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# Should Every Kid Get a Trophy?

By Lauren Tarshis

**Rewarding everyone on the team might make kids feel good, but some worry that it sends the wrong message**

## Debate

**Directions: Read the article. Study the facts. Decide what you think. Write an opinion essay.**

Walk into the bedroom of 12-year-old Lucas, a sixth grader from New Jersey, and you might think you've stumbled into a sports hall of fame. There are trophies everywhere: Little League trophies lined up on his bookshelves, basketball trophies crowded on his dresser, soccer awards dangling from ribbons on his bulletin board. There's even a bronze-colored football trophy lying on the floor; he uses it to keep his door from slamming shut.

Lucas admits that he didn't exactly earn these trophies for his athletic gifts. "I'm actually not so good at sports," he says. Like many kids in sports programs, Lucas has earned his trophies by simply showing up to practices and games.

"This has become practically a universal policy in many communities," says Karen Coffin, a coach who writes about youth sports.

Experts say that the "trophies for all" policy is part of a bigger change that has swept youth sports over the past two decades. Back when your parents were learning how to swing a bat, team life could be brutal. Often, coaches openly favored their star athletes. Less-gifted players would spend entire games sitting on the bench.

Today, rules in many leagues require equal playing time for all team members. "The focus isn't on winning," says Coffin. "It's about building skills."

This is a welcome change for many. Today, more kids than ever are playing a huge range of team sports. Coaches are

encouraged to support everyone on their teams, not just the future LeBrons. "The idea is to motivate kids to play sports, to have fun," says Dr. Michelle Anthony, an author and psychologist who works with kids and schools. Studies show many benefits for kids who stick with team sports, from better fitness levels to higher grades. Getting trophies can encourage kids to continue playing even if they're not superstars. No kid feels overlooked.

But some experts suggest that giving trophies to everyone sends the wrong message. In real life, people are not always rewarded for just showing up. A person doesn't get A's just for coming to class. A worker doesn't get a raise just for arriving on time. Shouldn't only the hardest-working or highest-performing athletes get the trophies?

Both Coffin and Anthony point out that trophies can lose their meaning when everyone gets one. Coffin also emphasizes that trophies are not an effective way for coaches to motivate players. "Receiving a pat on the back, a thumbs up from the coach ... any show of appreciation is what keeps kids coming back."

As for Lucas, he sees both sides of the debate. He agrees that getting trophies has made him feel good about being on his teams. But there is one problem, he confesses.

"I'm out of space."

## What Do You Think?

Go back to the article and find information to support each side. Write the information on the lines below.

### Yes Keep them coming!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### No It's reward overload!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.