

Top 10 Rules of Parental Behavior at their Kids' Games

The Sports Edge/WFAN 660 AM Sports Radio New York
(This is adapted from Rick Wolff's show, which originally on November 21st, 2004)

1. **Parents should be seen, but not heard too often.** It's fine and good to go and watch your child play. But as a parent, you should try to blend in with the woodwork. Don't draw attention to yourself -the games are all about YOUR child, NOT about YOU. As such, parents (not children) should be SEEN....but not HEARD.
2. **If you have to say something, it should only be positive praise.** If you absolutely feel compelled to cheer, make sure your comments are only positive! And make your comments generic in tone. That is, "Way to go guys" or "Great job girls" is much more effective than highlighting just one kid. Root for the TEAM - not just one individual kid.
3. **Never criticize your kid....and never, ever criticize somebody else's kid!** Coaching is the Coach's job - - NOT yours.
4. **Please do not do a play-by-play of the game.** This applies mostly to youth coaches who try and dictate every play of the game while it's happening...."Okay, Sam, dribble the ball up....now pass it over to Joe....Joe, pass the ball to Mike....Mike, take the shot." Coach, at practice....but during the game, let the kids figure it out! Otherwise, they'll become too dependent on you for constant instruction. Even worse, they'll feel that they can't be spontaneous during the game, less you get angry with them and bench them. PS - when you played sports as a kid, did anyone dictate to you what to do?
5. **If you can't control your mouth, then don't stand with the other parents....**stay way far away from the others, and stand off by yourself.... If you honestly feel that you might get too emotionally involved in your kid's game, then stand off by yourself during the action. You can come back and rejoin the sane parents during half-time, but there's nothing wrong with going away from the crowd and being alone with your thoughts.
6. **Refs are not there to be abused in any way.** Without the refs, umps, or officials, the game quickly is transformed from a real game into just being a scrimmage. The vast majority of sports parents DO NOT know where to draw the line when it comes to questioning a ref's call. Don't say anything to the ref. And don't say anything about their calls. Let the coach do that. You, as a sideline parent, just be quiet.
7. **It's okay to applaud a nice play by an opposing player....**we're trying to teach our kids to be good sports, and to respect their opponents. So if one of the opposing players makes a great play, applaud it! And you should tell your child that it's okay for their opponents to be talented as well.
8. **Understand that you are a role model for the kids** - they will follow your behavior. ALWAYS remember that your son or daughter is watching YOU to learn how they should behave.
9. **If a coach or a ref tells you to calm down, please take that caution seriously!** You won't get and do not deserve a second chance. If you can't calm down, you should be banned from the game so you don't ruin it for all the kids.
10. **Try to give your kid a smile....**when your kid looks over to the sideline and, for a brief moment, sees your face, please make sure you have a smile on it....or at least, a look of quiet pride. Kids DO look to parents for approval, and if you look like you're having a good time, then he or she will feel the same way.

Source: Institute for International Sport, Center for Sports Parenting www.sportsparenting.org

Resource: *Just Let the Kids Play* by Bob Bigelow