



RILEY'S RAINFOREST

“Send down . . . from the clouds of Thy mercy the rains of Thy healing . . .” —Bahá'u'lláh

Success with Sports

From softball to soccer, basketball to badminton, team sports can be loads of fun. They're good for your body, of course, but sports can improve your life in other ways, too.

Scientists find that kids who stay active tend to get better grades in school. This may be because an area of the brain involved in learning and memory—the **hippocampus**—gets bigger during exercise, and new brain cells get created there. Regular physical activity can also help you sleep better, which makes it easier to think and concentrate.

The planning involved in sports can help build mental muscles, too. It takes self-discipline and good time management skills to balance sports practice with school and other stuff in life.

Playing sports can even boost your mood and ease depression.



During exercise, your body releases feel-good chemicals called **endorphins**. One study found that teens who participated in sports had lower symptoms of stress and depression when they reached adulthood than those who didn't.

Cheering on teammates and working together toward a goal can lead to strong friendships. And a supportive coach may turn into a lifelong mentor.

You don't have to be a star athlete to enjoy the many benefits of team sports. Play casual ball games with friends, go for bike rides or hikes, or roller blade together through your neighborhood. Just grab some friends and go!

Explore & Soar: Discover Your Sport

How do you decide which sports to play? Try these tips for finding a good fit.

- ☐ Do you like individual activities that let you achieve your personal best? Think about tennis, running, and cycling.
- ☐ If you prefer working in groups, look at team sports like soccer, basketball, and baseball.
- ☐ If thrilling speeds and epic adventures are your thing, skiing, surfing, or mountain biking might be your style.



- ☐ Does combining creativity and activity appeal to you? Try dance, gymnastics, or cheerleading.
- ☐ Try out a sport you enjoy watching older kids or professionals play.
- ☐ Ask friends who play sports why they love their sport.
- ☐ Talk to your parents and gym teacher. They may have ideas about how your strengths match different sports.

Curiosity Canopy



T rue or False? Football is the most popular sport in the world.

True—but not what Americans consider football. The sport that most of the world calls football is known as soccer in the U.S. Globally, it has more participants and fans than any other sport.