

It can be tough to balance being supportive with being reasonable, especially if you can see your child's potential. However, here are some of the features of the best sports parents a child could hope for. If you're worried about your behaviour at your child's fixtures – whatever the sport, use these as a guideline to change it. If you are already doing a lot of the things listed then have a moment of smugness!

1. Don't live vicariously

You might be a failed athletics star or you might have had some success as an athlete, but you aren't living your child's life. Don't push your child down the path you wished you'd taken, and don't expect the same successes that you'd hoped for. After all, whose dream is it anyway?

2. Support the team

Although you love your child and encourage their involvement with athletics, they are also part of a team. Success for your child often means points for the team. By cheering on the group you send the message that that every performance counts, whether they are first or last, that effort is important and that there's something great about being in a team, all of which are valuable life skills.

3. Don't coach (unless you are their coach)

Your child has a coach. You're the parent so don't try to take on both roles. To do so is confusing for your child, not to mention embarrassing. Even if you have some personal experience with the sport, they're with a coach who knows what they're doing, so let them do their job. Do not shout from the stands. Step back, relax and simply enjoy your child's participation.

4. Follow your child's lead

Putting pressure on your child will only lead to rebellion and resentment. It's your responsibility to make sure your child gets to the training sessions, but it isn't your job to force your child to do something that they're not enjoying. There's a fine line between encouragement and pressure, but by letting your child choose their own path and set their own goals in athletics, you're giving the ultimate form of support.

5. Know the real competition

The best competition for children is their **own mindset**. The only way for your child to really achieve in athletics is for him or her to try to beat their own previous results NOT those of others. Being comfortable with this fact breeds healthy competition rather than tension and rivalry. Don't make training sessions into competitions and try not to become obsessed with Power of 10.

6. Don't compare your child to others or to their siblings

We all take our own path in life, and every individual measures success differently. The same can be said for children, so don't measure your child's success against others. For some, making the team is a form of success, but if your child lacks confidence, just joining a club and competing when they have the opportunity should be celebrated. Remember too that no athlete achieves a personal best every time they perform. Usain Bolt ran his world records over 100m/ 200m in 2009. He never ran as fast again. Does this lessen his legacy? **NO**

7. Know that it's OK to fail

Athletics is fantastic for teaching children all kinds of valuable life lessons in a safe, supportive environment. Failure teaches humility, and it's an important lesson for everyone to learn. It also helps to identify areas to work on, which will only lead to further improvement and success.

8. Don't look too far ahead

Let your child enjoy athletics for what it is, and if it leads to something more serious, that's just a bonus.

9. Make athletics fun

This is the most important factor in making you the perfect athletics parent. Even if your child never sees athletics as anything more than a hobby, it's still good exercise and a great alternative to sitting indoors on social media. If you make athletics fun, your child will enjoy it too, and that's where real success comes from.

Please also remember that your child is growing and their bodies are changing. Throughout teenage years their performances will go up and down and this will often be linked to growth spurts. Success as an Under 13/15 is no guarantee of an England vest at 18. What is great is that your child wants to do sport and whether they are Top three or at the tail end just encourage them positively.