

# An Unofficial Guide To Being a Hockey Parent

## Six Steps to Helping Your Child Get The Most of Canada's Game

On opening day of the baseball season, somebody famous usually throws out the ceremonial first pitch. You know it's opening day of the minor hockey season, the old joke goes, when the first parent is thrown out.

OK, so we're kidding. Sort of.

It's minor hockey time again. The best and worst time of the year all wrapped up in one.

So, at absolutely no cost, we are providing the Unofficial Guide To Being A Better Hockey Parent. Here are some guidelines:



1. **Support Your Child:** And we're not talking economics here. Research has shown the majority of kids participate in minor sports first and foremost to have fun. Kids aren't thinking NHL at age 11, even if some parents are. Let them have fun, their fun. You can enjoy it, just don't live it for them.
2. **The Car Ride Home:** This can be a point of major friction between players and parents. Don't get in the car after games and ask a million questions. Don't criticize their play -- or pick apart their teammates. Let them talk. Let them say what's on their mind. Respond with a lot of uh-huhs, and "I sees." If you want to ask questions, ask if they had fun? This can be an emotional ride after an emotional game. Make it better. Don't make it worse.
3. **Support Your Coach:** The majority of minor hockey coaches are volunteers, giving of their time. Some are more qualified than others. Some are better communicators than others. But almost all of them, to start with, deserve the benefit of the doubt. If you second guess the coach in front of your child, all you are doing is undermining your own child's experience. There is an old T-shirt I've seen around that ironically describes the relationship between coach and hockey parent: It reads "Of course I know more than the coach," and on the back it says "I'm a hockey parent."
4. **Don't be a Stop Watch Parent:** This isn't an exaggeration. I have seen parents in the stands with stop watches timing the amount of ice time their child received. Stop watch parents watch only their children, but never the game. They know how much ice their kid gets, but not how much anyone else gets. They get excited when their child scores, but couldn't care less when another one does. One of the great lessons of sport is how teamwork can make a difference. Teamwork among the parents is often as important as the team work amongst kids. One stop watch parent -- or similar squawkers -- can alter the chemistry of a minor hockey season.
5. **Give The Referees A Break:** OK, as a career big mouth, I should be the last guy preaching this to anybody but I start every hockey season hoping I'll change and each year I get a little bit smarter. If refereeing was that easy, anyone could do it. And most can't. But I can tell you this from experience: The more you carp, the more you yell, the less calls you get. Referees can hear you. They are, for the most part, trying their best. They make mistakes, just like coaches make mistakes, just like players make mistakes. Only we don't let them get away with any. Try and behave. Losing it in a rink can be embarrassing for your child, not to mention yourself.
6. **Use The 24-Hour Rule:** Even if your team doesn't have it, it should. The 24-hour rule works this way. If you have something to say to the coach, or they have something to say to you (that could be contentious) wait 24 hours after the event or the game before discussing it. By this time, you have better perspective, they have better perspective and a lot of arguments naturally are eliminated in the process. Hockey is an emotional game. It's best to let the emotions simmer before talking to the coach, adult to adult, preferably away from the rink.