



Parent behaviour guide

How to best support your child in competition



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTAL BEHAVIOUR FROM YOUNG ATHLETES

Pre-competition	
Do	Do not
Ensure athletes are physically prepared for competition. E.g. they arrive on time, well fed, and with the equipment they need.	Talk extensively about the upcoming competition.
Provide practice information regarding nutrition and warming up. But, do not become repetitive.	Do not try to change your child's agreed goals for that event.
Recommend and reinforce good pre-competition habits BUT do not try and do everything for your child.	Make any comments that refer to the outcome of the child's performance rather than concentrating on the immediate event.
Offer technical and tactical advice IF you have qualified knowledge.	Provide technical and tactical advice if you don't have knowledge.
Cater to child's needs for mental preparation. E.g. Identify if children like talking or quiet before competitions, give your child time and space to be alone if required.	Repeatedly tell your child to warm-up or get ready for their competition.
Remind your child you will be proud of them whatever the outcome.	Place excessive emphasis upon the outcome.
Emphasise effort, attitude, and enjoyment.	
Keep relaxed and calm before the competition.	

During competition	
Do	Do not
Attend competitions to show your interest (unless your child asks you not to).	Make reference to scores if not an aspect of your child's agreed goals for that event.
Behave in accordance with the rules and etiquette of the sport.	Criticise your child or their opponent.
Match all non-verbal behaviours (e.g. gestures, facial expressions) with verbal support.	Display negative responses during competition. For example, using a negative tone to give feedback.
Maintain a positive tone and body language.	Coach in any form, even "coaching-like" comments, unless requested by your child.
Keep support focused on effort rather than performances/outcomes.	Argue with officials, coaches, or other parents.
Maintain control over positive and negative emotions, do not get too involved.	Contradict coach instructions.
Shout to officials only if children are in danger.	Disrupt children so they lose concentration during competition.
Praise good performances and provide encouragement after poor skill execution.	Change your behaviour or walk away if the competition is close or your child starts losing.
Be empathetic and consider the feelings of all children before providing encouragement.	Embarrass your child by providing over the top support.
If advice is requested, give it when children are not on the line.	Forget that comments made in tents are public comments

Post-competition	
Do	Do not
Only talk about the competition if your child wants to.	Criticise for performance-related issues.
Comment on effort and attitude rather than the result.	Talk about the competition UNTIL your child wants to.
Give positive feedback first.	Focus on the negative aspects of a performance.
Keep feedback positive but realistic. That is, identify the good parts of the performance but do not exaggerate or be overly positive when the performance was not good.	Blame outcomes on others. For example, if a child had a bad competition do not try and blame it on the judge or other external factors.
Keep feedback simple and to a minimum after a loss.	Point out or continually discuss your child's mistakes.
Be realistic about the outcome rather than finding excuses for the result.	Tell players they did something well when they didn't.
Wait until children are ready to receive feedback.	Have a negative attitude after your child has lost.
Encourage your child to reflect on their performance by writing down their thoughts if they would prefer not to discuss it face to face.	
Support your child and keep your behaviour consistent whether they achieved their goals or not.	
Give your child space if needed.	
Encourage your child for the next competition and boost their confidence if they have lost.	
Ensure your child has appropriate food and drink available after a competition.	

Derived from: Holt, N. L., & Knight, C. J. (2014). Parenting in Youth Sport: From Research to Practice. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

**Remember these are general guidelines only.
Each athlete is an individual and your approach may
need to be altered to your child.**



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Archery GB

Lilleshall National Sports & Conferencing Centre
Newport
Shropshire
TF10 9AT

General Enquiries:
Tel: 01952-677 888
Fax: 01952-606 019
Email: enquiries@archerygb.org

www.archerygb.org



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