

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF PARENTAL BEHAVIOR

Watching youth games should be simple. Ideally, parents would bring the kids, watch the game, cheer - for both teams - and then go out for ice cream after the game. In between games, the parents would work with the kids, take them to practice and make sure that they tried hard and had fun.

Unfortunately, life at youth league games does not always work this way. Usually, it's the adults involved who cause problems. Think about it, if the kids were left alone to play, they would do just that - play. With parents there it should be so much better: more support, more help, more time with each other, still learning to set goals and work hard, striving to do your best at everything you do, but most of all - play.

Moms and Dads too often lose perspective not only of what's important at games, but also of what constitutes appropriate behavior. So parents, here is a quick reminder of how grown ups should behave at kids games.

- 1. Talk about the other kids on the team - indeed, on both teams - in the same manner you would want other parents to talk about your child.**
This is the golden rule applied to sports. Watching kids sports tends to be a social affair. When you are making conversation on the sideline with your friends and neighbors, think about what you are saying before you actually say it. To be on the safe side, only voice praise for the other children. That way, you will never go wrong.
- 2. It's nice to give a coach a pat on the back after a win. It's even nicer when you give the coach a pat on the back after a loss.**
Remember that coaches are volunteers who are sacrificing their own time to help your kid. So give them a well-deserved salute, especially when the team has not fared so well that day.
- 3. Do not hesitate to give the referee, umpire or official a pat on the back either.**
As you might have guessed, they are people too and they like it when parents and fans acknowledge there on field effort. Why don't you lead the way?
- 4. Remind your child that it is the effort that counts.**
We know that all the kids want to win. There is nothing wrong with this. But we also know that for every winning team, there is a team that did not win. Be prepared to point out the effort that your child put forth. Find something positive. They won't always come out on top in life and you should not treat them like failures at either time.
- 5. Avoid the PGA, Post Game Analysis.**
When the game is over and your child climbs back in the car, avoid at all costs the detailed, excruciating post game analysis of everything he or she did right or wrong. Just let them chill out, savor the fun of playing and relax. The worst time for criticism is right after the game. Practice with them later instead.
- 6. Smile! A lot.**
Kids sports are about having fun and because your kids will take behavioral cues from you, try to at least look like you are enjoying yourself. After all, if you want your child to play a particular sport and think they can become great, but you look miserable at the games and practices, how likely are they to enjoy it enough to actually stay with it long enough to get better.
- 7. If you are not a "good sport" at the games, the kids won't be either.**
This is self-evident. If you set a pattern of being a sideline loudmouth who likes to yell and scream at the referee, coach or opposing team - do not be surprised when you kid starts to copy that behavior - at games - at school - or with friends. You may only have yourself to blame.
- 8. Take the time to learn the rules of the game.**
A lot of kids are playing sports you may not be familiar with or may be playing under a rule that is different than from when you were a kid - or from the games you see on TV. Why don't you and your child read the rules together? Besides, it's a good idea to read the rules. It just might help you in a dispute.
- 9. If you must make noise at the games, shout only praise and encouragement.**
If you are a screamer and a yeller, make certain that when you open your mouth, you are only pouring out cheerful encouragement to your child's team. There is never a place for derogatory, snide or sarcastic comments at kids' games.
- 10. Above all, be there for your children.**
Support them, praise them and let them know you can always be counted on for unconditional love, regardless of the final score.