

Welcome to Junior Team Tennis

Dear Tennis Team Parents,

This Parent's Guide to Junior Tennis is designed to help answer frequently-asked questions, and to try to explain the expectations for players and parents regarding their behavior during the matches. I found this document online, and not all of it will be applicable, but I thought it was pretty good overall.

The attached information is not meant to be all-encompassing, but we hope it will be helpful. It will not answer your every question, nor will it alert you to all the issues that you might have concerning your child's development as a tennis player. As you progress through junior tennis, you will likely want to collect copies of *The Code*, and *A Friend at Court*, both of which can be found online.

We know that it's really difficult sometimes to be a parent on the sidelines during a match. We feel for our kids when they are disappointed. The message in the information below is basically meant to convey that it's not our job to coach them during their match, but to support them and make them feel good about their efforts, and to give them positive encouragement.

While we are watching our kids play their matches, what they see when they look over at us is our body language. We all know that they are going to miss easy shots, they are going to hit balls that are out, and they are going to have balls called out on them they, (and/or you,) think are in, (to name just a few things that will potentially frustrate them during their matches.) Try your best not to react and always try to keep your body language positive. It's hard sometimes. We are so in the mode of being our kids' advocates, but when they are in their matches, they need to be their own, and we are simply there to enjoy their good shots and give them our support.

One thing that we will be bound to encounter during the season are some parents and players whose behavior is not so great, and they may break many of the guidelines below. All I can say is that everyone can only control their own behavior. It's not our job to police anyone else but ourselves, and a good rule is to try to not to let anything they do upset us. They are not within our control, and it's better for all of us and our players if we just stay focused on the tennis and our own actions and try to ignore the rest.

So below are some guidelines for players and parents that are not often taught in typical tennis lessons. Hopefully they will be helpful to you and your child.

FOR THE PLAYERS

Below are guidelines for you to follow during your matches.

- Introduce yourself to your opponent.
- Compete at your highest level all of the time and let the chips fall where they may. Your self-esteem is not linked to the outcome of the match.
- Be proud of yourself for competing.
- A ball that is 99% out is 100% in. When in doubt, always give the point to your opponent.
- If you make an error on a call, correct it right away.
- During the warm-up, hit with control and warm-up all of your strokes. This is not the time to hit the ball away from your opponent. (Save your winners for when it counts!)
- It is the server's responsibility to clearly call the set score before the start of the game and the game score before the start of each point. If the server does not call the score, the receiver should confirm the score so there is no misunderstanding.
- After each point, return the balls to the server; not at or away from him or her. If the server already has two balls, you should hold on to the third one, unless they ask for it.
- If the serve is a let, the receiver should return the ball back to the server and not wait for the server to retrieve another ball.
- Any out or let calls must be made right away. If you wait until the end of the point, the point stands as played.
- Conduct yourself in a manner that makes the match enjoyable for your opponent.
- Avoid conflict with your opponent by concentrating on what you are doing. How are you going to play the next point? Are you breathing regularly and deeply? These things eliminate negative energy.
- If you respond to negative energy from your opponent, you create conflict.
- Swearing, racket throwing, abuse of the facility and court equipment, and gamesmanship will not be tolerated.
- Assume that everyone on the court is doing their best to make good calls, but we all fail sometimes, and make the wrong call, and in almost every case, it's simply a mistake which does not decide the match, so do not get upset over a perceived bad call. Remember that you also mistakenly make them on occasion.
- Play the best you can today and you are a winner.
- Always shake hands with your opponent. If you have anything to say, make it positive. Do not put down your opponent or your own playing.

Have Fun! Always remember that tennis is a great game and a lot of fun. You're out there to have fun. Enjoy yourself!

FOR THE PARENTS

Below are guidelines for you to follow during your children's matches.

- Remember, tennis is just a game. While you may want your child's skills to improve, you also want your child to enjoy the game. It's a game for lifetime.
- Don't put pressure on your child to win. Instead, create a supportive environment in which your child wants to improve his or her game.
- When your child has a private lesson with a pro, consider watching it from a distance in order to give your child and the pro some space.
- Make sure that your child knows the "rules of the game," and what he or she may and may not do during a match.
- Never call the lines or the score for your child during a match. Let your child call the lines and the score. It is his or her responsibility to do so.
- Don't coach your child during a match.
- You should be supportive of and encourage your child, but allow your child to make his or her own on court decisions for the development of the "person."
- Don't applaud or cheer when your child's opponent makes a mistake during the point or double faults.
- Applaud all good points for both sides.
- Treat your child the same way whether he or she wins or loses.
- Have fun watching your child play.
- Look relaxed, calm, positive and energized on the sidelines. Your attitude will help the child play better.
- Let the coach do the coaching. Too much input can confuse the child.
- Be there when your child loses or gets discouraged. Be an understanding listener, not a fixer.
- At the same time, give the child some space when he or she loses. Your child will want to be alone for a while, and then he or she will be okay. Chances are he or she will not want to talk about the match in the car on the way home.
- Keep your sense of humor. When you laugh and have fun, your child's stress level takes a big drop.
- Encourage your child to pursue realistic dreams and make sure you are not living out your dreams through his or her tennis.
- Treat your child as an individual instead of comparing his or her progress with that of other children.
- Use only positive motivation.