

Sturminster Marshall Golf Club

Parental Responsibilities



How You Can Help - Some Do's

Do get to know your child's golf professional – after all he or she can play an important role in your child's general development.

Do respect the Pro's opinion – he/she should be more knowledgeable than you, both about golf and the development of young golfers.

Do assess your child's progress – don't be afraid to ask the pro what plans or objectives he/she may have for your child (so that you can assess progress, perhaps every few months or so). Ask the pro to explain to you the reasons for any decisions you don't understand or agree with.

Do talk to other parents – it is often a good idea to get to know other parents so that you can share problems, car-taking duties, etc.

Do establish clear lines of communication – in case you need to speak with the club pro, club junior organiser, county or national officials regarding practice or competition. Find out when it is convenient and appropriate to contact them, and the best way of doing so. Don't ever address a criticism to or of your child, the pro or officials in front of other parents or players.

Do encourage effort as well as results – don't assess your child's progress solely by how many competitions they may win. It is important to recognise and reward effort.

Some Don'ts

Don't respond to a bad result or mistake with punishment or criticism – give your child time to work out for themselves why things went wrong. If they ask your advice, first compliment them for something he or she did right, then give the advice, emphasising the positive results if the instruction is followed rather than the negative consequences of a mistake. It is VITAL for a parent to give encouragement even after a poor performance.

Don't turn a blind eye to any bad behaviour, cheating or bad manners by your child – in such instances reasonably prompt action is appropriate. To do otherwise will infer that you condone such behaviour or at least do not consider personal standards and respect of people and rules important.

Don't forget that your child is still growing – training which may be appropriate for an adult (e.g. prolonged repetitive activities and work with heavy weights) can have adverse long term effects on the growth and development of a young child.

Don't coach from the side-lines – try to encourage your child to think for him or herself. A constant stream of instruction from you may only confuse the child, particularly if it is contrary to that of the pro.

Don't ignore aches and pains – children are often reticent to describe sports-related injuries, especially if it means missing coaching, practice, training or competition, so keep an eye on persistent grumbles about health; it is important to take injuries seriously.

Don't ignore other children in the family – sometimes brothers and sisters may feel left out or bored if the whole household revolves around the needs of the young golfer. It is important to try to keep a balance between golf and the interests of other members of your family.

Don't allow the situation to develop where your child is frightened of playing poorly because of the way you respond – a fear of failure can often result in children feigning injury, avoiding certain competitions or playing with unnecessary caution.

Don't force a young child to specialise entirely on golf – children should be allowed to develop their own preferences. In any case up to the age of 15 or 16 a concentrated diet of playing just one game to the exclusion of all other physical activities can well produce a declining enthusiasm for that game.

Don't always greet your child with "Did you play well?" or "Did you play to your handicap?" – Why not start with "Did you enjoy it?"

Don't attend throughout every lesson and every competition – it is important for your child's future development in sport that he or she is trusted to make the correct decisions during either practice or competition. This is the first stage in the development of self-motivation and self-reliance. Constant supervision by the parent can easily result in the young golfer becoming emotionally, and otherwise over-dependent on your presence and advice.

Don't say "we" won or "we" lost – it is important that you don't become so involved in your child's golf that you find yourself saying "we played well" or "we played badly". Remember it is your child who is participating – you are there to support and encourage, not to compete. The progress of many junior golfers has been hindered by excessive parental development.