



PARENT CHECKLIST



FINDING PATHWAYS TO PLAY

FOR TEENS (AGES 13-17) WHO DO NOT PLAY SPORTS

Data shows that kids are most likely to quit sports before age 13. Here are ten questions to ask yourself that can help get your teenager moving.

1. HAVE YOU ASKED WHY YOUR TEEN STOPPED PLAYING?

While some kids have never played sports by this age, the vast majority have at some point – and quit. Try to understand what happened. Bad experience with a coach? Lack of playing time? Performance anxiety? No friends on the team? Then chart your course.

2. HAVE YOU ASKED WHAT NEW SPORTS LOOK FUN?

Social media and YouTube expose teens to a world of eye-catching activities – and there are more options than ever. From pickleball to Spikeball, parkour to Ninja Warrior obstacle courses, Ultimate frisbee to competitive hip hop dance, there's probably an opening.

3. DOES THEIR SCHOOL OFFER NO-CUT TEAMS?

At large public schools especially, it can be hard to make teams, much less get playing time, in sports like basketball, soccer or baseball that some kids have played since pre-K. Others traditionally make room for all who want to participate, such as track and field.

4. DOES THE SCHOOL HELP CUT PLAYERS FIND ALTERNATIVES?

The [most innovative schools](#) recognize the supply of experiences in some sports may not meet the demand for them. [Some offer intramurals](#). Others [partner with local clubs and recreation departments](#) to find or create opportunities for them to keep playing.

5. CAN A STUDENT START AN AFTERSCHOOL CLUB?

Interscholastic competition – school vs. school teams sanctioned by a state federation – isn't the only form of sport that schools should offer. Ask if students or teachers can start their clubs for activities of shared interest such as biking, surfing or martial arts.

6. DOES THE P.E. PROGRAM MAKE A MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTION?

Only 8 states [require P.E. in every grade](#) and the reality is many schools fall short due to limited staffing and emphasis on academic testing. Still, ask: What's the curriculum? Is the focus on physical literacy, fitness, sport sampling, mental and emotional well-being?



7. DO LOCAL FITNESS CLUBS OFFER STUDENT DISCOUNTS?

Demand for fitness activities and yoga is strong among high school students, [Project Play's survey shows](#). And the older they are, the more they desire these activities. So call around. Many private clubs offer great rates for students, along with gyms for pickup ball.

8. HAS YOUR TEEN CONSIDERED UNIFIED SPORTS?

Unified Sports bring students with and without intellectual disabilities together on the same team to train, compete and build friendships. The [Special Olympics](#) initiative is growing rapidly across U.S. schools in soccer, basketball, flag football, bowling and other sports.

9. HAVE YOU ASKED THEM TO PLAY WITH YOU?

Golf. Tennis. Hiking. Volleyball. Skiing and snowboarding. Family activities can be plenty fun and you moving your body matters – parents are role models. Casual play also leaves ample room for schoolwork, the most common reason that high school students don't join teams.

10. HAVE YOU USED TECH FOR GOOD?

Tech is part of the problem – getting teens off social media. But digital tools also can offer solutions. Consult search marketplaces to find camps and sport options. Tap AI chatbots for ideas, customized for your teen. Use fitness and activity trackers and reward them for steps taken.

SCORE/BOXES CHECKED:

9-10 = IDEAL SCENARIO FOR KIDS

6-8 = SOLID FOUNDATION

3-5 = MUCH MORE CAN BE DONE

1-2 = MUCH MORE SHOULD BE DONE

DISCOVER RESOURCES FOR SPORTS PARENTS



Questions distilled from *Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game*, by the Aspen Institute's Project Play, which developed its framework with input from 300+ thought leaders.

Additional experts and resources were consulted in the development of the checklists. Background on and resources supporting the checklists are at: as.pn/parentchecklists

