

How to Get Your Kids Into Paddleboarding — From One Busy Mum to Another

A busy mum's guide to getting kids outdoors, on the water, and loving every minute of it.

"Keep your kids active and they'll generally be happier and healthier."

That was the advice a mum I deeply respected gave me when I had three young boys. Maybe I focused a bit too much on their sports rather than their academics — but honestly, it's made for a fulfilling, wonderful, rewarding, memory-making life with lots to do.

Sport gives kids a place to let off steam, a ready-made crowd of friends, a sense of independence, and resilience to cope with other things in life — not to mention all the physical and mental health benefits that keep them strong, happy, and grounded.

And for us, **paddleboarding** was a dominant sport as my kids were growing up.

Why Paddleboarding?

As a parent, taking time to encourage your children into water sports could be one of the best things you ever do.

Paddleboarding, in particular, gives them a chance to connect with nature, enhance their fitness, see new places, meet new people, and laugh - a lot. It's also a beautiful way to build your relationship with your children.

I always dreamed of giving my kids as many outdoor experiences as possible so that, when they're older, they'd have the confidence and ability to choose the sports and activities they love.

But let's be honest - this dream isn't always easy. Sometimes it feels like I never stop! Between organising the kit, finding time and managing everyone's moods, it can be exhausting. But every time we're out on the water together, it's worth it.



My Top Tips for Getting Kids into Paddleboarding

Over the years, these small things have made a big difference:

1. Be organised - but flexible

If I have the kit ready the night before, getting the kids out the next day is so much easier. Know where you keep your kit, make sure you put it away clean and dry, hang the wet suits up so when you next need it it is easy to find.

2. Have the right kit

If kids are cold, they'll give up quickly. Invest in warm wetsuits, gloves, boots and have hot chocolate ready when they come off the water, along with enough easy changing towels for everyone and dry clothes. On colder days, getting the kids into wetsuits at home was a lot easier than at the side of the river or sea, so they could be straight out of the car and ready to go. Comfort keeps enthusiasm alive.



3. Accept that the adventure is often shorter than the preparation

Sometimes the paddle might last 30 minutes, even though it took an hour to pack, drive, and sort out the kit. That's okay - it's still worth it. Those short bursts of adventure build great memories.

4. Feed them — lots!

Hungry or cold kids lose interest fast. Don't just let them paddle after a bowl of rice crispies! Make sure they've had a proper, nutritious breakfast and plenty to drink. I've learned the hard way that, no matter how busy I am sorting boards and snacks, food must be a priority. Taking sandwiches - which were usually eaten as soon as we set off! - was always wise and a load of good snacks.



5. Make it fun

If they love it, they'll keep doing it. Play games on the boards, set small challenges, let them jump in, laugh with them, the genius of play creates kids who want to keep coming back for more.

6. Be consistent

Don't let it be a once-a-year activity. Try to build a rhythm - maybe every other weekend or during school holidays. Kids love structure, and routine builds skills and confidence. If the weather's too cold or windy, swap it for another fun, active outing instead.

7. Fake enthusiasm (when you're tired!)

We've all been there - you'd rather have a quiet coffee than load the car. But showing excitement helps your kids stay motivated. Once you're out there, your own energy will follow.

8. Don't sit on the sidelines — get in with them

Kids love spending time with you, not just watching from the bank. Even if you're wobbling, falling, and laughing - that's what they'll remember most.



9. Be a role model

Show them that trying new things, being brave, and enjoying the outdoors is for everyone. And if you can't be the one on the board, help them find inspiring instructors or older role models who can encourage them.

10. Be patient and kind - and don't give up

Some days will go smoothly; others won't. There will be meltdowns, forgotten towels, and wobbly starts. Stick with it. Those are the days you're planting the seeds for a lifetime love of the water.

In the end...

Getting your kids into paddleboarding isn't just about a sport - it's about connection: with nature, with movement, and with each other. Yes, it takes effort. Yes, it's messy and tiring. But the laughter, confidence, and memories you'll share are absolutely worth it.

So pack the boards, grab the snacks, and get out there. You might just discover that your best family adventures happen one paddle stroke at a time. I found there more I did, the more they did - keep going.

Anna is a mum of three energetic boys with a background in PE teaching and running sports camps for kids. Anna now runs her own business as an Exercise Specialist, helping people get active, free from injury and enjoy movement. When not training clients or being a kids taxi, you'll find Anna climbing mountains, cycling, paddleboarding, or supporting Northern SUP Race Club.

