



Pregame Tips for Parents and Coaches

This bonus provides sports parents and coaches with tips to help athletes feel more confident prior to games. Keep these tips in mind when getting ready for games:

Pregame Tips

- Don't judge or compare your players' performances before games to other teammates/opponents, which can cause them to lose confidence when they think they are not as talented or skilled.
- Encourage and remind your players of their strengths and what they are doing well to build confidence.
- Avoid over analyzing their technique or method prior to games. You want your athletes to trust in what they have learned, not question if it is right.
- Help your players identify and let go of high expectations they demand of themselves in sports. Help your child develop process goals for competition instead.
- Develop a pregame warm-up routine to prepare for games that help your kids be ready for anything that might happen.
- Avoid focusing on mistakes from the week's practice or past games. Use mistakes during practice as a teaching opportunity to help your kids learn how to improve instead of harping on why they are bad, which causes kids to lose confidence.

- For coaches, we suggest you have a discussion with your athletes about how teammates can help others feel confident. Kids sometimes worry about letting their teammates down. Teammates reinforce this fear when they react negatively to others' mistakes.
- Encourage team leaders to provide suggestions for helping the team stay confident after setbacks.
- Help your athletes embrace the pregame butterflies. Don't bring attention to nervousness and anxiety, but their preparation/excitement to compete.
- Focus your kids on having fun. Don't be so serious on game day. Focus on enjoying the game, playing with friends, etc. Place less emphasis on being serious or the outcome of competition.
- Keep your own emotions in check. If you're nervous or anxious, your players will likely be affected by your feelings. Model confidence and composure before the game.
- Encourage your children to take deep breaths if they become anxious or upset during the game.
- Parents can often impart expectations on kids without even knowing it. In your effort to build confidence in your kids, you might be placing expectations on their performance, such as "You should easily beat the opposing team today."
- Tell your child that you don't expect them to be perfect or make zero mistakes. Convey your love and appreciation no matter what happens in the game. Always find something positive to say.
- Remind your team to let go of the things that you know might bother them during the game, such as harsh field conditions or rude opponents.
- Don't punish kids for making mistakes during competition. Some coaches punish kids for mistakes by yelling at them or removing them from a game after just one mistake. Punishing kids for mistakes teaches them that

mistakes are not acceptable and kids lose confidence. They play tentatively and afraid to make mistakes.

- Offer encouragement after a poor warm up prior to games to build confidence. You don't want kids to lose confidence if the warm up was not perfect.
- Encourage teammates to support each other, boost confidence in each other, and be accepting after mistakes.