



As youth sports become more popular and single sports last all year long, many parents and players are finding that they are spending a great deal of time with the select group of people whose children play year long sports. There are many benefits to this type of consistent contact. Friendships between families develop as some may spend years together. Families from different socio-economic and ethnic groups get to interact with each other on a common playing field.

However, with constant contact in a competitive arena, from time to time conflicts can arise between players and their families. Many of these starts with an off-hand comment or a misunderstood statement that gets repeated from person to person. As sports parents, we cannot control what others do. We can, however, monitor our own behavior. The question is, what kind of TEAM parent are you? Take this simple quiz to find out.

Choose the answer that best describes your actions:

1. To support my child, I...
 - a. Make sure he/she is at practice on time, has the equipment he/she needs, and a good positive attitude about the sport.
 - b. Talk to the coach often about what I think should be done in my child's training.
 - c. Share my child's accomplishments with other team parents.
 - d. Take her from team to team to find the right environment for him/her competitive experience.
2. When my child plays I...
 - a. Hassle the officials about every call or decision.
 - b. Make sure he/she hears my coaching instructions.
 - c. Cheer for my child and the team.
 - d. Question every decision the coaches' make.
3. When another child makes a mistake I...
 - a. Give advice to that child's parents so they know how they can help their child get better.
 - b. Don't say anything at the game, but talk about it later to help my child know what he/she shouldn't do.
 - c. Yell in disgust.
 - d. Don't say anything. Anyone can make mistakes and they are only children.
4. If my child has a bad game/competition...
 - a. Tell him/her it's not his/her fault. Conditions were not right for him/her to play well.
 - b. Don't dwell on it. I help them focus on the good things he/she learned that day.
 - c. Make sure he/she knows what he/she did and how it can be avoided next time.
 - d. Blame it on the coaches or officials.
5. If the team loses I...
 - a. Make sure my child knows it's a part of sports that kids need to learn to deal with.
 - b. Make sure everyone knows that it's probably because some of the kids on the team aren't as good as my child.
 - c. Make sure to let me child know it's the coaches' fault.
 - d. Wonder aloud to other parents if we need stronger pitchers, hitters, etc.
6. If my child isn't doing well...
 - a. It really worries me.
 - b. I make sure we practice more.
 - c. I try to make sure that he/she is still enjoying the game.
 - d. I try to support him/her in any way that I can. Sometimes that means just listening.
7. My goal for my child in sports is...
 - a. To get a college scholarship.
 - b. To go to the Olympics/the Pro's.
 - c. To have fun and learn the sport.
 - d. To have the chance I never had.
8. The best coach is...
 - a. The one who wins?
 - b. The one who plays my kid the most?
 - c. The one who has the most experience?
 - d. The one who is interested in helping my child become the best he/she can be.
9. After a game...
 - a. I listen to my child tell me about how he/she did.
 - b. I review all the areas my child needs to work on.
 - c. I take my child out to practice areas needing improvement while they are fresh on his/her mind.
10. The goal of sports is...
 - a. To win
 - b. For children to have fun and learn life lessons.
 - c. To make money
 - d. To toughen children to the harsh realities of winning and losing.

Let's check your answers.

1. **Correct answer: a.** The role of a parent is support. However, it is so easy sometimes to slip into a role as “quasi-coach.” After all, it looks so easy! It is also very easy to “brag” to other parents about how wonderful your child is. After all, you should feel that way, you are the parent. However, don't bore others with your bragging! Finally, it's not wrong to try to find a team that is a good fit for your child. Do this “up front” and at the beginning of the season, not in the middle! At some point children need stability. Find a good team with a firm foundation and let your child grow there.
2. **Correct answer: c.** Cheer on your child and the team in a positive manner. Hassling officials teaches children disrespect. It also doesn't garner any favor with the officials! Coaching from the sidelines and questioning coaching decisions will confuse your child and often get in the way of good performance. Your child needs to know that you have confidence in the coach.
3. **Correct answer: d.** Anyone CAN make mistakes, especially young athletes. Keep your thoughts and advice to yourself, next time it may be your child!
4. **Correct answer: b.** Young athletes have good and bad days (even the pro's do!). Think about it, when you have a bad day, do you want someone to review the whole day with you again, pointing out every mistake? It's also not appropriate to make excuses or assign blame. Children need to learn to take responsibility for their own performance. They need to learn that sometimes they will just have bad days and it is not the end of the world!
5. **Correct answer: a.** See #4. Just like athletes have bad days, so do teams. Children need to know that if they are on a team, they need to support each other, not point fingers!
6. **Correct answer: c or d.** Developing athletes often go through slumps in performance. It could be due to many factors. If they see that you can handle it without undue worry, they will learn to deal with it also. Practicing more may be exactly what your child DOESN'T need. They may even need a break from the sport to avoid burnout! Listen to your child and follow his/her lead.
7. **Correct answer: c.** Getting college scholarships and making the Olympics or Pro's are great dreams. But, let's face it; only so many athletes get there. For example, out of 70,000 gymnasts in the United States, only SEVEN make the Olympic team every FOUR years. That's not great odds. As for the chance you never had, if you feel this way you MIGHT be living out your fantasy through your child. This can lead you to apply too much pressure! So, focus on your child having fun and learning. The rest, as they say, will take care of itself.
8. **Correct answer: d.** Choose a coach who really cares about your child and has a long-term focus on how he/she develops in the sport. Make sure they have good, basic knowledge. Experience, while important, does not guarantee that a coach will be a good fit. And winning, as we know, can be accomplished in many negative ways!
9. **Correct answer: a.** Listen, listen and then listen some more. Don't re-hash every play.
10. **Correct answer: b.** Need we say any more?

So, what kind of sports parent are you?

Check your score:

90-100 – Great! Your child will have a good time playing sports. Other parents and the coaches will enjoy being around you.

80- Good. You might slip up once and awhile, but you have most of your priorities in the right place.

70- Need work. Be careful. Sometimes you let your enthusiasm get out of hand. Check what you say and do!

60 and below – Take a step back and think about what your priorities are. If you are not careful, you will drive your child right out of the sport!