

Children and Sports Skills: A guide for Parents and Coaches

Remember mom, dad and coaches...I'm just 4, 5 or 6...

Here is what you can expect of me in playing sports:

1. I'll have the tendency to keep the ball once I get control of it. I'll likely run in a straight line, even if I am going the wrong way, and may not stop at the field boundaries.
2. I may be easily distracted by things around the athletic event, such as a neat frog, butterflies, airplanes or whatever gets my attention.
3. There will probably be a big difference in my attention span between ages 4 and 6. At age 4, I may be unable to understand games or keep up physically with the 6-year-olds. At age 6, I will be more likely to understand the game basics and control a ball with my hands and feet.
4. Generally I will enjoy the physical activity. I may be content to just stand in the field and occasionally reach out for the ball if it comes close to me.
5. Teamwork is a difficult concept for me to grasp; I generally will have a "me" or "mine" concept of the game. Passing the ball to my teammates will be limited.
6. Catching a ball is difficult for me but generally I am able to make a catch before it bounces twice.
7. I am able to kick a stationary ball but have difficulty kicking a rolling ball.
8. I have very little concern with winning or losing.
9. I may or may not appear to understand instructions from coaches. Remember to keep the instructions direct because I am unable to interpret vague statements.

Mom, Dad, Coaches...

Here's where I'm at in the sports field at 7 and 8 years old:

1. I am beginning to understand the team concept idea.
2. I am switching from the "me" and "mine" concept to realizing that teammates are present too.
3. I've developed the ability to catch a gently thrown ball.
4. Most of the time I am able to dribble a ball continuously with my hands or feet without losing control.
5. I am able to learn and understand the rules of the game.
6. From my point of view, playing the game is the major thing; winning is not a major concern.
7. I will accept instructions from my coaches, but I need them to be direct and not vague.
8. I may get overloaded by my parents or fans shouting instructions. Let coach give me instructions.
9. I can become easily embarrassed by intense, negative criticism by fans or parents.

Hey mom, dad, coaches...

I am getting more control in my ability to play sports but please realize I'm still 9 or 10 years old. Here is what you can expect of me:

1. I am able to maintain a dribble with my hands or feet.
2. I am able to control a ball using a variety of body parts such as a thigh or head in soccer, or a bump volley in volleyball.
3. I am able to consistently hit a thrown ball with a bat (in baseball) or racquet (in tennis or ping-pong).
4. Using my maturing motor skills, I am able to throw, catch or kick.
5. I am able to use my hands or feet with competency.
6. I now understand the team concept.
7. I may be easily embarrassed by intense, negative criticism and behaviors by adults.
8. I now can accept the instructions of coaches. To some degree I may be able to interpret ambiguous directions, but receiving parental instruction at the same time as coaching instruction can confuse me.

I'm 11 or 12 years old and watch me go. Parents, coaches...here is what you can expect of me now:

1. I am able to throw and kick a ball with accuracy and for distance.
2. I am able to hand or foot dribble a ball while keeping an opponent from stealing it.
3. I am able to develop offensive and defensive tactics in team games.
4. I am able to combine individual physical skills in a competent manner, such as leaping, rolling, weight transfer, hand/foot dribble, running, throwing, etc.
5. While being guarded by an opponent, I am able to throw and catch.
6. I can accept decisions of game officials, even if I disagree with the call.
7. I understand that skill improvement requires input of practice time and effort.
8. I accept the instruction from coaches. I may even make my own modifications of coaching directions.

Parents, coaches: Now that I'm 13 or 14 years old, I have developed quite well and have an interest in the benefits of sports activities. But I'm still a young teenager and here is what you can expect:

1. I will combine different physical skills to a more competent level.
2. I have a tendency to practice skills learned in practice on my own.
3. My interest is growing in developing, improving and maintaining body composition.
4. I know, and can describe, proper conduct form participation in sporting activities including ethical and unethical behavior.
5. My taking part in physical activities helps me recognize the long-term physiological and psychological benefits.
6. I accept the instructions from coaches, but during games I may become angry at negative yelling or instructions shouted by fans or parents.

Be a fan of your player and help THEM excel!

