

KIDS AND SPORTS SKILLS

A Guide for Parents and Coaches: Understanding what to expect from kids at different ages

Remember Mom, Dad, and Coaches

I'm 4, 5 or 6 years old

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

I may or may not appear to understand instructions from coaches. Remember; keep the instructions direct because I am unable to interpret vague or ambiguous statements.

I'm 7 or 8 years old

1. I am beginning to understand the team concept idea.
2. I am switching from the "me" and "mine" concept to realizing that teammates are present too.
3. Look, I've developed the ability to catch a gently thrown ball.
4. Most of the time I am able to dribble a ball continuously with my hands or feet without loss of control.
5. I am able to learn and understand the rules of the game.

6. From my point of view...playing the game is the major thing...winning is not a major concern.
7. I will accept instructions by my coaches but I need them to be direct and not ambiguous.
8. I may get overloaded by my parents / fans shouting instructions. Let the coach's coach...let them give me instructions.
9. I can become easily embarrassed by intense, negative criticism by fans/parents.

I'm 9 or 10 years old

1. I am able to maintain a dribble with hands or feet.
2. I am able to control a ball using a variety of body parts, i.e., a thigh or head in soccer, or a bump volley in volleyball.
3. I am able to consistently hit a thrown ball with a bat (as in baseball) or racquet (as in tennis or ping-pong).
4. Using my maturing motor skills, I am able to throw, catch, or kick.
5. I am able to use either hand or foot with competency.
6. I now have well established the team concept.
7. I may be easily embarrassed by intense, negative criticism and behaviors by adults.

I now can accept the instructions of coaches. I may be able, to some degree, to interpret ambiguous directions, but receiving parental instruction at the same time as coaching instruction can confuse me.

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Continued on Page 2...

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I'm 11 or 12 years old

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

I'm 13 or 14 years old

1. I will combine different physical skills to a more competent level.
2. I have a tendency to practice skills learned in practice on my own.
3. My interest is growing in developing, improving, and maintaining body composition.
4. I know, and can describe, proper conduct for participation in sporting activities, including ethical and unethical behavior.
5. My taking part in physical activities has made me recognize long term physiological and psychological benefits.
6. I am accepting of instructions by coaches, but may become angry at negative fan/parent yelling or instructions during games.