

UN-L for Families

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SW 4 Counties

Chase-Dundy-Hayes-Hitchcock

Sportsmanship

The heart of the winter sports season is here and as parents and fans of student athletes, we love to watch our children play in games and push them to do their best in every play of each game.

Parents sit on the edge of their seats waiting for the next moment in time when their child goes into the game and all fans love to watch their team work together like a well oiled machine. At the same time, it's hard for to walk the fine line between being supportive and becoming over-involved.

However, through example and conscious teaching, we can help our student athletes to have a positive experience in their activities and to become a good sport.

Ten Tips for Teaching Your Children About Sportsmanship

- 1) Expect and reinforce good sportsmanship. Point out and reward good sportsmanship. Have a plan for dealing with poor sportsmanship.
- 2) Model sportsmanship. Discuss how you personally show sportsmanship. Describe how you can show respect to the opponent by shaking hands after the event. Describe the good feelings you get from being a good sport yourself.
- 3) Help your child remember to play. Discuss both the competitive and fun parts of involvement. Discuss the fun that comes from doing their best, performing well and spending time with friends—regardless of the outcome of the event.
- 4) Discuss the headlines. When you watch TV or read the newspaper, point out actions related to sportsmanship. Ask your child what they think of competitors who “showboat” or about the cost to the team for a technical foul. Look for examples of positive behavior as well.
- 5) Read books together with a sportsmanship theme. Particularly younger children, you can use this time to discuss examples of good sportsmanship and poor sportsmanship behaviors.
- 6) Reflect. Use the language of sportsmanship (respect, integrity, responsibility, fairness) when discussing practice and games. Ask them to think about why they had a bad or good game and what role sportsmanship played.
- 7) Emphasize teamwork in team events. Help your child to think “we” instead of “me.”
- 8) Make sure you and your child know the rules of the event. When you know the rules of competition, you can help your child to follow the rules as well.
- 9) Emphasize good sportsmanship at home. Games or contests at home are great family activities. Keep sportsmanship in-line during these activities. Watch for teachable moments when your family is engaged in competition.
- 10) Emphasize good character in daily life. The same behaviors that demonstrate good sportsmanship extend beyond the competitive arena. Promote respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring and citizenship in your daily lives.

For more information on developing good sportsmanship contact your local University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension office.