



# GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY SOCCER

ACTIVE START Soccer Guide






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**Mission Statement:**

*The ASA Technical Department seeks to promote personal development and well-being through the provision of soccer participation opportunities for all within Alberta. The sport of soccer provides a lifetime of opportunities for players, parents, coaches, officials and administrators: the ASA Technical Department seeks to provide guidance and support to all those wishing to embrace the sport that has become the World's Game.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The sport of Soccer has evolved to proudly boast itself as the World's Game. However in order for any sport to grow, it must provide a vibrant and active entry level of performance: The Grassroots of Sport.

The game of soccer has developed over the years and is presented in many different formats and name adaptations today. Some of these adaptations are for better and some a twist on an existing theme. This document aims to provide an insight and guidance on "The Alberta Way". A game plan to take the sport of soccer forward in Alberta for all those involved.

As the governing body for soccer in Alberta, ASA holds responsibility for developing and administrating the game at all levels. The technical coaching team has specific responsibility for nurturing the development of coach and player pathways.

Presented on the ASA website are a series of informational documents to support your understanding and development as a player, coach or parent/guardian supporter of grassroots soccer. The goal is to offer a series of practical informational documents to support your enjoyment and experience within soccer, without presenting a comprehensive digest of the rules and tactics etc. There are some obvious cross-overs between each of the documents, but feel free to browse and use these documents to support you understanding and the development of players coming into the sport.

This document will illustrate the opportunities that exist to enable the presented mission statement to be fulfilled. If there are any questions relating to the information provided here within or coach/player pathways please contact the technical team at Alberta Soccer.





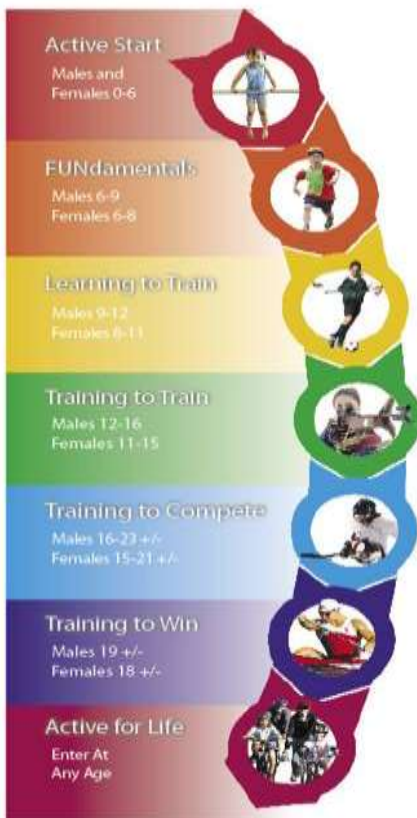
## "THE ALBERTA WAY"

The principle objective of this document is to offer a standard guide to support the many players, parents, coaches and administrators that promote the game at a Grassroots level of participation. It is recognized that this entry level of participation is critical for the players and game as a whole, where all those introduced to the game may be offered the opportunity of nurturing a lifelong passion for the sport.

Therefore this guide should be used to promote a standardized program of play across Alberta, in the hope that when players from different clubs, associations, districts and regions of the Province come together; they have all been afforded the same opportunities and framework within which to participate. All current coach and player programs are being aligned with the Canadian Soccer Association model of Long Term Player Development. This is a framework that was developed by Sport Canada as Long Term Athlete Development and provides guidance to support children and adults in terms of their physical, tactical, technical and psychological development. For further information on the model of Long Term Player Development please visit:

[www.canadasoccer.com/wellness-to-world-cup](http://www.canadasoccer.com/wellness-to-world-cup)

### 7-Stages of LTAD



### 7-Stages of LTPD





## STAGE 1 – ACTIVE START SOCCER GUIDE

This particular booklet encompasses both U4-U6 age groups as they embrace Stage 1 - Active Start of the Long Term Player Development model. For purposes of understanding, there are differences within both age groups in terms of recommended game formats, but the essence of Active Start – is to encourage children to move their bodies and have fun.

### THE GAME

U4 is the earliest format and presents 1 on 1, opposed to 1 v 1 games. 1 on 1 soccer is essentially a child playing the game with an adult to support them. The key focus of Active Start is to introduce very young children to physical literacy and the soccer ball. Physical literacy is the ABC's of movement (Agility, Balance and Coordination). The development of any athlete starts with physical literacy and the ability to run, hop, skip and jump. Within U4 soccer these are the key components to focus your coaching on, utilizing a soccer ball. There is no game or two teams in opposition, instead players are encouraged to explore movement with their ball and the support of a parent adult.

U6 Soccer introduces the oppositional game concept of 3 v 3 play. Here the field dimensions and rules are very limited to enable the players to continue to focus their attention on developing movement patterns, opposed to game tactics and scores. Players should still be challenged to achieve success and this may be in demonstrating a new move or yes scoring a goal.

Physical literacy is the development of movement patterns that will enable efficient and successful skill acquisition and execution in later stages of development. Simply put – learning how our body moves.

### FIELD SIZES

#### FIELD SIZE

#### U 4 SOCCER

No dimensions required, just a safe designated area, with small goals (pug nets are ideal).

#### U6 SOCCER



Age Group	Min Length	Min Width	Max Length	Max Width
U6	25 metres	18 metres	30 metres	22 metres





## BALL SIZE

Players should use a regulation size three ball. These would be available through a reputable sports store.

## GOAL SIZE

Age Group	Goal Height	Goal Length	Option
U6	5 ft / 1.524m	8 ft / 2.438m	Anything smaller

## RECOMMENDED TRAINING TIME

U4 30-45 minutes

U6 45-65 minutes

## RECOMMENDATIONS

U4: All activities should encourage basic movement and focused upon individual development and success. There are some session ideas indicated later in the ‘coaches perspective’.

U6: Dependent upon the group’s ability and attention the focus should continue to be on individual movement, but introduce small group drills. This is where the game is introduced in a 3 v 3 format with no goalkeepers. Recommended games ratio is 15 minutes game time per 60 minute session. If the children are enjoying it, keep it going, but if their attention is beginning to wander, introduce another fun drill. The essence in session building is to keep mixing up small chunks of fun and activity.

## THE CHILD’S PERSPECTIVE

U4 players are most likely coming into their first ‘organized’ social/sporting arena. It is therefore important to recognize their viewpoint and needs. They may not have learnt how to stand in line to await their turn. They will be seeking constant praise and feedback from coaches. They will be lively, sometimes talkative and cumbersome – they are finding their feet. Therefore it is important that they feel safe, supported and able in all they do.

U6 players may have now learnt about patience and sharing, they will have been introduced to working in small groups. They will be more comfortable on their feet. They however will still be seeking the re-assurance and support of their parents and coaches. Offer lots of praise and guidance in their practices and encourage them to try things without fear of failing.

The essence at this stage of development is that the players will respond to a big smile and high five. This is not to forsake the players favorite – “snack-time”. This is an important part of the players activity and allows coaches to encourage social engagement with the players. Try to offer variety in snacks and something that is healthy to the participation-avoiding sugary treats where possible.





## THE ADULT'S PERSPECTIVE

Parents will be looking to their child from one perspective and to see them active, engaged and having fun – smiling. It is important that parents recognize that coaches are often volunteers and not always child care or soccer professionals. If you see a coach requiring support than offer your assistance. Also recognize that if your child tumbles or feels frightened they will seek your support as their parent. This is natural so don't try to 'force' your child back into the session, they will find their own way when they see other children playing and engaging in the games.

## THE COACHES PERSPECTIVE

As indicated above these early stages require lots of patience and at times parental support. Don't neglect using parents who wish to participate or assist in a session, as long as the sessions adheres to the key consideration of providing a safe play and fun environment.

In terms of what to coach, at U4 there are no 'organized' games. This is for bigger boys and girls, these players need to just play and move their bodies – this will make playing games easier as they grow. If players do wish to participate in a game situation, the best form of game is the 'numbers' game or 1 v 1 with two balls, so everyone scores and goes home with a smile.

For U6 players 3 v3 is introduced, but the field and rules are very limited. Again the emphasis is about movement patterns of the body not the team. If the ball goes out and the players play on, let them. The time for stringent rules will come. This isn't to say that the coach should not have control of the session or players. The key for the coach is to recognize the players are there to play with minimal intervention and lots of self exploration.

## SESSION PLANS

We are in the process of publishing coaching exercises and games from the LTPD curriculum. Review these and build them into your session plans. When building a session remember, we learn best through doing and repetition – if the players enjoy a particular drill, there is no shame in repeating this.



