ Understand that you are a representative of your school and team. Be someone others look up to.

TOP 10

WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR STUDENT-ATHLETE

INFO & TIPS FOR THE PARENTS OF ATHLETES

Parents play a vital role in helping their athlete have a successful season. Here are ten important ways you can support your student-athlete.

1 BE PRESENT. Attend every game, meet, or match that you can. Your child may act like it's not important, but it is. Show up and cheer your athlete and team on.

2 PRIORITIZE ACADEMICS. Remember that student-athletes must be students first. Remind your child that succeeding in his/her classes is what's most important.

3 ENCOURAGE HEALTHY CHOICES. Make sure your athlete has a healthy diet, gets plenty of sleep, and has positive ways to deal with stress.

4 BE A GOOD LISTENER. When your athlete wants to vent about a game, brag about triumphs, or talk through disappointments, listen and provide support.

5

SHOW GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP.

During sporting events, be respectful, be positive, and support the players and coaches on both teams.

6

TEACH TIME MANAGEMENT.

Help your student-athlete create a daily schedule and prioritize the things he/she needs to do.

7

KEEP SPORTS IN PERSPECTIVE.

Winning is fun, but what's most important is that your child enjoy his/her sport and have a positive experience.

8

SHOW INTEREST.

Learn about the sport your athlete plays, and have discussions with your child about his/her athletic goals.

9

DO YOUR PART.

Make sure your child has the necessary equipment, attends all practices, and is ready for all games/matches/meets.

10

ENJOY IT. Let your athlete know that you are proud of him/her, and enjoy this special time. Use sports as a way to bond, share excitement, and have fun.

PLAYING A SPORT IN COLLEGE

INFO & TIPS FOR THE PARENTS OF ATHLETES



Parents and athletes need to understand that playing a sport in college is very different than playing a sport in high school. College athletics requires more time, more commitment, more individual responsibility, and a great deal of talent. And in order to receive an athletic scholarship, a student must be *truly* outstanding.

If your child is a talented athlete who would like to play a sport in college, learn about NCAA rules and eligibility requirements. Be informed and involved.

NCAA INFORMATION

NCAA colleges are divided into three divisions. Division I and Division II colleges can offer athletic scholarships. Division III colleges (usually smaller, private colleges) cannot.

Athletes who aren't able (or don't want) to play a sport at a Division I or Division II college often go to a Division III college. These colleges are usually more expensive, but the majority of DIII athletes receive non-athletic aid (e.g., grants).

The NCAA has very strict rules about who can play a sport in college. Athletes who want to compete at a Division I or II college must have a minimum GPA in a specified number of *core courses* in high school. They must also have the required ACT or SAT score.

NCAA REGISTRATION

To be eligible to play a sport at a Division I or II college, athletes must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center. This should be done at the beginning of an athlete's junior year. For information and to register, go to eligibilitycenter.org.

WHAT ATHLETES NEED TO DO

Students thinking about playing a sport in college need to see their counselor early in their high school career to make sure they're taking the right courses. *This is very important.* Athletes should also take the ACT and/or SAT in the spring of their junior year.

Make sure your child's counselor and coach are aware of your athlete's college aspirations.

NAIA AND NJCAA COLLEGES

NAIA Division I and II colleges can award full or partial scholarships. For eligibility requirements and a list of member colleges, visit playnaia.org.

NJCAA Division I and II junior and community colleges can offer athletic scholarships. There are no academic eligibility requirements for entering students. njcaa.org



SPORTSMANSHIP

INFO & TIPS FOR THE PARENTS OF ATHLETES

Having good sportsmanship means being respectful to everyone involved: players, spectators, coaches, and officials.



As the parent of an athlete, you have undoubtedly witnessed parents who do not exhibit good sportsmanship. These parents yell at the officials, criticize the coaches, and/or belittle the players. Their shouting (and cursing) can turn what should be a fun, exciting event into a stressful experience for everyone around them.

Perhaps there has even been a time or two when you were that parent. And that's understandable. It's easy to get wrapped up in the excitement and competitive aspect of sports. But that doesn't mean it's okay.

Here are a few things to keep in mind whenever you're watching your child compete in a sport.

Remember why you're there.

As a parent, you are in the stands or on the sidelines to enjoy the game, match, or meet, to support your athlete, and to cheer him/her on.

Be a good role model.

When you exhibit good sportsmanship, you are showing your child, and the other athletes, how to be respectful to others—and how to control your emotions. These are important skills that will serve your child well throughout his/her life.

Let it go and move on.

In sports, there are always bad plays, bad calls, errors, and games, matches, or meets you should have won but didn't. It doesn't do any good to dwell on these things. So, when an official makes a call you don't agree with, or you have a tough loss, let it go.

Don't add stress.

Parents who behave in unsportsmanlike ways make it more difficult for their child to focus and do their best. When parents yell or become angry, they often unwittingly embarrass their athlete, provide additional pressure, and cause their child to get less enjoyment out of their sport.

After the game...

If your child or child's team comes out on top, be a gracious winner. Congratulate the players and coach. And if your child's team doesn't win, be a good loser. Let your players know they did a good job and congratulate the other team. Don't make excuses, and don't blame the officials.

Check out the professionals.

When you're watching a sporting event with your child, look for examples of athletes who display good sportsmanship—and also for examples of athletes who behave badly. Discuss how their behavior affects the way you think about them.

Take a break.

If you ever find it difficult to contain your emotions, walk away, and take a few minutes to get yourself under control. Then return, and cheer!

“Victory is in the quality of competition and not the final score.” Mike Marshall