

Participation 101

Joining a New Sports Team

Children often participate in team-based sports activities. Being part of a team encourages friendships and working towards a common goal. Perhaps you and your child have decided that joining a sports team is something that he/she would like to try. You might have some questions about how to help your child successfully join a new team. Here are some tips to help make your child's transition to a new team a positive experience.

There are so many team activities to choose from. How do we decide?

You may choose a sport because a family member or sibling currently plays or has played in the past. Your child may also develop an interest in a sport based on conversations with peers, or by watching sports in person or on television. Some organizations advertise opportunities for children to try a sport before committing to an entire season of play. Your decision may also depend on the cost, time commitment, length of the season, type of equipment required and other variables related to a particular sport. When you have picked a sport, gathering more information may help your child have a successful transition to his or her new team.

How can I find out more information before the season begins?

As part of your decision-making process, or once you have chosen a sport, you can gather more information by:

- Asking other parents about the team or organization
- Checking the organization's website to learn more information about the sport such as rules and regulations, expectations, length of season and guidelines for play
- Contacting the coach and arranging to meet or talk to him or her before the start of the season
- Taking your child to observe the team playing or practicing and asking your child whether or not he or she is feeling comfortable to give the sport a try

My child is ready to join the new team. What next?

Prepare the coach by:

- Talking with him or her to understand expectations so that you know how you can prepare your child in advance of the first practice or game
- Discussing potential accommodations prior to the first game or practice and deciding on a plan

Prepare your child by:

- Teaching him or her the structure, rules and concept of the sport by reading books and/or watching the sport on television or in person

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- Practicing the sport and teaching your child the basics
- Assessing the types of accommodations that your child may need for successful participation by attempting the sport at home

It's Game Day. What should I do to prepare my child?

- Arrive a little early so that your child has a chance to get comfortable in a new environment
- Have a sibling or friend come along if this would make your child more comfortable
- Provide support, but encourage your child to participate as independently as possible
- As you get to know other parents, consider having a team mate over to play and practice the sport at your home

After the first game or practice and as the season progresses, talk with your child about the new skills that he or she is learning, which parts of the sport are fun, which parts of the sport are not as fun and if he or she is enjoying participating in the new sport. Keep the conversation going with your child's coach to thank him or her for helping to make your child feel comfortable, and to understand what you can be doing to help your child participate with success and confidence on the team. Finding out which new skills will be introduced will give you an opportunity to practice at home first, if this is a strategy that will be beneficial for your child. Once your child is participating in a new sport, it is time to invite fans and take photos. The memories that are made while playing on a team can last a lifetime.

Take home messages

Joining a new sports team may involve meeting new people and being in a new environment. It may take time for your child to adapt to this new situation.

Encourage your child to give the sport a good try before deciding to move on and try something else.

Celebrate and reward your child's efforts and even the smallest amount of progress while he or she participates on a new sports team.

A Resource from *CanChild's Participation Knowledge Hub*

<https://www.canchild.ca/en/research-in-practice/participation-knowledge-hub>