

Helping Your Child Choose a Sport



Choosing a sport for your child is an important decision for any parent. The best sport for a child is one that the child finds fun and interesting. To encourage a healthy and active lifestyle, you might casually expose your child to a variety of physical activities and let the child's desires and abilities act as a guide to further commitment.

How can you help your child pick a sport that will best serve his/her needs and interests? Consider the following:

SKILL/ABILITY

Does your child love to run and have great stamina; consider a sport like lacrosse or track and field. Is your child flexible; consider gymnastics. If your child has weak hand-eye coordination; think about dance or martial arts instead of softball or tennis.

PERSONAL INTEREST

Play with your child and find out what excites him/her. Is your child drawn to a particular sport? Does he or she like to watch local games or follow the sport on TV? Curiosity and enthusiasm are good motivators.

TEMPERAMENT

Consider how social your child is. Some kids are drawn to team sports (ie. football, soccer, or baseball), others prefer to focus on individual goals. These kids might prefer swimming, tennis, or fencing.

TIME COMMITMENT

Certain sports have intense schedules for practices and games. Will your child have problems juggling homework and time with friends and family? Think about how practices and games will affect your family's plans. Don't overextend your child.

COST

Understand that the cost of equipment, uniforms, fees, and other expenses (travel costs, private coaching) can be high for some sports.

WHO'S IN CHARGE

Do you and your child like the coach? Does his or her experience and attitude match your values?

KNOW WHEN TO STOP

It is important to know whether your child hates being active, doesn't like that sport in particular, or if there are social problems on the team that may be causing the issue.

There is a fine line between supporting them in a sport and forcing them to do something that they are not enjoying. Consider all these factors and decide if it is best to keep going or move on to something else.

EXPLORE

Allow your child the freedom to try different sports. Your child's interests and abilities will change as they grow. Do not lock your child into one sport at an early age. Specializing too early or doing the same activity several days of each week is not shown to be beneficial in terms of long-term athletic development. Studies have also shown that overuse sports injuries (stress fractures, tendinitis, etc.) are more common in children who specialize at a young age.