



## 10 Top Tips for Parents & Educators

# FAIR PLAY AND FRIENDLY COMPETITION

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit [nationalcollege.com](https://nationalcollege.com).

## 10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

# FAIR PLAY AND FRIENDLY COMPETITION

In school sports, fair play and friendly competition are important for character development. Fair play embodies respect and integrity while good-natured competition balances rivalry with camaraderie. This guide addresses potential challenges – like the pressure to win – and offers practical tips on instilling values of fair play and cultivating a positive sporting environment for young athletes.

- ### 1 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Parents, carers and teachers should try to exemplify fair play; demonstrating respect for opponents, coaches and officials. Children frequently learn by observing adult behaviour, so displaying a sense of fair play sets a powerful precedent for them to follow in their own actions on and off the field.
- ### 2 EFFORT OVER OUTCOME

Encourage children to focus on giving it their all, rather than basing their entire performance on whether they win or not. This fosters a growth mindset, where the journey and the process of improvement are valued just as much as the end result. It also reduces the pressure to “win at all costs”, which can be a harmful outlook in some situations.
- ### 3 SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Establish clear guidelines and expectations for behaviour before, during and after sporting events. Ensuring that children understand what is considered acceptable conduct helps prevent misunderstandings and promotes a positive, respectful atmosphere.
- ### 4 HIGHLIGHT COOPERATION

Underline the value of teamwork and cooperation in achieving success. Success isn't just about individual achievements, but about how well the team communicates, encourages each other and works together towards a common goal. A strong focus on cooperation fosters camaraderie and mutual support among players.
- ### 5 DISCUSS ACCEPTING DEFEAT

Help children to understand that they can't win every contest – that losing occasionally is a natural part of both sport and life in general. Teaching them to accept defeat gracefully and learn from their mistakes promotes resilience, humility and the ability to bounce back stronger from setbacks. Losing a loss in one's sports is also an admirable trait and can help children and young people garner respect in their future life.
- ### 6 ENCOURAGE INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

Promote an environment where all children feel welcome and valued, regardless of their skill level. Prioritise the importance of participation and enjoyment over winning, creating a supportive atmosphere where every child can thrive and develop their abilities without unnecessary pressure.
- ### 7 FOSTER CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

Teach children how to resolve conflicts peacefully and respectfully, both on and off the field. Providing them with strategies for effective communication and problem-solving helps build stronger relationships and empowers their ability to navigate challenges, which can be a huge boon to them throughout their adult lives.
- ### 8 TEACH RESPECT

Emphasise to children the importance of respecting everyone involved in the game, regardless of the outcome. Respect for your teammates, opponents, coaches and officials helps to create a positive, inclusive sports environment where everyone can feel valued and appreciated.
- ### 9 GIVE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Offer feedback that focuses on areas for improvement rather than outright criticism. Praise what a child has done well and advise on how to improve, rather than simply pointing out shortcomings. Encouraging a growth mindset and highlighting progress helps children to develop confidence, resilience and a desire to continue striving for excellence.
- ### 10 CELEBRATE GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

Try to avoid solely focusing attention on children's physical performance on the field. Recognise and celebrate acts of sportsmanship, fair play and kindness, too. By spotlighting positive behaviour, you reinforce the importance of good conduct and inspire children to practice this in the future, creating a culture of respect and camaraderie within the sports community that does wonders for morale.

**Meet Our Expert**  
 Caroline Holder is a PE consultant based in Staffordshire. Having worked across all age ranges delivering PE in schools, she now trains teachers and works with schools to develop their provision and ensure it achieves maximum impact for pupils. She passionately believes in the impact that PE, sport, and activity can have on children.

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Source: see full reference list on guide page or <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/fair-play-and-friendly-competition>

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According to Statista, 69% of children currently engage in competitive sport, either in or out of school 🏆🏀

Thanks to the Euros, it's very possible that percentage will see an uptick in the coming weeks. Enjoying sport and revelling in healthy competition can have a fantastic impact on children's development – but when presented with the idea of winning side 🏆 emotions can sometimes run high, and feelings can be hurt 🥀

A healthy approach to any kind of game or contest – not just the sporting variety – is an important quality to teach to children and young people; and our **#WakeUpWednesday** guide can help you to do that. Our list of expert tips explains how to emphasise the value of playing fair and dealing with both victory and defeat in a reasonable, mature manner.

Please [click here](#) to download the guide.