



How to be a Good Sport

Competition can be good and strengthen character when it makes the game a bit more fun, increases effort, and motivates children to participate. However for many children, dealing with losing is difficult and can have negative effects. Research has shown that for these children making and keeping friendships over time is more difficult.

Suggestions for helping your child *win* and *lose* well:

- **Be a good role model for winning and losing well.** What do you communicate to your child about competitive situations? Do you put the pressure on (even innocently) to win? Try to make family and friendship as non-competitive as possible. Don't send the message that winning is the most important
- **Point out others.** When you see examples of others being too competitive, let your child know.
- **Teach.** Let your child know what is and isn't an acceptable response when it comes to both winning and losing.
- **Praise.** Praise your child when they are a good sport about losing.
- **Praise effort and not results.** Talk about taking challenges and showing determination. Notice when he or she is improving at something. Send the message that everyone can get better at everything through practice, making mistakes and effort. When your child wins a game, comment on the effort, "Wow, you really paid attention to what I was doing. You noticed every one of my moves!" Try not to focus praise on winning.
- **Teach "bounce back" statements.** Give your child statements they can say to themselves (for example, "I made a mistake. Now I know what not to do next time!").
- **Explain that the winner is always different.** Children need to know that first place is only temporary.
- **Think about the loser.** Help your child imagine the loser's perspective. Encourage your child to be sensitive when a friend doesn't do as well at something as him.
- **Family games.** Playing is a good exercise in learning to compete.
- **Play to win.** Let your child experience losing with you. It's important that children learn the balance between winning and losing.

- **Insist that your child plays by the rules.** Explain the rules of the game before beginning. If your child tries to play by their own rules, let them know that their way is a different game.
- **Notice improvement.** Failure is quitting. Winning is never giving up. Encourage your child to be aware of his or her progress, not on how many times they've won the game.
- **Pay attention to your child's feelings.** Let them know it is okay to feel angry, disappointed, sad, etc. when they lose.