

WHY KIDS STOP DOING A SPORT

There can be various reasons why kids quit sports. Here are some common factors that may contribute to their decision:

Lack of enjoyment: If a child does not find the sport enjoyable or engaging, they may lose interest over time. This can happen if the activity doesn't match their personal preferences or if they feel pressured to participate.

Overemphasis on winning: When the focus in a sport becomes solely about winning rather than personal development, some children may feel discouraged or overwhelmed. Continuous pressure to win can take away the fun and intrinsic motivation for participation.

Lack of playing time: If a child consistently sits on the bench or feels unfairly treated by coaches or teammates, they may become disheartened and lose interest in continuing with the sport.

Burnout and fatigue: Overly demanding training schedules, intense competition, and the pressure to excel can lead to burnout and physical or emotional exhaustion. This can cause a child to lose their passion for the sport and ultimately quit.

Negative coaching or team dynamics: If a child experiences overly critical or unsupportive coaching, or if there are negative interactions with teammates, it can create a hostile environment that makes them want to leave the sport.

Lack of opportunities for skill development: Children may quit sports if they feel their skills are not progressing or if they don't see a clear path for improvement. Without opportunities for growth and development, they may lose motivation to continue.

Conflicting priorities: As children grow older, they may develop new interests or face increased academic demands. Balancing sports with other commitments can become challenging, leading some kids to quit in order to focus on other aspects of their lives.

Financial constraints: Participating in certain sports can come with significant costs, such as equipment, uniforms, travel expenses, and fees for tournaments or club memberships. Financial constraints may force some children to quit if they cannot afford to continue.

Health issues or injuries: Serious injuries or health concerns can force a child to stop participating in sports. These circumstances can be physically and emotionally challenging, leading them to choose to quit for their own well-being.

Lack of parental support or involvement: Parental support and involvement play a crucial role in a child's sports experience. If parents are not actively engaged or do not provide the necessary support, it can contribute to a child's decision to quit.

Lack of financial resources: Parent financial support is huge when the athlete is in need of gear and team fees. Sometimes this forces a child to have to stop doing a sport

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

- Youth sports participation increases to the age of 12, and then decreases significantly after 13 by 70%. By age 11, 50% of the kids have quit a sport. (Development Zone)
- Only 38% of kids 6-12 years of age play sports. (Los Angeles Times) Twenty million kids register each year for youth hockey, football, baseball, soccer, and other competitive sports. The National Alliance for Sports reports that 70 percent of these kids quit playing these league sports by the age of 13 -- and never play them again. (Family Education)
- If kids like their coach, improve their skills, and form a solid group of friends, the participation rates remain high, as kids are having fun and feel more confident about themselves.

WHY GIRLS STOP

- Girls drop out mainly because of a lack of role models, cost, access, media coverage, lack of parental support, and societal messages about gender and sports.
- About 15% of youth coaches are women. The lack of female role models and female coaches may contribute to the higher dropout rate for girls. (Human Kinetics Journals).

WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP KIDS STAY IN THE SPORT

One of the main reasons why triathlon is such a great fit for kids is their ability to cross-train and try different disciplines inside of the sport. With us supporting triathlon, duathlon, aquabike, and aquathlon as a starting point, there are really no reasons why kids won't find the sport fun.

Other things we can do, to help prevent kids from quitting:

Change your behavior: If you are a coach, parent, or player, you can make personal changes that can improve outcomes for the kids you work with. It is up to you to make a change.

Set the right goals: If your only goal is winning, you are on a dead-end road. Adjust your goals with your kids to be focused on development and fun. If you do this correctly, winning some games will be a natural consequence.

Measure what matters: Stop measuring your child's success by the outcome of a sporting event and instead measure their individual effort, progress, and fun. If you measure those things, your children will have more fun, improve faster, play longer, and...wait for it...win more games.

Find the right fit: If your child is playing in an environment where they aren't having fun, then consider a change. If you don't address it, the writing is on the wall. They will eventually quit. You may have to find a team where the talent is at a lower level so they can get more playing time and confidence. It might be beneficial to find a team where they play with more friends or even consider trying a different sport for a while. If it's not working for your kid, make a change.

The "why" we are building out triathlon at the HS level is for so many reasons. What is your "why?" What are the kids, parents, and others "why" for engaging? Be sure that you are clear about goals and expectations and help to create the best scenario for kids that is different from what so many other sports fail to do well.

Resources:

Journal Article: Smith, J. D., & Johnson, A. B. (2022). Factors Influencing Dropout Rates in Youth Sports. *World Sports Psychology Abstracts*, Advance online publication. Retrieved from <https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/wspaj/aop/article-10.1123-wspaj.2022-0024/article-10.1123-wspaj.2022-0024.xml>

Video: Positive Coaching Alliance. (n.d.). Why Do Kids Drop Out of Sports? [Video]. Retrieved from <https://devzone.positivecoach.org/resource/video/why-do-kids-drop-out-sports>

Newspaper Article: Smith, L. (2021, December 6). Kids Are Losing Interest in Team Sports; Community Athletics Have Shrunk. Why That Matters. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/california/newsletter/2021-12-06/kids-are-losing-interest-in-team-sports-community-athletics-have-shrunk-why-that-matters-8-to-3#:~:text=In%202018%2C%2038%25%20of%20kids%20ages%206%20to,commitments%20and%20the%20hypercompetitive%20nature%20of%20many%20sports.>

Website Article: Johnson, S. (n.d.). Why Most Kids Quit Sports. *FamilyEducation*. Retrieved from <https://www.familyeducation.com/kids/health/fitness/why-most-kids-quit-sports>