

 **USA FOOTBALL.**

PARENT GUIDE



FOR YOU. FOR THE GAME.

USA Football is creating a new standard in football by providing parents and athletes with trusted resources to make the game better and safer.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SKILLS AND DRILLS

SPORTS NUTRITION

STRENGTH TRAINING

ACCESS FREE RESOURCES AND DOWNLOADS AT WWW.USAFOOTBALL.COM/PARENT.



Being a parent is simultaneously one of the most challenging and rewarding opportunities in life. The pride that comes with watching our children succeed sits on a delicate balance with any letdown in seeing them struggle.

As a father of two student-athletes, I know firsthand that a parent's role goes much deeper than sitting in the stands cheering on our kids and their teams.

We are coaches, nurses, psychologists, equipment managers, chauffeurs, chefs, and so much more. We are there in the morning when they wake up filled with enthusiasm for the day, and we are there when they lie down at night filled with joy or disappointment.

USA Football is proud to support the millions of young athletes who play this game and their parents as we prepare for another season of America's most popular sport. This guide serves as a resource for moms and dads as they alternate the next few months between being encouragers, healers, mentors, No. 1 fans, and shoulders to lean on.

Let's focus on making this season the best it can be for our kids by being the best sports parents possible. Thank you for your willingness to learn about these best practices, and good luck.



Scott Hallenbeck
USA Football CEO and Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Hallenbeck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

NUTRITION

- 05 / FUEL UP FOR GAME DAY
- 06 / SNACKS ON THE SIDELINES
- 08 / HOW TO STAY HYDRATED IN THE HEAT

HEALTH & SAFETY

- 10 / FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT MODEL
- 14 / SPORTS PHYSICALS
- 15 / EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST
- 16 / BEAT THE HEAT
- 18 / MUST-HAVE FIRST-AID ITEMS
- 19 / TREATING THE MOST COMMON INJURIES
- 20 / COACH CERTIFICATION
- 21 / CONCUSSIONS – WHAT TO ASK YOUR LEAGUE

PERFORMANCE

- 22 / MULTIPLE SPORTS
- 23 / AGE-BASED LEARNING ON THE FIELD

COMMUNICATION

- 24 / 10 PHRASES – YOUR CHILD SHOULD HEAR OFTEN
- 25 / 4 EXPRESSIONS TO AVOID
- 26 / 7 WAY TO BUILD MENTAL TOUGHNESS
- 27 / QUESTIONS TO ASK COACH

VALUES

- 28 / THE VALUE OF SPORTS
- 30 / BUILDING CONFIDENCE
- 31 / COACHING EDUCATION
- 33 / THE BENEFITS OF FREE PLAY



FUEL UP FOR GAME DAY

Eating and drinking right are just as important as improving skills and practicing plays to be successful on the field.

Get your child ready for game day with some simple nutrition tips:

STEP 1 – CARB UP

Have your child eat a bigger meal two to four hours before he or she takes the field.

Incorporate protein and antioxidants, if possible, with carbohydrates.

STEP 2 – SNACK ATTACK

30 to 60 minutes before kickoff, have a small snack or sports drink ready for your child.

The key is to not fill your child's stomach, but to satisfy it.

3 KINDS OF FOODS TO AVOID

Fatty and fried foods. Greasy foods such as hamburgers and French fries are hard to digest and just sit in your child's stomach as he or she runs around.

Protein shakes and bars. Protein plays an important role in your child's overall diet, but they should not consume a large quantity right before a game.

Artificial sweeteners. These will stress your child's digestion, and the last thing anyone wants before a big game is an upset stomach.

PRO TIP:

Try a pasta dish with some lean ground turkey meat sauce, or a chicken stir-fry with lots of rice and veggies.

3 QUICK TIPS

Never skip. We are all rushed on game day, but having your child grab a yogurt, banana, or bowl of cereal before heading out the door will kick off the day off right.

Colorful plates. Foods that offer a variety of nutrients help with both performance and recovery.

Carb up. Kids burn through energy much faster than adults, so an abundance of carbohydrates is OK.



SNACKS

ON THE SIDELINES

Halftime for coaches means a chance to reinforce what the team is doing and helping your young athlete get better. For players, those few minutes also means snacks.



Halftime is a crucial point in the game to refill your child's glycogen – a muscle's fuel source – and keep him or her energized for the second half.

Try these easy options when orange slices just aren't cutting it:

- Fig bars
- Fruit rope
- Bananas
- Granola bars
- Dried fruit
- Rice Krispies Treats®

For more snack ideas and recipes, visit www.usafootball.com/parent.

Original content provided by: Joe Frollo

PRO TIP:

Ease digestion. Go for a high glycemic carbohydrate that absorbs quickly with minimal fiber.



YOUTH FOOTBALL PARENTS 101

Take a **FREE** crash course and start your experience as a **NEW** football parent on the right foot.

FEATURES:

- ✓ The ultimate football parents – *Mike and Christine Golic*
- ✓ Advice and tips on how to develop a great relationship with coaches, officials and other players
- ✓ The benefits of being active
- ✓ The role of the football parent

SIGN UP

Christine and Mike Golic help parents navigate their important role within a football team by discussing the benefits of being active, setting realistic goals and developing positive relationships. **START NOW:** usafootball.com/parents101.

FREE and available 24/7 – start your course today!

HOW TO STAY HYDRATED

LEARN IT

Dehydration Symptoms

- Feeling faint
- Headache
- Fever
- Intense thirst
- Not urinating for many hours
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Breathing faster or deeper than normal
- Skin numbness or tingling
- Muscle spasms
- Extreme tiredness

PRO TIP: If your child's urine is a dark yellow color, resembling apple juice, it is time to rehydrate.

TEACH IT

Make hydration a habit

One of the best ways to keep your child hydrated is to get them in the habit of drinking fluids every 20 minutes during the course of activity and after it ends.

DID YOU KNOW?

USA Football's youth coach certification has heat and hydration courses that are valuable for both flag and tackle coaches?

Learn more at usafootball.com/certification.

DO IT

When and how to hydrate

Before activity: Youth athletes should drink at least 10-16 ounces of water about 15-30 minutes before their game or practice.

During activity: Hydrate with an electrolyte-packed sports drink or water every 15 to 20 minutes throughout play.

After activity: Have your child drink chocolate milk as a post-workout snack to replenish nutrients lost during exercise.

PRO TIP: Pair a favorite sports drink with a healthy snack, and on busy days, plan ahead for additional hydration opportunities the night before an activity or with breakfast.

IN THE HEAT

Children have a harder time cooling down during activity than adults, and the chances of them becoming dehydrated is a real problem—especially when fluids leave the body faster than they can be replaced. But what goes out must come back in. Hydrating before a game or practice is just as important as during it.





FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

usafootball.com/fdm

FOR PARENTS

FOOTBALL FOR ALL[®]

WHY

As football has grown to become America's favorite sport, it's been taught and experienced in different ways around the country. That's led to challenges and issues you're probably familiar with.

We're parents, too, and we've heard your concerns. USA Football has always stood for safety, development, values and participation. The Football Development Model is our most ambitious effort to combine those ideals to benefit your athlete.

Help us create a safer and smarter football. A game we can share with more people and one that's more fun for those that play it.

WHAT

We're introducing a new model for youth football. It's designed to make the game safer by reducing contact and teaching the game based on an athlete's age, the skill they are learning, and game type. Here are the six key areas this model is built on.



Whole Person & Multi-Sport Development

It's not enough to make football players better at football. We will focus on the emotional, social and mental parts of a person in addition to the physical side.



Physical Literacy & Skill Development

The basics are the basics for a reason. We will teach the fundamental movements and techniques first so more complex skills can be added later.



Coach Education & Training

Coaches help to shape our children. We will continue to provide the best resources and training to coaches so they teach your children in the most effective way for them.



Multiple Pathways & Entry Points

From flag in school to Rookie Tackle with a local league, there are more ways to play football than ever before. We will give families options to play the game how they're most comfortable.



Fun & Fulfilling

No matter the level, football should be fun, so that's where we'll start. We will make fun a priority so children enjoy themselves and make friends as competition is introduced.

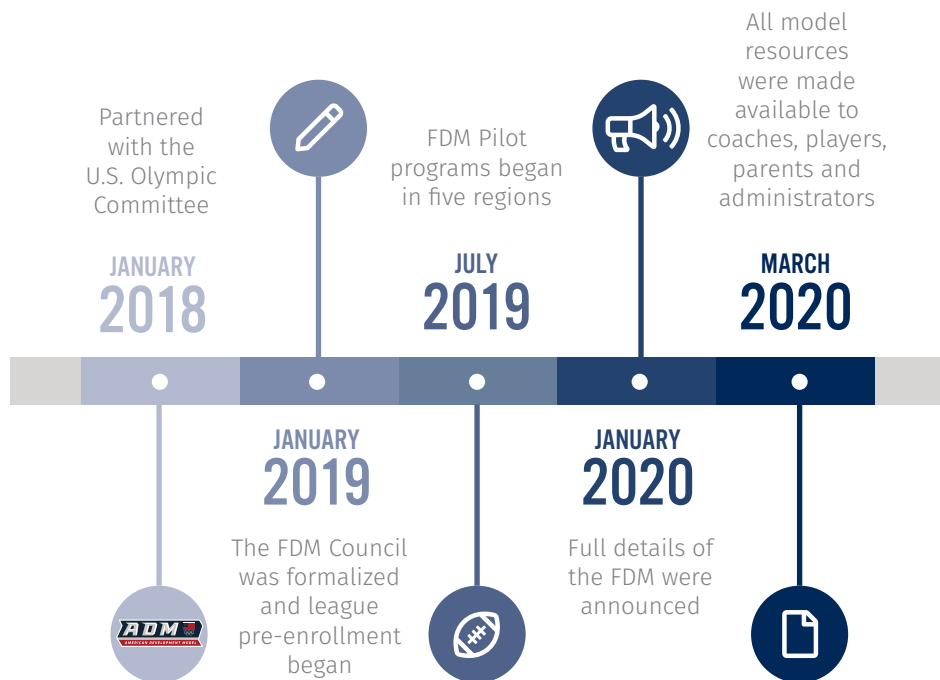


Participation & Retention

Teaching in a developmentally-appropriate way builds confidence and enthusiasm. We will encourage people to stay in the game longer by creating a better football experience.

WHEN

From its birth in the 1800s, football evolved in ways that have made it safer, more competitive and more popular, turning it into the game we know today. The Football Development Model is the next progression to continue making the game, its coaches and athletes better. Starting this effort today improves the experience for tomorrow.



HOW

Through research and partnerships with experts across football, medicine, child development, education and psychology, the Football Development Model was born. A change this big requires support from everyone who touches the game, starting with parents. Mom and dad influence both their children playing the game as well as the coaches teaching it. Asking the right questions and knowing what to look for helps your child have the most positive and fulfilling football experience.

Leagues that implement the Football Development Model are training young athletes in a way that's best for them on and off the field. Tell your coach, league or commissioner to visit usafootball.com/fdm to give the best football experience to your child.

WHO

Developed in conjunction with experts

Football Development Model Council

Medical / Child Development Specialists

Dr. Brian Hainline (Chairman)
Chief Medical Officer
National Collegiate Athletic Association

Dr. Gerard Gioia
Division Chief of Neuropsychology
Children's National Health System

Dr. Michael McCrea
Professor of Neurosurgery & Neurology
Medical College of Wisconsin

Dr. Johna Register-Mihalik
Assistant Professor Exercise & Sport Science
University of North Carolina

Dr. Allen Sills
Chief Medical Officer
National Football League

Long-Term Athlete Development and ADM Specialists

Dr. Stephen Norris
Adjunct Professor of Applied Physiology
Mount Royal University and
University of Calgary

Dr. Paul Roetert
Director of Education and Strategic Engagement
NCAA Sport Science Institute

Chris Snyder
Former Director of Coaching Education
United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee

Football Subject Matter Experts

Todd Berry
Executive Director
American Football Coaches Association

Anquan Boldin
Retired NFL Player

Callie Brownson
Chief of Staff & Assistant Wide Receivers Coach
Cleveland Browns

Jon Butler
Executive Director
Pop Warner Little Scholars

Calvin Everett
Athletic Director and Head Football Coach
Harrisburg (Pa.) High School

Brad Garrett
Assistant Executive Director
Oregon School Activities Association

Scott Heitland
Head Coach
Dallas Center-Grimes (Iowa) High School

Kirby Hocutt
Director of Athletics
Texas Tech University

Janan Miller
League President
Hill Country Pop Warner (Austin, Texas)

Dr. Karissa Niehoff
Executive Director
National Federation of State
High School Associations

Richard Raphael
President
Miami Xtreme Youth Football

Dr. Jon Steinbrecher
Commissioner
Mid-American Conference, NCAA

Buddy Teevens
Head Football Coach
Dartmouth College

Troy Vincent
Retired NFL Player
Executive V.P. of Football Operations
National Football League

WHO

Supported by coaches

What Top Coaches Are Saying



“I don’t care if you win or lose the game, I know that’s going to be the emphasis and it’s important, but I want to see you do your best and do what the coach tells you to do the way he wants you to do it. I think that’s the most important thing you can learn at a young age.”

Nick Saban Head Football Coach, University of Alabama



“Much like baseball, see them go from tee ball to coach pitch, if they get three strikes on them then they put it on a tee at the next level, then it goes to machine pitch and then real baseball. I think it’s a good application of football to go from flag football to the modified tackling to the six- or eight-man to the 11-man. It makes sense.”

Jim Harbaugh Head Football Coach, University of Michigan



“The Football Development Model has reimaged the game because it gives these young kids a chance to learn the game the right way, through fundamentals. Not just being locked into a certain position because of their weight or their height. It gives them a chance to learn it all. As they get older, through these stages now they can start to get more specific in what they want to do. They have a foundation because of what they learned right from the beginning”

Mike LaFleur Assistant Coach, New York Jets, QB Collective



“It is important for them to enjoy the experience, understand some of the fundamentals in touch, or flag or tackle football, and get excited about the opportunity to play the next season.”

Sean Payton Former Head Coach, New Orleans Saints



“All of my kids, I have four boys, they have all played flag football, they all loved it. It was fun – No. 1 – because in some of the rules, everyone has to touch the football, or they have to be thrown the football so there is more play involved in that side of it. But they also have really enjoyed the tackle element as well, and I think for these kids, whatever decision they decide to go with is the right one.”

Matt Nagy Former Head Coach, Chicago Bears



SEE WHAT OTHERS THINK

Parents, coaches, league leaders and sports specialists say a lot of great things about the Football Development Model. Check out the videos and quotes at usafootball.com/fdm.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A SPORTS PHYSICAL



Athletes come in all shapes, sizes, ages, and skill levels. One thing they should all have in common is a pre-participation physical evaluation (PPE).

While pre-season examinations won't prevent the bumps and bruises that come with your child playing youth sports, it provides physicians with vital information to make informed decisions.

Covering the basics

PPEs measure the following factors, which may influence your child's health and performance:

- Height
- Weight
- Blood pressure
- Pulse
- Vision
- Flexibility
- Range of motion
- Strength
- Functional movement

At the heart of it

PPEs are a key component to identifying certain heart conditions, including murmurs, arrhythmias, and other potential cardiac problems.

Sudden cardiac arrest is the No. 1 cause of death for young athletes in action and often shows no warning signs. Screening can identify if your child is at risk.

DID YOU KNOW?

USA Football certified youth coaches learn about sudden cardiac arrest. Learn more at usafootball.com/certification.

TAKE A TIME OUT

Before your child begins practice, contact your pediatrician to schedule an exam.



EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

The start of football season is an exciting time as millions of young athletes and their parents prepare to take the field decked out in the best equipment available for purchase.

Before dropping hundreds of dollars on the latest gear, be aware of what equipment you should buy.

Make sure your child is prepared for practice with the following checklist:

- 7-piece pad set*
- Athletic bag
- Belt
- Chin strap*
- Cleats (*typically plastic*)
- Eye black
- Football
- Gloves
- Helmet*
- Clear helmet visor (*if desired*)
- Integrated football pants*
- Mouth guard
- Padded girdle*
- Padded performance shirt
- Practice jersey
- Shoulder pads*
- Socks
- Water bottle
- Wrist coach for plays (*if required*)
- Flags**

* Contact Equipment

** Non-Contact Equipment



BEAT THE HEAT

WITH THESE SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

As parents, it's up to us to make sure our children don't come home dehydrated and overheated.

Here are some tips to keep your kids safer when the temperatures rise:

Avoid peak sun hours

Schedule outdoor activities early in the morning before the sun reaches its peak. Bring kids inside for a rest during the day's hottest hours, usually between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Hydrate before, during, and after activity

To prevent dehydration, make sure your child drinks 16-24 ounces of fluid 10-15 minutes before activity begins and breaks for water during playtime.

PRO TIP:

If mornings are a bad time for scheduled activity, plan plenty of breaks from the sun throughout the day. For more hydration tips, see page 08.

HEAT SYNCOPE

Becoming lightheaded or fainting during exercise

Treatment: Find a shaded area, lay your child on the ground, and raise their legs. This helps blood get back to the heart.

HEAT EXHAUSTION

May feel hot, tired, weak, or dizzy while sweating profusely

Treatment: Remove your child from activity and put him or her in a shaded/cool area. Lay your child on the ground and raise their legs about 12 inches. Make sure you replenish lost fluids and use ice wrapped in towels to help cool down.

HEAT CRAMPS

Painful and localized cramps that are usually visible and make muscles feel hard.

Treatment: Rehydrate with water and sports drinks. Use light stretching and ice massages on the cramped muscle to relieve cramping.

Beat the heat with these items when out and about with your child:

- Hats
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Aloe
- Ice packs
- Towel (can be soaked with cool water)
- Water
- Cold compress
- Sports drinks

For more information about keeping your child safe in the heat, talk to your pediatrician.



PRO TIP:

On both sunny and cloudy days, apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or greater that protects against UVA and UVB rays. In addition to dressing for the weather, apply sunscreen 15-30 minutes before sun exposure and repeat. Reapply sunscreen every two hours.

MUST-HAVE FIRST-AID ITEMS

Being a parent means knowing how to turn tears from aches and pains into smiles. And with a vast majority of youth sports injuries, that can be accomplished with over-the-counter (OTC) remedies that are easy to stock.

Include the following in your youth sports first-aid kit:

- Bandages of assorted sizes
- Gauze pads in various sizes
- Athletic Tape
- Tweezers
- Elastic wraps
- Cardboard splints, pillows, or commercial splint
- Finger splints
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Isopropyl alcohol
- Instant ice packs
- Latex gloves
- Pen light
- Scissors
- Arm sling
- Wound-care spray
- CPR pocket mask



TREATING THE MOST COMMON INJURIES

Football is a physical sport. Players will come home with bumps and bruises once in a while, but most can be treated with a little ice, rest, and TLC.

Here are three of the most common injuries ...

NAME OF INJURY	DEFINITION	TREATMENT
Sprains	A stretch or tear of a ligament (tissue that joins the end of one bone to another), usually around a joint.	Use the R.I.C.E. method (see below).
Bruises	Small blood vessels below the skin break, allowing blood to leak into tissue around them.	Apply ice to you child's bruise to help start the healing process. After three days, rotate hot and cold twice a day for 15 minutes each. As the pain goes down, his or her range of motion will start to return.
Cuts/Scrapes	An injury that rubs or tears off skin but is not deep and may sometimes bleed. It's most commonly caused by accidents or falls.	Stop the bleeding with pressure from a towel. Ice the wound, then apply a sterile gauze pad and elevate the body part. If you can't stop the bleeding with pressure, it might need stitches. Call 9-1-1 or go to your local emergency room. For minor injuries, consult with your pediatrician.

Recover with R.I.C.E.

For most minor injuries, recovery comes in four steps:

REST: Reduce your child's activity and help him or her avoid using the injured area for at least 48 hours — or longer if your pediatrician advises. If your child is concerned about staying in shape while healing, ask about alternative activities.

ICE: Wrap an ice pack in a thin cloth and hold it on your child's injured area for 20 minutes at a time, once an hour, as needed. Never put ice directly on skin.

COMPRESSION: Ask your pediatrician about wraps that can help apply gentle pressure (squeezing) to your child's injured area. Never wrap any body part too tightly.

ELEVATION: If possible, raise your child's injured area above heart level to decrease swelling.



COACH CERTIFICATION

Putting the Player's Interest and Development First

Coach education is more than just a certification. It's equipping coaches to provide them with the tools they will need to make a positive impact on your athlete so they can have fun and succeed.

WHAT ARE YOUR COACHES CERTIFIED IN?

Health & Safety

Ensures coaches are given instruction on concussion awareness, injury prevention, hydration, and cardiac arrest procedures.

Abuse Prevention

Helps coaches identify signs of abuse, learn the reporting processes and ways to protect the well-being of the athlete.

Transformational Coaching

Nails down what it means to be a coach and how to coach more effectively.

Principles of Contact

For coaches that teach contact: Designed to teach techniques of blocking and defeating blocks, shoulder tackling, equipment fitting and different levels of contact.

Quality Coaching

Gives coaches an understanding of how the model can give a positive impact on their athletes during the season. Athletes at the youth level are way different than athletes at the high school level and need coaches who understand what their needs are to develop basic skills to progress in the football and other sports of their liking.

EDUCATION BEYOND CERTIFICATION

Coaches that are USA Football Certified have access to resources to help enhance your athlete's football journey.

Player Progression Guide

Skill progressions and drills for passing, running, receiving, kicking, punting and athletic foundations.

Contact Manual

Includes skill progressions and drills for blocking, defeating blocks, flag pulling and tackling.

Practice Plans

Pre-built practice plans to help coaches meet practice and contact guidelines.

Football Development Model Age-Based Coaching Videos

Teach coaches how to keep an athlete's age in mind as they work on developing new skills in physical development, tactical strategies, thinking, feeling and behaving.

Online Resources

Ongoing resources that include education videos, webinars, play diagramming and more.



WHAT TO ASK YOUR LEAGUE ABOUT CONCUSSIONS

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury, and you should feel comfort in knowing the people coaching your child can identify the signs and symptoms.

Make sure your league has sufficient answers to the following questions provided by Children's National Health System:

Does the league have a general policy in how it manages concussions?

Does the league have access to healthcare professionals with knowledge and training in sport-related concussions?

Are coaches required to take a concussion education and training course?

Who is responsible for the sideline concussion recognition and response test for athletes with suspected concussions during practice and games?

Do coaches have readily available tools like concussion signs and symptoms cards, clipboards, fact sheets, smartphone apps, etc, during practices and games to guide proper recognition and response of a suspected concussion?

Does the league provide concussion education for parents, and what is the policy for informing parents of a concussion? What is the policy for allowing a child to return back to the game?

Does it coincide with USA Football, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and state concussion laws, which stress that athletes only be allowed to return to play after being cleared by a qualified medical professional?

Does the league teach proper techniques and fundamentals? If a player demonstrates unsafe technique during a practice or game, do the coaches re-instruct them on the spot?

Are there limitations to the amount of contact in practices? How often does practice include live contact? Is that any different than past years?

How amenable is the league, team, and coach to accepting feedback from parents about their children's head safety?



5 COMMON MYTHS

about athletes who focus on a single sport:

Most college athletes specialize in one sport as a child. Eighty-eight percent of college athletes played more than one sport in high school.

The only way to build the skills necessary to play at the college level is to focus on one sport. Children who play multiple sports tend to be more physically developed than those who limit themselves to one sport.

Young athletes need to play year-round to stay in shape and avoid injury. Athletes who play just one sport are 70- 93 percent more likely to get hurt.



Kids who spend their time in one sport are more likely to stay active throughout their lives. Children who specialize in a single sport early in life are more likely to burn out and stop participating altogether.

The only way to truly love a sport is to start early and stick with it. Playing multiple sports statistically produces longer playing careers, better confidence, improved athletic development, and less chance of burnout.

A photograph of youth football players in red and white uniforms on a grassy field. One player in the foreground is in a three-point stance, ready for the play to start. Other players are visible in the background, also in similar stances. The scene is outdoors under a clear blue sky.

AGE-BASED LEARNING ON THE FIELD

Coaching is teaching, and like in the classroom, youth football coaches must stick to subjects that their players can first understand then put into action.

Right age. Right stage.

Every age group requires a different approach to training and development so young athletes can get the best and most appropriate training.

The Football Development Model on Stages of Development

USA Football helps coaches teach in an age-and-stage appropriate manner through the Football Development Model.

Included with coaches resources are videos and tools to help coaches connect and properly teach based on where the athlete is in their own development. Learn more at usafootball.com/certification.





©James Smith, Courtesy of Dallas Cowboys

10 PHRASES YOUR CHILD SHOULD HEAR OFTEN

Words have the power to encourage and motivate just as easily as they can hurt and discourage.

Your child will remember general tones, approaches, and phrases heard most often. Avoid the negative and foster healthy self-esteem, strength, and confidence in your child by picking the right words.

- 1 "I love you."** You may think it is going in one ear and out the other, but trust that this phrase will stay with your child.
- 2 "I am proud of you."** Look into your child's eyes and say it every day and before and after every game, win or lose.
- 3 "I believe in you."** Self-confidence can be a struggle for some children. Having your child know you believe in what he or she is doing no matter what is a great foundation.
- 4 "How was your day?"** Let your child know that you care about things other than sports.
- 5 "You can do this."** Encourage your child to never quit, to keep pursuing dreams, and to overcome challenges when things get tough.
- 6 "I forgive you."** Your child may say the wrong things during emotional times, like right after a loss. Put moments like that in the past and learn to forgive.
- 7 "You've got to forgive yourself."** Any frustrations your child shows are nothing compared to what is going on inside their head.
- 8 "I am listening."** Put down your phone, iPad, or TV remote and look your child in the eyes.
- 9 "What do you think?"** Start a conversation with your child, even if you may not agree with what is going on.
- 10 "Let's talk."** Don't give up on your child, even when it seems like you are being shut out. Let your child know you are always there.

4 EXPRESSIONS TO AVOID SAYING ONCE YOU LEAVE THE FIELD

The car ride home after a game or practice can be a magnet for emotionally charged comments that could later lead to regret.

After a disappointing loss or performance, silence is a valid option if you aren't sure what your child wants to hear.

Here are four things you should avoid with your child after a hard loss:



- 1 “If only you hadn’t ...”** Remember to give kids some credit. They know their performance wasn’t great and probably feel bad about it. Reliving it could just make things worse.
- 2 “We worked on this.”** Let the coaches coach, and instead focus on giving your child the support he or she needs instead of discussing missed opportunities on the field.
- 3 “Why didn’t the coach put you in?”** Avoid asking why your child’s playing time dwindled or why they lost a starting spot. It will only demoralize and discourage— and maybe even plant ideas that weren’t there to begin with.
- 4 “I’ve seen you play harder than that.”** Effort and performance are unrelated, especially at younger levels. Avoid making kids feel like they have to please you while out on the field. Athletes who aren’t trying their best already know.

Visit www.usafootball.com/parent for more tips on communicating with your player.

7 WAYS TO BUILD MENTAL TOUGHNESS IN YOUR CHILD



Athletes can practice and prepare to get their bodies in the best shape for a game, but getting prepared mentally is a different thing. Fear of failure is real and affects how athletes perform, regardless of their age.

- 1 Look to the future.** Everyone loses once in a while, but that doesn't make it easy. Help your child put that last play behind them and focus on the next opportunity.
- 2 Focus on the positive.** Even after near-perfect performances, it's natural for players to dwell on one or two failures. Help your child focus on successes and how to learn from failures in order to overcome them.
- 3 Don't punish every mistake.** Not every misstep needs to be addressed. Don't step in until mistakes become a habit that needs to be corrected.
- 4 Don't show disappointment.** Your job as a parent is to help your child build confidence, so encourage, support, and just be there.
- 5 Let them own it.** When young athletes can accept that they make mistakes, that is when progression starts.
- 6 Be their rock.** Emotions ride high during games, and coaches and players sometimes overreact to what is going on. Your job is to show your child how to handle both success and failure in a mature fashion.
- 7 Repeat after me.** In the end, belief has to come from within. Create a mantra for your child to say over and over when times get tough. "Let's do it," "I believe," and "I got this," are all powerful starting points.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD'S COACH

Your role as a parent of an athlete is to support, encourage, volunteer and guide them through the ups and downs of every season.

While it's the coach's job to instruct, you must become comfortable with the process and be aware of what your child is doing.

What are your thoughts on playing time? Know up front whether your coach's main focus is winning or development. At the younger levels, the final score should not matter. As athletes advance, a coach's job might be tied to the team's performance.

Do you have first-aid training? Don't assume that coaches can do anything more than apply a bandage. Insist that someone on staff is present at all games and practices, knows CPR and can identify both heat illness and sudden cardiac arrest.

What is your emergency action plan? If an emergency does occur, are you prepared to react? Is there proper cellphone coverage at all practice and game sites? Are there automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) and cooling tubs available nearby?

How can I help?

This answer might surprise you. While every league and school welcomes volunteers to do the work behind the scenes, the coach's No. 1 request might be, "Please get your child to practice and games on time."

Do you have a child on the team?

Don't jump to conclusions. If the coach says, "yes," seek assurances that favoritism will not be an ongoing problem throughout the season.

Original content provided by:
Janis Meredith, Author, Sports Parenting Survival Guide



SPORTS = INCREASED HAPPINESS

Kids who play sports show higher self-esteem, are less depressed and more satisfied with their lives.

TEACHES TEAMWORK

Working and playing as a team, it's one of the best lessons a young athlete can learn while participating in a sport. From understanding how actions can affect teammates to working with others, sports teach young athletes unparalleled life lessons in teamwork.

THE VALUE OF

SPO

The value of sports goes far beyond the wins, losses, plays and games. In fact, the more children start participating in sports, the more likely they are to stay active as they grow older. And that is just the start to all of the benefits.

AFFECTS FUTURE CAREER SUCCESS

The benefits of youth sports can extend into the workplace. A survey of 400 female executives found 94 percent played a sport and 61 percent had contributed the lessons they learned to help them succeed in their career.

INSTILLS TIME-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Adding extracurricular activities, such as sports, can teach your child the importance of time management and prioritization of commitments. Parents can help their children prioritize their commitments, schoolwork and chores by creating a plan to help them handle their responsibilities while leaving enough time for sports.

FOSTERS PERSEVERANCE

Mistakes. Lost games. Errors. Every athlete will have a horrible game. It's how they overcome and fix the mistakes that matters the most. Participating in a sport teaches young athletes a valuable lesson of overcoming adversity and persevering when the odds seem against them.

DEVELOP AND IMPROVE COGNITIVE SKILLS

Organized sports help children develop and improve cognitive skills and is associated with improved academic achievement, attitude, concentration and behavior.

SPORTS

ENCOURAGES GOAL SETTING

From improving a particular technique or skill to mastering a position, participating in sports plays a huge role in how children learn the aspects of goal setting and achieving personal success.

NURTURES A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

The most obvious benefit of participating in sports at a young age is it teaches the importance of fitness. Staying active starts a life-long habit of living a healthy lifestyle.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE THROUGH OPPORTUNITY

Confidence and opportunity are two of the most important things that you and youth football coaches can give players.

For some, things come easy, and their personalities exude confidence. Others struggle to believe in themselves enough to give their best effort.

Confidence is something you can instill and improve by exhibiting great energy, providing positive feedback, and showing your child you know how hard they are working.



4 PHRASES THAT INSTILL CONFIDENCE

As your child leaves and prepares to join their teammates, choose your words wisely as they will carry those words with them onto the field.

Original content provided by:
Craig Sigl, Author, MentalToughnessTrainer.com

SHOULD SAY ...

- "You can do it."*
- "We're rooting for you."*
- "You are awesome."*
- "You've done it before.
You can do it again."*

DON'T SAY ...

- "Woah, those guys look big."*
- "Don't screw up."*
- "It can't be as bad as last time."*
- "Make me proud."*

COACHING EDUCATION

/ VALUES

31

The foundation of a positive experience for your child

Many youth sports coaches are volunteers, and only five to 10 percent of these coaches will receive relevant training related to the sport they are coaching. The value of coaching education goes way beyond the wins and losses.

Longer engagement in sports

Sports can play a positive role in your child's life, and playing for a trained coach lessens the chance of dropout. Athletes who play for untrained coaches drop out at a rate of 26 percent compared to five percent of those who play for a trained coach.

Chance of a positive experience

As a parent, a fun experience should be the No. 1 goal for your child. Ultimately, it is your child's coach who can make or break the desire to keep playing. Studies show that coaches who have received proper coaching education are better at establishing a fun-filled and stress-free environment that keeps children engaged.

Reduce injuries on the field

Coaches with proper coaching education and development teach age-appropriate fundamentals, techniques and drills properly, effectively reducing the risk of injury.

We wouldn't send our children to schools with teachers who haven't received proper training, and the same should go for coaches.

WANT TO COACH?

Coaching can be a lot of fun, and we've worked with experts to build wonderful resources through our certification to help you get started. Get certified and access them today at usafootball.com/certification.



THE POWER OF A STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM

Running a successful football program can be challenging, especially when costs surpass what registration fees and budgets can handle. Fundraising is a key component of creating a solid foundation for your program.

USA Football offers organizations the opportunity to gain additional funds through fundraising partners.



FUNDRAISING CAN:

- 1 ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF YOUR PROGRAM
- 2 SAFEGUARD YOUR BUDGET
- 3 MAKE THE GAME BETTER AND SAFER FOR PLAYERS

FUNDRAISING PARTNERS

Everyone needs help with fundraising, and our partners offer a wide variety of options to best suit your program's needs.

FlipGive

FlipGive is a unique fundraising tool that allows you and your supporters to shop online with popular brands and raise money for your team, club, school or cause. Fundraisers earn up to 50% back when they and their friends shop online with popular brands like Nike, Under Armour, Starbucks, ALDO and many more! It's fast. It's easy. It's 100% free.

To start a fundraising campaign, visit

usafootball.flipgive.com.

Learn more about how you can receive the power of a strong support system. Visit www.usafootball.com/fundraising and see what options are right for you.



THE BENEFITS OF FREE PLAY

Free play teaches children about leadership and problem solving that an organized, coach-led team may not allow.

Children who grow up on the playground and compete for the fun of it have an advantage because they adapt to different roles depending on whom they play with.

Here are six skills children can learn from free play:

- 1 Physical skills.** Simple games such as tag, follow the leader, and ping-pong address important skills including speed, reaction time, hand-eye coordination, balance, and how to fall down.
- 2 Footwork.** The same crossovers, lead steps, and backpedals players use in football are there in basketball, soccer, tennis, lacrosse, dodgeball, and dozens of other sports.
- 3 Mental balance.** If you play enough games around the house or at the park, you are going to lose a few. Dealing with disappointment is a key lesson for children.
- 4 Courage.** It's hard competing against older, more talented kids. By stretching the boundaries of comfort, children go beyond what they may think is possible.
- 5 Visualization.** Whether riding a bike, bearing down on a skateboard, or trying not to get tackled, it's about keeping your head up and watching the angles.
- 6 Decision making.** With no adults in charge on the field, kids are pretty good at finding common ground. After all, everyone wants to get back to the game.

Riddell[®]
PROTECT AND PERFORM



**Leaders in Innovation.
Leaders in Head Protection.
Leaders in Football.**

RIDDELL.COM



USA FOOTBALL THANKS OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT TO HELP US CREATE A BETTER, SAFER GAME.



Riddell





usafootball.com