



## Hockey Rink Etiquette For Parents

### 10 things to keep in mind while watching from the stands:

1. Let the coaches' coach. If you are telling your son or daughter – or any other player for that matter – to do something different from what their coach is telling them, you create distraction and confusion.
2. It is very unnerving for many young players to try and perform difficult tasks on the ice on the spur of the moment when parents are yelling at them from the sidelines. Let the kids play. If they have been well coached, they should know what to do on the ice. If they make a mistake, chances are they will learn from it. Limit your cheering to positive encouragement.
3. Do not discuss the play of specific young players'. How many times do you hear comments such as, "I don't know how that boy made this team..." or "she's just not fast enough...". Negative comments and attitudes are hurtful and totally unnecessary and kill team harmony, which is critical to a fun successful season.
4. Discourage such toxic behavior by not participating. Listen patiently and then address issues in a thoughtful, positive way. Speak to the positive qualities of a player, family or coach. It tends to make the outspoken critics back off, at least temporarily.
5. Do your best not to complain about your son or daughter's coaches to other parents. Once that starts, it is like a disease that spreads. Before you know it, parents are talking constantly in a negative way. That is not to say you cannot have a legitimate concern, however, if you have what you truly feel is a legitimate concern with your child's coach – arrange an appointment to meet and discuss with the team staff. Be considerate of the coach and pick an appropriate time for discussion on the matter. Immediately after a game is generally not the right time.
6. Avoid making any negative comments about players on the other team. This should be simple: we are talking about youngsters, not adults who are being paid to play professionally. Besides being tasteless and classless, these kinds of comments can be hurtful to the young person involved and to their family as well.
7. Try to keep interaction with parents on the other team as healthy and positive as possible. Who's kidding whom? You want your child's team to win. So do they. But that should not make us take leave of our senses, especially our common sense. Be courteous 'till it hurts; avoid the 'tit for tat' syndrome. Parents on the 'other' team are not the enemy. Neither are the boys or girls on the other team. We should work to check any negative feelings at the door before we hit the arena.
8. What is the easiest thing to do in the youth sports world? Criticize the referees. Oh, there are times when calls are missed, absolutely. And that can, unfortunately, directly affect the outcome of a contest. Do not publicly question an officials' judgment and never their honesty or integrity. Outbursts from parents on the sideline made toward the referees, only signal to our own children on the ice that they can blame the refs for anything that goes wrong. Learning early in life to make excuses and to blame others is not a formula for success in sports – or life.
9. We all feel things and are apt to be tempted to say things to others – fellow parents, officials, our own kids – in the 'heat of the moment'. But we don't excuse athletes for doing inappropriate things in the 'heat of the moment' (there are penalties, suspensions, etc.) so we should apply similar standards to our own behavior at the rink. Remember that children learn best by example. Applaud good plays by your team and by members of the opposing team.
10. The parking lot is not the time to 'fan the flames'. Whether it is a coach's decision, a referee's call, a comment that was made, let it go. Don't harass the coach or an official or a parent on the other team after the game is over. Go home, relax, and unwind. Talk positively with your child. Many of us have made the mistake of "chewing out" our own son or daughter on the way home for perceived poor play. The ride home is sometimes as important as the game itself. Make that time a good memory for your son or daughter by discussing as many positives as you can about him/her, their coach and their teammates.