



When Should My Kid Specialize

Deciding when the time is right to specialize can be a difficult decision for both parents and athletes. This decision might come naturally to some, and others might find it quite challenging. If you're finding it difficult to navigate this, sit down with your athlete and complete one of the problem solving processes together!

STEP BY STEP THROUGH THE PROBLEM

1. What is the situation or question I'm trying to solve? (e.g., determining if now is the right time to specialize)
 - a. What are the biggest problems with things staying the same? (e.g., not enough time to spend on all activities)
 - b. What are the most important factors that impact the problem? (e.g., finances, limited vehicle access)
2. Do I have all of the facts about the situation? Do I need to collect more information?
3. What are the goals in trying to solve this problem right now? (e.g., starting to feel overwhelmed with all the things to do, getting behind in schoolwork, not sleeping enough)
4. What are all the solutions/options? List all of the options you can- this is not the time to review and judge (e.g., switch practice days, quit all sports, sort out carpool options with basketball teammates, go all in on golf, go all in on basketball, limit social time on weekends)
5. What options feel best to implement right now?
6. When will I check back in on this, or how will I know if it was helpful?

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

A Cost/Benefit Analysis can be helpful if you're having difficulty deciding between two courses of action, (e.g. whether or not to do something).

Often people focus on the pros and cons of one specific decision. Here, we focus on both options, to fully review all options.

Find a time to sit down with your athlete and reflect/analyze each section. When reflecting on each question remember to take into account your family values, your athletes goals, their trajectory, and their overall wellbeing.

Another option, instead of completing the task together, is to complete it simultaneously. Parents, coaches, and athletes can all complete this separately. By having the athlete complete

this themselves, they will likely have thoughts that are unique. It should not be the parent or coach giving the athlete the benefits/ costs and telling the athlete what is a worthwhile benefit or what is a costly disadvantage... the athlete needs to feel these and believe they are important to their experience as well.

Complete each quadrant as follows:

- What are the benefits of specialization for your athlete?
- What are the benefits of waiting to specialize?
- What are the costs of specialization?
- What are the costs of waiting to specialize?

	SPECIALIZE	WAIT
BENEFITS Advantages/Pros		
COSTS Disadvantages/Cons		
FAMILY BUDGET Disadvantages/Cons		

REFLECTION

If you decide that specialization is not a 'right now,' it can be helpful to create a plan that considers:

- What are the priorities for your athlete in golf?
- What are the priorities for your athlete in pursuing other sports/ interests?
- Are there points from any of the quadrants that the athlete would like to focus on or spend more time learning about?
- What might a blend look like so that the athlete is not going to experience burnout?
- Are there people you feel are important to communicate this plan to?
- When will you review this exercise again?

“Hockey helped make me who I am... As a goalie, you are there for your team, and that’s a lot of pressure. Just like in golf, bad things happen and you just have to keep fighting and fighting. It made me physically stronger and mentally stronger.”

- Brooke Henderson