



GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY SOCCER

FUNdamentals 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.





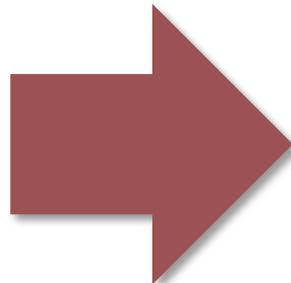
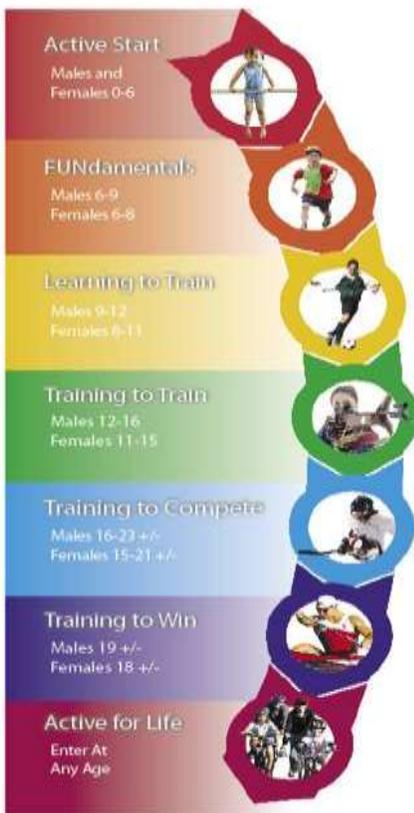
"THE ALBERTA WAY"

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

7-Stages of LTAD



7-Stages of LTPD





STAGE 2 – FUNDAMENTALS (U6-U8 FEMALE/U6-U9 MALE) SOCCER GUIDE

The FUNdamental stage of Long Term Player Development (LTPD) brings a logical progression from Active Start, where the focus was upon the introduction and development of physical literacy. Once some physical literacy (agility, balance and coordination) foundations have been introduced, players are now encouraged to have ‘fun with the ball.’ Reflecting the individual (egotistical) nature of children in this age group, players should be encouraged to practice with a ball each and develop their physical attributes by practicing and learning new moves. The measure of success for many children within FUNdamentals is to show off a new move, opposed to winning a game or a medal. Coaches and parents are therefore encouraged to use this window of opportunity and encourage players to dribble and take risks, using guided discovery as a key tool to develop the player’s passion for ‘playing’ soccer.

THE GAME

Many sports have introduced mini-adapted games for younger players, to allow them to develop the key techniques within an age-appropriate game format. It has earlier been indicated that there is an emphasis upon the individual and self-expression with the ball within the FUNdamental stage. The character of these young players can still be predominantly self-focused, so small-sided games allow for lots of touches and opportunities to demonstrate these new skills.

The recommended competitive format for this age is that no league standings should be maintained, but games should be performed within a festival type format with an emphasis on fun. This should not detract from the focus of competition, whenever two team play each other there is competition, but research and experiential evidence shows that the focus of the player’s attention does not match the focus of the supporting adults (coaches and parents). A child’s focus is predominantly on playing the game, not keeping score. So encourage this in their play, by rewarding good plays. They will know the score and scorers, but they will also use the praise and feedback they received as a reference point for their performance.

Below are the recommended game formats for outdoor soccer within the FUNdamental Stage:

TEAM SIZES

U6	3 V 3 including a sweeper-keeper	4 min- 6 Max	Community
U7	5 v 5 (includes goalkeeper)	6 Min- 10 Max	Community
U8	5 v 5 (includes goalkeeper)	6 Min- 10 Max	Community





FIELD SIZE

Age Group	Min Length	Min Width	Max Length	Max Width
U6	25 meters	18 meters	30 meters	22 meters
U7/U8	30 meters	20 meters	36 meters	25 meters

GOAL SIZE

Age Group	Goal Height	Goal Length	Option
U6	5 ft / 1.524m	8 ft / 2.438m	Anything smaller
U7/U8	5 ft / 1.524m	8 ft / 2.438m	Anything smaller

BALL SIZE

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

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE TIME

45-60 minutes of practice time.

It is recommended that there should be equal practice to game ratio for this stage of development, in order to encourage the players self-expression within a game environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

U6 – U9 players: As indicated this stage is dedicated to ball mastery, so develop practice sessions that focus upon the player with the ball. The warm-up and cool down should all be player-ball focused. If you are unsure of many particular skills or tricks, create an environment that encourages self-expression by the players or invite some skilled youth players in to assist with demonstrating these moves.

Introduce small sided games and offer these to encourage decision making amongst players. Players should also be encouraged to play all positions including goal-keeper.





THE CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE

All these young children will now be attending school, and so experiencing the social rules of learning, sharing and receiving instruction. They will also have a desire to learn and try new things. Encourage this self-expression and allow mistakes. They will be driven by praise and positive feedback in relation to the effort they put into a practice. The main motivation will also be intrinsic, a desire for positive feedback and learning new moves. A common phrase from the players within this stage should be “I can do it” or “watch this coach”. Avoid placing emphasis on any game outcomes and at the end of each practice always remind them what they have been practicing and set some homework (practice) tasks.

A further consideration within this stage but also others is that children want to please; they want to please the coach and their parent/guardians. They will respond more favorably to smiling and encouraging faces than to negative feedback (verbal or non-verbal) and an over emphasis on instruction. The sessions should be fun for all, the coach, players and parents alike.

THE ADULT'S PERSPECTIVE

Parents will be looking to their child from one perspective a parent's 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, then 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.

As has been indicated, this stage of development is to encourage ball mastery, this means lots of fun with the ball and yes mistakes. Encourage your child to spend time mastering the ball and trying new moves. There are no limits to a child's ability if they are encouraged. Avoid criticism and scolding a player if they make a mistake. Also recognize that many players will not want to pass the ball in small games. This is not a problem; it is in their nature at this stage of development. Recognize that greater emphasis will be placed on the team game in later stages of LTPD, so at this stage, encourage players to develop their confidence and desire to 'take the world on'.

THE COACHES PERSPECTIVE

This stage of development is all about the ball, fun and 'me'. Players should be encouraged to develop a free spirit and adventure, so avoid any attempts to stifle this. As with Active Start, sessions and instruction should be minimal and offer lots of variety. Encourage movement of any type with the ball, whether the ball is on the floor, in the air, fast or slow. Players will also develop an understanding of their favorite drills, if so let them do these on a regular basis. Remembering that we all learn through repetition, so rather than offering a new drill each week, allow familiarity for players to truly master a drill and its requirements.

In games encourage players to try new moves and attempts to dribble with the ball. There will come a time in the following (Learning to Train) stage to encourage more team-work, but within FUNdamentals, let the players play. They will develop a greater sense of awareness at this age when playing through errors rather than too much instruction. Recognize that children are sensitive to criticism and if you stop a play to offer critical





feedback, they may already have shut down to hearing any feedback regardless of how well intended instruction is that you wish to give. Always try to phrase feedback with possibilities rather than corrections.

The most important recommendation for coaches within the FUNdamental stage is to have fun and play. If the players see this from a coach, then they will likewise mimic the coach's actions and have more fun themselves, it becomes infectious.

SESSION PLANS

Coaching exercises and games from the LTPD curriculum are in the process of being developed by the ASA Technical Team. Once developed, review these and build them into your session plans. When building a session plan, remember we learn best through doing and repetition – if the players enjoy a particular drill, there is no harm in repeating this. Also encourage players to express their wants within any planning, this may result in a desire for shooting games, but every shooting game also requires a goal-keeper and defenders? When planning a session consider any adaptations that will allow for success and follow the acronym of STEPS

Space-**T**ask-**E**quipment-**P**osition-**S**peed

If you are struggling for success in a particular session, this could be remedied by changing one of these acronyms. For example, by making the space bigger, allows more time on the ball to make the correct move, making the space smaller limits the time on the ball and so increases the pressure for success.

Always plan your sessions to commence and conclude with a ball each, then recap on what the focus of the session was and provide a homework task for the players to master

