

## Responsible Sport Parenting: Kid-Friendly Criticism

We know that as parents, we have to sometimes correct our kids to help them improve. But we can deliver this feedback with useable information that helps empower our children. For example, “You need to focus!” contains virtually no useable information, but “Remember that coach wants you to keep both feet on the ground on throw-ins.” contains very useable information.

Here are a few more tips:

■ **AVOID NON-TEACHABLE MOMENTS**

The ride home from a game ended by a costly mistake is not the time to offer instruction.

■ **WAIT FOR PRIVACY**

People hear criticism better in private than in front of a crowd.

■ **ASK PERMISSION**

If you ask, and your child prefers not to hear your criticism, honor that, and ask again later. (Do not use this technique in areas where your child needs an immediate lesson, such as poor sportsmanship or dangerous behavior.)

■ **USE IF-THEN STATEMENTS**

To help your children feel in control even while you are criticizing, phrase your feedback in the form of an if-then statement. “If you call Ava off the ball, you’ll be more comfortable under that pop-up.”

■ **MAKE A CRITICISM SANDWICH**

“Sandwich” the criticism between a truthful, specific compliment on each side. The criticism is the meat, while the compliments are the bread. For example: “You’ve been exploding off the line great. You seem to get under the lineman’s pads almost every time now. Just make sure you keep your hands inside. If you combine keeping your hands inside with that explosiveness, you’ll be hard to beat.”



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