



'SET THE STANDARD' – A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



BACKGROUND

The 'Set the Standard' parent guide has been developed to help parents and carers to positively support their child when they are competing.

This downloadable document provides further detail on the top tips for parents that are covered in the 'Set the Standard' online guide.

You can access the 'Set the Standard' online guide [here](#), and find further resources and guidance on our [Parent Support webpage](#).

1. REMIND YOUR CHILD TO WORK HARD, ENJOY IT AND PLAY FAIR

Encouraging your child to **work hard** helps them understand that progress comes from consistent and prolonged effort – which is not easy! It also teaches them to value persistence, to view mistakes as part of learning, and to recognise that their development as a tennis/padel player is something within their control and can be shaped over time. By emphasising hard work and effort over results or outcomes, your child will feel more in control of their development and more excited about the challenges that competitions naturally provide.

Alongside working hard, encouraging your child to **enjoy it** reinforces that tennis and padel are not just about measures and outcomes, it is about enjoying the challenge of competition (i.e., testing their skills out under pressure). When enjoyment is prioritised, and children view competitions as a challenge (i.e., when resources match the demands) rather than a threat (i.e., when demands outweigh the resources), they are more likely to look forward to competing, trying out new skills, strategies, and techniques, and perform to the best of their ability. By reducing the emphasis on outcomes it also frees children up to enjoy the wider competition experience (e.g., being with teammates and/or friends, travelling to new places, spending time with their parents)

As a final point, reinforcing **play fair** before competition helps them to understand the importance of respect and integrity. Fair play involves respecting the referees and their opponents, following the rules, honest line calling, and handling both winning and losing appropriately (e.g., shaking hands before and after the match). However, children also learn about fair play outside of sport, so establishing clear and consistent rules, practicing turn taking, and modelling how to win and lose gracefully will help your children to understand what playing fair means and display these behaviours on court. Overall, reminding your child that working hard, enjoying challenges, and playing fair are all things within your child's control will help them gain a sense of achievement irrespective of the competition result.

2. MAKE SURE WHAT THEY SEE FROM YOU IS REASSURING

Making sure what your child sees from you on the court side is **reassuring** is an integral part of your in-match communication and support. The psychological demands of tennis and padel (e.g., individual nature of the sport, winning and losing of points, constant momentum shifts) can mean that children experience a range of both positive (e.g., excitement, happiness, and joy) and negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, anger, dejection, and frustration) when competing. When experiencing these emotions, children often look at their parents to understand how to make sense of, and react to, what is happening on court.

As a result, your visible reactions and body language on the court side becomes an important emotional reference point which will shape their own interpretations and emotional responses to the demands they are experiencing. In situations when they are angry or frustrated, your response will dictate if they stay there or move on. A relaxed neutral posture (i.e., sitting forward, with your hand in your lap) and engaged expression, can communicate both calmness and reassurance. This sort of reassurance helps children to stay calm, reset, and move on to the next point.

Your reactions during matches to events that happen on court also shape how your child makes sense of, and interpret, success and failure. For example, if you stay composed and positive after your child double faults, puts an easy volley into the net, or loses a game/set, they learn that mistakes are normal, recoverable, and ultimately part of learning. In summary, what they see from you is a model for how to handle the challenge of competition, regulate emotion, and deal with success and failure – make sure it is reassuring!

3. ENCOURAGE EVERY PLAYER, RESPECT RUNS BOTH WAYS

Encouraging every player, not just your own child, sends a valuable message about respect and kindness, and that it runs both ways. When a parent applauds good rallies, acknowledges effort on both sides, or offers a simple “well played” to an opponent, it shows children that respect remains an important part of the sport. It also teaches them that everyone on court is trying, everyone feels pressure, and everyone deserves recognition. In addition, if they see you encouraging other players and treating them fairly, they will feel more confident that they will be treated fairly as well – it runs both ways. This helps create a competition environment where all young players feel safe, valued and motivated to keep competing and improving.

Children also watch how their parents interact with officials, coaches, and other parents, and they will often replicate it. As a result, if they see you respecting officials, coaches, and other parents they learn that respect is demonstrated in these ways. It also then becomes part of how they carry themselves on court, how they handle tight moments, how they respond to line calls, and how they treat opponents after a match. A respectful courtside presence is likely to reduce conflict, build trust with officials, coaches and other parents, and help your child feel safe and supported. Furthermore, when parents and children are known for their respect, it enables stronger relationships and positive connections within the community and can lead to lifelong friendships.

4. HELP THEM TO SEE THE POSITIVES, NO MATTER THE OUTCOME

Helping your child see the positives, **no matter the outcome** is one of the most valuable forms of emotional support a parent can offer their child. Tennis and padel are sports where outcomes are very objective – it's win or lose, there are no draws or personal best scores for each of their skills! However, children do not always know how to interpret and make sense of the outcomes, and can often be quite negative about their own performances. As such, your child may turn to you to understand what matters, what counts as progress, and what they might be able to take away from each match (e.g., strengths, areas for improvement).

By highlighting the positives, you can encourage them to look beyond the outcome. Maybe they fought hard in long rallies, tried out a new tactic or technique, stayed composed after a double fault, remained consistent with their pre-point routines, or showed great sportspersonship on court. Pointing out these things helps them recognise that improvement and progress happens in many forms. Over time, this will also help them to shift their attention away from focusing on the outcome and more to their individual performance (i.e., “What did I do well today?”, “What should I be working on in training next week?”, and “What could I do differently next time?”). This mindset shift can help to protect their perceptions of competence, maintain their motivation, and facilitate their long-term development. Ultimately, viewing sport as a “lab of learning” means there are always some positives, no matter the outcome!

5. LEAD BY EXAMPLE, RESPECT THE OFFICIAL'S DECISION

We know from research that some parents find competition stressful and experience a wide range of emotions before, during, and after matches (e.g., anger, excitement, anxiety, and happiness). Some of these negative emotions can lead to undesirable behaviours (e.g., confrontation, walking away, getting involved in line calls) and prevent parents from **leading by example**. However, children watch how you respond to the competition schedule, timing of matches, and events which happen on court (e.g., tight calls, momentum swings, score disputes, and moments of frustration). As a result, your reactions become a reference point they use to understand what acceptable behaviour looks like in competition and when you treat officials with respect and accept the rules of the game, your child will learn that respect is an essential part of playing sport.

Players and officials can make mistakes and part of the sport is learning to cope and manage these situations. Even when you disagree with an official's decision, or the rules of the game favour your child's opponent (e.g., the opponents line call stands), displaying negative emotions (e.g., anger, frustration), can negatively impact your child's concentration and emotional state. However, if you demonstrate patience, empathy, and respect for the decision, you help your child develop the ability to stay in the moment (i.e., avoid time travelling), problem-solve, and move on. Your behaviour in these situations also influences other parents, the tone of the match, and the confidence of players and officials. A respectful spectator creates a safer, more enjoyable atmosphere for everyone involved and your child benefits most of all.

