



## Parent Expectations Policy

---

INTER ATLANTA FC offers players of all ages, genders, and skill levels access to competitive sports. Our commitment is to provide educational, competitive and fun environments for all, and we feel that cooperation between players, parents, and coaches is paramount in our ability to deliver on this commitment. Please carefully review the following INTER ATLANTA FC parent expectations: As a member of INTER ATLANTA FC, I will:

**Commitment to the Club/Team.** We're excited to have you as a valued member of Inter Atlanta FC, and as a member, it's important to understand your commitment when you join the club and a team. Teams are formed with a specific number of players that gives the players and the teams the best opportunity to have quality training sessions, appropriate game rosters and the development of the players and teams. If we have players missing training and games, it negatively impacts the rest of the team and the ability for players/teams to develop. Your commitment to every training session and game throughout the season/club year are very important and we appreciate your commitment.

**Watch trainings from a distance, off the fields.** This time is for our coaching staff to work with the players and for them to enjoy their time with each other. Please don't interact with the players during trainings any more than you would while they are sitting in their classroom at school. This includes cheering and standing/sitting alongside training.

**During games, only give supportive comments after the play.** We will take a minute to explain why it is so important that parents do not coach from the sidelines. We spend hundreds of hours at practice during the year developing the player technical, tactically, physically and psychologically including decision-making skills. Decision making is one of the most important skills that a player develop; this is why we spend so much time working on it.

One of the most effective ways to develop good decision making is to allow players to make decisions on their own without fear of reprimand. If a player relies on a coach to yell at him/her when to shoot, for example, then the player never gets to practice making this decision himself/herself. So, when this player goes onto an evaluation with a higher level (Pro Academy, ODP team, high school team), or just to play in a pick-up game and there is no coach telling him/her when to shoot, the player is lost. The player may dribble until the ball is taken away or may pass the ball when he/she clearly should have not. It is largely through a player's education and practical application that he/she learns how to act effectively. We work with the players at length during games and practices to understand what factors should be weighed in making decisions. But ultimately, it is the player's decision to make.

During any game, each player will make many of these decisions. Will they make some poor decisions? OF COURSE! But they will learn why it was poor and what would have been better and make fewer poor decisions over time. More importantly, we hope the bad decisions they make will be less costly and the good decisions they make will be more effective in the next game. Any decision is better than no decision.

While we try hard to create an environment where players can make their own decisions without the fear of making mistakes, this can be shattered very quickly if the players hear a constant stream of commands from spectators. It is understandable that we all get caught up in the moment of the game and want to help the players to do better. However, shouting instructions is not the best way to do this. To help your players improve in the game please focus your energy on being supportive and encouraging players to watch high level athletic contests, read about the game and to spend more time practicing on their own. We understand that giving players explicit instructions during a game may help to win that particular game. In some important games you will hear coaches giving a lot of instruction. However, our primary intent is to help the players to reach a much higher level of play. A large part of that is developing smart players that make good decisions. One thing our coaching staff has come to realize is that winning one particular game is not worth sacrificing the development of our players. In some games the coaches will be very instructive and in other games we may just evaluate how the players do without much instruction. However, we can't do this type of evaluation if the players are receiving instruction from the spectators.

**Avoid lectures.** Some parents with good intentions give a 30-minute lecture, covering all the player's supposed deficiencies and giving playing advice, in the car on the way to each match. The kids arrive far off their optimal mental state, dreading the critique they are likely to hear, whether they want it or not, on the way home. Players who are massaged in this way tend to not play badly, they just tend to not play, possibly to avoid making mistakes. For the best results, parents should memorize and use the following:

Before the match:

- I love you
- Good luck
- Have Fun

After the match:

- I Love You
- It was great to watch you play
- Did you have fun

**Avoid rewards and punishments.** Please avoid rewarding players for certain types of play. Paying your child for every time he/she scores can lead to poor decision making on the field (i.e., shooting when a pass was the better choice). Also avoid punishments, such as grounding a player who doesn't score. Players grow much faster when they aren't scared of making a decision.

**Help teach good nutrition.** Coaches will often speak with the players about what they should be eating before and after games and practices. Many younger players rely on their parents to cook for them or to buy them meals. If a coach has told the players to eat a light lunch of fruits and grains, then please don't go to Wendy's for lunch! Likewise, players need to have enough cool water to stay hydrated during games and practices. This means an insulated water jug with some ice. On a hot day, a 20 oz. Aquafina bottle will often be finished within 30 minutes. If not, it will probably be too hot to drink.

**Understand coaching styles.** Each coach has a very different style of working with players. During games, some coaches will be very vocal, giving constant instruction and feedback to the players on the field. Other coaches will spend most of their time talking to individual players when they are subbed off the field. Furthermore, some coaches use games as a time to evaluate the progress the players are making and to come up with a plan for the next few practices. Please understand that, while the coach might be quiet during some games, this does not mean that we're not paying very close attention to what players are doing.

**Understand that different coaches will work with your player.** Inter Atlanta FC has a knowledgeable and experienced coaching staff. Our coaching staff consists of professional coaches with considerable coaching and playing experience. Your child's head coach will be at most of the games and practices for the team. However, other staff coaches will regularly run trainings or games as well if conflicts arise. Please understand that it's good for the players to have a different coach give them a slightly different perspective on the game from time to time.

**Understand Guest Playing and Club Passing.** As an organization, we strongly encourage coaches to utilize guest players/club passing as needed and appropriate. Having different players join a team for practice can help to challenge a player that has been doing well. It can also help to get a player some extra time on the ball if they may have missed part of the season due to injury or perhaps just joined late. Likewise, a team that has low numbers may wish to bring in a few players to help the coach run exercises that require a specific number of players. Coaches will often use guest playing/club passing in games for some of these very same reasons. Understand that our commitment to each family in the club is for their primary team. When guest playing/club passing opportunities arise, it is important to understand that this is a bonus for the players getting the opportunity and should not be an expectation of any player in the program. As you can imagine, there are many, many factors that go into determining which players will get these opportunities. Rest assured that both coaches are weighing all these factors and working together to determine what is best for both teams and all the players involved. As mentioned, we do ask coaches to provide guest playing/club passing opportunities as much as possible and as much as will help the players and teams involved. However, it is not reasonable to expect the coaches to take the time to explain this decision each time these opportunities arise.

**Contact coaches at appropriate times.** We encourage parents to ask the coaches questions about positions, team goals, tactics, training, player development, etc. **However, it is important the timing of these conversations is appropriate. As so, there is a 24-hour rule and parents should only contact coaches after 24 hours of any practice or game.** Of course, if you need to

tell the coach before a game or practice that your player has an injury, has to leave early (or something of that sort) or there is an emergency, that is fine.

**Respect coaches, opponents, and referees.** There is never a place in youth sports to use vulgarities, threaten, intimidate, or use physical aggression toward coaches, opponents, or referees. If there are inappropriate actions such as these named above, we reserve the right to remove the parent and his/her child from the program immediately.

**Support the brand.** Parents' conduct at all times either positively or negatively affect our brand, your player, the team and the experience of everyone involved. As a parent, it is critical that you conform to the highest standards of good sportsmanship, good citizenship, and good moral conduct.

**Enjoy the game!** Please keep in mind, we are talking about Youth sports, which is a beautiful activity that can teach all of us a lot about life. Please try your best to support us in our effort to teach the players to become better athletes and respectful competitors! Remember, if the players aren't having fun, we're missing the whole point of youth sports.