

10 WAYS TO KEEP SOCCER FUN

1. **Remember why kids want to play.** Kids play soccer for enjoyment, pure and simple. The purpose of youth soccer isn't for parents to measure the athletic prowess of their children or to have coaches display their tactical brilliance. Nor is it to see which club, state, or region can produce the best teams.
2. **HELP YOUR CHILD CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLAYING SITUATION.** Your job as a soccer parent is to help your child choose the appropriate level of play and a suitable team. Remember, a child starting on a B-level team improves faster- and has more fun- than a child who rides the bench on an A-level team.
3. **SET A SPORTSMANLIKE EXAMPLE.** Be a good host when welcoming visiting teams' parents. Say hello and ask how their kids' season is going. Offer to buy a round of coffee. And when the game heats up, remember that just because the parents are from another town, it doesn't mean they're your mortal enemies.
4. **HELP RUN THE TEAM, ESPECIALLY IF IT'S A TRAVEL TEAM.** Become aware of the work your team coach, manager and club administrators do. Then think about how you can help. The more assistance teams and clubs get from parents, the more they can do to help youth players. Sought-after skills include bookkeeping, fundraising, scheduling, word processing and making travel arrangements. If you can't take on a big job right now, offer to bring halftime refreshments to a couple of games or to host a post season team party.
5. **SET A HEALTHY EXAMPLE.** If mom or dad serves it, it's got to be good. That's what kids believe, even if it's not what their health teacher says. So keep fatty and sweet foods to a minimum and be sure your kids get the bulk of their calories from carbohydrates. Restrict your alcohol consumption and shun cigarettes, especially in front of kids at team gatherings.
6. **PLAY WITH YOUR CHILD IN THE BACK YARD OR AT LOCAL FIELDS.** Nothing will add more to your child's enjoyment of the sport than to have you as a playmate. Learn the skills and moves with your child. Help perfect techniques by adding a kick wall or rebounder to your back yard.
7. **TAKE YOUR CHILD TO THE STADIUM.** Go see some soccer. You have lots to choose from, including local high school, college, amateur and pro-league matches. Watch for national team matches in your area, too. When you can't make it to the stadium. Tune in to a match on TV and discuss it with you child.
8. **ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO WORK WITH YOUNGER PLAYERS.** This is a great way to bring out the best in your child. Young players make great volunteers because they really know the sport. Youth referees, assistant referees, and assistant coaches are in great demand. Look for something less formal? Suggest your child organize a backyard 3v3 tournament for neighborhood tykes.
9. **DON'T THINK OF SOCCER AS A MEANS TO AN END.** High school varsity teams, college athletic scholarships and pro stardom are not good reasons for encouraging your child to play soccer, at least not until the child reach the teens. If you need a reason to allow your child to play soccer

beyond his or her love for the game, remember that soccer rates highly in player involvement, creativity and fitness.

10. **BE SUPPORTIVE OF YOUR CHILD'S TEAM.** This means recognizing the achievements of the team and of individuals on the team, not just of your child. Avoid negative comments about refs (we know it's hard) coaches, and players. And next time you're standing on the sidelines, relax and enjoy the game. Don't embarrass your child by becoming a loudmouth parent.

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