

# Difference between being successful and being driven to win at all costs

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



" Let's play again so this time I can beat you," your child says when you capture his last checker. You agree to play again, secretly wondering if your efforts to help him be a success have gone too far. His skill improves with each game, but he's too obsessed with beating you to notice. How do you teach your child the difference between being successful and being driven to win at all costs? Here's how to recognize the benefits and drawbacks of competition, and to keep your child's appetite for winning from getting out of hand. What does my child learn from competition? It's impossible to protect your kids from competitive situations, and you probably don't want to, anyway. Your child can learn some valuable lessons from healthy competition that will serve him well as he gets older. - The importance of playing by the rules. Five-year-olds are just starting to understand that rules are the basis of any game, says Sara Wilford, the director of the Early Childhood Center and Art of Teaching graduate program at Sara Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York. When everyone makes up his own rules, no one can play together, and the game isn't enjoyable. The earlier your child learns this lesson, the more fun he'll have playing with other children as he grows older. - How to be a good winner and a good loser. " A good winner knows not to say 'Na Na, I beat the \*@%# out of you,'" says Dee Shepherd-Look, a clinical psychologist and professor of child and adolescent psychology at California State University, Northridge. On the flip side, a good loser knows not to pout. Not only is this a crucial lesson for your child to learn, but it's also important that he learn it early in life. Six-year-olds may be able to get away with throwing temper tantrums when they lose, but 16-year-olds who throw fits are rarely tolerated. The older your child gets, the

harder it is to back track and teach him to be a good loser. - The value of giving your best effort. " It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game." You've heard this a million times because it's true. A loser can feel good about his efforts because he tried his hardest, Shepherd-Look says. Furthermore, a winner may look back on the game and realize her victory would have been impossible without that extra push at the end. The more your child is exposed to challenging situations, the clearer this concept will become. How do I know when competition gets out of hand? Although they can be valuable learning opportunities, competitive situations can easily get out of control. Look for signs that your child thinks winning is more important than playing the game, says Shepherd-Look. For example, suppose your child is playing Old Maid with his friends. If the rules keep changing, and some kids cheat while others quit and refuse to play, it's time to take a break. You may want to suggest that the kids work on a puzzle together or play a game in which everybody wins.