



# TIPS FOR PARENTS

## Managing Extracurricular Activities



Extracurricular activities, such as 4-H, sports, and music lessons, can play an important role in a child's development. They offer opportunities for growth and help to build skills. When selecting activities, you should consider how it will impact your family's time and energy, finances, and stress levels. Below are some tips on how to effectively manage your child's activities.



### Understand Your Child's Interests and Goals

When selecting your children's activities, think about their interests and strengths. What do they enjoy? What are they good at? What skills do they need to practice? Explore all the available options with your child and work together to find the activity that best fits them. Involving your child in the decision can help model the decision-making process and let them have a say in what they join. As they grow, encourage children to be more selective about their activities by talking about the time available, the effect on the whole family, and any goals with the activities.



### Be Realistic

While you want your children to have opportunities to try out different extracurricular activities, it is important for them to learn to balance school, activities, family time, and free time. Consider putting a limit on how many activities your child is involved in each season or semester. Think about the effect the activity has on the whole family. Ask questions like these:

How many nights per week will the family be going in different directions?

How much time will this activity require each week?

Will this activity require out of town travel?

How will the child get to/from the activity?

How much money will it cost to participate?



Talk with your child to understand their feelings, challenges, and successes with their after-school activities. Encourage them to express any worries or stress they may have. Offer support and understanding when helping them find solutions to any problems. Remember, not all of their time needs to be scheduled. Free time is when children play, rest, and have quality family time.



## Time Management and Self-Care

Finding a healthy balance of activities for each member of your family can be challenging, but it also offers opportunities for you to teach your child some time-management and self-care skills. They can benefit from routines and learn to manage their time well.

If your child is balancing multiple responsibilities, such as basketball and homework, you can help reduce the stress of getting it all in if you help them learn how to break tasks into smaller, more manageable parts, set deadlines, and avoid putting things off until the last minute. For example, if they have a big project coming up at school, help them realize that working on it a little each day for 2 weeks can help it seem less overwhelming. This schedule allows them to stay on top of their responsibilities but also care for themselves. Use visual aids like a calendar to help them understand and follow their routines. Regularly review and adjust the schedule to make it manageable for the whole family.

Emphasize the importance of self-care to your child. Teach them healthy coping skills such as breathing exercises or journaling to manage stress. Remember that every child is different, and while some children can handle many activities at once, some may only enjoy one or two at a time.

### References

Child Mind Institute. *Finding the balance with after-school activities*. <https://childmind.org/article/finding-the-balance-with-after-school-activities/>

Visit [tips.extension.msstate.edu](https://tips.extension.msstate.edu) for additional parenting resources.

#### Publication 4009 (POD-07-24)

By **Kindall Akers**, MS, CFLE-P, Extension Associate I, and **Lori Elmore-Staton**, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Human Sciences.

Copyright 2024 by Mississippi State University. All rights reserved. This publication may be copied and distributed without alteration for nonprofit educational purposes provided that credit is given to the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Produced by Agricultural Communications.

Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity institution. Discrimination in university employment, programs, or activities based on race, color, ethnicity, sex, pregnancy, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, or any other status protected by applicable law is prohibited.

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. ANGUS L. CATCHOT JR., Director



## Family Time



Be sure to leave plenty of time in the schedule for family activities and bonding. Plan activities together, such as family meals, outings, or game nights. These moments allow everyone to connect, strengthen relationships, and create meaningful memories together.

Sometimes parents may feel pressure to involve their child in activities, but it is important to make those decisions based on your child's interests and personality and your family's time, energy, and money. Managing your child's extracurricular activities can be challenging. Still, with proper planning and support, the whole family can find balance. By understanding your child's interests and goals, having realistic expectations, supporting time management and self-care, and making time for family, you can help your child succeed in all areas of life.