

## ***Being a Good Sport When Cheering on Your Child***

“Stand and cheer for the doer, the achiever—the one who recognizes the challenges and does something about it.”—Vince Lombardi, football coach

You are your children’s biggest—and most important—cheerleader. Whether they’re competing in a sport or performing in a theater production or music group, your presence is a key way to support your children. But the way you are present also makes a difference in the way your children feel about you, themselves, and the activities they are in. Consider these ideas:

### ***Try it...***

#### ***For all parents***

- Attend as many of your children’s games and performances as you can. Kids notice when you’re there—and when you’re not.
- Focus on supporting your child and the other kids there. If you’re overly competitive, ask yourself why winning is more important to you than supporting the kids who are involved. If you’re not sure how to best support your child, consider downloading the Little League’s free parent code of conduct at [www.littleleague.org/forms\\_pubs/parentcodeofconduct.pdf](http://www.littleleague.org/forms_pubs/parentcodeofconduct.pdf).
- Point out what you liked about your child’s performance. The more specific you can be, the better. For example, say, “I enjoyed hearing your trumpet parts in the band,” or “I am so proud of you for blocking that kick.”
- Invite other significant adults in your child’s life to games and performances. Consider occasionally inviting grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and other important adults.
- When you take photos or record your child’s game or performance, also remember to put down the camera and cheer! It’s important to be fully present in the moment, and one way to do that is to set technology aside so that you can witness firsthand your child’s achievements.
- Ask your kids periodically what they like about their sport (or activity). Ask what they have fun doing or learning—and if there is anything they’d like to change if they could.

#### ***For parents with children ages birth to 5***

- Focus on the fun and funny factor. Young children who play on teams run the wrong way, get distracted, and are more interested in what captures their attention at the moment than in the game or performance. Instead of being embarrassed, relish the

spontaneity of it all.

- Give your children credit for participating, even if it seems they didn't contribute much. Learning how to participate with others at this age is a major skill that builds slowly.
- Usually one or two activities are all young children can handle at this age, as long as each activity meets only once or twice a week. Children at this age also need time for unstructured play in their daily routine to thrive well.

### ***For parents with children ages 6 - 9***

- Give children choices for sport activities: soccer, basketball, T-ball, etc. Be careful to find the right sports leagues for them since competitive leagues start at early ages. Many communities offer both competitive leagues and recreational leagues; the latter are less demanding and often more child friendly.
- Follow your children's interest for activities. Ask what they like about the activity. Many will say "having fun" and "being with friends" as their top reasons for playing—not winning.
- Monitor your child's enthusiasm for the activity. If your child becomes less interested, find out why and talk to the club leader or coach.

### ***For parents with children ages 10 - 15***

- Young teenagers still like to have their parents attend their activities, but many want their parents to observe without much fanfare. Ask your children how they prefer your support and then support your children in that way.
- If you notice another parent who often yells, screams, or acts in disrespectful ways, talk with the coach to see if you can create a team cheering guideline that fits on a business-size card and is given to all the parents. It could include: Support our kids by cheering for them. Anyone yelling or screaming will be asked to leave the game by the referee. Notice when kids do things right.
- Get to know the names of the kids your children perform or play with. Support them as well as your child.

### ***For parents with children ages 16 - 18***

- Point out how you've noticed growth and mastery in your child's performance. Teenagers enjoy hearing specifics on how they're improving.
  - Continue to attend all their games, events, and performances, even if your teenagers say you don't need to come.
  - During the last performance or last game of the season, consider bringing a gift certificate or some other small gift. Then celebrate with your teenager by taking him or her out for a treat.
-