

# Sportsmanship

## Keeping the game fun for everyone

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*“One man practicing sportsmanship is far better than a hundred teaching it.” - Knute Rockne*

Spring is here, and along with the blooming flowers, trees, green grass, and sunshine comes the Spring Sports Season. Baseball, softball, soccer, track, and field hockey are all ready to welcome the return of warmer weather. But young athletes bring more than just their skills to the game; they often have a cheering section. The key to sportsmanship is to keep the cheering section, and not let it turn into a jeering section.

Sportsmanship is defined as “conduct (as fairness, respect for one’s opponent, and graciousness in winning or losing) becoming to one participating in a sport.” It’s unfortunate that in recent years more and more examples of poor sportsmanship are seen not only at professional sports events, but also at youth events among players, parents, and even coaches. Most youth sports leagues in our area require all players, parents, AND coaches to sign a Code of Conduct. An example of a player’s code of conduct is below:

1. Know the rules of the sport or activity that he or she is participating in and abide by them.
2. Respect the game officials and refrain from addressing them or commenting on their decisions during the play of the game. The team captain may address the officials during the game but only within the provisions of the rules, and in a courteous, respectful manner.
3. Maintain control of his/her emotions, avoiding the use of abusive language or profanity, humiliating remarks, and/or gestures of ill temper.
4. Do not physically assault, or threaten to physically assault, another player, game official or a coach.
5. Respect the coaches and players of the opposing team. Demonstrate appropriate gestures of sportsmanship during and at the conclusion of the game, being humble and generous in victory, proud, and courteous in defeat.
6. Follow all building and facility rules and regulations, respecting at all times the property of others.
7. Realize, accept, and practice the principle that a team’s reputation is built not only on its playing ability but also on sportsmanship, courtesy, and manners of each individual player.

The Parent Code is similar, with the following addition:

“Refrain at all times from coming onto the playing surfaces or from throwing objects or other foreign materials onto the playing surfaces. Exit in an orderly manner at the conclusion of the activity. Enter indoor facilities quietly and remain seated during the activity (including, but not limited to, a practice or competition).”

**Parents should cheer and not jeer from the sidelines.** Shout positive encouragement from the stands, but leave the coaching to the coaches.

While the coaches will monitor the players’ behavior on the field, the rules of good sportsmanship really start at home. Set a good example, teach respect for one another, establish a sense of what is right and fair, instill a sense of personal growth, and help your child learn the value of teamwork.

Aside from their excellent health and team-player benefits, sports can play a big role in boosting your child’s self-confidence, but they also can damage a child’s self-esteem. Not every child is a natural athlete, and expecting your child to be a scholarship-bound world class player in a youth league gives them unrealistic expectations, and makes them feel like they’ve failed you, their team, and themselves when they don’t perform to your expectations. Give your child access to a wide variety of team and individual sports, and let them choose which one(s) they love and want to keep pursuing. Don’t let them quit a sport after the first loss, but don’t force them to stick with a sport they hate. A good rule is one full season of participation before deciding that particular sport is off their list of favorites. They will want to play better in a sport they enjoy, and it will instill a stronger sense of sportsmanship.

Bottom line, the best way to remember good sportsmanship is to treat the other players the way you want to be treated, or want your child to be treated. Think before you speak, or yell, or rant, or heaven forbid, throw something. Don't do a victory dance, or taunt the other team. Help a player up when they fall, regardless of which team he is on. Congratulate the other team at the end of the game, win or lose.

Good sportsmanship helps everyone win.

*"I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career, lost almost 300 games, missed the game-winning shot 26 times. I've failed over and over again in my life. That is why I succeed." - Michael Jordan*

Resources:

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/food\\_fitness/sports/sportsmanship.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/food_fitness/sports/sportsmanship.html)

<http://life.familyeducation.com/sports/parenting/36484.html>