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**ABSTRACT**  
 This booklet gives parents suggestions for helping their children's motor development by careful selection of physical activities and sports from birth through the teen years. In each of three sections, comprising birth to five years, six to twelve years, and the teen years, brief introductory passages discuss skill development and give specific advice on parent behavior and attitudes. The sections contain an evaluation of children's readiness for competition, a physical activity readiness guide, and frequently asked questions about motor skill development and physical fitness at that age level. Problems resulting from sex stereotyping and program and equipment safety factors are considered in a separate section. Arguments for and against competitive sports for children are presented. A youth sports evaluation guide presents a bill of rights for young athletes with guiding questions for parents. Among the concepts advocated are the right of children to participate in sports at a level that corresponds to the individual child's maturity and ability, the right to qualified leadership, and the right to share in leadership and decision making. (76)

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**Children and Youth  
In Action:**  
*Physical Activities and Sports*

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# Foreword

Helping children and youth develop the habits and attitudes necessary for maintaining a condition of physical fitness is a major task in our society today.

Beginning at birth and continuing throughout the teen years, regular opportunities for vigorous physical activity and for learning and practicing physical skills can contribute to an individual's total development—physical, social, mental. For example, appropriate physical activities and sports can help build the strength and stamina necessary for a healthy life. They can also help build self-confidence in physical abilities so that children and youth can learn to enjoy participating in many recreational sports activities now and later as an adult.

Each child—girl or boy, healthy or physically handicapped—can benefit from regular participation. This book gives parents suggestions for helping their children develop by the careful selection of physical activities and sports throughout the growing years—from birth through the teen years.

This project is a joint effort of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, an organization of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services.



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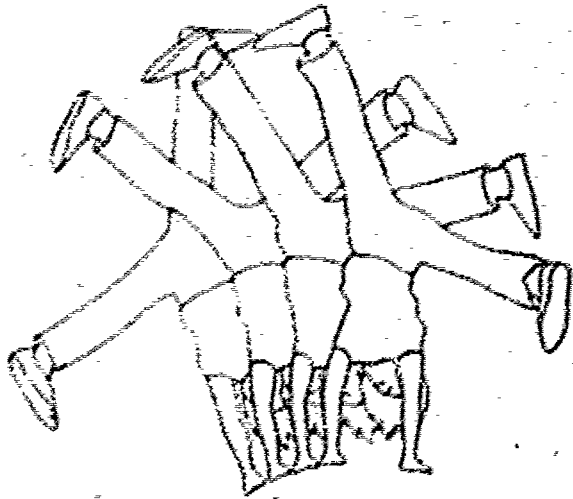
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## Introduction



- "Don't run in the house!"
- "Don't jump on the furniture!"
- "Don't bounce that ball in the living room!"
- "Don't wiggle in church!"

Long before children enter school, they learn they can get along better with adults if they're *not too active*. Although you must help your children understand the need for certain restrictions, they need opportunities to do many active things every day of their growing years. Children need *physical activity* for total development.

By mastering a variety of motor

skills, children gain *self-confidence* that often carries over to other learning situations. Active play in games and sports can help children's *social development*: as they learn how to cooperate with others and share in decision-making. Participating in physical activities gives children a way to express their feelings without words. Daily vigorous physical activity helps to develop the muscular strength and heart function necessary for *physical fitness*. Learning motor skills in childhood leads to more opportunities to enjoy recreation later in life.



## WHAT IS PHYSICAL FITNESS?

Physical fitness is "the ability to carry out daily tasks with vigor and alertness, without undue fatigue, and with ample energy to enjoy leisure-time pursuits and to meet unusual situations and unforeseen emergencies." According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, "The evidence is mounting that physically fit persons live longer, perform better and participate more fully in life than those who are not fit. Regular, vigorous exercise is essential to vibrant good health, and it enhances the capacity for enjoying life."

Since physical fitness is a lifelong concern that should begin in infancy, it is important that children develop a positive attitude toward physical activity. Parents can help by setting an example of physical fitness themselves and by encouraging the whole family to participate together in sports and other activities.

## WHAT ARE MOTOR SKILLS?

Motor skills, as used in this booklet, are the skills children develop when they use their bodies

to accomplish goals or perform tasks. Some examples of motor skills are climbing, jumping, throwing a ball, riding a bicycle or just running for the joy of it.

Because physical activities—especially games and sports—are a natural part of a child's play, many parents believe that motor skill development will take care of itself. Actually, without help and encouragement, many children fall behind and never catch up in some skills. Some children begin to "drop out" of certain kinds of physical activity and games as early as age 6. A 12-year-old who says "I can't do that" or "I don't want to play" may have stopped trying even before entering school.

## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

This booklet suggests some of the things you can do to help your children enjoy participating in physical activity for both recreation and fitness. Keep in mind that the interest you show, as well as the amount of time you spend with your children, is important. If you are willing to give up an hour of TV to join your children in active play after dinner, they will see that you are genuinely interested in

their physical activity. You also may be pleasantly surprised at the fun you have.

It is important to help *all* children, including those with handicaps, to participate in physical activities that are within their capabilities. "The need for motor ac-

tivity that we recognize for normal children is at least as strong—if not stronger—in the severely handicapped child." On page 49, you will find a list of resources that can provide special help in modifying activities for a handicapped child.





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## PART I:

# Growing Up With Physical Activity

### BIRTH TO FIVE YEARS

#### What Are Young Children Like?

Physical activity comes naturally to young children. As infants, they depend on movements to satisfy basic needs. They thrash about with their arms and legs, grasp what comes within their reach and push against things that stand in their way. These actions help children relate to the world around them and help them develop the controlled, purposeful skills they will need later on.

As children grow, they continue to use physical activity to learn about their world and themselves. In physical play, they find out how things work. They discover their own abilities and limitations. Young children often use their new body skills to "talk" to their world. Banging a cup may mean "More, please." Pushing something away may mean "No!" Jumping and dancing about may mean "Look at me! I'm happy!"

#### A Child's Motor Skills Develop in a Sequence

Almost every task children do before age 6 requires mastering a new motor skill. Drinking from a cup, throwing a ball, going down stairs—all are challenges. Some skills are easier to learn than others. The order in which skills are learned is called a developmental sequence. For instance, children first learn to walk, then to run, jump and hop—in that order. There is a developmental sequence in learning a single skill, too. As children practice a particular skill, such as hopping, they use their bodies more effectively each time and reach a higher level of development in that skill.

Children progress through motor development sequences at their own rate. Children of the same age may be at different developmental levels because of differences in motor ability and in the amount of time they have practiced the skill.

You need not worry about your child's rate of motor development unless it seems unusually slow. The important thing is that each child shows continued progress.

Children who are mentally or physically handicapped, however, may take quite a long time to learn some skills. With patience and encouragement by family and friends, these children also can make progress.

You will find that physical education teachers and physical therapists will usually be glad to discuss your child's motor development with you. Page 49 of this booklet lists several books that will help you learn more about specific motor development sequences.

### Skill Development Takes Practice

Because children under 6 are just starting to develop their motor skills, they need lots of practice. They should be encouraged to do things like throw, catch, run, skip, leap, jump and roll. They also need to learn how to stop without falling to the floor or the ground. Fortunately, most young children think of such activities as fun and enjoy practicing these skills.

You should try to understand the way children practice motor skills. They may work at one task, switch to another and then return to the first task. By returning to a task, they get in a lot more practice than you may think. Only

through a great deal of practice will they achieve the excitement and self-confidence they show when they do. "No Mom, look at me!"

### Should You Worry About Your Child's Physical Fitness?

Physical fitness and motor skill development go hand in hand when children are very young. To perform daily tasks such as reaching, crawling, walking, running or climbing, children need strength, flexibility and balance. As long as you encourage vigorous activity that calls for use of every part of a child's body, formal exercises are usually not necessary. Because 3 to 6-year-olds often lack arm strength, they need opportunities to use their arms for climbing and hanging. Make sure that your infant or toddler has daily active play under the supervision of an adult.

### Things You Can Do to Help Your Child Develop Motor Skills:

- *Find a place for activity.* Provide a safe area and plenty of time each day for your child to run, hop, crawl, hang, throw, catch, jump and engage in other large muscle activity. Also set aside an area where the child can practice small movements, such as cutting out things, drawing or hammering. In the home, arrange part of the child's room, a spare room or

space in the attic or basement as a place for these activities, and clear out all breakable or dangerous objects. These places may have to be supervised. Outdoors, your child can be physically active in the backyard, on the sidewalk or in the park. A garage door without windows can be used as a back board for throwing a ball and your driveway can be used for dribbling, kicking or bouncing a ball. A tree with a sturdy rope and a tire attached will encourage a child to climb, hang and swing. If your child goes to a day care center, preschool or community recreation program, make sure that the children have plenty of time and space for both small and large muscle activities.

Check all your child's play areas for safety. Young children lack motor control. They often run into things and break them. For your child's safety and your own peace of mind, find places where your child can practice motor skills without danger of accidents.

- *Provide simple, interesting play things that encourage physical activity.* Place a low, heavy table or a footstool in the room where your infant or toddler plays. Children will try to stand and walk when they can pull themselves up on furniture that is close at hand. In the play area in your home, provide things to throw or kick—balloons, rolled-up socks, or pieces of newspaper crunched into a ball.

These "toys" don't cost much, won't make noise or break things and youngsters enjoy practicing motor skills with them. Outside, look for safe "jumping-down" places (curbs, low benches, tree stumps or a bottom step), "climbing-up" places (a ladder, a jungle gym in the park, a tree rope with knots or your legs), and "hanging upside-down" places: iron railings, low tree limb, jungle gym or your arms! Look for equipment that encourages your child to be active.

While swings, merry-go-rounds and see-saws do not provide much vigorous activity, they can help develop balance skills. Also, let your child ride on your shoulders while you walk about, or get down off your hands and knees and invite the child to play "horsey" on your back. These activities are fun for children and help develop balance too.

If you send your child to a community recreation program, make sure that balls of different sizes, weights and textures are available, as well as beanbags, paddles, hoops and large equipment for climbing, swinging and hanging. To encourage skill development, young girls and boys must have an opportunity to practice many skills by using different kinds of play equipment.

- *Let your child select the activities to practice.* As much as you can, let your child decide whether



to throw a ball, ride a bike, climb a jungle gym, or run and jump. Don't be too quick to show how you would do it. Try to find out what motivates your child to practice. If, over a period of time, you notice that your child passes up certain activities that are helpful in skill development, suggest that the child try them.

- *Keep the tasks simple but challenging.* Rather than handing a toy to your infant, place it on the floor just out of reach. Children learn to crawl more easily when they have to reach for something. Encourage your toddler to climb up on a chair or footstool, instead of waiting to be lifted. (Stand by, of course, to provide help and assure the child's safety.) As your child becomes more successful, make each task a little more difficult. For example, if the child can kick a large ball easily, find a smaller ball to kick. If the child can throw a ball a short distance, suggest that the ball be thrown harder, farther or higher. For your children, just practicing a skill is a game. They may say, "Let's play kicking." They don't need complicated games and lack the skills to play them.

- *Help your child be successful.* When something doesn't work right away, your child won't regard it as a failure unless you do. Only by trying over and over will motor skills develop. Because your child wants to please you,

your attitude is extremely important. When children are encouraged by adults, they enjoy learning a skill and success usually follows.

### What About Competition?

Because of the developmental characteristics of children under age 6, it is of doubtful value to place them in competitive situations. In competition, someone always loses. Young children may think of losing as failure, and this can work against your efforts to help them gain enough confidence to try new and different things. If your children have a chance to experience a broad range of physical activities throughout their first five years, the transition to competitive situations should be smoother later on.

- *A word of caution:* If you believe that a child needs to learn to cope with competition, you may be concerned that your child is not developing skills or becoming "competitive" fast enough. Keep in mind that when children are ready for competition, they can become involved in good competitive programs—on their own terms and at a level that will foster further development—not hinder it. Read Part III, Youth Sports, page 37, for a discussion of adult-organized competition.

# Physical Activity Readiness Guide

## Birth to Five Years

Age

If Children:

They May be Ready for:

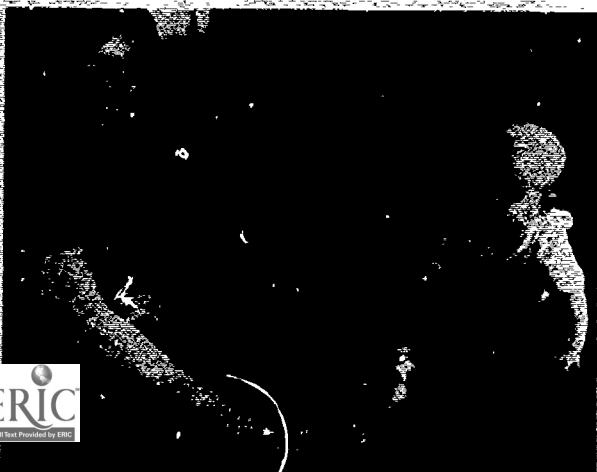
Birth  
to  
2 years

—are mastering basic life skills at home of walking, climbing stairs, feeding self, crawling after objects, etc.

—encouragement to try these skills in different situations. For example, outside of the home.

—help in exploring many different ways to use the body. For example:

- following a rolling ball (you roll it, child runs or crawls after it, picks it up with hands)
- balancing on your shoulders (child sits with legs around neck/holds your hands)
- swinging on your leg or from your hands
- hanging from your hands, your arms or a bar
- climbing a ladder
- pushing and pulling against resistance (pushing/pulling a person standing still; pushing a wheelbarrow or cart filled with dirt; pulling a sled through snow)
- crawling through shallow water in a tub or plastic pool



Age

If Children

They May be Ready for:

2 years  
to  
5 years

—use play to practice their physical skills

—enjoy attempting new motor tasks

—seek praise from adults for their physical accomplishments

—*encouragement* to experiment freely with a wide variety of skills. For example:

- foot travel skills such as running, jumping, hopping, skipping
- ball skills such as kicking, throwing, hitting, catching both large and small balls
- basic swimming and skating skills
- creative or expressive movement (dancing to music, hand clapping, beating of a drum)
- climbing and hanging skills
- pedalling go-carts or tricycles
- propelling self on scooter or wagon
- balancing on moving objects (roller skates/ice skates, scooter, bike, see-saw, a pulled sled, piggy back on adult shoulders)

—*opportunity* to “play with” or practice all skills in many different situations. For example:

- alone and with other children
- on many different surfaces (carpet, pavement, grass, sand)
- indoors, outdoors
- in small spaces/in large spaces
- at home and at preschool



## Questions Often Asked About Children From Birth to Five Years:



*My child seems to be left handed. Should I do anything to change that?*

Young children are still developing hand dominance. Encourage your child to use both hands when trying new skills as well as practicing old ones. Changing a child's natural movement pattern may slow down the development of other physical skills.

*My 4-year-old has eye-hand coordination problems. What can I do to help?*

Eye-hand coordination is still developing in 4-year-old children. You can do some things that will help the coordination develop normally but, unless the child is still having trouble in a few years, try not to regard it as a "problem." Roll small balls to your child and gently throw large, lightweight balls. A ball suspended from a height (ceiling)

will be easier to hit than one that is thrown.

*My 5-year-old child is very overweight. What should I do?*

If your child is already overweight, you should check with your doctor or the local health clinic for advice on a combination diet and exercise program.

*Is childhood obesity something to really worry about? Won't children outgrow it?*

"The problem of childhood obesity is an extremely serious one . . . The old belief that children outgrow their baby fat is widely believed but just is not true . . . It is extremely important that parents provide ample opportunity for activity in infancy and childhood—indeed everyone should have a daily program of activity."



## THE YEARS FROM SIX TO TWELVE

### What are Children from Six to Twelve Like?

Children of the same age may differ a good deal in motor development. A child in the 6- to 12-age group may be a lot bigger than others the same age but may not necessarily be more advanced in motor skills. Some 6-year-olds are still like younger children.

Children from 6 to 12 vary in physiological development, too—in such things as bone growth, muscular strength and signs of puberty. A 10-year-old may be equal to a 12-year-old in physiological development. As a parent, it's important that you understand this because physiological growth can make a big difference in your child's ability to master particular activities at different stages in childhood. Youngsters who become baseball or football stars are often more advanced physiologically than other children their own age.

Most youngsters 6 to 12 are loaded with energy. Although some children begin to seek the

challenge of organized sports at this time, many youngsters in this age group will still like to throw, catch, run and jump at times—just for the fun of it!

### Six to Twelve Is a Good Time to Learn New Skills

During the years from 6 to 12, physical activity remains essential to a child's growth and fitness. Compared to other periods in a child's life, the years from 6 to 12 are rather slow years in physical growth. Since changes in body proportions during this period are not dramatic, this is a good time for a child to learn new skills and become quite skillful in such activities as swimming, gymnastics, dance and games.

### How They Learn to Play With Others

While children entering the 6- to 12 age group like to play with others, they tend to play side by side, rather than together. They'll say, "Me first. . . then you," rather than "Let's both do this."

When 6- or 7-year-olds say they want to play basketball, they usually mean they want to bounce or shoot a basketball by themselves or with one other child, rather than play the game as members of a team.

Until youngsters this age make the transition from "me" to "we," they often find it difficult to play a game that calls for every one working toward the same goal. Children in this age group frequently argue with their friends when at play. They haven't yet learned the skills of compromise and team play. Anticipate these arguments in children 6 to 12 and

try not to interfere in what is part of their learning process.

### Let Them Make Up Their Own Rules

Most sports were designed by adults for adults. Don't expect a child from 6 to 12 to play a team game the way grownups would play it. Children often change the rules to suit themselves. They may arrange a ball game, for example, so that each player gets more chances to hit the ball. Let children this age bend the rules, if they want to. They'll enjoy the game more and learn to play it better if there are fewer players



6-28  
Copyright © 1978  
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"We made it up ourselves. You don't need nine guys on a team, or grownups, or uniforms. . . . It's like baseball, only better!"

*The Family Circus* by Bill Keane reprinted courtesy *The Register and Tribune Syndicate*

and more times at bat for all. And they'll find it easier to play a game if the playing field is not too long. If they have lighter weight bats, lower baskets and other equipment suitable to their age and size.

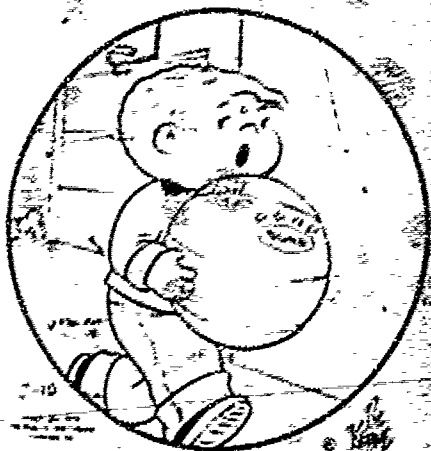
### **Don't Expect Them to Master a Game Right Away**

Playing a team game calls for social and mental skills a growing child is just starting to develop. Children 6 to 12 are only beginning to understand the cooperative spirit of team play. Many youngsters haven't learned to accept mistakes that happen in their own play or in the play of others.

Often, a child this age lacks the ability to make quick decisions during play and dribbles the ball toward the wrong goal or throws the ball to the wrong team. When this happens, someone may laugh and this can be a blow to the child's self-confidence. At a time like this, the youngster will need your understanding and encouragement.

### **Help Your Child Select Activities That Build Fitness**

Growing children develop new interests. They begin to read books, go to the movies and spend more time watching television. Although these activities are important in their overall development, they may take children away from the daily physical activity they need.



"I don't think I can play basketball till I grow up closer to the basket."

*The Family Circus by Bil Keane registered  
courtesy The Register and Tribune Syndicate*

Try to balance these new interests by encouraging daily activities that build fitness. Offer to join in play with your child. Keep an eye on the child's activities. Try to steer the youngster towards play that develops motor skills. Preteen play should help build a child's strength, endurance, agility, speed and flexibility. The child's activities should develop all-around physical fitness, rather than focus on a single goal, such as bodybuilding for strength.

### **Ways to Help Your Six- to Twelve-Year-Old Learn Physical Skills**

- *Encourage your child to practice basic skills. Urge the child to continue to practice running, jumping, skipping, throwing, catching, sliding and the like.*



Practicing combinations of these skills is the first step toward developing the sports skills that may be desired later on.

- *Provide one tip or suggestion at a time.* Whether you're helping your child learn to swim, ride a bike or throw a football, offer just one suggestion at a time. Children become confused if you offer too many ideas for improvement all at once. Say, "Kick under the ball," and when the youngster has practiced that, go on to your next suggestion.

- *Urge the child to practice skills for short periods each day.* Practice sessions of 20 to 45 minutes daily are better than long sessions once or twice a week. When the child acts tired or skills get worse, end the practice session and switch to another activity that's easier and more fun.

- *Encourage your child!* A child who feels successful in learning new skills will want to learn more. When your child does well, offer praise in specific terms. Say, "Good! You used smaller steps to change direction" or "Fine! You bent your knees that time and made a soft landing." If the child is not successful, avoid quick criticism. Instead, offer a specific suggestion for improvement and encourage their efforts.

- *Prepare your child for the unexpected in games.* While playing a game, unpredictable things can happen and skills have to be

called into play quickly and used accurately and effectively. In practice sessions with your child, try to prepare the youngster for the kinds of things that can suddenly occur during a game. When practicing baseball, for example, start by throwing easy fly balls or grounders right to the child. Then gradually make things more difficult by throwing the ball short of the child, over the child's head or to the side. To catch the ball, your youngster will have to run forward, backward and to the sides. Gradually make the practice harder so the child can learn to catch a crazily bouncing grounder, pivot and throw it accurately to the teammate on first base.

No matter what game, your child needs practice in all game situations you can think of. Begin with easy ones and then make them more complicated. Add a teammate, then an opponent so your child gets practice in playing in relation to other players, guessing where the ball will be, getting in position to handle it and moving quickly to assist a teammate.

- *Avoid comparisons with others.* Encourage a child in this age group to concentrate on self-improvement rather than on keeping up with others. Tell the child, "You caught the ball every time today, didn't you?" or "Did you think you did better today?" When children begin to compare their own skills at play with the

skills of others, they're usually ready to deal with competition and to play in competitive games. Let them reach that point in their own good time.

• *Respect your child's choice of activities.* Allow your child to try a variety of sports and activities and choose a favorite, even if it's not one that you would choose for yourself. Children should be encouraged to participate regularly in physical activities, and that's more likely to happen when they're having fun. For some children, studying dance can be more interesting than playing in an organized game. For others, gymnastics or figure-skating can be more challenging than a team sport. An informal game of stick ball with friends at a nearby playground may be more enjoyable to a child. Jogging or bicycling with family and friends can be a source of pleasure for all.

• *Don't aim too high.* Be careful about steering your child toward a particular sport in the hope that it will lead to a university scholarship or a professional career in sports. You may both end up disappointed. Only a few exceptional athletes emerge from early, specialized training. Children under 12 seldom enjoy the intense practice needed to train for a sports career. In fact, specializing too early may discourage children and cause them to drop out of all physical activities as they enter their teen years.

• *Take an interest in the physical education program at your child's school.* Take time to visit the school, observe the physical education program and talk to the staff in charge. Does your child have at least a half-hour of daily instruction and practice in basic motor skills? Is at least half of the child's physical education period spent in vigorous, continuous activity? Is the school's overall physical education program well organized and effective? If not, talk to the principal. Call the matter to the attention of your PTA. Play an active role in getting the school to improve its program.

### What About Competition?

As children grow, some show interest in competition at an early age and some do not. Your 7-year-old may be more "competitive" than your 12-year-old. Much depends on whether a child feels ready for competition and enjoys it.

Many children who really do not enjoy competitive games or sports participate in them because of the urging of parents and teachers. Adults can turn practices that are fun into contests. When you say, "You win," "You lose" or "Your little sister is beating you," you may be putting your child into the kind of competition the child may not be ready for. At school, when a teacher arranges a competitive game, children may feel compelled

to compete although their skills are not yet fully developed or ready to be tested.

Observe your child's response to competitive situations. Does the child handle the stress of competition well? Has the child learned how to lose a game without losing self-confidence? Remember that children must develop an ability to handle stress in competition, and the rate of mastering this ability varies in different children.

In a competitive game, players often try to catch an opponent off guard so that he or she will make a mistake. If your child's skills are not fully developed, being made to make a mistake or miss is not

much fun. Too much competition too soon can slow down a child's progress in skill development. As a result, by age 10 or 11, the child may want to avoid competitive sports and may drop out of all play activity.

The child may offer excuses such as, "That game's no fun" or "They never give me a chance at bat." But the real reason may be a sense of failure. When children want to drop out of games, you can help keep their interest alive by suggesting other non-competitive activities that they can undertake until their self-confidence is returned.



# Physical Activity Readiness Guide

## Six to Twelve Years

Age

If Children:

They May be Ready for:

6 years  
to  
9 years

—give indication that they want to become skillful

—*encouragement* to improve all skills through self-testing challenges:

—are willing and able to practice one thing for longer periods of time—but do not enjoy adult-organized “drills”

- How far/how high can you jump?
- How high can you throw? How high can you kick the ball?
- Can you catch the ball when it is farther from you—when you have to reach for it?
- Did you balance longer today than yesterday?
- Can you swim a little farther today?



—*encouragement* to experiment with skills in a non-competitive setting:

- gymnastics, team game skills, individual sports skills, etc.
- longer periods of non-competitive swimming, creative dancing

—*sensitive, qualified instruction* in the basic skills of games, dance, gymnastics and aquatics.

6 years  
to  
9 years

—have begun to master some of the basic skills of a particular activity and are socially ready to work cooperatively in a group

—*low-key competition* in which they can test their skills.

Age

If Children:

They May be Ready for:

9 years to 12 years —are confident about the physical skills they have and are comfortable learning new ones

—wish to test themselves against others

—ask to join agency or school sponsored teams

—are quite skillful and are willing to practice

—*encouragement* to participate in more intensive skill instruction and practice of:

- specific sport, aquatic or gymnastic skills.
- combinations of skills as they may occur in a game (dribble, pass, run, catch, shoot)
- more formal dance forms, such as ballet or modern dance techniques
- permission to participate in low-key competition in sports of their choice. (Parents should evaluate each program in terms of the safety and well-being of the children involved.)

But—If Children:

They May be Ready for:

9 years to 12 years —are behind in skill development or feel inferior because they think they are.

—give indications that they do not like sports or other kinds of physical activity

—*encouragement* and help with their skills in a non-stressful situation.

—*encouragement* and help in finding some form of physical activity they enjoy and can be successful at.

—*assurance* that they can improve their skills with patient practice.

—*a chance to learn the basic skills* of running, jumping, throwing, catching, kicking, changing direction . . . without feeling embarrassed or without being pressured to put these skills into a game form or to compete against others until they are ready.

## Questions Often Asked About Children from Six to Twelve Years

*Why should I worry about my children being physically fit?*

According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, underdeveloped children may develop a low opinion of themselves, an active dislike of physical activity, sport, and an antisocial attitude. Such children also are likely to become sedentary, overweight adults with all of the added health risks that those conditions entail.<sup>5</sup>

*To develop and maintain physical fitness, how much activity should children have?*

All children should be active daily, or have vigorous activity a minimum of three times a week. For the healthy child, who has been cleared by a doctor, 15 to 20 minutes of continuous exercise—vigorous enough to exercise the large muscles, raise the pulse rate and stimulate deep breathing—will aid in the development of strength and endurance.<sup>5,6</sup>

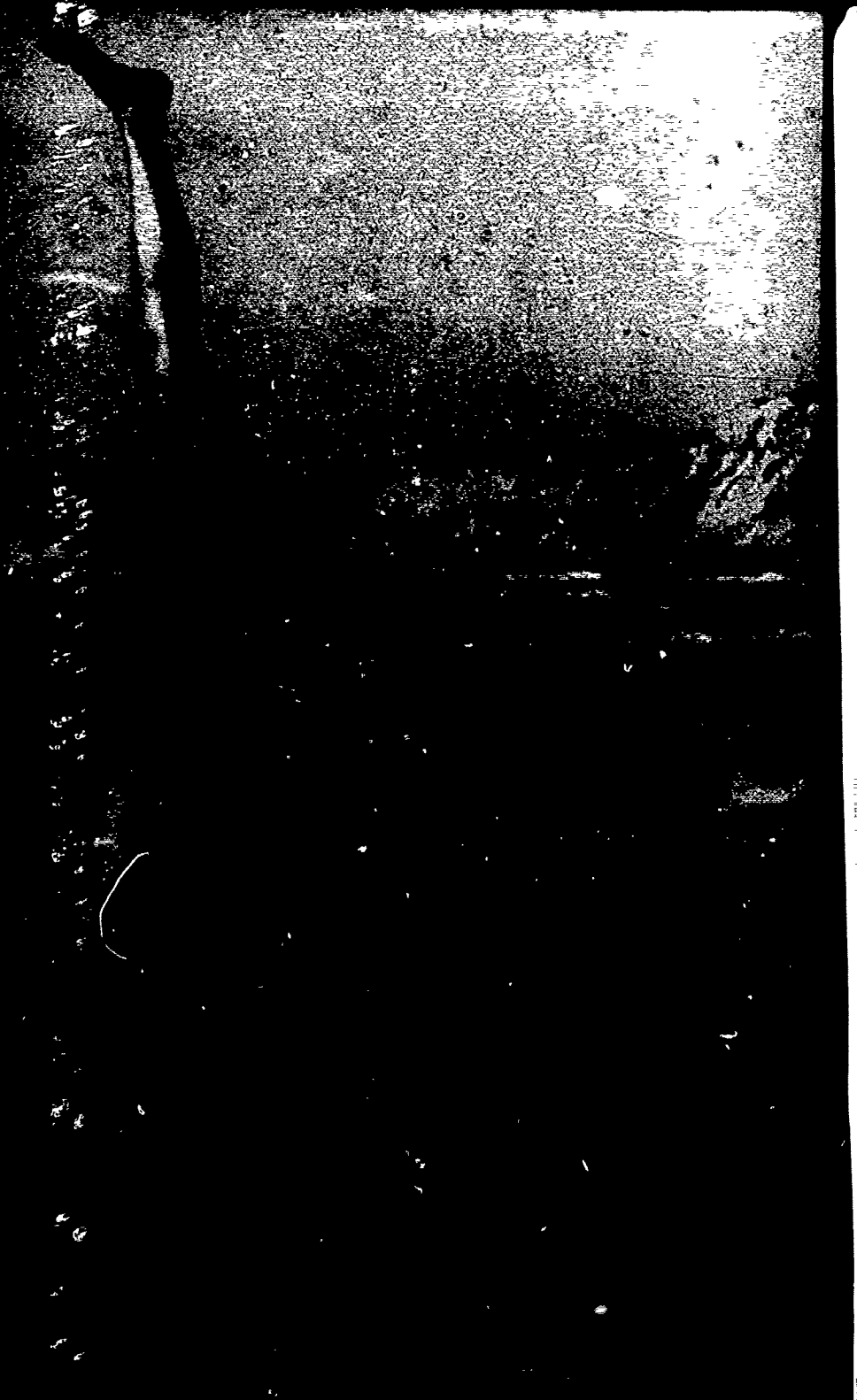
*How can you tell how physically mature a child is? My child is 9, but he is as big as a 12-year-old, only less coordinated. Should I have him play ball with the 12-year-old or the 9-year-old league?*

Signs of physical maturity are the obvious physical signs of

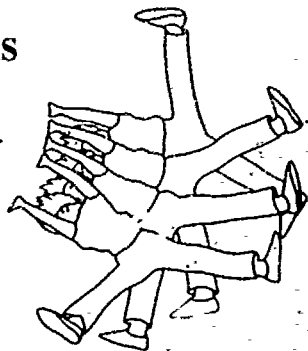
puberty. Another way to determine maturity is to have an X-ray of the wrist bones by a doctor who can evaluate your child's physical maturity rather accurately. Your son would benefit more from learning a variety of skills and playing games in which size is not a major factor. A 9-year-old is usually not socially, emotionally or mentally ready to play with 12-year-olds. Give him a chance to become better coordinated through practice and let him play at his own level of skill development.

*My 8-year-old daughter has a special talent for swimming and her coach says she could be a fine athlete with about 3 hours of training a day. Do you think this is too much?*

There is no substantial evidence that early training guarantees better athletes. Although the endurance capacity of children is more than adequate, the question is whether a young child should be driven to excellence. Because of the possibility that your daughter might later "turn-off" to sports, it would be better for her to enjoy many different activities now. If she wants to train as a swimmer when she is a teenager, it will be her choice.



## THE TEEN YEARS



### What Are Teenagers Like?

- *They vary widely in physical characteristics.* In the sixth, seventh or eighth grades, children may differ a great deal in their physical makeup. Teenagers of the same age may vary as much as 12 inches in height and 70 to 80 pounds in weight. Children in this age group mature physically at very different rates, too. Girls tend to reach mature development two to three years earlier than boys. There are also significant differences in physical maturity among children of the same sex and age.

- *Some teenagers find it easy to become skillful in physical activities.* Usually, these youngsters have greater strength and stamina and a keener interest in developing their physical skills. They like to participate in sports and games because excelling in these activities brings them great personal satisfaction and the approval of others. These children often become known as the "athletes."
- *Other teenagers drop out of*

*sports and games.* Adolescents whose skills have not developed or who lack confidence in their ability to master physical activities, often stop participating in competitive games? During their teen years, they become spectators rather than participants, and this pattern continues when they become adults. Other teenagers give up sports because they develop new interests. They make new friends or take up new activities like driving a car or riding a motorcycle. Some take jobs to earn spending money or help support the family.

- *Bodily changes often cause special problems.* As part of normal growth, teenagers undergo physical changes that often cause anxiety and embarrassment. Youngsters find they have a new body to deal with—taller and heavier than before and with a new center of gravity. They may lose confidence in the skills they developed before these changes. Many teens become self-conscious about being too tall, too short, too fat or too thin.



Rapid growth causes difficulties in learning new skills or maintaining skills mastered at an earlier age. In many sports activities, the early maturer often has an advantage, particularly in games like baseball or football that call for physical strength. On the other hand, the late maturer may have an advantage in activities like gymnastics, which require agility.

• *Teenagers are sensitive and often need guidance and encouragement.* During the critical teen years, youngsters dislike being compared with others their age who have a different body build or show greater physical abilities. They are easily discouraged and may need a parent's help in maintaining a balance of activities in their daily lives

### **The Teen Years Can Be Difficult Years**

Teenagers are trying to deal with so many new and complex questions—sex, drugs, alcohol, jobs, money, religion, authority, loyalty to family and friends, and many others. They're discovering what they do and do not value. Many teenagers complete their physical growth while they are still developing socially and emotionally. All this can create a lot of stress.

### **Physical Activities Can Be a Good Outlet For Their Tensions**


Encourage your youngster to continue physical activities with an

emphasis on doing the child's "personal best," rather than on becoming the best athlete. Your teenager can gain in self-confidence and personal satisfaction through keeping physically active. A teenager can develop new interests and friends by going to a swimming pool, playing a game of street hockey in the neighborhood, or learning new skills like bowling, cheerleading or baton twirling. Teenagers need regular physical activity to work off tensions and to become healthy, fully functioning persons.

### **Teenagers Need to Learn to Value Physical Fitness**

Teach your teenager about the important role that physical fitness plays in maintaining good health and well-being and in controlling weight. You can set an example by keeping fit yourself and by sharing in your child's activities. Help your teenager find different kinds of activities that are vigorous and fun. Not only competitive sports, but things like jogging, bicycling, swimming, dancing and gymnastics will help youngsters stay fit, *if they participate in these activities regularly.*

Encourage your teenager to value physical fitness highly. Even if the youngster has not been very active before, the teen years provide a good opportunity to "catch up" in physical capacities like strength and endurance. Your



teenager should take this opportunity because it will never again be as easy.

### **Ways to Help Your Teenager Learn Physical Skills**

- *Help your teenagers set reasonable goals.* Too much emphasis on "being good at sports" or on winning may lead your teenager into avoiding skills that cannot be mastered easily. Not

everyone can be a skilled athlete, but anyone can find an activity that is enjoyable. Only a few can reach the champion level but all of us have a "personal best" toward which we can aim.

Help your youngster understand that winning and losing are of only temporary importance. Stress the *effort* your teenager makes, rather than the outcome of a game or skill practice. Encourage teenagers

to choose activities *they* enjoy, rather than activities that *you* find interesting.

- **Help your teenager accept being a "beginner."** Adolescents taking up a new activity may be impatient about the time it takes to master a skill. They want to "play the game" right away, rather than practice. Help your teenager understand that it's difficult to learn a skill during the excitement and tension of an active game. Like young children, teenagers need to learn about the importance of improving their skills through practice. Even though they feel "grownup," they should accept being learners. Only through regular practice can they master skills that will give them enjoyment in many activities for years to come.

Most teenagers worry about making mistakes. Reassure your teenager that making mistakes in learning skills can be useful because from errors we all learn to make corrections in our motor patterns. Don't let your teenager associate mistakes with failure.

- **Take an interest in your youngster's physical activity programs.** Encourage teenagers to enroll in school or community programs in which they can develop new skills and perfect skills already learned. Discuss their physical activity programs with them and observe their lessons whenever you can. See if the program is flexible

and allows for individual differences in children.

Physical education programs in junior and senior high schools should provide every teenager with an opportunity to learn new skills and practice old ones. These programs should focus on sound instruction in dance, gymnastics, swimming and a variety of games. Find out if there is an intramural sports program for girls and boys who are interested but who are not on varsity teams.

- **Join in activities with your teenager.** Teens like to feel that they can do what adults do. You can encourage your teenager's interest in physical activities by joining in the youngster's activities. Plan to take instructions together in swimming, golf or tennis and practice together. Ask your teenager to share with you what is being learned in the physical education class at school. Being active with your teenager is fun. It can also be a good way for both of you to get to know each other.

### What About Competition?

During the teen years, youngsters react to competition in different ways:

- Some adolescents enjoy competition. They can't wait for the next game or the next practice session.
- Other youngsters are not sure if they want to continue taking part in competitive games.

• Still others don't like competition at all and want to drop out of games and sports.

*The eager competitors.* Young people who enjoy competition are challenged by matching their skills against skills of others with equal ability. They learn many things through winning and losing. But at some point, even these active youngsters may have to face a difficult question—how much are they willing to give up in order to devote more and more time to practice?

You can help your teenager face this question by asking the youngster a few questions yourself. Are you willing to spend the time needed to become highly skilled in this sport? Can you take the time you'll need for practice and still keep up with your school work?



With your chores at home? These questions may help your teenager think things over and decide just how interested he or she is in a competitive sport.

Young people who are eager competitors should be encouraged to enjoy the activity for its own sake. Only a few youngsters can look forward to earning a living by playing in a competitive sport. They'll be happier if they play the game because they enjoy it. They should have other types of activity to turn to, as well.

*The youngster who's "not sure."* Many teenagers who are skillful in sports want to branch out and try new things. They may decide to take up photography or playing a musical instrument or acting in a play. They may choose to spend less time in organized sports or to get out altogether.

If teenagers do give up sports, encourage them to maintain their interest in regular physical activity. They can keep this interest alive by joining a school intramural sports club or by participating in community recreation programs. They can also take up swimming, tennis, roller skating or jogging with friends or members of the family.

*The teenager who doesn't want to compete.* If your teenager just doesn't like competitive sports, accept the way the youngster feels. But urge the youngster to keep active through participation in some of the activities described above.

# Physical Activity Readiness Guide

## The Teen Years

Age	If Teenagers:	They May be Ready for:
The Teen Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>—are very interested in the social aspects of physical activity</li><li>—are highly skilled and totally absorbed in sports</li><li>—want to learn new skills for their social importance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>—competition in physical activities they choose and at the intensity they and you feel they can handle, (intramural or local sports club as contrasted with interschool varsity level or travelling team).</li><li>—help in keeping a balanced perspective toward sports in their lives.</li><li>—encouragement to develop interest and skill in additional activities they can use later for adult recreation.</li><li>—encouragement to participate at other levels of competition even if unsuccessful in "making the team."</li></ul>

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Age	But—If Teenagers:	They May be Ready for:
The Teen Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>—have "dropped out" of activity altogether</li><li>—try to avoid physical activity of all kinds, physical education classes, sports, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>—help in seeing the importance of finding at least one enjoyable form of physical activity (biking, swimming, jogging, dancing) they can learn.</li><li>—encouragement to keep practicing motor skills that are of interest to them even if they are not as "good as their friends."</li><li>—your praise for the effort being made rather than the result.</li></ul>

# A Quick Scorecard on 14 Sports and Exercises

## A QUESTION OFTEN ASKED ABOUT TEENAGERS:

*What are the fitness values of different activities and sports?*

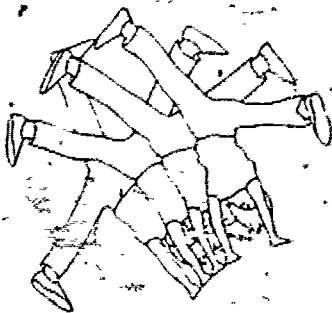
Here's a summary of how seven experts rated the various sports and exercises discussed. Ratings are on a scale of 0 to 3, thus a rating of 21 indicates maximum benefit (a score of 3 by all 7 panelists). Ratings were made on the basis of regular (minimum of 4 times per week), vigorous (duration of 30 minutes to one hour per session) participation in each activity.\*

	Physical Fitness					General Well-Being				Total
	Cardiorespiratory endurance (stamina)	Muscular endurance	Muscular strength	Flexibility	Balance	Weight control	Muscle definition	Digestion	Sleep	
Jogging	21	20	17	9	17	21	14	13	16	148
Bicycling	19	18	16	9	18	20	15	12	15	142
Swimming	21	20	14	15	12	15	14	13	16	140
Skating (Ice or Roller)	18	17	15	13	20	17	14	11	15	140
Handball/Squash	19	18	15	16	17	19	11	13	12	140
Skating-Nordic	19	19	15	14	16	17	12	12	15	139
Skating-Alpine	16	18	15	14	21	15	14	9	12	134
Basketball	19	17	15	13	16	19	13	10	12	134
Tennis	16	16	14	14	16	16	13	12	11	128
Calisthenics	10	13	16	19	15	12	18	11	12	126
Walking	13	14	11	7	8	13	11	11	14	102
Golf*	8	8	9	8	8	6	6	7	6	66*
Softball	6	8	7	9	7	7	5	8	7	64
Bowling	5	5	5	7	6	5	5	7	6	51

\*Ratings for golf are based on the fact that many Americans use a golf cart and/or caddy. If you walk the links, the physical fitness value moves up appreciably.



## PART II: Other Considerations



### What About Sex Stereotyping?

As children enter adolescence, their attitudes toward physical activity will affect their continued participation. Are you trying to influence them by what you expect of boys or girls? As a parent, how would you respond to the following statements and questions?

- If girls play sports seriously, they tend to become masculine. YES/NO
- Figure skating and dancing are feminine activities. YES/NO
- Football and basketball are masculine activities. YES/NO
- Do you find men's sports on television interesting and women's sports amusing? YES/NO
- When you want something lifted or carried, do you almost always call on boys to do it? YES/NO
- When your son and his friends get their clothes torn or dirty, do you find yourself saying, "Boys will be boys?" YES/NO
- Do you ever hear yourself saying "Angela shouldn't look so sloppy?" YES/NO
- Do you ever say, "I hope Tommy will still be popular, even

though he's not going out for soccer." YES/NO

- Would you ever say, "Anna, wouldn't you rather go out for gymnastics than basketball?" YES/NO
- If Kathy told you she wanted to play Little League Baseball, would you try to convince her to be a cheerleader for her brother's team instead? YES/NO

If you answered YES to any of the above, you may be using sex stereotypes in trying to influence your children. Many young men and women fail to find enjoyment in activities and sports because they become frustrated with the sex role expected of them. Many boys and girls who have been active in sports up to age 12 drop out during their teens. Some boys, pressured to "become athletes," respond by deciding to quit sports. This reaction can be frustrating for the parent. It can be just as difficult for boys who are not athletic as it is for girls who are, when adults enforce sex stereotyping. Boys and girls need your encour-



agement to find activities which best suit their own interests and needs. Masculinity and femininity are *neither lost nor gained* by a strong commitment to a particular activity or sport.

Sex stereotyping is expecting children to conform to fixed patterns of behavior which you relate to their sex. It often begins at birth. In the baby nursery of some hospitals you can see evidence of the beginning of stereotyping in the pink bows on the heads of girls and the football cutouts on the cribs of boys.

Often, parents are not aware how many messages children receive that reinforce these sex role expectations. A young child soon learns to behave in a way that is expected of a boy or girl. Some nursery school and kindergarten teachers still ask girls to pass around the paste and scissors, and boys to erase the board and move the chairs.

*Marie, age 3, has two brothers, ages 2 and 5. When asked what she wanted Santa Claus to bring her, she replied, "Well, I'd like a football . . . but I guess I'd better ask for a doll!"*

In most cases, the separation of boys and girls in physical activity and sports has been due to cultural expectations rather than to physical differences. Many parents, teachers and coaches still believe that it is undesirable for girls to participate

in sports that have previously been dominated by boys.

Although boys 8 years and older, often seem stronger than girls in the same age range, differences in performance among children are more often due to maturation, experience and interest, rather than to their sex. Actually, until puberty (around age 11, 12 or 13), boys and girls of equal ability can compete safely in the same sport *if they want to.*

*As two boys walk home from school, one of the boys says, "In gym today, I came in second in the 50-yard dash. A girl came in first!"*

*His friend exclaims, "Wow! You let a mere girl beat you?"*

*"Girls aren't as mere as they were in the old days!"*

On an average, boys continue to grow and improve in physical performance until 17 or 18 years of age. Most girls reach full growth by age 14, and many have achieved their best physical performance by then. A decline in the performance of girls after age 14 is probably due to loss of interest in practicing. When children reach the end of their growing period, many boys tend to be taller and heavier than most girls. This means that in contests involving strength and speed, teenage girls and boys should usually be separated. But this does not mean that girls

should avoid strength or speed contests.

Opportunities for physical activity and sports should be provided equally to girls and boys so that their future choices will be due to individual preferences, rather than to their sex role label. The decisions children make about their future goals will be easier if you do not emphasize sex roles.

Girl who choose to play competitive sports—and boys who don't—should not be made to feel different. The important thing to remember is to respect individual differences in your children when encouraging them to be physically active.

### What About Safety?

Whenever children are active, there's always the possibility of injury. While at play, youngsters don't always use good judgment in protecting themselves. Clearly, it's important that you know where your child is playing and how safe the child is at all times.

If your child is age 7 or younger and usually plays in or near your home, here are some things to check:

*Is the child's equipment safe?*

Are the playthings secure and in good repair? Are they appropriate for your child—not too heavy, too high or too easily breakable? Are they spaced far enough apart so

that your youngster won't run into them? Is the equipment where it should be—and not laying on the floor to be tripped over?

- Is your child aware of the surroundings?* Does your child avoid bumping into other children and play a safe distance from moving swings, seesaws and slides? (This is difficult for young children to judge so they will need constant watching.) Also, your child should be able to balance on different surfaces (ice, pebbles, cement, a rug) or while running, walking, skipping or jumping. Make certain that your child knows not to run into the street.

- Is your child wearing the proper clothes?* For use in play, clothing should be loose enough to allow your child to move about easily. There should not be any strings or flared legs and sleeves that could catch on equipment. Shoes should fit snugly, bend with the feet and grip the surface your child is playing on.

- Can you see and reach the child at all times?* If the youngster is age 7 or younger, you should be close enough so that the child can answer your call and can be

reached in seconds, if necessary.

- Have your children been trained to know their own safe limits? When your child runs, rides a bike or skates, does the youngster know how fast he or she can go without losing control? Does the child know how far a ball will travel if hit or kicked and what damage can be done? Does the child understand the rules about playing in a street, a park, a pool or in a friend's backyard—and how to ask for help, if needed?*

If your child is about age 8 or older, you will need to help the youngster who is interested in organized sports make wise choices. Many experts feel that "collision sports" like football or hockey are of questionable value for children under 10 years. Injuries to growing young bones may cause complications in later years.

You may want to guide your preteen boy or girl into activities like basketball or soccer which involve some body contact, but are not classified as "collision sports." Or you may want to encourage the child's interest in such noncontact activities as tennis, swimming, volleyball, softball, gymnastics, jogging, track and field, softball or baseball, dancing or skiing.

To be sure that your preteen



child is safe in any kind of activity and in any kind of play area, check these things:

*If your child plays informally at a recreation center, a playground or in the street:*

- Do you know who is responsible for keeping the playground free of hazards?
- Have you helped your child develop a sense of responsibility about personal safety and the safety of others?
- If the play area is provided by the city, a church or some other organization, is it supervised? Are rules enforced for the safety of youngsters playing there?

- If your child plays street games, have you laid down safety rules for the child to follow?

***If your child participates in sports programs run by the school or the community:***

- Have you received guidance on purchasing properly fitting sports gear and equipment for your child? (A poorly fitting helmet, for example, can cause injuries.)
- Are the practice sessions too long or strenuous? Does your child seem overtired at the end? (Fatigue can cause a child to be injured.)
- Is your child being taught the importance of safety?
- Are there arrangements for emergency treatment of any injuries that occur during a physical education class, a practice session or a game?
- Is an adequate insurance program provided for the children? If so, have you enrolled your child in the program?

For additional ways to evaluate the safety of a sports program, read the "Bill of Rights for Young Athletes" in Part III: Youth Sports, page 40.

Safety should concern everyone involved in physical activity for children—children, parents, teachers, coaches and recreation leaders. Adults who set up the ac-

tivity areas have a responsibility to make them safe places in which to play. As a parent, you have a role in this, too. You need to help your youngster understand that rules are made for *their* safety.

Listen carefully to what children say. If you hear them talk about "horseplay" in a locker room, "fooling around" on gymnastics equipment, or pushing others into a pool (things children often think of as "fun"), bring the risks involved to their attention and to the attention of the adults in charge. Ask if the school or recreation center has rules prohibiting this kind of behavior and if the rules are enforced.

Here are a few more things to check that *can be important* if your child is injured:

- Does your child know your address, your phone number, the name and phone number of your family doctor?
- If you have health and accident insurance, does your child know the name of the insurance company? Does the youngster carry a card with the policy number on it?
- Do you know the name of the person to notify if your child is injured in a public playground? Does the agency responsible for the play area provide you with information about what to do in case of an accident to your child?



## **FART III: Youth Sports**



Adult-organized competitive sports programs for children are growing rapidly across the country. More than 30 national organizations arrange competitive sports for children (for example, Little League Baseball, Pop Warner Football, American Youth Soccer, AAU). Thousands of local groups also organize athletics for children (YMCA's and YWCA's, city recreation departments, churches, Police Athletic Leagues).

Many schools sponsor intramural games and varsity competitive sports programs. About 20 million youngsters—40 to 60 percent of all children under 14 years of age—participate in some kind of competitive sport.

It is now possible for *all* children

to compete in sports—boys and girls, the handicapped, the disadvantaged and the not-so-skilled.

There is a wide variety of adult-organized sports available to children of all ages. In addition to swimming, tennis, and track competition, young children are competing in contact sports like basketball, soccer, wrestling and in collision sports like hockey and football. Boxing is generally not recommended by some experts<sup>10</sup> for children of any age. For children under 12, there are different points of view about the "right age" to play competitive sports. As parents, you have the responsibility to make the appropriate decision.

To help you decide what is best for *your* child, here are some typical arguments for and against competitive sports for children:

### Those for youth sports say

Life is competitive. Sports teach a child how to compete as an adult. There is no better place to learn about competition than through sports.

Youngsters are by nature active and need physical activity. Youth sports provide a wholesome outlet.

In youth sports, children learn many skills. Every child benefits from this kind of skill instruction.

In youth sports, children learn to be good sports and how to win and lose gracefully.

Organized sports "keep kids off the streets and out of trouble."

Youth sports give every youngster—not just the superstars—an opportunity to become a skilled athlete.

### Those against youth sports say

Although life is competitive, adults can choose what area they want to compete in. Many children would be better off learning about competition through a spelling bee or a band contest, rather than through sports.

Unless children play a key position for a whole game, many have little opportunity for real activity in a competitive sport. The only exercise they get may be in running to and from the practice field.

The unskilled child who needs skill training most is often left out, while the strong and skillful youngster usually gets most of the attention.

Too often, adults teach children to place too much emphasis on winning.

Many kids who start playing competitive sports at a very young age drop out around age 13 and wind up on the streets again. We need to find out why.

In youth sports, too many youngsters do *not* receive the same opportunities as the superstar types.

**Those for youth sports say**

Youth sports give children a chance to work with adults and participate in "grownup" games.

**Those against youth sports say**

Children are not "grownups." Why not let them find their own interests as kids, instead of asking them to play at being adults?

In the final analysis, whether your child has a good or bad experience in youth sports will depend on the quality of the leadership provided by parents and coaches.



The National Association for Sport and Physical Education, a division of The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, sponsored a task force to study youth sports. This group, composed of experts from youth sport agencies, the

medical profession and physical education, developed the "Bill of Rights for Young Athletes" that appears on the following pages. The guiding questions are given to help you evaluate any competitive sport experiences your child may have.



## Youth Sports Evaluation Guide



### Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

1. The right to participate in sports.

*Research shows that children would rather play and lose than sit on the bench for a winning team.*

### Guiding Questions for Parents

Does your child get the same chance to practice and play as every other child?

Has a child ever been "cut" from the team?

Have you given your child the right to choose *not* to play? (This right implies that participation is the *child's* choice.)

## **Bill of Rights for Young Athletes**

2. The right to participate at a level that corresponds to each child's maturity and ability.

*Jean, age 7, said "I got a 4th place ribbon yesterday in the 220." "Terrific," said the adult. "How fast did you run?" "As fast as I could," the youngster replied.*

3. The right to have qualified leadership.

*"Qualified adult leaders do not find it necessary to abuse children in order to achieve recognition for themselves."*

*— Mariens & Seefeldt<sup>10</sup>*

4. The right to play as a child and not as an adult.

*"... if someone does something wrong, just look it over and keep playing."*

*— 6th grader*

## **Guiding Questions for Parents**

Are children grouped by maturation (height, weight, strength), rather than by age alone?

Are late-maturing children given an opportunity for modified sport experiences with less intense levels of competition? (For example, can they play basketball using smaller balls and lower baskets? Are baselines shortened? Are games shortened and playoffs and tournaments eliminated?)

Do coaches and game officials respect your child?

Does your child's coach understand children and how they learn?

Does the coach have the ability to communicate with children and parents?

Does your child look forward to working with the coach at practice time?

Do your child's coaches, game officials and the spectators all give your child encouragement for the effort being made?

Do you let mistakes during a game go by without comment? Does the coach?

Do you tolerate a little silliness from the children without getting annoyed or impatient?

## Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

### 4. Continued

5. The rights of children to share in the leadership and decision-making of their sport participation.

*"Games should be fun, not too easy but not very, very hard. In games you should not always compete against somebody but a lot of the time you should."*

—6th grader

6. The right to participate in safe and healthy environments.

*"Adults should not deny children the right to play sports because of the fear of injury. Instead they should make certain that the sport environment is reasonably safe and healthy."*

—Martens & Seefeldt<sup>10</sup>

## Guiding Questions for Parents

Do adults sometimes seem to forget that they are watching children at play?

Are the children ever asked their opinion about what they need to practice?

Do you give your child a choice about what sport to play or what level of competition to participate in?

Do the adults involved in the sport program listen to a child's views? Do you?

When your child makes a decision, can you accept it?

Are coaches trained to recognize and correct any unsafe condition or practice?

Are all children, unskilled as well as skilled, given safe equipment and a safe playing area?

Are the rules of the game modified to fit the developmental needs of the children?

Are the skills of a game taught so that children attempt difficult things only after learning their basic skills?

## Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

### 6. Continued

#### 7. The right to proper preparation for participation in sports.

*"Make sure you told them everything about the game before playing. If one is not doing it right, don't get mad—try to help them."*

*—6th grader*



#### 8. The right to an equal opportunity—to strive for success.

*"Winning is not final. Failure is not fatal."*

*—LeRoy Walker*

*1976 Olympic Track Coach*

### Guiding Questions for Parents

Are the children taught that they should never deliberately try to hurt another player?

Are the children told what is expected of them and, in turn, what they can expect from their efforts?

Is a medical clearance required?

Is there an appropriate conditioning program?

Are the children taught skills in a way that will help them improve steadily?

Are children kept out of competition until they have learned the rules of the game, have acquired some skills, and have learned how to act on the playing field?

Do you see that your child gets the right amount of sleep, eats properly and keeps up with school work during the sports season?

Are children taught to measure success through the effort made, rather than the outcome of the game?

Are all the children given an equal opportunity to learn through practice and to improve through game play?

## Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

## Guiding Questions for Parents

### 8. *Continued.*

*"I like soccer because you can play an excellent game and lose."*

*—Anna, age 13*

Do you measure your child's progress in relation to the child's *development*, rather than through comparisons with other children the same age?

Are "errors" viewed as necessary steps to skill development?

Is each child allowed to participate without fear of criticism by coaches or parents?



## Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

### 8. Continued

9. The right to be treated with dignity.

*"Teach them right and let the student make some suggestions. And when they do something wrong the teacher shouldn't get upset."*

—6th grader

10. The right to have fun in sports.

*"... I like playing soccer because when I kick the ball, it just makes me feel very good."*

—Angela, age 8

## Guiding Questions for Parents

Do you help your child set goals that are realistic for his or her present ability?

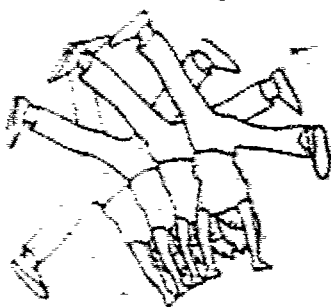
Does the coach treat each child as a person of worth—a person with feelings? Do the spectators? Do you?

Are the children taught not to belittle or make fun of each other?

Are rules set up to prevent heckling by spectators during a game?

Can you accept your child's losing a game—or quitting the sport—without criticism?

Do you take all these rights—seriously? If so, your child will enjoy the right to have fun in sports.





## Summary



As a parent who wants to see your child enjoy all the benefits of healthful physical activity, you will want to keep these key points in mind:

- Share the adventure with your child. Whether the youngster is 6 or 16, join in the child's physical activities. Go out together to swim, hike, ski, bowl or play an easy game of catch.
- Show your child how much pride you take in his or her progress toward "getting in shape."
- Take an interest in your child's physical education programs in school and in youth sports. Make sure that these programs teach your child physical skills as well as the value of physical fitness and active involvement.
- Let your child *choose* physical activity. Don't try to force on

your child a sport or other activity that *you* enjoy.

- Give equal attention to each of your children. Show as much interest in the physical activities of an unskilled and self-conscious child as you do in the accomplishments of the family's "star athlete."
- Help your child learn that participation in activities is much more fun and of much greater value than watching others play.
- Take an interest in the child's physical activities for the youngster's sake, and not for your own satisfaction.
- Last but not least, let your child *play as a child!* Let your child develop skills that will lead to self-confidence and a desire for activity as an adult. Help your child build an activity program that will lead to healthy, rewarding experiences throughout life.



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## Additional Resources

### For Skill Development:

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Wickstrom, R., *Fundamental Motor*

*Patterns*, Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1977.

### **For Helping Handicapped Children Learn Skills:**

Arnheim, Daniel and William Sinclair, *The Clumsy Child*, St. Louis: The C. V. Mosby Co., 1975.

Geddes, Dolores, *Physical Activities for Individuals with Handicapping Conditions*, St. Louis: The C. V. Mosby Co., 1974.

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Vodola, Thomas M., *Diagnostic-Prescriptive Motor Ability and Physical Fitness Tasks and Activities for the Normal and Atypical Individual*, Neptune City, N.J.: VEE, Inc., 1978.

*The following are available for sale from AAHPERD, 1900 Association Drive, Reston, Va. 22091:*

*A Guide for Programs in Recreation and Physical Education for the Mentally Retarded*

*Early Intervention for Handicapped Children Through Programs of Physical Education and Recreation*  
*Get a Wiggle On* (for blind or visually impaired infants)

*Move It* (for blind or visually handicapped children)

*Physical Education, Recreation and Related Programs for Autistic and Emotionally Disturbed Children*

*Physical Education, Recreation and Sports for Individuals with Hearing Impairments*

*Physical Education and Recreation for Cerebral Palsied Individuals*

### **For Physical Fitness:**

*The Main Artery* — a bimonthly newsletter — concerning cardiovascular health disease prevention in young children is available from Project Super Heart, S.U.N.Y., Cortland, N.Y.

The following publications are available from the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, Room 3030, Donohoe Building, 400 6th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C., 20201:

#### *Youth Physical Fitness—Suggestions for School Programs*

S/N 040-000-00400-9

Recommendations for basic advanced and comprehensive school physical education programs, with strong physical fitness emphasis. Suggestions for developing administrative and community support. Test instructions and qualifying standards for Presidential Physical Fitness Award program. 96 pages.

#### *An Introduction to Physical Fitness*

S/N 040-000-00403-3

Self-testing activities, graded exercises and jogging guideline. Information on exercise and weight control. For adults. 28 pages.

#### *Adult Physical Fitness*

S/N 040-000-00026-7

Explains health and other benefits of regular, vigorous exercise. Progressive, 5-level programs for men and women. Sections on weight training, water activities and daily fitness opportunities. 64 pages.

#### *The Fitness Challenge in the Later Years*

S/N 017-062-00009-3

For older men and women. Exercises and activities carefully selected to combat problems of aging and to promote flexibility, balance and cardiovascular

fitness. Includes self-scoring system. Large type, clear illustrations. 28 pages.

#### ***Exercise and Weight Control***

S/N 040-000-00371-1

Explains how to maintain desirable weight by keeping energy intake (food) and energy output (physical activity) in balance. Includes caloric expenditure table. 10 pages.

#### ***Aqua Dynamics***

S/N 040-000-00360-6

A comprehensive program of strength, flexibility, and endurance exercises that can be performed in virtually any swimming facility. 32 pages.

#### ***The Physically Underdeveloped Child***

S/N 040-000-00387-8

Suggestions for identifying and helping the one child in six who is weak, uncoordinated or otherwise physically underdeveloped. Includes screening test and recommendations for remedial activities. 14 pages.

### **For Youth Sports:**

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The following newsletters dealing with topics related to children in organized sports are available through subscription:

*Sports Line*, A Newsletter for Youth Sport Coaches Published by the Office of Youth Sports, Department of Physical Education, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. 6 issues a year.

*Sport Scene*, Focus on Youth Programs. Published by the North Carolina Youth Sport Institute, 4985 Oak Garden Drive, Kernersville, N.C. 27284.

*Spotlight on Youth Sports*, a publication of The Institute for the Study of Youth Sports. Published by The Youth Sport Institute, IM Sports Circle, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824.

