



Focus on Development

Informed by Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) Guidelines

November 16, 2019

Long-Term Athlete Development



What is LTAD?

Human development from birth to adulthood is a continuous process. To understand the process better, experts divide human development into distinct stages with specific characteristics; these are called stages of development.

In Canadian sport, experts have identified seven stages of development, each with its own physical, mental, emotional, and cognitive characteristics. This is our Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model, and it's the basis for the optimal training and competition kids need to enjoy sport the most and perform their best.

Why do we need the LTAD model?

Because participation in recreational sport and physical activity has been declining and physical education programs in schools are being marginalized.

Because the international performances of Canadian athletes have been declining in some sports.






Because other sports are having trouble identifying and developing the next generation of international athletes.

Because **NOT** matching skills and activities to a stage of development has serious negative consequences, and Canadians and the Canadian sport system have been suffering from them for some time. To mention just a few of them:

- Children don't have fun;
- They develop bad habits because of the over-emphasis on winning;
- Their skill development is poor;
- They don't reach their optimal performance level;
- Many burn out and drop out of sport.



Recommendations

-  Align to the LTAD guideline of 70% practice and 30% competition.
-  Schedule practices for all Divisions to ensure a 70|30 split.
-  Create an 'A' Tier in Senior Rookie, Minor and Major to focus on development.
-  Create a Coaches Package that includes practice plans, drills and areas of focus for each Division and Tier.
-  Determine Coaching Requirements and/or Certifications for each Division and Tier.

Stage 1: Active Start

Chronological Age:
Males and Females Ages 0-6

Objectives:

To make play and physical activity fun and exciting and an essential component of daily routine throughout life.

- 1 Keep children active: Children this age shouldn't be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when they're sleeping.
- 2 Help them learn proper movement skills. Recognizing proper movement skills isn't always easy, but there are resources that can help.
- 3 Organize some physical activities — get a group of children and parents together and go to the park to let them explore the swings, slides, and monkey bars!
- 4 Let children explore their physical environment, but keep a watchful eye on them and keep the environment safe. Let them run, jump, climb, and swing — it's important for their development.
- 5 This is a great time to get children into introductory gymnastics and swimming programs — not to create elite gymnasts or swimmers, but to provide wonderful learning opportunities in different environments.



T-Ball Junior Rookie

Recommended Changes:

- T-Ball will loosely follow the Fall Ball format.
- Junior Rookie will follow the 70% practice and 30% competition formula.
- Coaching Resources will focus on:
 - Movement such as running, jumping, climbing, swinging.
 - Basics of throwing and catching.
 - Drills that focus on fun and engagement.
- No Coaching Certification Required

1

Arrange for your children to be physically active every day. Remember that several short bursts of activity are probably better at this stage than one long training session.

2

Encourage your children to take part in a wide range of sporting activities. Specializing too soon in a single sport is NOT good. Trying different sports helps children work on their agility, balance, coordination, and speed.

3

Make sure your children choose sports that focus on running, jumping, throwing, catching, and kicking. Encourage children to build on the gymnastics and swimming activities they started in the Active Start stage.

4

Ask sport programs in your community to use trained or certified coaches — they can help children develop the fundamental movement skills.

5

Urge your child's school to have frequent physical education classes — every day is best — taught by qualified physical education teachers. Children benefit enormously when they're taught to do movement skills properly.

6

Talk to your children about the importance of having fun and enjoying participation. Focusing on results and over-specializing hurts rather than helps later sport performance.

7

Pay attention to the equipment used to improve strength. Children in this stage should use medicine balls, Swiss balls, and their own body weight, not heavy weights or weight machines.

Stage 2: Fundamental

Chronological Age:

Males Ages 6-9
Females Ages 6-8

Objectives:

To begin teaching agility, balance and coordination and speed (ABCs). To continue to instill the importance of daily play and physical activity.



Senior Rookie

Recommended Changes:


- Senior Rookie 'A' will loosely follow the Fall Ball model.
- Senior Rookie 'AA and AAA' will follow the 70% practice and 30% competition formula.
- Coaching Resources will focus on:
 - Movement such as running, jumping, climbing, swinging.
 - More advanced drills for throwing, catching, batting, base running.
 - Begin to focus on baseball rules and strategy.
- Additional Coaching Requirements will be required to ensure more qualified coaches and a better baseball experience.

1	Help children further develop fundamental movement skills and learn overall sports skills. Don't let them specialize too much too soon — it can have a harmful effect on later skill development.
2	Encourage your children to play at least three different sports they enjoy. Also encourage them to engage in unstructured play.
3	Make sure your children do the right kind of strength work. This includes doing activities that use their own body weight (sit-ups and push-ups, for example), working with medicine balls and Swiss balls, and hopping and bouncing. Children in wheelchairs should practice wheeling uphill.
4	Encourage children to develop their endurance, for example, by playing games where they move continuously or by doing relay-type activities.
5	Be aware that training for speed is effective in this stage. Children can develop speed through activities that focus on rapid, darting movements and on fast hand and foot movements. Rapid changes in direction are also great — think tag and dodging-type games.
6	Make sure your children get the right amount of competition. Children in this stage enjoy competition, but they have to train too. The goal should be 70% of activity time in training, 30% in competition. In a team sport, this means 2 or 3 practices for every game.
7	If your child is in a team sport, make sure he or she gets a chance to compete. This is not the time for coaches to play only the star players and leave less-developed players on the sidelines. Some of those slower developing children will some day reach the highest levels of performance in their sport.

Stage 3: Learning to Train

Chronological Age:
Males Ages 9-12
Females Ages 8-11

Objectives:
To continue to enhance ABCs to develop overall sports skills. To begin to integrate physical, mental, cognitive, and emotional components within a well-structured program. To develop physical literacy.



Minor
Major

Recommended Changes:

- Minor and Major 'A' will loosely follow the Fall Ball format.
- Minor and Major 'AA and AAA' will follow the 70% practice and 30% competition formula.
- Coaching Resources will focus on:
 - More advanced drills for throwing, catching, batting, base running.
 - Strong focus on baseball rules and strategy.
- Some Coaching Requirements will be required to ensure more qualified coaches and a better baseball experience.

1	Stamina training is essential, since the body adapts more easily to such training in this stage than at any other time.
2	Aerobic training is a high priority, particularly toward the second half of this stage, after Peak Height Velocity (PHV) has occurred. But children still need to work on developing skill, speed, and strength. They also need to maintain or improve their flexibility, as this is a time of rapid growth for bones, tendons, ligaments, and muscles.
3	Strength training produces better results at some times than at other times. These optimum times are called windows of accelerated adaptation. For girls, there are two windows; the first is right after PHV, and the second starts with the onset of menstruation.
4	For males there is a single window — about 12 to 18 months after PHV.
5	Your child's training year should be broken into one or two cycles at some point during this stage. Each cycle is in turn broken into several phases, each with its own training focus. This approach to planning is called periodization. If you want to know more about periodization, check with a qualified coach.
6	Children need to learn to cope with the physical and mental challenges of competition, and integrating basic mental-preparation skills into training can pay big dividends.
7	Competition becomes more important, and children should spend about 60% of their activity time in training, about 40% in competition. Too much competition wastes valuable training time, but too little slows the learning of technical/ tactical and decision-making skills in game conditions. Training sessions should include lots of game-like drills and situations.
8	Better quality equipment starts to matter more. This is especially important for athletes with a disability, who need sport-specific equipment such as athletic prostheses. Equipment that suits a child's size, strength, and ability makes things more fun and reduces the chances of injury.
9	Children should be starting to focus on a couple of sports (not just one), and they'll probably show a preference for certain positions or events. While you should encourage this, it's still too early for a high degree of specialization.

Stage 4: Training to Train

Chronological Age:

Males Ages 12-16

Females Ages 11-15

Objectives:

To develop endurance, strength and speed. To develop athletics-specific skills and fitness.



**Intermediate
Junior
Senior**

Recommended Changes:

- Intermediate, Junior, Senior will follow the 70% practice and 30% competition formula.
- Coaching Resources will focus on:
 - More advanced drills for throwing, catching, batting, base running.
 - Strong focus on baseball rules and strategy.
- Additional Coaching Requirements will be required to ensure more qualified coaches and a better baseball experience.

Stage 5: Training to Compete

Chronological Age:
Males Ages 16-18+
Females Ages 15-17+

Objectives:

To develop event specific area physical preparation.
To introduce event specific protocols to identify strengths and weaknesses. To implement event area specialization. To integrate physical, mental, cognitive and emotional development.

1

Athletes now train year-round. Training intensity is high, and training is individualized for the athlete, his or her event, and his or her position.

2

Athletes work on using skills developed in practice in competition conditions. They prepare for high-level competition by modelling, in training, every aspect of what to expect in competition.

3

Physical and mental preparation should be individualized, and optimal recovery from training should be determined for each athlete. Tactical and technical training focuses on building on the athletes' strengths and eliminating known weaknesses.

4

There is more competition or competition-specific training than general technical/tactical and fitness training. Athletes should spend about 40% of their activity time in training, about 60% in competition and preparation for competition.



No Recommendations Yet

**Intermediate
Junior
Senior**

Stage 6: Training to Win

Chronological Age:
Males Ages 18-21+
Females Ages 17-21+

Objectives:
To optimize event specific preparation for competition. To refine event area specialization
To continue with integration of physical, mental, cognitive and emotional development. To conduct event specific testing and monitoring.

- 1 This is the final stage of athlete development, and the focus is on maximizing fitness preparation and sport performance in all its dimensions under competitive conditions. These dimensions include strength, endurance, flexibility, nutritional preparation, and psychological preparation.
- 2 Success in this stage requires that the required physical, technical, tactical, and psychological skills be fully established. It also requires that the physical conditioning groundwork was completed at the developmentally appropriate times.
- 3 Athletes train to peak at major competitions, and training consists of a relatively high amount of work done at high intensity. Training is carefully planned, with the training year divided into one, two, three, or more cycles, depending on the demands of the sport and the individual athlete's strengths.
- 4 About 75% of activity time consists of competition or competition-specific training; the remaining 25% consists of more general training.



No Recommendations Yet

Intermediate
Junior
Senior