

Sports and hobbies help kids make friends and learn life skills. If your deaf or hard of hearing child is reluctant, here are eight ways you can encourage them to join a club or group activity.

Getting involved in a club or group-based activity can boost a child's physical, mental and social wellbeing. Taking up a sport or hobby is a great way for kids to make friends, build resilience, and develop important life skills.

But joining these activities comes more naturally to some children than others. While some jump at the chance to meet people and try something new, others might feel anxious. If a child is hesitant about trying out an activity, here are 10 ways you can encourage them.

START WITH A TRIAL SESSION

Remind your child that trying something new does not mean making a long-term commitment to it. Clubs and groups typically allow kids to try out an activity to make sure they like it. Encourage them to have a go. If they decide not to continue after a session or two, you can always try something else.

JOIN WITH A FRIEND

Having a familiar person by their side can give kids the confidence they need to join a new activity. Why not invite one of your child's friends to come along with them to the first session. Even if their friend does not continue, your child may feel ready to return on their own.

MEET CLUB STAFF OR MEMBERS BEFOREHAND

Invite the child and family to meet with your coach, instructor or a club volunteer in advance. That way, there will be a familiar face around on the first day. Use that meeting to explain your child's needs. You might like to share some of our resources or tips on how to become an inclusive, deaf-friendly club.

REMIND THEM OF PAST SUCCESSES

This is probably not the first time your child has had to overcome something. Remind them of times they've moved forward in spite of reluctance. For example, they may have been nervous about starting school or visiting a new healthcare professional, but they did it.

DO A PRACTISE RUN

If the child is anxious about the situation, suggest the family does a practise run at home beforehand. For example, the parent could play the role of the coach or teammates so the child can practise introducing themselves. They could also practise what to do in awkward situations, such as a miscommunication. This will help the child feel better prepared and more confident.

ASK QUESTIONS

There may be a good reason why your child is nervous about starting something new. Here are some questions to ask to find out.

Can you think of something you used to find scary or difficult that's easier for you now?

What's the worst thing that could happen if you have a go?

How likely do you think that is?

What is more likely to happen?

What would you say if a friend felt the way you do?

Listen to the answers and talk through them to help the child confront any fears.

STAY WITH THEM IF NECESSARY

The child will be relying on the parent to take the lead, especially if they are younger. They might find it reassuring to know their parents will be there throughout the session.

REWARD THEIR EFFORTS

Kids can be nervous about trying new things for many reasons, such as their temperament or a past experience. You can support them by celebrating each effort they make. Rewarding effort helps kids learn that the process is just as important as the outcome. It shows them success can mean a lot of things, including willingness to try.

“I've tried other groups, but I found this one helped me the most. They were the most accepting and they just made me feel included.”

EWEN, DEAF SEA SCOUT

EIGHT WAYS TO GET INVOLVED



REMEMBER:
ADULT
SUPERVISION AT ALL TIMES



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