



## Seven Pillars of YMCA Youth Sports

What we want youth sports to be in the YMCA is stated in our Seven Pillars of YMCA Youth Sports.

**Pillar One** – Everyone Plays. We do not use tryouts to select the best players, nor do we cut kids from YMCA youth sports. Everyone who registers is assigned to a team. During the season everyone receives equal practice time and plays at least half of every game.

**Pillar Two** – Safety First. Although some children may get hurt playing sports, we do all we can to prevent injuries. We've modified each sport to make it safer and more enjoyable to play. We ask you to make sure the equipment and facilities are safe and to teach the sport as we've prescribed, so that the skills taught are appropriate for children's developmental level. We ask you to develop your players' fitness levels gradually so they are conditioned for the sport. And we ask you to constantly supervise your young players so that you can stop any unsafe activities.

**Pillar Three** – Fair Play. Fair play is about playing by the rules – and more. It's about you and your players showing respect for all who are involved in YMCA youth sports. It's about your being a role model of good sportsmanship and guiding your players to do the same. Remember, we're more interested in developing children's character through sport than in developing a few highly skilled players.

**Pillar Four** – Positive Competition. We believe competition is a positive process when the pursuit of victory is kept in the right perspective. The right perspective is when adults make decisions that put the best interests of the children above winning the contest. Learning to compete is important for children, and learning to cooperate in a competitive world is an essential lesson of life. Through YMCA youth sports we want to help children learn these lessons.

**Pillar Five** – Family Involvement. YMCA youth sports encourages parents to be involved appropriately along with their child's participation in our sport programs. In addition to parents being helpful as volunteer coaches and timekeepers, we encourage them to be at practices and games to support their child's participation. To help parents get involved appropriately, YMCA youth sports offers parent orientation programs.

**Pillar Six** – Sport for All, YMCA youth sports is an inclusive sport program. That means that children who differ in various characteristics are to be included rather than excluded from participation. We offer sport programs for children who differ in physical abilities by matching them with children of similar abilities and modifying their sport. We offer programs to all children regardless of their race, gender, religious creed, or ability. We ask our adult leaders to

encourage and appreciate the diversity of children in our society and to encourage the children and their parents to do the same.

**Pillar Seven** – Sport for Fun. Sport is naturally fun for most children. They love the challenge of mastering the skills of the game, of playing with their friends, and of competing with their peers. Sometimes when adults become involved in children’s sport, they over organize and dominate the activity to the point of destroying children’s enjoyment of the sport. If we take the fun out of sport, we’re in danger of our children taking themselves out of sport. Remember that these sports are for the kids; let them have fun. YMCA sports are based on the concept that fair play is the very essence of competition. Everybody should have an equal opportunity to compete and a fair chance to win. This fundamental virtue is a special attribute of sport and inherent in it.

Fair play implies respect for oneself, one’s opponent, and others involved in conducting the competition. Players, coaches, officials, and spectators share a responsibility for fair play. Fair play sets the game above the prize.

The YMCA believes that its sports programs provide an excellent means of developing a predisposition to play fairly. As this virtue develops, it can influence behavior in everyday life.

The YMCA also believes that its sports programs can help people to grow personally, clarify values, improve relationships, appreciate diversity, develop leadership skills and have fun.

It is for the development of such virtues that the YMCA promotes its sports programs.