

Starting the Sportsmanship Conversation

Talking to your kids about sportsmanship isn't easy. But it is one of the most valuable things you as a parent can teach your kids. And sportsmanship can translate into learning valuable life lessons we hope our kids gain from their youth sports experience. But how do you have the conversation? This handy guide should help.

STEP 1

Start with explaining: **What Is Sportsmanship?**

- Play fair
- Follow the rules of the game
- Respect officials, umpires and referees at all times
- Treat their opponents with respect – think: golden rule!
- Value their teammates -- remember that we all make mistakes and that it takes a whole team, not just one player, to play a game

STEP 2

Then talk about **When Sportsmanship Happens**

- When they win
- When they lose
- When they practice (not just in games)
- When no one is looking

STEP 3

Once you know what it is, talk about **What To Do When You See Bad Sportsmanship**

- If bad sportsmanship comes in the form of trash talk or attempts to distract, brush it off and refocus on the next play
- If bad sportsmanship comes in the form of something more serious, such as dangerous play, bring it to the attention of the coaches or officials
- Talk about it after the game – it's important

STEP 4

And then finally, make sure you talk about **What Your Role As A Parent Is In Sportsmanship**

- You care about their effort and learning more than their wins and losses
- You will cheer for good plays –whether they make them, or the other team does
- You promise not to yell at officials, umpires or referees, even when you disagree with the call
- You'll respect the parents and coaches of the opponents