

The Parent's Guide to Developing Successful Wrestlers

Support the Athlete. Trust the Process. Build the Person.

Parents have one of the most influential roles in a young wrestler's development.

The greatest champions are rarely built by great coaches alone. They are built through the combined efforts of dedicated athletes, knowledgeable coaches, and supportive parents who understand their role in the process.

Parents invest tremendous amounts of time, money, and emotion into their child's wrestling journey. They drive to practices, travel countless miles to tournaments, purchase equipment, celebrate victories, and help their children navigate disappointment.

Their influence extends far beyond transportation and encouragement.

The environment parents create at home often determines how long a child remains in the sport, how much they enjoy it, and ultimately how much they achieve.

This guide outlines the principles that help parents maximize their child's wrestling experience while developing confident, resilient, and responsible young men and women.

1. Remember the Bigger Picture

Very few young wrestlers will become NCAA Champions.

Even fewer will compete internationally.

Eventually...

Every athlete's wrestling career ends.

The lessons they learn should not.

The true value of wrestling lies in developing:

- Discipline
- Confidence
- Resilience
- Humility

- Leadership
- Accountability
- Work ethic
- Character

Those qualities remain long after the medals have been packed away.

Never sacrifice long-term development for short-term success.

2. Define Success Correctly

Too many parents define success by wins and losses.

That creates unnecessary pressure.

Instead, ask:

Did the athlete improve?

Did they compete aggressively?

Did they demonstrate courage?

Did they display sportsmanship?

Did they learn something?

Did they show discipline?

Championships are wonderful.

Character matters more.

When improvement becomes the focus, victories often follow naturally.

3. Trust the Coaches

Parents choose coaches for a reason.

Allow them to coach.

One of the quickest ways to confuse a young wrestler is to receive different instruction from multiple adults.

When coaching conflicts exist:

Confidence decreases.

Learning slows.

Athletes hesitate.

Questions and communication are always appropriate.

Sideline coaching and contradicting instruction usually are not.

The strongest athlete-coach relationships are built upon trust.

4. The Ride Home Matters

Some of the most important conversations in wrestling happen after practice and tournaments.

Young athletes replay every mistake in their minds long before getting into the car.

They rarely need another technical breakdown.

What they need is perspective.

Instead of asking:

"Why didn't you shoot?"

Try asking:

"What did you learn today?"

Instead of saying:

"You should have..."

Try saying:

"I'm proud of the way you competed."

The ride home after practice matters just as much.

If parents criticize coaches after practice, athletes begin questioning the people responsible for their development.

If parents criticize mistakes every day, athletes eventually become afraid to try new things.

Growth requires mistakes.

Mistakes require trust.

The ride home should restore confidence—not destroy it.

Children should leave the car believing they are loved regardless of the outcome.

5. Don't Rescue Your Child From Adversity

Every wrestler experiences:

- Bad tournaments
- Difficult practices
- Better opponents
- Tough losses
- Unfair calls
- Frustration

These moments are not obstacles to development.

They are development.

Parents naturally want to protect their children.

Sometimes the greatest gift is allowing them to struggle.

Resilience cannot be taught.

It must be experienced.

6. Encourage Independence

As wrestlers mature, they should gradually assume more responsibility.

They should learn to:

- Pack their own wrestling bag.
- Prepare their own equipment.
- Monitor hydration.
- Make healthy food choices.
- Communicate with coaches.
- Study opponents.
- Evaluate performances.
- Take ownership of improvement.

The objective isn't simply to develop better wrestlers.

It's to develop responsible adults.

7. Fuel Performance at Home

Parents control much of an athlete's recovery.

Provide an environment that supports performance.

Prioritize:

- Lean proteins
- Healthy carbohydrates
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Water
- Consistent sleep

Recovery is every bit as important as practice.

A wrestler who consistently sleeps well and eats well possesses a tremendous advantage before ever stepping onto the mat.

8. Avoid Comparing Children

Every wrestler develops differently.

Some mature early.

Others much later.

Some win immediately.

Others slowly build toward success.

Comparison steals confidence.

The only meaningful comparison is:

"Is the athlete improving?"

Measure today's athlete against yesterday's athlete.

Not against someone else's child.

Growth is personal.

9. The Parent Reflection Journal

Becoming the Parent Every Wrestler Needs

After every practice and tournament, parents naturally evaluate their child.

Did they wrestle well?

Did they improve?

Did they compete hard?

Those are important questions.

But perhaps the more important question is this:

"What kind of parent was I today?"

Parents have tremendous influence over a wrestler's confidence, enjoyment, resilience, and long-term development. The environment created at home often determines whether a child continues wrestling long enough to reach their potential.

Just as wrestlers evaluate their performances, parents should periodically evaluate their own.

The goal isn't perfection.

The goal is growth.

Before Competition

Did the parent...

- ☐ Help the athlete get enough sleep?
- ☐ Encourage proper nutrition and hydration?
- ☐ Keep pre-match conversations calm and positive?
- ☐ Avoid placing unnecessary pressure on the athlete?
- ☐ Allow the coaches to handle technical preparation?

During Competition

Did the parent...

- ☐ Cheer more than coach?
- ☐ Remain respectful toward officials?
- ☐ Show respect toward opponents and their families?
- ☐ Trust the coaching staff?
- ☐ Display positive body language regardless of the score?

The Ride Home

The ride home is one of the most influential moments in a young wrestler's development.

What was the very first thing said after practice or the tournament?

Did the conversation focus primarily on:

- ☐ Effort
- ☐ Improvement
- ☐ Character

Or...

- ☐ Winning
- ☐ Mistakes
- ☐ Missed opportunities

Did the parent...

- ☐ Criticize the coaches?
- ☐ Criticize the officials?
- ☐ Criticize the athlete?
- ☐ Encourage the athlete?
- ☐ Leave the athlete excited to return to practice?

Children should leave the car believing they are loved whether they won every match or lost every one.

Weekly Reflection

This week, did the athlete...

- ☐ Improve?
- ☐ Work hard?
- ☐ Display sportsmanship?
- ☐ Show resilience?

☐ Encourage teammates?

☐ Demonstrate responsibility?

Those accomplishments often matter more than medals.

Parent Self-Evaluation

Rate each area from **1 (Needs Improvement)** to **10 (Excellent)**.

Encouraged effort more than winning ____ /10

Trusted the coaching staff ____ /10

Remained positive after losses ____ /10

Avoided coaching from the stands ____ /10

Kept wrestling in perspective ____ /10

Built confidence instead of pressure ____ /10

Modeled sportsmanship ____ /10

Demonstrated patience and emotional control ____ /10

Reflection Questions

What made the athlete smile this week?

What character trait improved the most?

What does the athlete need most from the parent next week?

☐ Encouragement

☐ Patience

- ☐ Accountability
- ☐ Confidence
- ☐ Independence
- ☐ Perspective
- ☐ More enjoyment

Parent Goals for Next Week

Choose one or two areas to improve.

- ☐ Praise effort more often.
- ☐ Ask more questions instead of giving advice.
- ☐ Trust the coaching process.
- ☐ Stop comparing the athlete to others.
- ☐ Stay calmer during competition.
- ☐ Focus on long-term growth instead of immediate results.
- ☐ Make the ride home more positive.
- ☐ Simply enjoy watching the athlete compete.

Parent Commitment

The parent commits to being the one constant source of encouragement in the athlete's wrestling journey. Coaches will coach. Officials will officiate. Opponents will compete. Parents will provide unconditional support, perspective, and love regardless of the outcome.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Final Thoughts

Parents often wonder what they can do to help their child become a better wrestler.

The answer is surprisingly simple.

Provide encouragement.

Trust the coaches.

Celebrate effort.

Model respect.

Teach responsibility.

Remain patient.

Support the process.

The greatest gift a parent can give a young wrestler isn't another technical correction.

It's an environment where hard work is valued, mistakes are accepted as part of learning, and the athlete knows they are loved regardless of the outcome.

Years from now, most children won't remember every medal they won.

They'll remember who believed in them after difficult losses.

Who celebrated their effort more than the scoreboard.

Who encouraged them to keep going when things became difficult.

Who made the ride home a place of safety instead of stress.

Because the greatest accomplishment isn't raising a champion wrestler.

It's raising a confident, resilient, respectful young adult who learned that success is measured not only by victories on the mat, but by the character developed along the way.

A wrestling career lasts only a few years.