



“It’s really tough to shake the hand of someone who just beat you, and it’s even harder to do it with a smile. If you can learn to do this and push through that pain, you will remember what that moment is like the next time you win.”

—Amy Van Dyken,
Olympic gold medal-winning
swimmer

Good Sportsmanship

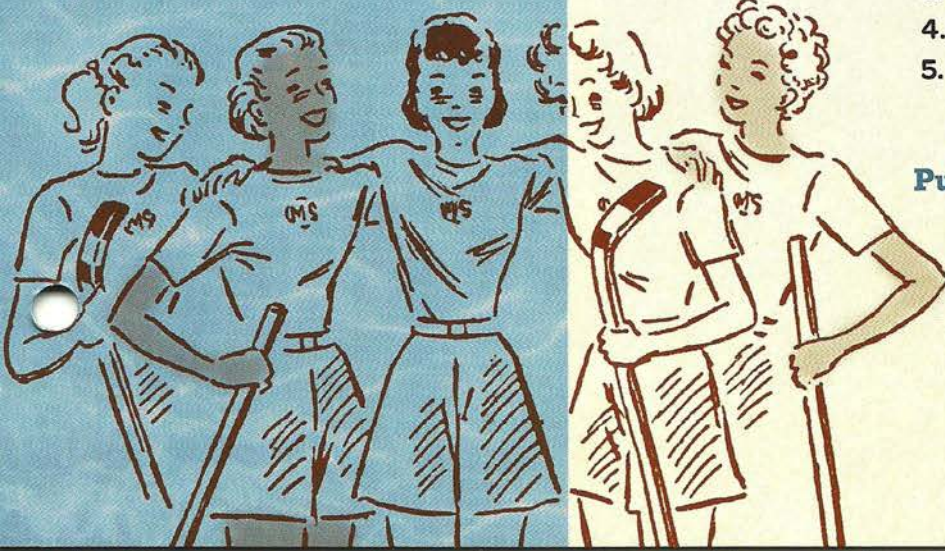
It’s good to be a great athlete, but the greatest athletes agree it’s just as important to be a good sport. When you make good sportsmanship a habit in games and in life, others want to play with you, hang out with you, and generally live up to your example. So whether you’re a dedicated athlete with a chosen sport or you just like to enjoy an occasional game among friends, this badge will help you have more fun on the field—and off.

Steps

1. Create your own definition of sportsmanship
2. Be a good competitor
3. Be a good teammate
4. Psych yourself up
5. Put your definition of good sportsmanship into action

Purpose

When I’ve earned this badge, I’ll know how I define sportsmanship and will have put my definition into action.



Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more!

STEP

1 Create your own definition of sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship can be a lot of things: playing fair, respecting officials and other players, following the rules. Whining, cheating, and bragging are generally bad sportsmanship. But the lines can get blurry. Is it good or bad sportsmanship to do a victory dance, taunt batters, or question an official's call? Use this step to create your own definition using the chart on the next page.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Go to a sports event. Take note of as many interactions among athletes, coaches, and officials as you can (arriving early or staying late could help). Emotions and stress can make for more good *and* bad behavior, so see if you can find an event that's part of a championship or longtime rivalry.

OR

Watch a sports series. Choose a sport or game you like and pull up an old championship series to watch: the X Games, the Olympics, Wimbledon, the World Series, even a billiards tournament. The beauty of this option is you can watch the replay as often as you like!

OR

Head to the Web. Read three news stories about good and bad sports behavior. From the triathlete who hopped onto a bus during a race to the home-run hitter who admitted to using steroids, stories of bad behavior abound. Luckily, there are lots of good stories, like when a women's college softball team carried an opposing team member around the bases when her knee gave out.

Do you think there's any difference between "sportsmanship" and "sportswomanship"?



“I hope that we shall all remember the rules of this Girl Scouting game of ours. They are:

To play fair,

To play in your place,

To play for your side and not for yourself.

And as for the score, the best thing in a game is the fun and not the result.”

—from Juliette Gordon Low’s 1924 birthday message to Girl Scouts

STEP 2 Be a good competitor

You don’t have to dial it down to be a good sport. In fact, giving it your all in every game or event can be part of good sportsmanship. What else does it take to be a good competitor every time you hit the field or court or track?

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Make an illustrated quote book.** Athletes and coaches share this kind of wisdom all the time (“practice makes perfect,” “if at first you don’t succeed . . .”). Gather a dozen or more quotes from athletes and coaches and make an inspiration album.

OR

- Talk to an athletic director, coach, or player you admire.** Ask them to share their experiences. Make up a list of areas you’d like to cover before you chat—perhaps preparation, frustrations, pain and setbacks, and maintaining focus.

OR

- Get a biography of a female athlete who’s a great competitor.** Then, write an essay, poem, or song that focuses on why and how she’s such a strong competitor and a good sport.

STEP 3 Be a good teammate

Coaches always say they don't want a show-off, they want a team player. Teamwork skills help you on and off the field. There's teamwork involved in every group, from Girl Scouts to debate team. Play one of these games, then agree on three strategies that helped you build a team and three practices that got in the way.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

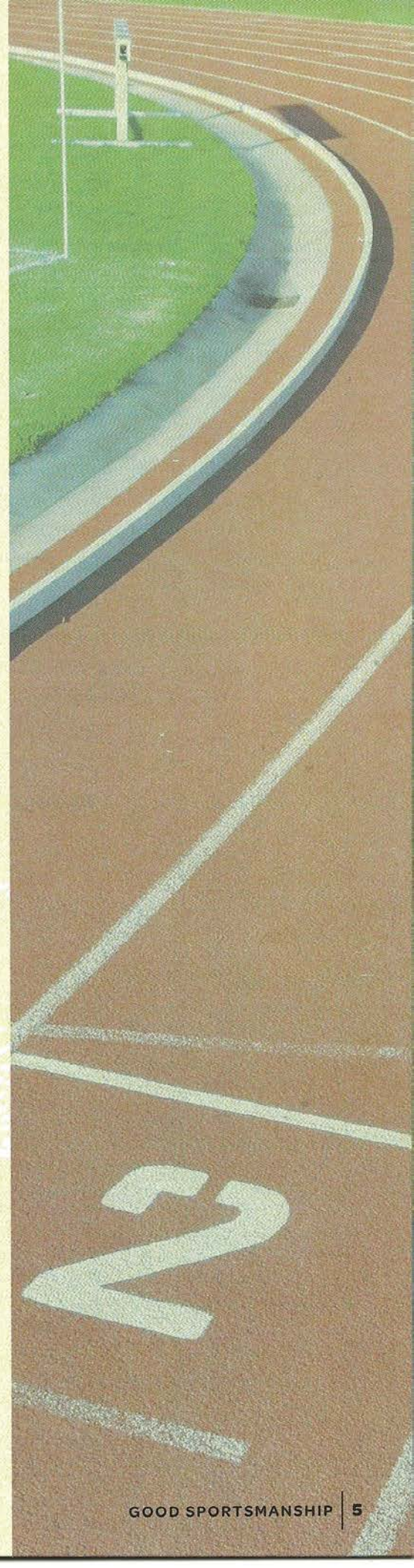
- Play Trust, like they did on *Survivor*.** Get a team of at least four girls together and create an obstacle course about 20 yards long. Take turns being the caller, who yells directions to her blindfolded teammates to get them all through the course without running into one another.

OR

- Play three team-building games.** Try three of the classic team-building games sports psychologist Colleen Hacker plays with the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team: Human Dragon, Wolves and Sheep, Human Knots, Scavenger Hunt, classic Trust, Triangle Tag, and others. Some of these are explained on the following pages.

OR

- Play Capture the Flag.** It's hard to find another game on the planet that uses as many team-building skills as this classic! Not to mention, it's hard to find a more fun way to spend an afternoon.



STEP 4 Psych yourself up

Whether you're involved in a team or solo sport, the biggest obstacle can be the voices in your own head. Train those voices, though, and they can be your path to success. Check out the methods sports psychologists and extreme athletes use to psych themselves up for competition and find three that work for you.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- But I landed my triple axel!** Judging in sports like figure skating and gymnastics is subjective. How do athletes deal with knowing that no matter what they do, some things are out of their control (you didn't like my music? my outfit?). Find an athlete who competes in a subjectively scored sport and see what they have to say.

OR

- Mind over matter.** It's tough to find an athlete these days, from the oldest skier to the youngest X Games shredder, who doesn't talk about visualization. Mental training can improve performance. A golfer, for example, might visualize the perfect stroke over and over to help her muscles remember it. Find out more about the technique and how it might improve your game.

OR

- Play sports psychology games.** You'd be surprised how many teams routinely work with sports psychologists. Play a team game and run your group through some of their psych-up exercises before you start. Use the ones on the next page, or ask for help from a sports psychologist, coach, or athlete.



STEP 5 Put your definition of good sportsmanship into action

Consider insights you've gained during steps 2, 3, and 4, and then take a moment to make revisions to the definition you came up with in step 1. Once you've got your ultimate list, put your new ideas and strategies to the test.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Compete. If you're already involved in a sport, take your definition and follow it during a big game or event. Or try a new sport: It's harder to fall back into old habits that way. After you play, review your definition. What's easier said than done? Anything in your definition to adjust?

OR

Play with little kids. Volunteer to help with Little League, to play board games or simple active games (like Red Light, Green Light or Duck, Duck, Goose) at a nursery school, or to run a kindergarten field day. As you teach the kids, you'll be testing the strength of your own convictions! After the event, look over your definition. How does it apply to other age groups? Do you need to change anything to make your definition more universal?

OR

Take on the role of referee, umpire, or judge. Volunteer to work with a league, start an afternoon pickup game, or host a subjective competition (roller skating, figure skating, ballroom dance. . .). Keep your "good sport" list in mind during the game. After, review each point and make sure you still agree with it. If not, make adjustments.

TIP: After you complete this step, you'll have your tried-and-true definition of sportsmanship. You might want to hang it in your locker or a personal space—you might find your insights helpful off the field, too.

More to Explore

Compose a contract. Write a Good Sportsmanship Contract for your school or community sports program and get the coaches and athletes to sign it.

CAREERS TO EXPLORE

- Youth recreation administrator
- Athlete
- Coach
- Personal trainer
- Sports instructor
- Guidance counselor
- Sports psychologist
- Military officer
- Sports psychiatrist
- Physical therapist
- Sports official, such as umpire or referee
- Elementary school teacher
- Politician
- Lawyer
- Judge
- Sportscaster
- Journalist
- School administrator
- Sports team manager
- Sports agent
- Professional sports scout/recruiter