

What are the best things to do at competitions?

Sport competitions are emotionally charged environments, with lots of potential to say or do the wrong thing. Youth sport competitions are one of the only achievement environments in which you actually watch your child perform; you will see them succeed and you will see them make mistakes and there is often little you can do to help. Within this environment it can be really hard to know what to say or do. Our best advice is to take the lead from your child; ask your child what she/he likes you to do before, during, and after competitions and then try to do this! Below are a few suggestions from athletes we have spoken to, as you'll see less is often more desirable than more.

Before Competitions	During Competitions	After Competitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest tactics if your child asks for them (but avoid contradicting coaches). • Give your child time and space to be alone/be with their team • Recommend and reinforce good pre-match habits but do not try and do everything for your child • Remind your child you will be proud of them whatever the outcome • Emphasise effort, attitude, and enjoyment • Keep relaxed and calm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend competitions to demonstrate interest • Be attentive to the match throughout • Show your support by clapping and cheering appropriately during the match • Have a positive and happy attitude • Keep a neutral or happy expression throughout the match • Keep calm • Be respectful towards your child's opponents and the referee/umpire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow your child to discuss the match with teammates and their coach first. • Only talk about the game if your child wants to • Comment on effort and attitude rather than the result • Keep your behaviour consistent whether they won or lost • Be realistic about the performance rather than finding excuses • Give positive feedback first and keep it simple • Ensure your child has food and time to recover • Give your child space if they have lost

Based on:

Knight, C. J. et al., (2011). Parental involvement in team sports: How do athletes want parents to behave? *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 23, 76-92.

Knight, C. J. et al., (2016). Positive Parental Involvement in Elite Youth Slalom Canoe. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 28, 234-256.