



Parents: A Pre-Game Routine for Parents

Unlock your child's potential on the field with our expert-backed pre-game routine for parents. From stress management to goal-setting, discover how to support and inspire your young athlete. Game-changing strategies await!



COACHING

As parents, we play a crucial role in ensuring our children show up to a game ready to compete and feel inspired. While the result of the game does not matter (this is youth sports and lots of learning happens from losing too) we should want our children to always bring a want-to-win, competitive mindset to games.

Developing a Pre-Game Routine for Parents is an essential step to support our children. Aside from things like making sure your child has the proper nutrition before a game, there are a handful of things to consider as you put together a Pre-Game Routine that works for you, your child, and your family.

- **Be conscious of how you are feeling.** Is there a bit of extra stress in your body because it's a big game such as a tournament final or a cross-town rival? While it's normal for parents to feel a sense of stress because we care and want our children to do well, we must not let our children feel this stress. Take a moment before you interact with your child on game day to reflect on how you are feeling and develop a strategy to manage yourself if the stress has crept in. Maybe it's as simple as a few deep breaths or a statement you say out loud to yourself such as *"I need to be calm and supportive and bring some joy to the game."*

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- **Have a checklist for getting out the door.** There's nothing worse than a frenzied rush out the door screaming reminders about water bottles and uniforms to put your child in a less-than-optimal frame of mind for a game. Whether it's a mental checklist or paper posted by the door, develop a plan for leaving the house prepared.
- **Support your child's goals for the game.** Regardless of the age or skill level of your child, they should have some goals for the game. For a young, novice player maybe it's to stay focused when they are in the game or to dribble with speed three times during the game. For an older player maybe it's to keep their head up when they have the ball, to stay focused and move off the ball. For most children, it's best to have this conversation the day before the game or over breakfast, not while they are in the backseat and you're peering in the rear-view mirror trying not to be stressed yourself! Once your child has decided on their game goals (narrow them to a few words so they remember them) – remind them so they are front of mind as they head off to their team.
- **Develop a special sendoff tradition.** Maybe it's a high five or a special handshake. Come up with something special you say or do that is an indication they are leaving you, joining their teammates, and it's game time! For my daughter, it became the same statement: **WORK HARD, BE A GOOD TEAMMATE, HAVE FUN....LOVE YOU!** For games I couldn't make in person, this would often be the last message she saw on her phone before she put it away to start warmup.

While we likely understand the importance of teams having a Pre-Game Routine to properly prepare for a game, putting a Pre-Game Routine for Parents in place can be a great step towards supporting our children, helping them feel inspired and ready to compete.

About the author

Skye Eddy is the founder of **Soccer Parenting** and **The Sideline Project**, aimed at engaging parents to make youth sports better. A former professional player, Skye was a collegiate and youth All-American goalkeeper, Defensive MVP of the NCAA Final Four (1993), and State Champion track athlete. Skye has coached extensively at the grassroots, youth, and collegiate levels. An MBA graduate of the University of Richmond, Skye has earned her U.S. Soccer B License, the National Goalkeeper License, and is a Coach Educator for U.S. Soccer and United Soccer Coaches.