

# Kids and Sports: What if it's not a match?

Fitness Without the Field



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*"There is no one alive who is yourer than you."  
- Dr. Seuss*

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If your child doesn't like opera, it'll probably go unnoticed. However, with sports, it's different.

According to a 2017 survey by MarketWatch, Americans spend more than \$100 billion on sports annually, with more than half of that going for sporting events. Besides that, Americans spend an average of 4 hours each week watching sports programs.

Not sharing a favorite national pastime can be awkward. As a parent, you may also be concerned that your child will miss out on the benefits of participating in sports, including physical fitness and social skills.

Fortunately, there are other ways to keep your child healthy and engaged. Keep reading for some suggestions to help when your child doesn't like sports.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO DON'T PLAY SPORTS

Take a walk. It's often overlooked because it's so simple, but walking is very effective at burning calories and conditioning your heart. Studies show that a brisk one-to-three-mile daily walk reduces the risk of death by about 10%.

Do more aerobics. For greater health benefits, supplement walking with more vigorous cardio workouts. Your child might enjoy cycling, swimming, or running.

Train for strength. If your child is mature enough to play sports, they're probably ready for resistance exercises. Check with your doctor and provide adequate supervision and age-appropriate equipment.

Go dancing. Zumba burns about the same number of calories as jogging, and your child might think it's more fun. How about ballroom dancing? Ballroom dancing teaches valuable skills like leading and following. Watch videos or take classes to learn more steps.

Put on skates. Kids love ice rinks and skateboard parks. Check with your local department of recreation and parks to find free lessons for youths. Be sure to discuss safety measures.

Learn martial arts. Karate and other disciplines build confidence as well as muscles. Visit a variety of dojos and ask for free trials to help you choose a program that suits your child.

Gardening. Gardening is an engaging and hands-on activity that involves physical activity and provides children with a direct connection to nature.

Geocaching: Combining physical activity with a treasure hunt using GPS. Connect with the outdoors while having fun and experiencing the thrill of discovery.

Horseback Riding: Riding horses and taking care of them. Riding a horse requires the use of core muscles, balance, and coordination. It provides a full-body workout without feeling like traditional sports.

*“Kids who don't play sports often have a wide range of other interests, from art to music to science.”*





*“Non-athletic kids build strong friendships based on shared interests and values.”*

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## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO DON'T PLAY SPORTS

Play music. When it comes to encouraging teamwork and discipline, a band can do anything a sports team can do. Just learning to play a musical instrument also boosts brain growth, as well as reading, math, and motor skills.

Perform on stage. Acting is another way for your child to work on their communication habits and increase their emotional intelligence. They can audition for a role in the school play or enroll in youth programs at many community theaters.

Join a club. Schools, neighborhood centers, and other venues offer a wide range of associations for kids with similar interests. Your child can develop their hobbies and expand their social circle.

Start a business. Children gain real-world experience, as well as a paycheck, with an afterschool business. Studies show that most students can maintain their grades if they work less than 15 hours a week.



Attend camp. For a briefer but more immersive experience, send your child to camp. Popular themes include STEM, outdoor adventure, and arts education. If you're on a strict budget, contact nonprofits like Boys & Girls Clubs and YMCA. Ask about financial assistance and discounts.

Volunteer together. Participate in service projects designed for families and youths. You can support one-time events or find recurring opportunities where your child will have more time to bond with others.

Artistic pursuits. Creative children often enjoy painting, drawing, sculpture, and other forms of visual art. By providing them with creative materials and opportunities to explore museum programs and other artistic interests they discover the joys of their creativity.

Your child can make friends and stay physically fit without footballs and baseball bats. Pay attention to their interests, so you can help them choose activities that will allow them to have fun and develop important life skills.

Most importantly, provide your child with free leisure time to explore and pursue their own interests. Without adequate time and experience, kids aren't likely to know what they are most interested in. Provide your kids with a variety of life experiences and the free time and room to explore their own interests. Even kids who like sports do best when given a variety of opportunities to help them discover their strengths and passions.



Remember, not over-scheduling your child's life with extra-curricular activities provides the added benefit of reducing stress for the entire family. Pursuing family fun times together helps a family bond.

When was the last time your family played hide and seek together?

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*Supportive parents play a crucial role in nurturing their child's non-sports passions.*

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