

What to Ask the Your Child's Sports Coach During a Preseason Meeting: The 10 Best Questions

Highlight

Evaluate your child's sports coach and ensure a quality experience for your child by asking these expert-based questions.

The 10 Best Questions

Keep this short version in your hand during the meeting as your question guide. Experts' best answers are below.

1. What is your main focus this season? Why are you coaching?
2. What is your philosophy about winning? How important is it to you?
3. What training and experience do you have for coaching youth sports? Are you a certified coach?
4. Describe your safety and first aid training. Are you trained to recognize and respond to concussions?
5. What is your protocol and experience in handling medical emergencies during games/practices/matches?
6. Will my child have adult supervision at all times?
7. What is your policy regarding missed practices or games?
8. Is there a minimum playing time?
9. What is your policy for handling bullying and sexual abuse?
10. What's the best way to contact you during the season?

The Golden Question

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

Take your pick (or write your own question) for your own circumstances.

The 10 Best Answers

1. **What is your main focus this season? Why are you coaching?**

Start with this neutral question, asked in a friendly voice. This approach will encourage the coach to be honest and non-defensive in answering tougher questions later.

The National Alliance for Youth Sports says, “If the word ‘fun’ isn’t in the answer, be on alert.” Karen Partlow of the American Sports Education Program agrees. “Listen for an emphasis on skill development. What are you going to teach my child?”

2. What is your philosophy about winning? How important is it to you?

Everyone wants to win but it’s not the only goal, says the National Alliance for Youth Sports. Will the coach be a good role model of sportsmanship or routinely shout and squabble with referees and players?

Many youth sports coaches strive to win every game. Unfortunately, this mindset may keep your injured child in the game. On her blog Mom’sTeam.com, Brooke De Lench asks it her way: “Will you promise to always put my child’s safety ahead of winning?”

Related: [How to Spot a Bad Youth Sports Coach: Ask These 10 Best Questions](#)

3. What training and experience do you have for coaching youth sports? Are you a certified coach?

You want details on the coach’s prior experience, including the children’s ages and sports. The National Alliance for Youth Sports says, “These are always fair questions. Don’t assume an experienced coach is trained and certified.”

Dr. Karl Knopf, a physical education instructor in California, warns, “The answer, ‘I played in high school’ isn’t good enough especially if high school was 20 years ago.”

Related: [10 Best Questions About Children’s Sports Programs](#)

4. Describe your safety and first aid training. Are you trained to recognize and respond to concussions?

Insist on a well-educated coach for the following highest-risk sports for concussions: football, soccer, lacrosse, wrestling, basketball and softball. Concussions are often difficult to spot right away (because not all victims are knocked unconscious) but are potentially deadly.

Also ask:

- Do you know all the safety rules?
- Do you require protective equipment?
- How frequently do you check equipment for proper fit?

Related: [Ask Your Child's Coach About Concussions: The 10 Best Questions](#)

5. What is your protocol and experience in handling medical emergencies during games/practices/matches?

The National Alliance for Youth Sports says, “The coach should have a game plan for handling injuries and emergencies on the field. If not, insist they develop one, and follow-up with them to be sure they are prepared.”

Ask more questions:

What happens when a player is injured on the field?

Who's responsible for calling 9-1-1?

Is an automatic external defibrillator (AED) on site for cardiac emergencies?

6. Will my child have adult supervision at all times?

Is too easy to simply answer “yes,” so ask follow-up questions:

Do you have any assistants?

If so, what is their training? Their safety and medical preparedness?

Do you need me and other parents to help out?

If so, when and how can I/we volunteer?

7. What is your policy regarding missed practices or games?

Some coaches are flexible and others aren't. It's better to know upfront and plan accordingly.

If you ask this question during the preseason meeting with other parents present, you may eliminate misunderstandings or accusations of favoritism later on.

8. Is there a minimum playing time?

No child relishes the dreaded bench. Studies show children overwhelmingly prefer to play for a losing team than warm the bench for a winning team.

According to sports psychologist Dr. Chris Stankovich, “This is the No. 1 point of contention between parents and youth sports coaches.”

You can avoid conflicts by understanding the coach's viewpoint says longtime youth coach John O'Sullivan and author of *Changing the Game*. "Always remember the coach is balancing the needs of 16 players, not just your child's."

9. What is your policy for handling bullying and sexual abuse?

Did you know that the Department of Justice's statistics state that a child in America is sexually abused every two minutes? Unfortunately, according to the National Council of Youth Sports, "Sports and other youth activities present an ideal opportunity for abusers."

The majority of incidents are not reported which explains the National Alliance for Youth Sports advice: "A parent should never feel ashamed to ask this question."

The best coaches will be happy to discuss this topic because they have proactively already developed an action plan.

Related: [Know the Warning Signs of a Bad Youth Sports Coach by Asking These 10 Best Questions](#)

Ask:

Can a child anonymously report abuse?

Do you use the two-adult rule to prevent possible sexual abuse?

Finally, ask the program director, *not the coach*, how children are protected from a coach who is abusive or a bully.

Related: [What to Ask a Youth Sports Program Director: The 10 Best Questions](#)

10. What's the best way to contact you during the season?

Or ask:

Do you encourage parents to contact you?

If so, do you prefer calls, emails or texting?

What's open for discussion?

Are any topics off-limits?

Will you provide mid-season progress reports or any other feedback about my child?

Master coach O'Sullivan explains, "Like school, if the teacher doesn't send home progress reports, you're bound to ask, 'What's going on?'"

The Golden Question

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

Take your pick (or write your own question) for your own circumstances.

- If you have a substitute, will parents be notified in advance?
- What are your plans for tournaments and the projected costs?
- Is your kid on this team? If so, how will you avoid favoritism?

QDoc's Q-Tipster

Think the coach isn't telling the full truth? Check the coach's answers with other parents who know this coach. See [How Good is This Sports Coach? Ask Other Parents these 10 Best Questions.](#)

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