

# Helping your child learn their game playbook

MULTI-SPORT PARENTING



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Learning the Xs and Os of game plays is one of the most intimidating aspects of joining a sports team, but it is a necessary skill if your child wants to log actual playing time. In youth athletics, the playbook is relatively small compared to the encyclopedia-sized binders that are issued to professional players. Still, the various diagrams, rules and explanations are often difficult for young minds to digest.

Even when a coach keeps the plays simple, children's brains have a tough time not only memorizing plays but also knowing how to access and use that knowledge when the pressure is cranked up during game time. In a recent

interview with [Sports Illustrated](#), Dr. David Redish, a professor in the Department of Neuroscience at the University of Minnesota, explained that memorizing the playbook and successfully extracting that information onto the field is challenging because it requires the use of two different brain systems.

From using digital sports apps to programming plays into video games, parents can use these four strategies at home to help their young athletes learn their sports playbooks.

## **1. Video games for visual reps**

Transform sports-themed video games into a positive educational resource by utilizing the built-in plays to help young athletes understand formation basics, practice read progressions and learn passing concepts. These games can also teach children the fundamental structure of the game, such as the purpose of specific offensive and defensive positions.

Minnesota Vikings rookie quarterback [Teddy Bridgewater](#) uses EA Madden Football to practice what he refers to as “visual reps.” While you can’t plug in your own team plays, you can create a custom playbook in Madden that features plays similar to the ones your child is expected to learn. While playing side by side, you can also call out a play that your child must execute in the virtual game.

## **2. Reinforce repetition with flashcards**

Relying on the power of repetition, flashcards are an old-school technique that serves as an effective memory aid to help your youngster master the basics of the game. Write the name of the play on one side of the card and diagram the play on the backside. Call out a play and have your child respond with their role. For a variation, turn the flashcards into a matching game where the goal is to pair the name of the play with the right diagram.

## **3. Review game film on digital sports apps**

From [Digital Playbooks](#) to [Hudl](#) to [Krossover](#), sports video apps can transform ordinary tablets into powerful teaching tools. These digital apps, which offer youth-centered versions, allow athletes to study plays and review their own performance. Many are equipped with digital playbooks that support uploading of play diagrams. Some apps turn these static plays into animated routes while others let players insert notes on the page.

As a parent, you can also use your tablet to record practices and games so you can watch the videos together at home. Observe the film in slow motion, focusing on play development and identifying patterns. Have your child study their own performance as well as reps performed by other team members.

#### **4. Teach and practice visualization**

Sports psychologists utilize visualization as an important method for helping athletes focus, stay positive and improve their physical and mental abilities. Research has shown that visualizing can be just as effective as physical practice, and the technique only requires 10 minutes of time every day to program the subconscious brain. The mental strategy works by engaging the brain's visual and motor cortexes.

Young athletes will need guidance at first to learn how to properly create detailed mental images. In a quiet place, have your child close their eyes and ask them to imagine the sporting arena, the playing field and their teammates. Ask your child what they feel, what they hear, what they smell and how they feel? Call out a play and then have them run it through their mind, frame by frame, imagining where they should be on the field and what actions they must take to see it successfully completed.

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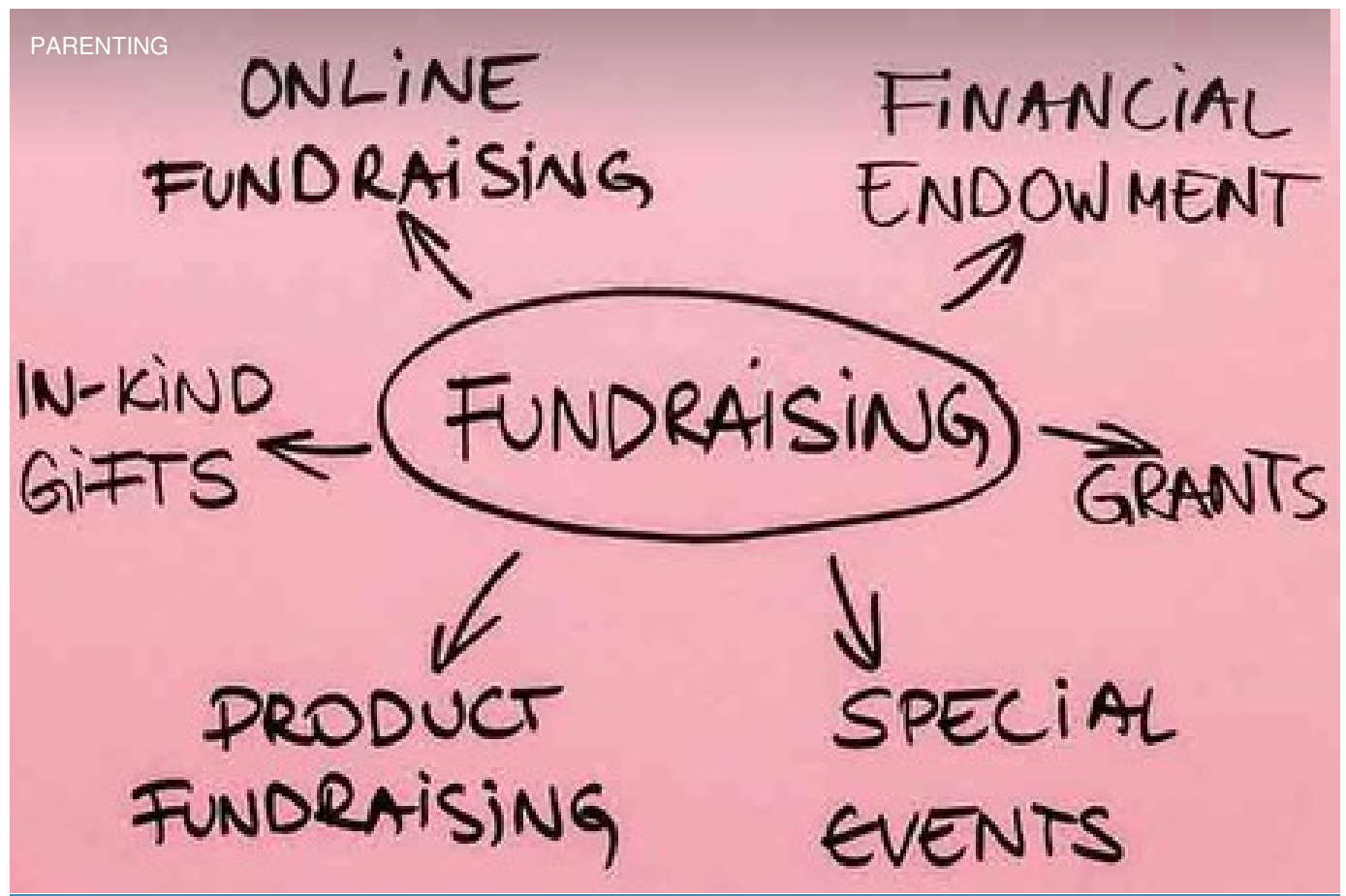
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