

## When a child contest becomes abuse

There's nothing wrong with showing off a child's beauty, but a child contest becomes abuse when parents live vicariously and sacrifice character and fun. Child beauty pageants aren't the only times a child contest becomes abuse, but that's usually the first thing people think about. Any hobby contests, intellectual competitions, sporting events, or school fairs can also subject children to abusive practices when not managed properly. All manners of intellectual and athletic competitions where children are pitted against one another for the purpose of choosing winners and losers can be perilous.

### The benefits of contests

We all know the benefits of raising an [unmaterialistic baby](#). There's many benefits to competition, too, including physical and psychological benefits that result from contests where children compete among one another. Indeed, we should teach our children about winning and losing at a very young age, both for the purpose of exploring how self-esteem

can be impacted by these life aspects and to build individual character in young ones. But competition can also be a recipe for hostility, aggression, frustration and aggravation. A child contest becomes abuse when kids begin detesting one another, become irrational, break relationships or feel crippled by the results. Lessons in cooperation, teamwork and constructive victory, however, can be beautiful lessons when all goes well in a contest. Parents should seek out

these healthy contests for children, and avoid subjecting our children to the egos of parents who forget that fun is more important than victory. If a child is not nurturing his or her good traits, parents must step in and stop the contest.

### **Choose contests based on age**

A child's age can also be helpful in discovering a contest. Babies under the age of two have little recognition of competition, so organized contests with winners and losers are always exploitative. From 24 months until the age of 5 years old, children should be given to "free play," which typically include games like running, catching, singing and basic scripted games where everyone succeeds. Children between 5 and 9 years old are ready to compete and feel the pains of winning and losing, but organized activity should always focus on the fun and experience of the activities, with scores an afterthought. If there are "play-offs", then the league should be avoided. Harder lessons can come after the age of 10, but each child's maturity and mindset must be evaluated for the contest at hand. A child contest becomes abuse whenever there's sustained dread, pain or frustration.

### **Beauty contests should always be avoided**

Children's beauty contests are similar to the adult beauty pageants depicted on annual Miss America or Miss Universe television shows. The three types of pageant child contests include Natural, Full Glitz and Semi Glitz Pageants, the character-challenging body modifications progressing accordingly. Many parents assume "Natural" means "safe", but competing children's beauty against one another always results in superficial results. "The prettiest girl always wins," writes Patricia Elane in her insightful history called [Toddlers in Tiaras? My Life as a Baby Beauty Pageant Judge](#). "It doesn't matter if a child speaks five languages, has saved a life on a subway track, plays cello at the university postgraduate level, or has won an Olympic medal. If she doesn't have 'the look', she won't win the prize.

Instagramming children in a competition to out-cute the baby next door is a trend that is evil. This child contest becomes abuse as soon as we see the parent's vicarious vanity. [Infant fashion shows are here](#), and society is suffering because of them. These shows include scripts one might expect to see on TheOnion.com: "Here, she sports a delectable Baby Leopard Print Footie by infant clothing maker Little Me. I might be a little biased, but I can totally see this as a cover for Baby Vogue."

If only that Baby Vogue reference were a joke. It isn't. You can find everything you'll need for your own beauty pageant at the [Baby Vogue Boutique](#).