

FitFacts®

How Should I Help My Child Pick a Sport?

CHILDREN WHO PLAY SPORTS NOT ONLY HAVE A REGULAR OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, BUT THEY ALSO DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS INCLUDING LEADERSHIP, TEAMWORK, SELF-DISCIPLINE, COOPERATION AND HOW TO BE A “GOOD SPORT” WHETHER THE GAME IS WON OR LOST.

YOU CAN SET YOUR CHILDREN UP FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE WITH YOUTH SPORTS BY ASKING YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING FIVE QUESTIONS BEFORE FILLING OUT THE NEXT YOUTH-LEAGUE REGISTRATION FORM:

What are my child's greatest athletic strengths? If they like to run, soccer or track may be a good place to start. Is it increased strength and bulk compared with his peers? In this case, [football](#) could be a nice fit. If they have really good hand-eye coordination, consider baseball or softball. The key is to guide your child toward sports that are most likely to boost confidence and provide a positive experience.

Does my child gravitate toward team or individual activities? Team sports help children develop social skills and leadership abilities, while individual sports help a child to build self-confidence and self-reliance. A child does not have to pick one or the other - many kids thrive in both team and individual sport environments.

Am I pressuring my child to play a particular sport because it's my favorite? It's natural to encourage your children to play the same sport you grew up with and still love to watch and play. But remember, not everybody has the same interests. As your kids get older, give them the opportunity to pick which sport(s) they would most like to try out.



What is my child's level of coordination and skill? If a child is strongly resisting playing a particular sport, it may be because his or her skill set is different from what is required to do well in the sport. Brush it off and give your child the opportunity to explore other types of sports and physical activities.

Is my child having fun? Try to resist the temptation to try to raise the next sports star – the goal is to have fun! Also, avoid encouraging a child to specialize in one sport too early. Not only does this increase the risk of overuse injury, but it may unnecessarily limit a child's ability to develop other skills, while also taking some of the fun out of the sports experience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

[American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#)

ACE- Fit Life: [How Should I Help My Child Pick a Sport?](#)