

GETTING KIDS OFF THE COUCH & INTO THE GAME

FOR KIDS (AGES 6-12) NOT PLAYING SPORTS

It can be hard, knowing how to introduce your child to sport and physical activities that meet their unique needs. Ten questions to ask of yourself, your kid, and local programs in finding a good fit:

- 1. IS MY CHILD GETTING AN HOUR OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DAILY?**
If the answer is no, they are not getting CDC's recommended amount for youth. That means moderate-to-vigorous activity, with at least three of those days also involving exercise that strengthens muscles and bones.
- 2. DO I REGULARLY ENGAGE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OR SPORTS MYSELF?**
Research shows that parents who are physically active are more likely to have physically active children. Be a role model, while also encouraging fun activities that you can enjoy together – from bike riding to a backyard catch.
- 3. HAVE I POPULATED OUR HOME WITH BALLS AND OTHER SPORTS EQUIPMENT?**
Provide a child with the tools to play, on their own terms (not those of adults), and often they will. Unstructured play builds physical literacy and love of game, with intrinsic rewards that encourage further engagement.
- 4. DO I LIMIT SCREEN TIME AT HOME AND REQUIRE MY CHILD TO GO OUTSIDE?**
The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends parents place consistent limits on time spent with media. Start by removing TVs from bedrooms. Research shows more than 1.5 hours of daily TV is a risk factor for obesity.
- 5. HAVE I ASKED MY CHILD WHICH SPORTS THEY MIGHT LIKE TO LEARN?**
Most kids get funneled into the same, small handful of team sports. But there are 120 sports offered across the U.S., and some providers and sites might just be a few miles away. There's a sport for every kid. Internet tools can help you explore
- 6. HAVE I CONSIDERED ACTIVITIES THAT LIMIT PEER COMPARISON?**
Rock-climbing. Skiing. Snowshoeing. Martial arts. Archery. Individual sports can feel safe, especially for kids with special needs. Then there are more recreational team games, like Ultimate Frisbee.

7. IS THE PROGRAM I'M CONSIDERING FOCUSED ON SELF-IMPROVEMENT?

Kids lacking physical confidence especially benefit from programs that foster a “mastery climate” in which development, not outcomes, is the goal. Ask programs for their mission statement — and how they define success.

8. HAVE I THOUGHT ABOUT VOLUNTEERING FOR A RECREATION BOARD?

Want more inclusive, development-focused policies in youth sports that make room for kids like yours? Do something about it and run for a town recreation board or youth sport program board. Get in there and change things.

9. HAVE I ADVOCATED FOR QUALITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECESS?

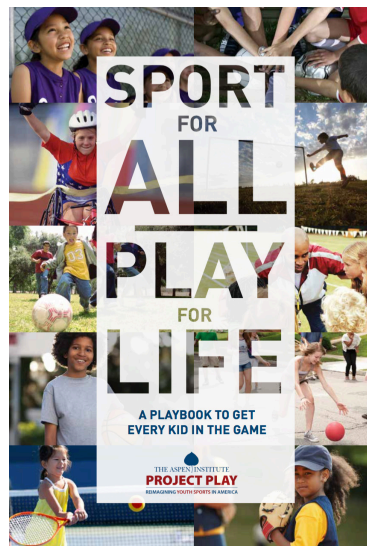
These settings can engage all kids. But they're under-resourced. The median P.E. budget for schools is \$764 per year. Encourage your school board to make P.E. and recess available on a daily basis, led by trained instructors.

10. HAVE I LOOKED FOR LOW-COST, “LEARN TO PLAY” OPPORTUNITIES?

Organized leagues today can be costly, and a full-season commitment can cause a kid who doesn't like the sport to turn off to sports in general. Find programs and camps that offer sport sampling, ideally at low or no cost.

SCORE/BOXES CHECKED:

- 9-10 = Ideal scenario for kids
- 6-8 = Solid foundation
- 3-5 = Much more can be done
- 1-2 = Much more should be done



Questions distilled from *Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game*, by the Aspen Institute's Project Play, which developed its framework with input from 300+ thought leaders.

Additional experts and resources were consulted in the development of the checklists. Background on and resources supporting the checklists are at: www.projectplay.us