

# PARENT AND GUARDIAN'S HANDBOOK FOR SAFER SPORT

## SAFESPORT LISTENING DO'S AND DON'TS

FOR SCHOOL-AGE KIDS (6-12)



**When your child says, “Coach yelled at me in front of everyone and told me they wished I was not on the team.”**

### Do ...

- ▶ Calmly ask your child what was happening in practice before the coach yelled at them. Try to find out if the coach has said things like this to your child, or others, before.
- ▶ Empathize with your child. Let them know you understand how it must have felt and that adults should never speak to kids that way.
- ▶ Encourage your child to come to you again if the coach continues to use hurtful words or loses their temper.
- ▶ Reach out to the coach and have an open and honest conversation about what happened.

### Don't ...

- ▶ Call the coach immediately and yell at them.
- ▶ Let your child think they deserved it because they were not paying attention.

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**When your child says, “I think I broke two fingers. Coach was deciding between me and another catcher for the next game. He kept pitching harder and harder balls to see who would miss.”**

### Do ...

- ▶ Stay calm.
- ▶ Look at their hand and take them to the emergency room right away if it is hot, swollen, or tender to touch.
- ▶ Ask if any kids can throw that hard.
- ▶ Ask if the other child hurt their hand, too.
- ▶ Follow the procedure for reporting possible physical abuse.

### Don't ...

- ▶ Ask who earned the position.

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**When your child says, “Sorry I’m late. Coach made me stay after to help with my dismount. I finally got it, but I was kind of uncomfortable with how they held me each time.”**

**Do ...**

- ▶ Remain calm.
- ▶ Tell your child you are so glad they shared this with you.
- ▶ Ask about what made it uncomfortable. Where was the coach touching? How were they touching? How often?
- ▶ Talk about the difference between safely spotting and inappropriate touching.
- ▶ Observe practices, including randomly dropping in when unexpected.

**Don’t ...**

- ▶ Think it’s no big deal because your child is only ten.
- ▶ Assume that sexual abuse only happens between people of a different sex.
- ▶ Assume it won’t happen again because your child got the dismount.
- ▶ Let them stay after practice alone again.

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**When your child says, “This is the third practice in a row that no one would be my partner in drills. I think it’s because they all think I’m weird.”**

**Do ...**

- ▶ Thank your child for confiding in you.
- ▶ Ask if anyone else is in the same position of feeling left out during practice.
- ▶ Acknowledge that it can be hard being with a group of kids with different values and personalities.
- ▶ Assure your child that there is nothing weird about them at all!
- ▶ Consider watching a practice to see how your child is being treated and how the coach handles it.

**Don’t ...**

- ▶ Immediately call the coach and demand a solution.
- ▶ Chalk this up to “Kids will be kids.” It could be an indicator of peer-to-peer abuse or bullying.

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**When your child says, “There’s a sleepover at one of my teammate’s houses this weekend. I’m the only one on the team that didn’t get invited.”**

**Do ...**

- ▶ Thank your child for sharing this with you. Do acknowledge that this must feel bad.
- ▶ Ask if they’re sure that the rest of the team was invited. It could be that the captain just invited their close friends.
- ▶ Ask if the other kids on the team do anything else that makes your child feel left out and, if so, how often these things happen.
- ▶ Check your child's social media account(s) to see if anyone is posting negative comments.
- ▶ Brainstorm ways with your child about ways they could hang out with teammates in social situations.

**Don’t ...**

- ▶ Ignore your child’s feelings or tell them “You don’t need those kids as friends anyway.” If they are teammates, they probably do want to be friends with them.
- ▶ Rush and contact the parent of the teammate who is having the sleepover.

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**When your child says, “The coach pulled me out of the game and swore at me in front of the whole team. She told me we lost because I didn’t block a goal.”**

**Do ...**

- ▶ Thank them for sharing this experience with you and ask about what happened. Try and determine if this was a single outburst or a pattern of how the coach treats your child or other kids.
- ▶ Have a conversation with the coach so they know that shaming your child immediately shuts them down.
- ▶ Ask the coach to consider giving your child another chance next time so that they can learn from the mistake.

**Don’t ...**

- ▶ Doubt your child or ask if it cost the team the game. Indeed, your child might have made a mistake and let in the winning goal. Mistakes are okay. Coaches swearing at kids is not okay.

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**When your child says, “Coach spiked a ball really hard into my arm today, and now I can barely move it. He said it was the only way I’d learn to stand in the right position.”**

**Do ...**

- ▶ Take a close look at your child’s arm to assess whether they need medical attention.
- ▶ Talk about other ways the coach could have demonstrated proper positioning. Do ask if the coach has ever done anything like this before, to your child or any other team member.
- ▶ Document the incident and consider reporting to league authorities. When possible, watch games and practices so you can be available if your child needs help.

**Don’t ...**

- ▶ Ignore the complaint or say something like, “You’re exaggerating. I am sure it does not hurt that much.”
- ▶ Model inappropriate behavior by going to the next practice and screaming at the coach in front of your child and the other players.

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