

10 Reasons Why Kids Should Wrestle

Wrestling is a great sport that teaches athletes so many valuable lessons about sport and life in general. Dan Gable, legendary University of Iowa coach, World, and Olympic Champion; is quoted as saying “Once you have wrestled, everything else in life is easy.” I still think that life can continue to throw powerful punches and challenges, however, I am in agreement that wrestling is a sport that teaches hard work and personal accountability. If one fails on the wrestling mat, there is no one else to blame but the individual. It is hard to blame a coach or a teammate for a sub par performance, and wrestling forces an individual to look inward to see what you’re really made of. Here are my top ten reasons why kids should wrestle.

1. Wrestling develops basic athletic skills

Wrestling is one of those sports that requires a lot of body control. It isn’t enough to be able to run, jump, or throw. You have to be able to use your neck, your back, your arms, your legs, and everything else that you can control to help you to win a match. One of the staples of a good wrestling practice is tumbling in the warm up. People often recognize the value of signing children up in gymnastics, but many people are unaware that there are a lot of tumbling and gymnastics movements that are a part of wrestling practice. We make sure to spend a portion of every practice, especially with our youngest athletes, on tumbling. You have to build an athlete before you can turn him into a wrestler. That is not even to mention all of the flexibility, strength, explosiveness, and skill required to execute a lot of wrestling moves effectively.

2. Wrestling develops personal responsibility

Wrestling is a sport that makes you responsible like no other. Whether you win or lose, it’s entirely up to you. You are responsible for your training. You are responsible for making weight. You have to score. It’s all on you. There are dual competitions and team tournaments where every individual’s performance comes into play, but your teammate can’t step in to tag you out, if things aren’t going your way. You have to be ready to be ready to perform every single match.

3. Wrestling develops mental toughness

The training that is required for wrestling is very intense to say the least. In just a six minute match, you can feel entirely wiped out. In the heat of a tough match, your lungs can burn, your legs and back can be worn out, and your forearms can be completely swollen with blood. Because of the intense nature of the sport, you have to be prepared for anything. You also have to be mentally tough and prepared to square up one on one with your opponent. If you step on the mat, and you don’t believe that you are going to win, you are in trouble. You have to be mentally strong to be ready to perform under pressure on a regular basis. You have to be mentally prepared to push your body beyond what it wants to do.

4. Wrestling teaches about nutrition and weight maintenance

One of the hardest parts of wrestling is making weight. It is a challenge to go through the regular wrestling workouts, and when you are cutting weight, you also will probably be doing extra workouts

on the side as well as cutting your calorie intake. You have to learn how to say no to the cake and say yes to fresh fruits and vegetables. You have to learn to say no to the soda and chips and say yes to water and chicken breasts. The better you eat, the more energy that you will have, and the better that you will perform.

5. Wrestling brings kids together and builds a strong camaraderie

Adversity has a way of bringing people together, and due to the challenges that a wrestler faces on a daily basis in practice and competition, the bonds between wrestlers become very strong. In a wrestling practice, you have a group of guys that are giving it their very all to become the best they can be, and in order to do that, they have to compete against each other, day in and day out. However, even though guys are trying to break their opponent during practice, they can also be some of the best friends after practice is over. There is a great feeling of empathy that is developed for the other athletes, and when they win big matches, you are happy for them. When they lose big matches, you can feel the sting of their loss too.

6. Wrestling develops discipline

To be successful in wrestling, you have to develop discipline. You can't just show up to practice whenever you want to, or else you will not be properly prepared to compete. You can't just compete on the days that you feel like it, and you can't just watch your diet occasionally. You have to develop and stick to a routine. If you are undisciplined in any of your efforts, it can be disastrous further down the road when you show up to a competition untrained or unprepared. You have to do the work every day.

7. Wrestling brings different cultures and countries together

Wrestling is a sport that helps bring people together. Even though the competition is fierce, most wrestlers are able to look past where an individual is from. If you walk around in various cities all across the world, people can recognize your cauliflower ear, and they know you are a wrestler. Wrestling took me all across the globe, and I still have some great friends from other countries of the world like Germany, Egypt, Cuba, and Hungary just to name a few.

8. Wrestling teaches an individual how to focus on something and master it

There are a lot of techniques that you can try to master in wrestling, but the very best wrestlers usually have one or two moves that are unstoppable. It takes a lot of time and repetition to get a move down just right so that it can be executed during competition. Bruce Lee wasn't a wrestler, but he has a quote that I really like. It says, "I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times." This quote applies to wrestling as well. The wrestlers who dabble in a lot of different things, won't be the greatest. The wrestler that can discipline themselves to focus on one technique and master it, will give themselves a great opportunity to win.

9. Wrestling provides opportunities to further education

Let's face it. It is very unlikely that most wrestlers will get paid much, if anything at all, to wrestle. However, wrestling can provide an opportunity to earn a scholarship to wrestle in college and further one's education. A lot of times when people think of getting a scholarship to wrestle in college, they immediately think that division I schools are the only places that they can go to get a wrestling scholarship. The truth is that there are more opportunities to wrestle in college and get school paid for by competing in other divisions as well. Division II, NAIA, and junior colleges also have programs with scholarships available. If young wrestlers are committed to the sport and do their homework about wrestling programs, hopefully, they will be able to find a school that they can wrestle at and further their education as well.

10. Wrestling is fun

Last but not least, wrestling is fun! Despite all of the challenges that are a part of the sport, it is so much fun and so rewarding to go compete and win. Having your hand raised at the end of a match is a great feeling. It is a very satisfying feeling to know that you are able to work hard, improve your skills, face challenges, and overcome them. You know that no matter what life throws at you, that you will be able to prepare for it, and come out okay on the other side.

Conclusion

Wrestling is such an amazing sport that provides youth an opportunity to learn things that will help them throughout their lifetime. It helps to develop strong minds and strong bodies. It helps youth to learn to set and work to achieve goals. It is a great sport that I am very grateful to have competed in, and I am still very fortunate to be able to continue to coach and pass along lessons that I have learned along the way. If you are a wrestler that is still competing, I hope that you continue to do so and keep learning things. If you are a parent of wrestlers, I hope that you continue to encourage them to work hard. If you don't wrestle, I encourage you to give it a try. Finally, if you are a parent of youth that don't wrestle, I encourage you to encourage them to try out wrestling. Even if they only do it for a short time, they will be forever changed.

About The Author

Justin Ruiz is a college and youth wrestling coach. He was a 2x NCAA All American for the University of Nebraska, 6x World Team Member, and a World Bronze Medalist.