

How much is too much?

Should your child go for the football practice 5 days a week? Are 3 days enough? It is common for parents to be a little confused when it comes to deciding how much is too much with reference to after school activities. They argue that since most of the activities are fun (as different from studies), children will simply lap up these classes. But, too much of fun can also make a child sick. Here is a simple guide that will help you decide how much is too much for your child.

#### Kindergarten:

Your child is just beginning to learn to interact and get used to discipline. His or her after-school life should be simple and carefree. One or two classes per week are enough at the beginning. Once the child settles down, look for more challenging activities like a music program.

#### Grade 1:

One or two activities per week, play dates and playground visits are recommended. Avoid competitive sports activities. The child is still too young to have to worry about winning and losing. After the rigors of a full day at school, he or she needs a healthy outlet for pent up energy. Physical activities and noncompetitive sports are best for this age.

#### Grade 2:

Your child is old enough to voice opinions on what activities he or she wants. Sports, skating, swimming or computers - steer him towards things he likes. Many children begin lessons on a musical instrument around this age. But, allow your child some 'alone time' during which he can unwind and just do whatever he wishes.

#### Grade 3:

Socialization begins to take center stage. Team sports are a good choice. Developing motor skills, painting, drawing etc are good too. Let the child explore areas of interests. But leave aside enough time for the family and for fun activities.

#### Grade 4:

At this age, the child will tell you what he likes. He needs to get involved in activities that will boost his confidence. This will also help him manage stress as this is the time when social pressure is beginning to build. But, beware of the homework demon. Your child needs more time with his studies. Balancing his schoolwork with other activities is very important.

Grade 5:

The fifth grader is bubbling with energy and will want to do just about everything. But she or he may conveniently push studies to the background. So, close supervision is needed. Keep one or two days free for family time and other activities. Now is a great time to get your child interested in community service.

Middle school:

Steer him away from TV. Get him engaged in activities that reinforce learning. Academic performance can be improved by encouraging your preteen to join clubs like the Girl/Boy Scouts program, language clubs, chess clubs etc. As a thumb rule, 16-20 hours a week of extra activity should be more than enough. But look out for signs of burnout.

What you select for your child and how long he should work at it is basically decided by the child's temperament. As a parent, you should closely observe your child and base your decisions on feedback from the child himself.

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