

Keeping

Your Child Safe 
in Sport

Play

your

part

Bring out their best

How to have

supportive conversations

with your child about sport



NSPCC

Keeping Your Child Safe in Sport

We are part of the NSPCC and funded by Sport England, Sport Northern Ireland, Sport Wales, and UK Sport.

We started our Keeping Your Child Safe in Sport campaign in October 2016 (previously known as Parents in Sport Week). Over the years we have had a number of different key messages, but the central one will always be how parents and carers can support their children in sport and how to keep them safe.

For more information and support, please visit [nspcc.org.uk/safeinsport](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/safeinsport)

Why does this matter?

The part you play in your child's sport can have a big impact on how your child feels about sport and physical activities.

We want to make it easier for you to talk to your child about what support means to them and how you can help to bring out their best.

Whether your child's goal is to achieve a winning score, a personal best, be a good teammate or to simply enjoy their sport, your support can help them achieve their goals.

How to play your part

Listen to them

**Keep sport
fun**

**Respect
everyone**

**Get involved
with the club**

**Understand how
your child
develops**

See something, say something

**Keep the
conversation
going**



Listen

Ask your child how they want you to support them.

You've asked them how they want to be supported, and you know what that means to them. Some children love loud cheers, while others prefer a quieter show of support like a high five or a smile.

Listen to what they say and watch their body language. As they get older, they may want you to show support differently - so ask them again.

Try this!

Agree with your child three things you can do to show your support – things like a wave, a thumbs up or a specific signal.



Keep sport fun

Praise hard work and progress before performance.

Giving kind feedback can help them manage during challenging times like competitions or team selections. Other things matter – so talk about their progress, their determination, their teamwork, their leadership, their passion.

When they are young, they should be trying everything and having fun.

Try this!

Ask your child 'what was your favourite thing about today?' to help them focus on something positive.



Respect

Everyone - the coaches, officials and the competition.

Children learn from what they see, so show them what great sportsmanship and respect look like. Cheer on all teammates, respect the coach and officials, even if you disagree with decisions. It will also show them what respect looks like and help them to respect others too.

Try this!

Encourage your child to say 'thank you' to someone after training or a competition – like a coach, a teammate or an official.



See something, say something

Take the time to learn about the club's safeguarding policy and if you see something that concerns you – even if you're not sure, talk to someone at the club.

Your club or activity organisation should have a welfare officer that you can talk to and you can also get support from the NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000 or [email help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

Try this!

With your child, look at the club's noticeboard and see who can find the club welfare officer's name and contact first.



Get involved



Show your child you want to be part of it.

Even a little support can show your child that being part of a team matters – Whether you can offer to wash kits, collect the subs or hand out water bottles. Make sure you read all the communication from the club and sign the parents' code of conduct, so you know how everyone is expected to behave.

Try this!

Ask your child to help you choose what 'one thing' you're going to do to help the club this month.



Keep it going

The conversation doesn't stop here.

As children get older their reasons for taking part and the support they want from you may change. Younger children can benefit from playing many sports so they can learn what they enjoy and what they are good at.

As children get older, they may want to focus on fewer sports, and they may want you to take a step back and let their voice be heard more as they grow in independence.

Try this!

Check in with your child each season, or before a competition, and ask whether anything has changed in how they want you to support them.

Talented and elite young people



There are some specific factors to be aware of when your child is moving through the talent pathway or is in a high-performance environment. They may need extra support when it comes to things like managing pressure, balancing sport with their education and social life, taking care of their physical health alongside training, and looking after their mental health and wellbeing.

Try this!

With your child, choose a regular time away from sport and training that you'll ask if they need any help – with their sport or with anything else. Ask about their life outside of their sport, for example school, social life, other hobbies. You could talk whilst sharing a favourite snack, or after a television programme you enjoy watching together.

Understanding how children develop

Knowing how your child develops is key to supporting their activities that match each child's stage and needs. They will develop each of the following at different stages.



Physical growth: progress in moving skills (like running), small motor skills (like catching), coordination, strength, and flexibility.



Thinking skills: how well children solve problems, remember things, pay attention, and understand rules. Children learn differently.



Emotional growth: making friends, handling emotions, understanding others' feelings, building confidence.



Language skills: how well children understand and talk about thoughts and feelings.

Remember that each child grows at their own pace. Instead of comparing them to others, celebrate their progress and choose ways to talk and support based on their development.

"There is no such thing as a
perfect parent.

So just be a real one."

— Sue Atkins, Parenting Coach



More resources

- [Keeping your child safe in sport](#)
- [Factsheet about having a post-sport chat with your child](#)
- [Conversation starter question cards](#)
- [Poster with 5 questions to ask your child's sports club](#)
- [Parents and carers of elite athletes](#)

Getting support

- [Advice for families](#) – NSPCC pages to support parents
- [Family hubs](#) (parts of England only) – a single place to get support for children, young people and families
- [Better Health](#) – if you need support with your own health and wellbeing, the NHS Better Health website includes support for weight management, smoking, getting active, alcohol and mental health
- [Citizens Advice](#) – gives people free and practical advice in lifestyle such as finance, family law, housing, immigration, work and benefits

Keeping children safe.

We're the NSPCC, we exist to keep children safe. Everything we do puts children first – their voices, their experiences, their needs.

We support young people through Childline and a range of specialised services. Making sure they always have someone to turn to. We work to prevent abuse from ever happening and we're here to help children recover so that it doesn't shape their future. We've been protecting children for over 140 years. And as long as children need us, we'll be here.

[nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)

NSPCC



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