



# How to Practice with Your Child

Practicing skills with your child can provide some of the most rewarding moments in youth sports. Batting practice, shooting baskets, or hitting a few tennis balls together is a great way to share the sport you love. However, I found it's really tempting to over-coach during these times. If this is happening to you, and your practice sessions are becoming no fun, I have two strategies for you that helped in our family.



The first option is to spend time playing together and skip the coaching completely. Enjoy the activity without analyzing technique or results. Just play. Sometimes our kids just want to spend time with us without being evaluated or corrected. Focus on making yourself enjoyable to be around.

The second strategy can be used to improve technique, and create a thinking athlete, without turning you into a nag. It's called The Rating Game. When trying to improve a specific skill, ask your child to rate himself from 1 to 10 on a particular attempt. A 10 equals perfection and a 1 is the worst execution possible. You might say to a baseball player, "On this next swing, I'm going to ask you for your rating on how well you watch the ball." Being asked to give himself a score creates awareness of the area needing work. If he says, "That was a 5.", your response can be, "Okay, let's see if you can show me a 6 on the next one." Kids are amazingly honest with themselves about their rating. The second and third attempts will generate a greater focused effort in the hopes of earning a higher score from themselves. You might say to a tennis player, "I'm going to ask you for your score on your follow-through after the next serve." If you hear, "It was a 6", you can ask, "What would you have to do differently for it to be a 7?" Watch the wheels turn and get ready for a new level of concentration. The fascinating part of this exercise is that you're just asking for their personal rating...no nagging, no correcting necessary. Your child knows which efforts are better than others, but you've helped him focus his attention on the things that matter.

Let your children draw their own conclusions about how to earn a higher score. Keep it fun by playing the Rating Game intermittently – not everyday. You'll know you're fun to practice with if you get invited to do it more often.



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## Discussion Guide for Parent and Athlete

1

Think of ways you can “play” with your child. If it’s not in her sport, think of other ways you can be active together and keep it light.

2

How could you use The Rating Game in a way that challenges your child, without you becoming a critic or judge. Use it to create awareness.