

Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility in Activity

Children are born loving their bodies, curious about them and inclined to be active. Good parenting with activity preserves those qualities. Parents provide *structure, safety* and *opportunities*. Children choose *how much* and *whether* to move and the manner of moving.

The division of responsibility for infants:

- The parent is responsible for *safe opportunities*
- The child is responsible for *moving*

The parent provides the infant with a variety of positions, clothing, sights and sounds. Then the parent remains present and lets the infant experiment with moving.

The division of responsibility for toddlers through adolescents

- The parent is responsible for *structure, safety* and *opportunities*
- The child is responsible for *how, how much* and *whether* he or she moves

Supporting activity is good parenting. Parents' jobs include:

- Develop judgment about normal commotion
- Provide safe places for activity the child enjoys
- Find fun and rewarding family activities
- Provide opportunities to experiment with group activities such as sports
- Set limits on TV but not on reading, writing, artwork, other sedentary activities
- Remove the TV and computer from the child's room
- Make children responsible for dealing with their own boredom

Fundamental to parents' jobs is trusting children to decide *how much* to move, the way to move and *whether* to be active.

- Children will be active
- Each child is more or less active depending on constitutional endowment
- Each child is more or less skilled, graceful, energetic, or aggressive depending on constitutional endowment
- Children's physical capabilities will grow and develop
- They will experiment with activities that are in concert with their growth and development
- They will experiment and find activities that are right for them

Crossing the lines of the division of responsibility is likely to create problems with movement and distort growth. Trying to control *whether, how much*, or the *way* a child moves or how his body turns out crosses the lines. So does catering to a child's expectation that he will be endlessly entertained. For a further discussion of Ellyn Satter's division of responsibility in activity, see *Your Child's Weight: Helping Without Harming*.

