

How can I ensure my child gains benefits from participating in sport?

First is important to understand the benefits your child can gain from participating in sport. Such benefits include:

- Physical and health benefits such as physical fitness, physical competence, strength, power, agility, and speed.
- Social benefits such as learning to work with others, developing leadership, creating friendships with peers, and learning to resolve conflicts appropriately.
- Psychological benefits such as resilience, challenging oneself, problem solving, learning from disappointments, maintaining effort in difficult or demanding situations.

Next it is important to focus on these positive values and benefits. You can do this through the questions you ask your child about sport and how you respond to winning and losing. For instance, asking if your child what they learnt in a competition rather than what the outcome was, or focusing on what they enjoyed in a training session rather than how they performed compared to their teammates will remind your child that enjoyment and development are the key aims of sport. Encouraging your child to focus on the enjoyment of skill development will likely lead your child to remain in sport for a longer time to have a more enjoyable and successful experience than focusing on winning and losing.

Finally, it is not just how you interact with your child that will affect the benefits they gain from sport. The sporting environment can also influence the way your child thinks and behaves. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are the coaches promoting respect, personal growth, and equality?
- Are failures and mistakes being treated as opportunities to learn?
- How are the stress levels within the environment your child plays sport?
- Are teammates encouraging each other?
- Do the players play in a fair manner?

If you can't answer these questions positively the environment might not be supporting positive growth and development for your child. In such instances you could try and talk to your child's coach to understand their approach to coaching. You can then make a decision as to whether this is an environment you want to keep your child in or whether another environment may be better for your child.