

# Canada's Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) Model

**Canadian Sport for Life** documents the Long-term Athlete Development model adopted by Sport Canada and the Canadian Sport System ([www.ltad.ca](http://www.ltad.ca)). Each National Sport Organization (NSO) responsible for a specific sport is developing its unique LTAD model based on Canadian Sport for Life and through its Provincial and Territorial counterparts is implementing the model across the country.

The LTAD is a seven-stage model that provides a general framework of athlete development. As part of the Canadian Sport for Life Framework, LTAD aims to embed developmentally appropriate structures within the sport, recreation, and education systems. The model acknowledges that physical education, school sports, competitive sports, and recreational activities are interdependent.

The first three stages of the model: Active Start, FUNdamentals, and Learning to Train, focuses on developing children's **physical literacy** (movement skills). Stages four to six of the model: Training to train, Training to compete, and Training to Win, focuses on developing excellence. Stage seven, Active for Life, encourages lifelong physical activity.

## Physical Literacy

The learning and practice of fundamental movement skills is the basic building block for the development of physical literacy. The development of fundamental movement skills, and fundamental sport skills, is critical if children are to feel confident when they engage in physical activity for fun and for health, or for competition and the pursuit of excellence. Research shows that without the development of physical literacy, many children and youth withdraw from physical activity and sport and turn to more inactive and/or unhealthy choices during their leisure time.

Physical literacy is the development of fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills that permit a child to move confidently and with control, in a wide range of physical activity, rhythmic (dance) and sport situations. Physical literacy also includes the ability to 'read' what is going on around them in an activity setting and react appropriately to those events.

Physical literacy is developed during the first three stages of Canada's LTAD model, meaning the time from birth to the start of adolescence: from birth to approximately age 11 for girls to age 12 for boys. Although children mature and learn at different rates, almost all children learn their fundamental movement skills in the same sequence, and go through the same phases.

As a child grows and develops (matures) nerve cells make more connections, while at the same time, the muscles of the body are getting stronger. Until the brain is mature enough, and the muscles strong enough, the child simply cannot learn the skill, and trying to teach the child does little good. What is important at this time is providing the child with as many opportunities to explore all possible movements in a rich environment – which means that the child's environment needs to be both safe and challenging.