



Seeking Input

This is a working document and we are seeking feedback. If you have coached your children or worked with coaches that have coached their children please consider offering your insight on this resource for coaches. Each contributor will receive credit in the final document. Provide feedback here: [Preparing to Coach Your Children](#)

Preparing to Coach Your Children

Considerations for Parents Across Sport Settings

The following information serves as a resource for parents when preparing to coach their children. To use this document, review the *common considerations* for parents when coaching their children across all levels of sport. Then find the setting in which you coach your child for suggestions specific to your coaching context.

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Common Considerations

As a parent-coach you have two roles to manage when preparing to coach your children. The following suggestions apply across all sport settings.

Your Role as a Coach

- Remain impartial when assessing the skill and ability of your child. Evaluate them using the same approach you do with all your athletes.
- Have a trusted/knowledgeable friend, family member, or colleague give you a fair assessment of your child's abilities relative to their peers and level of competition.
- Avoid favoritism or the perception of favoritism to your child. At the same time, treat your child fairly. Be careful holding your child to a higher standard than their teammates unless this aligns with your coaching style. For example, you always hold your best players to a higher standard and your child is one of the best players on the team.
- Be aware that you might have stronger emotional reactions to your child's performances and actions. Use this awareness to respond in a comparable manner that you would with other members of the team.
- In team settings, communicate with your child like a member of the team and not one of your children. This will allow your child to feel like they are a part of team and a peer among their peers.
- Make decisions in the best interest of the team, even if the decision might not be in the best interest of your child.
- Consider asking another coach to provide instruction to your child. Allow your assistant coaches and support staff to fulfill their role on the team and work with your child without interference from you.

Your Role as a Parent

- Away from the team setting, release your child to the game and allow them to find enjoyment in playing the game without your input.
- Help your child establish goals based on their abilities and not your expectations.
- Support your child's interest in the sport you coach and in other sports. Be supportive in the level they want to compete at.
- Allow others to coach your child without interference. Intentionally find avenues for other coaches to coach your child.



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- Involve your spouse/partner in your child's experience on your team. Your child needs a parent's support at home for their sport experience. Share in this experience with your spouse/partner.
- At home, make decisions regarding your child's participation in the sport you coach in their best interest and that align with family values. For example, placing their health and well-being at the forefront of your coaching decisions.
- Encourage and praise your child for things they do great on the field. Leave the coach on the field - don't take the coach home with you.
- Show empathy if your child is struggling in the sport you coach. Speak to them like their parent and avoid crossing into your role as their coach.

Communicating Expectations with Your Family

- Explain to your family your role as a coach and the additional time commitment it requires.
- Establish boundaries between home and the field of play. Determine when it is okay to discuss and talk about your child's performance, the game, or practice, and when it is not. Be a parent at home and support their participation in the sport.
- Ask your partner/spouse and other children in the family how they feel about you coaching their child or sibling. Seek feedback from your spouse/partner throughout the season to assess your actions and behaviors. Discuss and make a plan regarding how you are going to manage the dual role of being a parent and a coach.
- Discuss with your child how your role as their coach might place them in a position to be mistreated by their peers. Help them understand their role as a member of the team and give them strategies to positively address those comments and/or behaviors. In the presence of the team, your child should address you like a member of the team.
- Discuss with your spouse/partner possible mistreatment from other parents with children on the team and how it might impact their relationship with other parents.
- Explain to your child how you will coach them. If you are intentionally going to be harder on them, tell them before practices start. Let them know that it might happen unintentionally as well and that you will do your best to recognize it and address it. Include your child in this decision making process and ensure you both are on the same page. Getting their perspective is important in this endeavor. Make sure they feel comfortable voicing their concerns before and during the season. Revisit this decision throughout the season to be sure that the decision you made at the beginning of the year is still working for both your child and you as a parent-coach.
- Set aside time after practice, if needed, to discuss any issues that came up during practice that might impact the family.



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Where to Seek Assistance as a Parent-Coach

- Ask coaches that have coached their children what expectations they communicated to their child prior to the start of the season. Learn how they manage their dual role as a parent and a coach on and off the field of play.
- Seek information and advice from the supervisor overseeing the sport program, a coaching association for the sport you coach, or a coaching association for sports you are not coaching.
- Ask assistant coaches to take on a specific role (i.e., disciplinarian, defensive coach) with your team, to provide your child an influential voice other than your own.

Sport Settings

Find the sport setting you coach in and consider the suggestions offered in preparing to coach your children.

Community-Based Youth Sport

Setting: I am a parent-coach of my child's youth sport team operated by a local organization providing participation opportunities for youth in my community.

- Communicate your values and behavioral expectations with the parents of players on your team. Then demonstrate in practices and competitions holding your child to the established standards.
- Discuss options for other parents to assist throughout the season, outside of, or including, coaching with you. Allow them to teach and provide feedback to your child without interference by you.
- Discuss with your child how you expect them to behave while participating in sports and with you as their coach. Younger children might have a difficult time separating their coach from their parent. In front of the team communicate with them like any other member of the team. If your child needs you as a parent during a practice session or a contest, communicate with them privately and have another parent-coach oversee the team for a few minutes.
- Embrace the family atmosphere and enjoy the laughter and play-like atmosphere of youth sport. Using humor can alleviate the pressure of the parent role in coaching your children.
- Create opportunities in the team setting for your child to bond with their peers. Your presence as a parent may stifle their ability to connect. If another parent is assisting in



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practice sessions, have them take a group that includes your child to allow them a break from you as their coach.

- Establish clear team rules and be consistent in enforcing them with all team members, including your child.

Scholastic Sport

Setting: I coach a school-sponsored sport team at the middle/high school as an assistant/head coach and my child is a member of the team.

- Address with your team and their parents your approach to coaching your own child. Explain that your child will have the same behavioral expectations as every member of the team. Then demonstrate this approach in team settings on and off the court.
- If you serve as an assistant parent-coach, seek guidance from the head coach on their expectations when coaching your child. While many of the same concepts of coaching your child apply to head and assistant coaches, the head coach may have specific expectations based on their coaching philosophy.
- Be aware how others in sport, such as officials, spectators, and opposing coaches and players might perceive you coaching your children. Practice managing your emotions when officiating calls go against your child, fans heckle them, or opposing coaches make comments. Discuss these potential situations with your child ahead of time and what an appropriate action would be in these situations.
- Avoid isolating your child in moments of correction; treat your child like others when instructing and motivating. Discuss strategies or methods of communication, such as cue or code words, in which your child can use to communicate to you that they need their space or need your support.
- Discuss with your child the challenges and benefits of playing for a parent-coach, how to deal with peer conflicts and what role (parent or coach) you will play when conflict occurs. Make a list of the benefits they receive in playing for you, such as access to the weight room or the gym. Then consider the challenges that might arise, like perceived favoritism or peer conflict.

Club/Travel Team Sport

Setting: I am a parent-coach of a youth sport club/travel team.



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- Encourage open feedback from assistant(s) regarding your child's skill and role on the team to guard against favoritism.
- During overnight trips, consider having your child room with their teammates so they have the opportunity to bond with them.
- Shift between the two roles of coach and parent. Stay in the role of coach during practices and competitions. Be a parent during downtime between games and in moments alone with your child when traveling for competitions.
- Communicate with parents the sport club policies or travel team arrangement regarding player fee discounts for your child with you serving as a coach. This information may not be communicated by those overseeing the funding.

Privatized Training

Setting: I operate a private business that provides skill development/performance training for athlete development and my child is a participant/client.

- In training sessions, ensure your 'paying clients' receive the same attention as your child. Discuss behavioral expectations with your child when participating in training sessions.
- Balance pushing your child into training sessions with offering them flexibility to participate and explore other sport opportunities. Your child may feel pressure to participate in privatized training since you operate the facility.

Intercollegiate Sport

Setting: I coach an athletic team at the intercollegiate level as an assistant/head coach and my child is a member of the team or a recruitable athlete in the sport I coach.

- Be transparent in determining scholarship funding for your child to avoid a conflict of interest. Involve an athletic administrator in the process of determining the appropriate amount of the scholarship being offered to your child.
- Use outside resources (i.e., recruiting services, other coaches, scouts, etc.) to evaluate your child's ability to play at the collegiate level you coach at. Share this information with your athletic administration and the media in the recruiting process to build credibility for the recruitment of your child with the campus and the local community.



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- Manage your emotions when faced with negative comments about your child's performance from spectators and coverage in the press. Avoid message boards, anonymous chats, and social media as the conversations could be detrimental if things are not going well.
- Support your child's autonomy and independence as a young adult outside of the team environment. Discuss the time commitment of being a student-athlete and help them find time to be outside of your supervision to be a "normal student-athlete."
- Establish a procedure (or follow athletic department guidelines) for dealing with violations of team rules; remove yourself from being the decision-maker in situations that involve your child.

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