

Ten steps towards being a good sport

1. Personal action – get active!

Each individual and family has a role to encourage participation in sport for personal development, where the discipline of training is rewarded with the satisfaction of performance, where competition is balanced with comradeship, and where observance of the rules encompasses also a spirit of generosity.

It hardly needs saying that walking, running, swimming, stretching, cycling, and so on are critical to cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and flexibility. In today's stressful and busy world, sports and exercise can help provide a healthy distraction, and reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms. (Social Justice Statement 2014–15)

Sports lovers or not, we can all make an effort to make the best use of the bodies God has given us by exercising regularly: walk jog, swim, ride a bike ...

2. Teach someone a skill

It might be as simple as teaching a son or daughter, niece or nephew or a neighbour how to throw or catch a ball, ride a bike, swim, or catch a frisbee.

3. Watch a game in your local area!

Local communities are called to harness the love of sport and the contribution of players, volunteers and spectators for the good of all and with a welcoming spirit that reaches out to people who are excluded and in need. (Social Justice Statement 2014–15)

Go and watch a game of footy, netball or cricket in your local town, suburb or school.

4. Research and support sports clubs in your local area

Sport is a wonderful socialiser: it enables people to gather in healthy, supportive environments. This has special benefits for young people, who need to interact with their friends. And when such interactions offer fun, competition, skills and goal-setting, there is a fertile environment for personal development and also the involvement of the local community. (Social Justice Statement 2014–15)

You may be surprised at how many clubs and associations there are in your local area. They may get a surprise when you join the pool of volunteers who help them! Many sports have community programs. Google the clubs in your area to see what they have to offer – and what you might be able to offer.

Over two million people – 14 per cent of adult Australians – volunteer their time and effort to sports and physical recreation organisations. Without them, our sporting events would not be a success and, indeed, many of the 26,000 local sporting clubs around Australia would not exist. (Social Justice Statement 2014–15)

Play, coach, mark lines, umpire/referee, cheer from the sidelines, help with catering.

Look up your state department of Sport and Recreation for simple suggestions and organised activities, for example:

<http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/publicat/detail.asp?pub=24>

5. Help challenge bullying, racism and sexism in sport.

It is not uncommon to witness a fanatical 'win at all costs' mindset; violence on the field, on the sidelines or in the street; racist taunts, communal conflict and exclusion of minorities; abuse and exploitation of women; and greedy opportunism that turns social good into business opportunities for a few. (Social Justice Statement 2014–15)

Too often, we see sport used as a way of bullying or exploiting others. It can happen in schools, in sporting clubs or at elite sporting levels. It can happen among fans or even in the media. It may not be easy to stand up to bullies personally, especially when they feel they have a majority behind them. But we can let club managements or media organisations know that we have no respect for people whose actions betray instead of strengthening the ideals of sport and the society around it.

6. Who's on the edge? Build inclusiveness

Participation in sports can be a means for those at the margins of society to move from the edges to the centre. (Social Justice Statement 2014–15)

Find out who is not included in local sports activities: migrants, refugees, women, girls, low income families, people with disabilities. What needs to happen to enable them to be involved? Help someone in your street or your parish to obtain sports gear or join a club. 'Whatever it takes' could mean something different!

Sport has a role to play in fostering inclusiveness and reconciliation, working to prevent youth suicide, and promoting reconciliation. Research some stories that show how sport has helped achieve these goals.

Some websites:

Reconciliation Australia <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/news/a-step-forward-for-reconciliation/>

WA Department of Sports and Recreation – Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
<http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au/reconciliationactionplan>

NATSICC Cross Cultural Sporting Program
http://issuu.com/thenatsicc/docs/may_2011_natsicc_news

7. Challenge the high costs

There are many groups whose participation in organised sports and recreational activity has been affected by the commodification of sport, the merchandising of equipment and higher prices. (Social Justice Statement 2014–15)



You may not be able to influence the oversized fees some sportspeople are paid but you can influence local and even national clubs. Ask them if the constant changes to club jumpers, for example, are for good reasons or just for financial gain. If you have sports equipment you no longer use, hand it on to someone else. Ask yourself if the new equipment being bought for clubs or personal use was manufactured under fair conditions. Look for **Fairtrade** products, which do not use child or exploited labour.

<http://fairtrade.com.au/farmers/fairtrade-sports-balls>

<http://www.etiko.com.au/#>

8. Support sports people who show positive values

There are many examples of sports men and women who have been a force for change – working to ensure that sport is inclusive and seeking to transform us into a truly sporting nation. (Social Justice Statement 2014–15)

Many sports people have become community leaders supporting health and inclusiveness, campaigning against violence and discrimination, and working for equality and poverty relief.

Support players at local, state and national level who show positive values: send them a text or email, go and watch them, ask them to come and talk at your club or school.

9. Challenge over-commercialisation, drugs and gambling

There continues to be public concern about alcohol advertising in sport and its effect on young people and the wider community. Most recently, there has been a public outcry over the dramatic rise of sports betting, particularly the intrusion of advertisements for online bookmakers. The impact and language of betting are reaching a wider public than ever before – and affecting the young. It is commonplace to hear children predicting the outcome of a match by quoting odds rather than analysing players' form. (Social Justice Statement 2014–15)

Companies that sponsor sporting clubs are making a valuable contribution to the community. But often, sport can become a commercial enterprise in itself and lose sight of the good it should be doing for society. Similarly, clubs may turn a blind eye to drug abuse and the growing influence of gambling. Make your views known to individuals and clubs that exhibit that downside: unfair play, excessive gambling, drugs, or a win-at-all-costs attitude.

10. Understand that not everyone loves sport

Not everyone may share your enthusiasm for your particular sport or team – or for any sport at all. Some people have very strong personal reasons for being alienated from sport – for example, experiences of bullying, exclusion or sexism at school or in later life. Respect their choices and be sensitive in expressing your own enthusiasm.