

5 Ways to Support Your Child in Minor Hockey Tryouts

5 min read



Athletes perform best when they feel calm, confident, and prepared.

Tryout season is here. Anxiety levels are up for both athletes and parents. We as parents want what's best for our kids, and for them to be happy. Tryouts can be a tricky and difficult time for all. It's easy to feel unsure of what to say or how to act before tryouts. Athletes perform best when they feel calm, confident, and prepared. As a parent, you can have a positive impact on your child as they go through the tryout experience.

Here are five ways to have the best and most successful tryout experience with your child:

First, **praise their effort**. Athletes can control two things: their attitude and their effort. By praising your child's effort you are increasing their confidence. Confidence comes when one has given great effort towards their preparation. As your child practices before tryouts begin, be sure to tell them how proud you are of the effort they are giving. Coaches love effort and great effort is something that will help your child stand out from the crowd. Praising effort will reinforce your child's belief in him or herself. We love sports because the mirror life and teach our kids many valuable life lessons. Continue to praise your child's effort in all that they do. As a parent, you will be giving them one of the most valuable resources in life: self-confidence.

Secondly, **praise your child's courage.** For some tryouts won't be a problem and their spot on the team is already secured. For others, this can be a time of great fear and concern. Just by showing the desire to compete and tryout for a spot your child is showing courage. Think back to how nervous you were when you were the same age. I know I was always nervous and self-conscious before events like tryouts. By praising the courage your child is displaying, you will further enhance their confidence. Tell your child you love him, are proud of him, and the result of the tryout will never change that. Sometimes kids don't know when they are showing courage, so be the parent that acknowledges it in your child.

Thirdly, **teach them the art of visualization.** Visualization is a tool that many collegiate, olympic, and professional athletes utilize. Before tryouts begin have your son or daughter ask their coach what specific areas they need to improve upon, and what they will be asked to do during tryouts. Then have your child visualize these skills mentally every night before tryouts begin. The mental training involved with sports is just beginning to take off. It will be the next big thing in sports. By visualizing themselves performing well in tryouts, your child is training their muscles to repeat the process when it's live. Visualization and mental preparation could be just the thing which helps your child get the spot they want.

Fourthly, **emphasize the person over the player.** Don't let your identity as a parent be tied to their talent level as a player. The quality of your parenting skills is reflected in the type of teammate your child is and how coachable they are. Please make sure your child knows you love them for who they are as an individual. Always make it a priority to cheer for the first name and not the last name. Putting pressure on a child to live up to a "standard" or "reputation" will only increase their anxiety. If your child knows you love them and support them for who they are, they will have the confidence to perform to the best of their ability.

Lastly, **offer to practice with your child.** Go to a location and spend time working on the basic fundamental skills. There is no need to work on the flashy, exciting play. Just master the basics. Parents who work with and help teach their kids the fundamentals are setting their child up for success. (It's always a great idea to ask the coach what drills you can work with your child on at home). Start by working with your child, but make sure you are giving them drills they can master and work on by themselves. The most important thing is to encourage your child and their efforts. Once they feel confident and empowered, they will take the training and run with it. It also is essential to come off as supportive but not pushy. If your child feels pushed they'll begin to shut down and the outcome will not be good.

A few final suggestions:

- Be on time for practices and tryouts
- Teach your child to eat a healthy diet
- Stress the importance of quality sleep and recovery

Tryouts don't have to be a stressful, anxiety filled experience. As long as you support the first name and his or her efforts, your child will be happy. Just in case the news is not good, have a plan in mind for what to say and alternative activities to participate in.