

# The role of the parent

## Ways parents can help their kids have a good player-coach relationship

By Michelle LaRowe, Editor-In-Chief of eNannySource.com



**R**espect is at the center of the player-coach relationship. With a setting that is based on respectful behaviour, all members of a team can thrive. A parent's role in helping a child to have a good relationship with a coach is one of instruction, encouragement and support. Unless you, the parent, are the one doing the coaching, it's not possible to control how the coaching is handled. However, you can work to provide positive support that will enable a child to have a good experience.

### Age-appropriate expectations — teach respect

Although children at different levels have different physical and behavioral abilities, it's always possible to teach respect. Important aspects of respectful behavior

include paying attention when the coach speaks or models a skill, listening without interrupting, following directions, trying new skills and asking questions in a polite manner. Additionally, respectful behavior involves not being distracted by other kids. Simple use of polite words and behaviors can also help form a positive relationship. Teach your child to thank the coach for his time at the end of practice.

A young child can stray off task easily and distractions are common in early league levels. However, coaches working with young children are generally trained to keep activities shorter to accommodate age-related needs. As children grow older, more attentive behavior can be expected as longer drills and activities are provided. Help a child to enjoy a good relationship with coaches at any level by reinforcing respectful behavior with encouraging words. Correct your child when

inappropriate behavior is observed, and be sure to praise positive behavior.

## Model respectful behavior – it's on you

Your child doesn't have control over his arrival time. Being late to practices and games can create problems for the coach, and it's on you to make sure your child arrives on time. The team can also suffer if multiple kids are late or absent. Good communication from a parent can help. Let your child's coach know if he will be absent or late. Make it a point to be on time for official activities. Follow through on commitments to the team, especially those involving things like after-game snacks or important forms.

A parent who expects a child to show respect for an authority figure, like a coach, must also model such behavior. If you bad-mouth the coach's style, decisions or other actions, your child may assimilate some of these same sentiments into his own behavior. If he perceives negativity on the part of Mom or Dad, he may feel that he is justified in acting out or criticizing on his own.

No coach is perfect, and parents often disagree about a coach's decisions. However, helping a child to have a positive experience means that it's important to avoid attacking his coach publicly or privately. This can be tough, especially if there is a perception that the coach hasn't treated a child fairly, but it's important to remember the power you have as a role model.

## Act in a supporting role – lighten the duties

Coaches often appreciate the availability of parents during practices and games. Having a parent available makes it possible to quickly deal with serious behavioral issues. Additionally, having a few parents help out can lighten the duties of the coach by making it easier to manage drills and other administrative tasks. Consider

volunteering as a team parent and assisting a coach in coordinating distribution of team notices, uniforms or fundraising materials. Demonstrate a willingness to help set an example for a child while supporting the coach. Parental support can do a lot to keep a child's relationship with the coach positive.

## Dealing with differences – directly with the coach

It's important to realize that no matter how attentive and cooperative a child is, the player-coach relationship is two-sided. There will be times when a parent may not agree with how a play is handled, where a child is positioned, or when a child has to sit out for a play (or longer). An unintended slight can lead to a negative

relationship between parents, players and coaches. It's important to address concerns directly with the coach.

Similarly, teach a child to ask questions respectfully if he disagrees with how a situation has been handled. Help your youngster understand that the coach is the leader and has the responsibility for decision-making. It's important not to over-exaggerate small issues. At the same time, a pattern of oversights may require some private discussion.

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## Ongoing development – encouragement over time

Your child will have many coaches over time. Every coach will be unique in his approach to team discipline, drills and game strategies. It's important to help your child understand that respect is an ongoing priority. Encourage him with positive points at the beginning of a season, and continue to model support and cooperation in order to facilitate a pleasant player-coach relationship.



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