**Things to Know When Shopping for Football Gear**

🏈 **Essential Gear Checklist**

1. **Helmet** – Must be certified (look for NOCSAE seal), properly fitted, and include a chin strap.
2. **Shoulder Pads** – Should fit snugly and allow full range of motion.
3. **Mouthguard** – Required for safety; some leagues require tethered ones.
4. **Practice Jersey & Pants** – Lightweight and breathable for training.
5. **Game Jersey & Pants** – Usually provided by the team, but check first.
6. **Hip, Thigh, Knee, and Tailbone Pads** – Often come with integrated pants or as a pad set.
7. **Cleats** – Football-specific cleats (not soccer or baseball) for traction and ankle support.
8. **Gloves (optional)** – Improve grip and protect hands.
9. **Athletic Supporter/Cup** – Often required for boys.
10. **Water Bottle** – Hydration is key!

🛍️ **Shopping Tips**

* **Buy in Person When Possible**: Especially for helmets and shoulder pads—fit is everything.
* **Check League Requirements**: Some leagues have specific gear rules or provide certain items.
* **Don’t Overspend**: Kids grow fast. Look for gently used gear or starter packages.
* **Try It All On Together**: Make sure all gear works together without pinching or restricting movement.
* **Label Everything**: Especially if your child is in a team setting.

🧠 **What to Ask When Buying**

* Is this helmet reconditioned and certified?
* Can the shoulder pads be adjusted as my child grows?
* Are the pants integrated with pads or do I need to buy them separately?
* What’s the return policy if the fit isn’t right?

🧒 **Comfort & Confidence**

* Let your child move around in the gear—run, squat, raise arms.
* Make sure they feel confident and not overwhelmed by the equipment.
* Break in gear during practice before game day.