

What If I Don't Like Sports?

Not everyone likes organized sports or team sports. If this sounds like you, don't sweat it.

We're going to talk about what keeps some kids from liking sports. With a few changes, you might find out that there is a sport out there that you could like. But if not, we'll suggest other fun ways to stay active.

Learning About Sports

Sometimes, kids feel that they don't like sports because they might not understand how to play them or they haven't had much practice doing them.

Sports can seem complicated because of all the rules and special equipment. Even the fields and courts they're played on come in different shapes and sizes and have confusing-looking lines drawn on them.

People spend many years learning about favorite sports and practicing how to do them well. So don't feel bad if you don't know the difference between a "corner kick" and a "goal kick" in soccer. If you want to learn more about a sport, you might ask your mom or dad about camps or programs that introduce kids to new sports. These may be better than just joining a team that starts playing games right away without much explaining first.

Gym class and intramural programs at school also can be a way to try new sports with a mix of kids. Another way to learn about a sport is to watch instructional videos or DVDs or check out library books that explain the rules and offer suggestions for kids learning to play them.

If you have an older friend or family member who's good at a sport, you might ask him or her to help you practice. Some sports are just good to understand, even if you never want to play on a competitive team. For instance, you might play softball or volleyball, just for fun, at a summer picnic.

A Bad Sports Experience

Some kids don't like organized sports because they were once on a team and they didn't have fun. Maybe all of the other kids seemed to know what they were doing and you felt unsure. Or maybe you didn't like the pressure of competing against other teams, where you know one team is going to win and the other is going to lose. Competition can bring out some intense emotions.

Sometimes, kids on a team get so fired up about winning that they may yell or get upset at a player who makes a mistake. This can be stressful — especially if it's you who made a mistake!

But everybody makes mistakes sometimes and no one should tease you for it. If they do, it's a good idea to talk with the coach or your mom or dad. Sometimes kids need to be reminded about being understanding and respectful to each other.

Parents and coaches also can get upset about a game situation and put too much pressure on kids. Kids might feel confused and stressed out during games if they're not quite sure what they should be doing.

But team sports also can be a great experience. Kids get to improve their skills and feel that team spirit as they work together toward a common goal.

If you've had a bad experience with a team, maybe it's time to try a new sport or a new league. Some leagues and programs emphasize skill building over competition — and some leagues don't even keep score!



Buddy Up

Did you ever notice that you have more fun when you're with a friend? This is especially true when you're trying a new sport or activity. So if you want to try ice skating, or you're wondering if you might be good at tennis, grab a friend and find out together!

The Right Sport

There are dozens of sports, so you might not have found the one for you yet. Lots of kids try soccer and baseball. But what if your best sport is going to be volleyball, cheerleading, or gymnastics? You'll have to try it and find out.

Some kids are naturally graceful. Others are strong. And still others have great aim. Different sports require different skills, so you'll want to try different sports to find one that suits you. Some activities you might not think of as sports, such as karate or cheerleading, but they are great for staying active.

If you don't like being on a team that much, you might consider individual sports. An individual sport means a kid does the sport on his or her own. You can do these sports competitively or just for the fun of doing them.

Here's a list of some individual sports:

- swimming
- diving
- running
- ice skating
- wrestling
- gymnastics
- golf
- tennis
- skateboarding
- in-line skating
- biking
- martial arts
- bowling

What's the Big Deal About Sports?

You might wonder why grownups want you to try sports and be active. There's a good reason: Playing sports is a great form of exercise and exercise keeps your body healthy.

We've already talked about the many sports to choose from, but there's even more good news — many other nonsport activities can provide exercise and keep you active, including:

- playing at a playground
- raking leaves
- jumping rope
- dancing around your bedroom
- walking your dog
- working in the garden
- washing the car
- making a snowman

You also might find that by limiting your use of electronics — TV, computer, and cell phone — you'll just naturally be more active.

So, no, you don't **have** to play a sport, but you might still find one you like. The most important thing is to be an active kid.

And you have a world of activities to choose from. Somewhere out there is a special one that's just right for you!

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