



SOFTBALL CANADA'S ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MATRIX

[GOLD MEDAL PROFILE
INTEGRATED]





Softball Canada's Athlete Development Matrix (ADM)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A tremendous amount of time and energy was invested in creating Softball Canada's Athlete Development Matrix. We were very fortunate to be able to access some of the most knowledgeable and experienced experts both in the field of softball specifically and in the ancillary areas impacting athlete development. Their input was critical in ensuring the information

contained within the guide was both relevant and leading edge ensuring it would serve as a powerful resource for Softball in Canada.

The successful development of this guide is the result of the many long hours our contributors have given of their time, expertise and knowledge. Without this

valuable collaboration and teamwork, none of this would be possible. Softball Canada would like to thank all those involved for their insights, leadership and generosity in helping us build the very best pathway to develop the very best athletes.

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- ◆ Terry Baytor
- ◆ Dave Bourne
- ◆ Gord Collings
- ◆ Gary Corbett
- ◆ Lisa Down
- ◆ Jackie Dugger
- ◆ Jeff Ellsworth
- ◆ Tony Foti
- ◆ Dr. Colin Higgs
- ◆ Dr. Kaila Holtz
- ◆ Guy Jacobson
- ◆ Lise Jubinville
- ◆ Andrew Leslie
- ◆ Mark Loehndorf
- ◆ Erin Mills
- ◆ Noreen Murphy
- ◆ Kristin Noonan
- ◆ Dave Paetkau
- ◆ Mark Quinn
- ◆ Mike Renney
- ◆ Andrea Wolf
- ◆ Mark Smith
- ◆ John Stuart
- ◆ Dr. Lauren Tashman
- ◆ Lori Zehr
- ◆ Sport Canada
- ◆ Own the Podium
- ◆ Sport for Life
- ◆ All Softball Canada Provincial & Territorial Associations





WHAT IS AN ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MATRIX?

An Athlete Development Matrix (ADM) is an outline of the skills and attributes of athletes progressing through each stage of development to providing the greatest probability of success to the individual as they mature - not just with athletic success but also participation for health and social benefits.

Softball Canada's ADM is a document to help guide coaches and steer the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) content. It lays out in great detail what a player should be able to do at each stage of **their** Long-Term Athlete Development. Softball's ADM tries to ensure that players do not miss critical skills early in learning the game - therefore leading to more successful softball development.

WHO IS IT FOR?

The Athlete Development Matrix is a document designed to help guide coaches and administrators as they work together to develop athletes and is the foundation in which Softball Canada aligns its various resources including coach certification and athlete program development. For parents the ADM should act as a directory of skills that their child's coaches will be teaching them throughout the season.

The ADM is NOT a "cookbook" for high performance excellence, but rather a guide to developing all players to maximize their enjoyment of the sport - and to ensure that those players who have the talent and drive to become World Class Athletes have the necessary fundamental foundation by learning the correct skills at the appropriate stage of development.

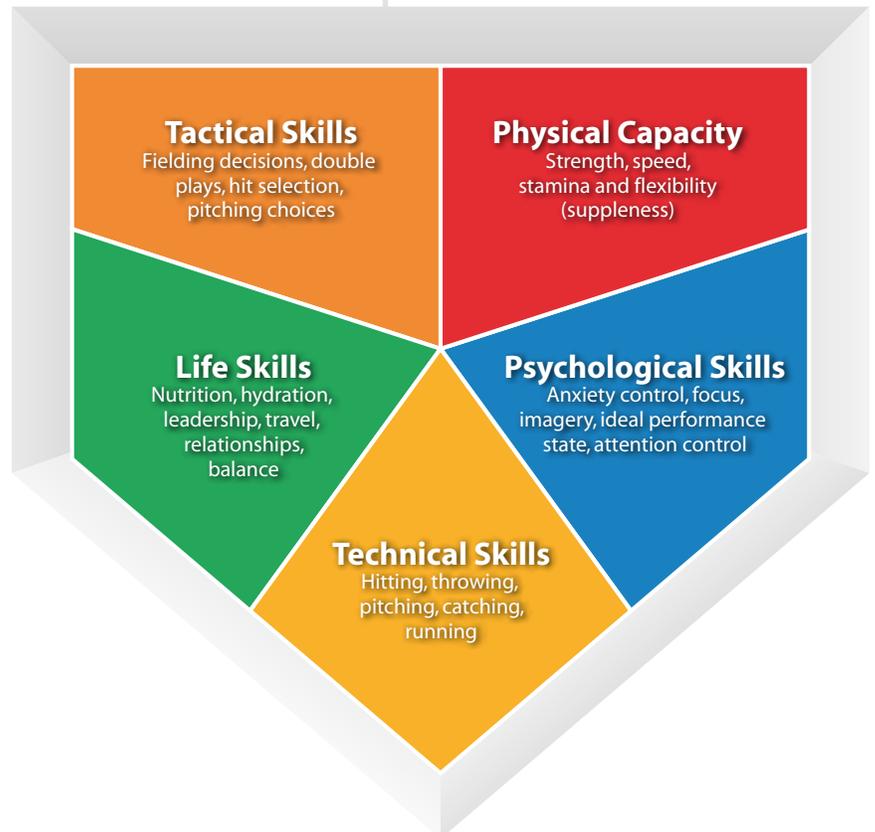
THE FIVE SEGMENT MODEL

To organize the multiple aspects of development in an easy-to-follow format for coaches, Softball Canada's Long Term Player Development utilizes a Five Segment Model..

- ◆ The **sport specific technical skills (hitting, throwing, etc)** required and
- ◆ The **sport specific tactical skills (decisions, double plays, pitching choices, etc)** needed to play the sport
- ◆ The **physical capacities (speed, strength, endurance and flexibility)** required of the sport
- ◆ The **sport psychology (mental, imagery, focus) skills** needed, and
- ◆ The **life skills (teamwork, decision making, etc)** that support effective athlete development.



The **Softball** Matrix was developed by Softball experts, in consultation with experts in adolescent growth and development and sport performance, based on the generic **Sport for Life** Athlete Development Matrix.





WHAT'S NEW IN VERSION 2?

As new research and information comes to light, we must continue to update and improve our LTPD framework. Following the lead of Sport for Life and Own the Podium, Softball Canada has incorporated several changes to our model moving forward.

UPDATED SOFTBALL TECHNICAL/TACTICAL SKILLS TABLES

Some of the most significant changes you will see, will be the technical and tactical skills laid out in the tables of each stage of development. These changes stemmed from updates to the generic LTAD model, feedback from softball experts and the greater softball community but in large part by aligning Softball's Athlete Development Matrix with our Gold Medal Profile. The Gold Medal Profile (GMP) defines the skills and abilities required to achieve podium performances and recognition at the highest level of play (Olympics, Pan American Games & World Championships).

ADDITION OF THE AWARENESS AND FIRST INVOLVEMENT STAGES

Awareness promotes an understanding of opportunities to get involved in sport and physical activity. It highlights opportunities for persons of all abilities to participate in sport, become an athlete, and go as far as their ability and motivation will take them. In Awareness, prospective participants and leaders are informed of the range of activities available and how they can take part.

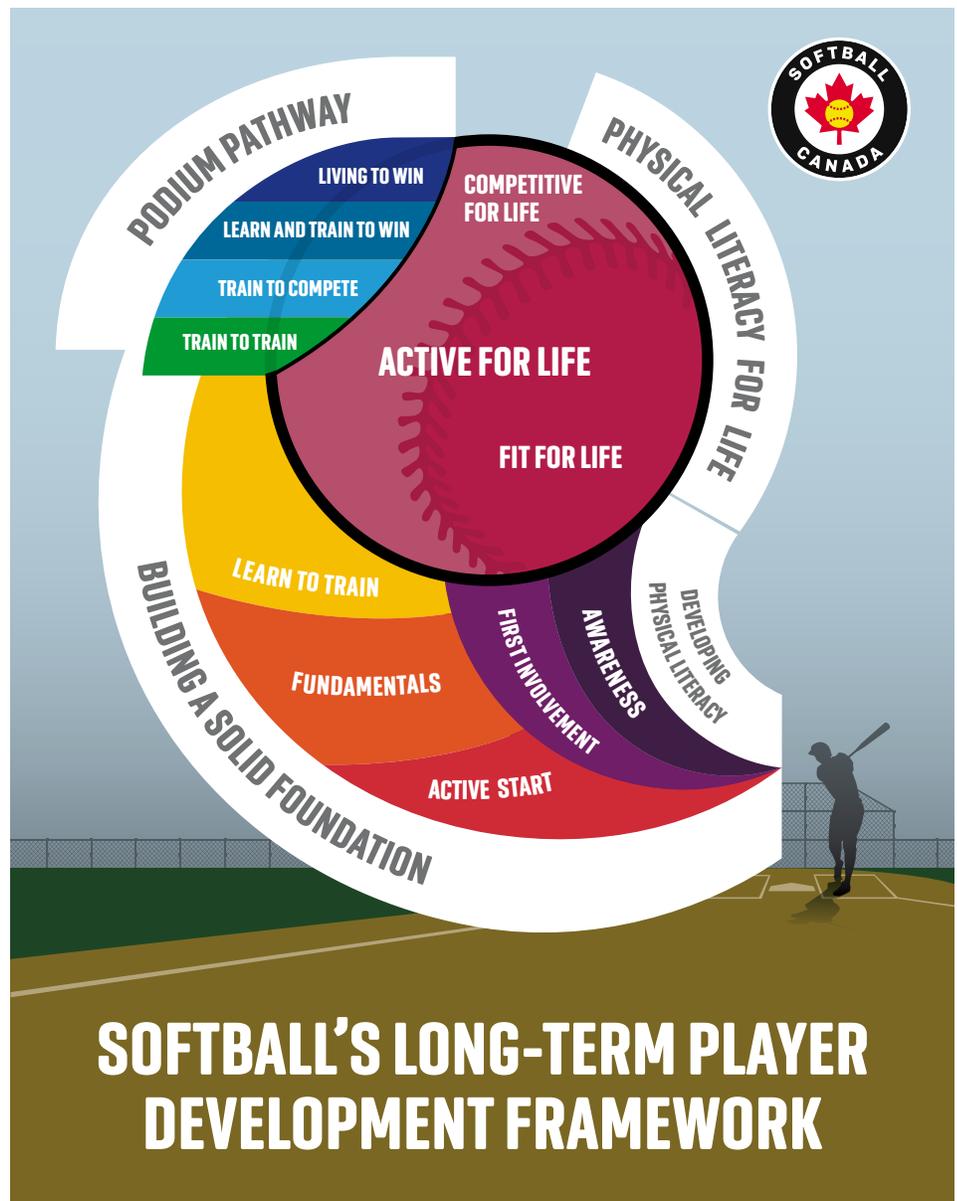
First involvement refers to the first experiences participants have in sport. In this phase it is critical to ensure individuals have a positive first experience in an activity as negative first experiences can lead to non-participation. Organizations and leaders need to create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for participants with developmentally appropriate instruction, adapted equipment, and facilities with a program orientation they will nurture the desire and confidence to participate for life. Clear direction should be provided to participants with regarding their second involvement.

NEW SOFTBALL CANADA LONG-TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

As a result of changes being made to the overall Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity framework - Softball's model has also updated some important pieces:

- ◆ First Involvement and Awareness are integral to everyone's initial experiences in sport and physical activity.
- ◆ Physical Literacy is not confined to the early stages of development and can happen throughout a participant's life.
- ◆ The Podium Pathway describes Softball's excellence stages and specifically applies to athletes on a trajectory towards podium results at the highest level of Softball. It encompasses both the Gold Medal Profile and Winning Style of play (WSP). The WSP is derived from competition results and is the progression of performance benchmarks required to move through the Podium Pathway and successfully reach the Olympic podium as it applies to team sports.

Our updated Long Term Player Development Model graphic reflects these changes.





Softball Canada's Athlete Development Matrix (ADM)

GOLD MEDAL PROFILE STANDARDS (FEMALE)

The Gold Medal Profile (GMP) defines the skills and abilities required to achieve podium performances and recognition at the highest level of play (Olympics, Pan American Games & World Championships). The Winning Style of Play is the progression of performance benchmarks required to move through the pathway and successfully reach the podium as it applies to team sports – like softball. The GMP and WSP skills and attributes for softball have been identified within the Athlete Development Matrix (ADM) with this 🍁. The Gold Medal Profile Standards table outlines the average and exceptional standards as laid out by Softball Canada. The table (available for download at softball.ca) includes not only technical and tactical skills but also life, mental and physical skills, all of which hold equal importance. They are based on validated metrics and benchmarks collected by experts in softball. These standards are only applicable to competitive, not recreational athletes and can give coaches, parents and athletes the ability to recognize where areas of improvements in their skill development can be made.

These standards can and should act as goals to work towards as an athlete's development progresses, but it is incredibly important to note that an athlete will not get to the highest level of play by only focusing on these skills. Each of these standards are influenced by a number of variables, and that should be kept in mind when interpreting these standards. In softball, it is vital that athletes play multiple positions and realize that the skills needed to achieve a podium performance need be fostered during an athlete's early development.

Coaches should also note that these standards are based on average developing athletes, it is important that late developers not be overlooked especially during sensitive periods of maturation. While the GMP standards begin within the Train to Train stage, it is in the best interest of athletes to apply these standards during the latter part of the stage in order to allow athletes as much time as possible to mature.

Softball Canada is working with our Men's National Team Program to collect and analyze data comparable to the Women's Program in order to make it available to our members in the same manner.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

The ADM is a roadmap of what players need to learn, develop and build as they advance and become more skilled in the sport. It provides a guide for individual coaches regardless of the level of player they coach. It will need to be updated regularly to incorporate emerging knowledge, and accommodate any changes in skill, tactics and strategies that are seen in Softball. Information in the ADM will be coordinated with the NCCP coaching program and updated accordingly. The ADM is intended to be an ongoing working document that will evolve with the sport.



ATHLETES WITH A DISABILITY (AWAD)

Information is available in every stage of development pertaining to Athletes With a Disability. This information includes tips on inclusion, how to minimize barriers, and ways to adapt softball to create more meaningful sport opportunities for all athletes.



Softball Canada's Athlete Development Matrix (ADM) is a part of Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) in Softball in Canada.



HOW SHOULD THE ADM BE USED?

The Athlete Development Matrix recognizes that skills are not taught just once, but rather develop as the child's body grows and strengthens, and the child's brain develops greater capacity for thought and greater control over musculature. Most skills go through a well-recognized sequence:

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ **I** - Introduce, ■ **D** - Develop, ■ **C** - Consolidate, ■ **R** - Refine, ■ **M** - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

■ **INTRODUCE (FIRST EXPOSURE)**

Introduce means that the player is learning an element (skill or tactic) for the first time and is given a global idea of what the skill is and how to perform it (key movements). Players should be introduced to a skill or tactic under controlled, constant, easy and predictable conditions. The pursuit of this objective requires concentration in a rested state. The focus or emphasis is on a global execution of the skill/tactic at much less than game-like speed.

The skill is **introduced** and the player has a basic understanding of why it is performed and how to do it.

■ **DEVELOP (LEARN)**

After players have been introduced to a skill/tactic and have a fairly good understanding of what it should look like, the skill/tactic must now be repeated continuously and correctly in order to make it reliable. This is still an early stage of learning where the athlete is learning to coordinate the key components of the movement and execute them in the correct order to perform a rough form of the skill/tactic. The movements are not well synchronized or under control and lack rhythm and flow. The execution is inconsistent and lacks precision. The athlete must think about what they are doing while performing the skill. Both form and performance tend to deteriorate markedly when the athlete tries to execute movements quickly or is under pressure, as may be the case in a competitive situation. The develop stage is still part of the learning process with the focus on improving the success rate (outcome).

The athlete **develops** the basics of the skill - and can perform it in a way that others would recognize.

■ **CONSOLIDATE (STABILIZE)**

During this skill development stage, the athlete can now execute the movements of the skill/tactic with correct form, good movement control, synchronization, and rhythm when performing the skill under easy and stable conditions. The movements can be repeated consistently and with precision under these conditions. Some elements of the performance can be maintained when the athlete is under pressure, when conditions change, or when demands increase, but performance remains inconsistent.

A **consolidated** skill is one that has been learned well, and can be executed without conscious thought by the player.





Softball Canada's Athlete Development Matrix (ADM)

REFINE (PERFECT)

This skill development stage is achieved only by the best athletes. The performance of the skill/tactic is highly automated which enables the athlete to focus on the environment to pick up visual cues in order to make rapid adjustments as necessary. The athlete can now execute the skill/tactic or movements in a way that is very close to the ideal in terms of form and speed but may also develop a personal style that is efficient for their physical make-up. For example, two players may possess the same variety of skills, but they will use different skills in a given situation due to differences in stature, speed, stamina, strength, and suppleness. At this stage, the execution of the skill may look different from another player's execution. Personal interpretation of movements or personal movements may also be combined into unique patterns in response to specific competitive situations. The performance is very consistent and precision is high, even under very demanding conditions and in situations that are both complex and varied. Only minor finetuning may be necessary to achieve optimal execution. The athlete can also reflect critically on his or her performance to make in-game corrections. It is expected that players involved in drills/games will read and react appropriately to changing tactical situations.

Once a skill is **refined**, the player can execute the skill at will, in game situations, and with variations that are triggered by "in game" situations that the player recognized and responds to.

MAINTAIN (PRESERVE)

Once a skill/tactic is refined or a capacity has been achieved, there is a need to ensure it does not deteriorate or is not de-trained during different points within a season. Players in this stage of skill development can preserve consistency in the execution of the skill/tactic or level of conditioning usually with a lower level of training or practice than was necessary to reach the refined stage.

When a skill has been refined, there is a need to **maintain** it at an appropriate level, through specific training, through repeated in-game use, or both.

Keep the above definitions in mind as you work your way through the document.

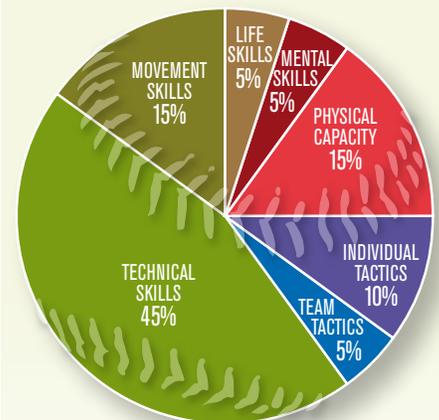


BEST USE OF SOFTBALL TIME

Once skills have been identified, it is important to decide where to spend valuable and **LIMITED** training time and that this time changes as the athlete develops. The ADM provides some guidance in every stage of development, the overall best use of softball time.

Although, the amount of time spent will ultimately depend on the individual athlete and their specific strengths and weaknesses.

This is an Example





Active Start (AS)

ABOUT THE ACTIVE START STAGE

Very rapid development of physical skills with some functional abilities like Executive Function occur in this stage. Executive Function is a set of closely related skills that allow a developing child to work effectively with the information in their brains, focus their attention, filter out distractions, and quickly switch mental gears from one task to another. Children who miss out on opportunities to develop these abilities may have a more difficult time later in life.

In this stage, it is important for children to be encouraged to lead a healthy and active lifestyle by making physical activity fun. Physical Literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life. It begins to develop in early childhood and grows during adolescence and adulthood. In Active Start, the development of a wide repertoire of basic human movements and Fundamental Movement Skills (FMSs) will not only make the acquisition of more sport-specific skills possible later in development, but more importantly will provide the tools required to develop healthy habits of physical activity through their lifetime. Children should be provided with an abundance of opportunities to develop a variety of FMSs such as locomotion (travel) skills, object manipulation skills and body management skills in all environments (on land, in/on water, on ice/snow and in the air).

The Participants

These are young children who are generally not involved in organized softball activities until very late in this stage. Softball Canada has an interest in starting kids off on the right foot, and ensuring that they develop the skills, capabilities, and attitudes that will allow them to grow into proficient softball players as they mature. The Timbits Softball Program was created to do just that.

SEASON STRUCTURE

Late in this stage players are introduced to fun, playground games with a softball twist using the Timbits Softball Program.

- Pre-Season: No pre-season suggested
- Competitive Season: 8-10 weeks with 10-20 combined practice/modified game sessions lasting 60 minutes each
- Softball-specific activities per week: 1-2 times
- Daily participation in unstructured and structured physical activities or sports

Long-Term Player Development in Softball

Softball Canada has a plan to systematically develop players once they enter the sport up until they reach their full potential. We call this process Long-Term Player Development (LTPD). This means:

- *Teaching the right skills at the right time;*
- *Developing appropriate speed, strength, endurance and flexibility, and;*
- *Holding competitions suited to the developmental age of the players.*

It's all about doing the right things, at the right time and in the right way.

For more information about LTPD and more details about this stage, visit:

<https://softball.ca>

Active Start Basics:

- ✓ Create a safe and stimulating environment with minimal adult interference where a child's love of being physically active for a life time is developed. This means setting up opportunities for active play, and letting children both control what and how they play, but also negotiate with other children about how to play together. Too much adult intervention in minor disagreements prevents children from learning important communication and social skills.
- ✓ Provide organized physical activity opportunities for at least 30 minutes a day for toddlers and 60 minutes for preschoolers.
- ✓ Provide unstructured play opportunities for at least 60 minutes per day and up to several hours per day for toddlers and preschoolers with no child inactive for more than 60 minutes at a time except while sleeping.
- ✓ Use a wide range of equipment and regularly rotate for variety and experience.
- ✓ Emphasize fundamental movement skills (FMSs), agility, balance, coordination and speed (ABCs).
- ✓ Be patient and understand that children will master fundamental movement skills at different rates.
- ✓ Develop habits of being physically active every day.
- ✓ Increase executive function, along with communication and social skills.
- ✓ But most of all - Keep it **FUN!** Ensure children **ENJOY** being physically active with friends and family.

Physical literacy

is the...



...to be

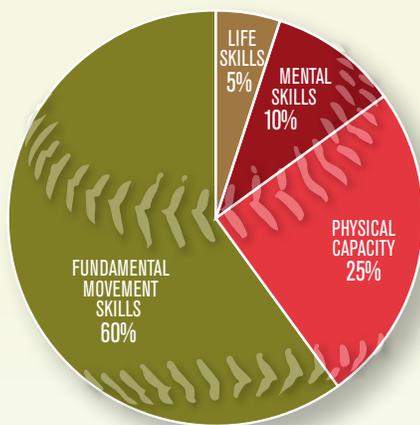
Sport for Life active for life



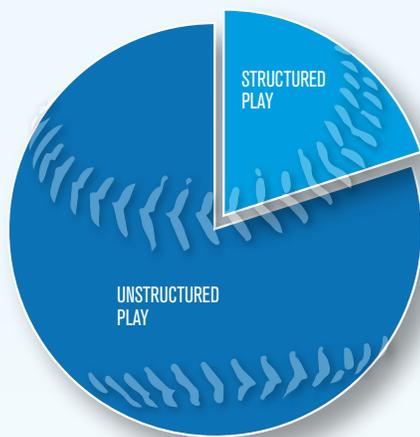
THE FIVE-SEGMENT MODEL

At every stage of LTPD, players need to develop stage and age appropriate skills and capacities in each of the following areas: technical skills, tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills. Each capacity has different levels of importance at different points in a player's development. For the Active Start stage this means:

Best Use of Softball Time



Best Use of Activity Time



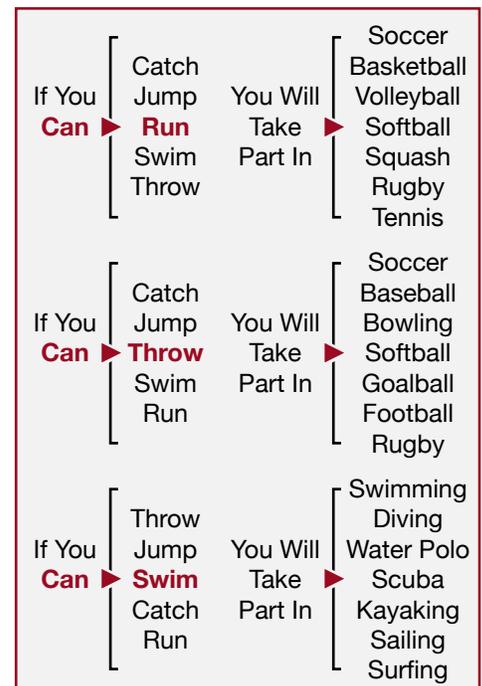
- Active play is a combination of unstructured play and structured play
- Suggestions for activities:
 - Alternate active play and rest throughout the day
 - Accumulate a minimum of 60 min. of active play every day
 - Ensure kids have active, adult role models

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS (FMSs)

The objective of this stage is to introduce and develop fundamental movement skills that lay the foundation for motor patterns that can then evolve into sport-specific skills later in a child's development. The focus should be on making activities fun, on learning multiple fundamental movement skills and developing athleticism by improving agility, balance, coordination, and movement speed. This is a time during which basic human movement patterns are developed, executive function increases, habits of daily physical activity are established and a positive attitude towards physical activity and vigorous play is created. Learning should occur through play rather than instruction, with unstructured play being more effective. Playing outside in natural settings has been shown to be very effective in meeting these objectives.

Key fundamental movement skills to develop at this stage are:

- ON LAND:
 - Running, starting, stopping, changing direction, forward, backward and sideways movements; falling and rolling.
 - Catching, throwing, striking, and kicking to develop hand-eye coordination (using a wide variety of equipment and sizes of equipment with both the left and right hand/foot).
 - Agility, balance and coordination along with speed of movement.
 - Hitting different objects of various sizes (balls, shuttles, etc.) with a bat or racquet.
- IN WATER:
 - Floating, swimming and diving to develop body orientation skills and enhance child safety.
- ON SNOW AND ICE:
 - Skating, sliding and skiing.
- IN THE AIR:
 - Jumping and twisting, learning to control the body when not in contact with the ground.



Structured Play

Is organized and led by an adult who decides when and where the child will play and what equipment or toys they will play with. The child follows the adult lead, and, if more than one child is playing the adult mediates any disputes. The child makes few, if any decisions and may come to rely on others telling them what to do. This is not ideal for developing Executive Function.



Unstructured Play

Is when children decide when, where and how they will play and what equipment or toys they will play with. The role of the adult leader is to ensure safety and provide a stimulating environment. If more than one child is playing, the adult mediates any disputes only when it is clear the children involved cannot resolve it themselves. The child makes most decisions, and negotiates conflict which assists in developing Executive Function.





Active Start (AS)

MALES: 0 - 6 YEARS
FEMALES: 0 - 6 YEARS

PHYSICAL CAPACITY

	Developed through Active Play		
	Low	Med.	High
Endurance	■		
Speed - Hand/Foot	■		
Speed - Whole Body	■		
Speed - Endurance	■		
Relative Strength	■		
Strength - Endurance	■		
Explosive Power	■		
Flexibility	■		

NOTE

Physical capacity is developed through active play. Unstructured play (led by the children) is most effective with adults ensuring safety. Outdoor play on different surfaces is recommended as this encourages development of agility, balance and coordination.

MENTAL SKILLS

Ensure a positive physical activity environment and active adult role models.

Focus on development of Executive Function through games and activities that require rapid change in the player's focus (cognitive flexibility), holding multiple pieces of information in mind at the same time (working memory) and readiness to move - without moving until a signal is given (inhibition control).

Games of "make believe" expand children's thinking.

Ask children to feel their heart beat, and listen to their breathing.

Encourage children to cooperate in play towards the end of this stage.

Provide a visually stimulating environment, and brightly coloured physical activity equipment.

LIFE SKILLS

Learns to interact with adults other than parents/caregivers, and understands that different adults have different roles.

Actively takes part in group activities, can follow simple instructions, and imitates actions in "follow-the-leader" activities.

Learns to take turns during activities, and cooperates with others who are playing.

Learns to share toys and activity equipment.

Understands, remembers and can follow simple rules (particularly safety rules) for activities.

Can articulate what is dangerous about different areas (near roads for example) when engaged in physical play.



Athletes with Disabilities

Children with a disability should be encouraged to take part in dynamic physical play with their able-bodied peers.

- Provide opportunities to learn fundamental movement skills like running/wheeling, throwing, catching, and striking.
- Minimize barriers, and be cognisant of adaptive devices/equipment and support needs.
- Develop a "can do" expectation of success when a child tries an activity.
- Have fun!

SOFTBALL TECHNICAL / TACTICAL SKILLS

Some children who are developmentally ready may be introduced to softball late in the Active Start stage. However, it is not the right time to start softball-specific training. Children who pick up a bat and ball and imitate parents or older siblings should not be discouraged, but organized softball is not recommended until the child is ready. When a child is ready, parents should look for programs that focus more on fundamental movement skill development with a softball flavour like the Timbits Softball Program.

SLEEP

Sleep Duration: 10-12 hours

- Establish stable sleep routines and bedtime routine
- Introduce independent sleep initiating behaviours



Long-Term Player Development in Softball

Softball Canada has a plan to systematically develop players once they enter the sport up until they reach their full potential. We call this process Long-Term Player Development (LTPD). This means:

- Teaching the right skills at the right time;
- Developing appropriate speed, strength, endurance and flexibility, and;
- Holding competitions suited to the developmental age of the players.

It's all about doing the right things, at the right time and in the right way.

For more information about LTPD and more details about this stage, visit:

<https://softball.ca>

Changing the Narrative

We are only just beginning to learn how important what kids tell themselves can be. If a kid isn't having success with doing a skill - ask them why they think it's not working for them. Listen carefully for "self-blaming" reasons like, "I'm just not good enough", and external reasons, like, "The pitch is too fast". Keep asking questions until you get an "external" reason, and then both reinforce the child's externalization of the problem and ways to modify the task. "Yes, the pitch is too fast, let's see if you can hit when the pitch is slower". If we can change their internal "story" about why they can't do something, we can change their attitude towards doing it, and we won't reinforce their belief that they just can't do the skill because they are not good enough.

ABOUT THE FUNDAMENTALS STAGE:

This is a stage of rapid development of a wide range of fundamental movement skills (FMSs) in different environments. A child's participation in many different sports and activities should be encouraged. Unstructured play remains important but there is a shift to more structured play including instruction. Less skillful kids should not be permitted to fall too far behind their peers as could lead them to be left out of informal games with their peers.

The Participants

These are elementary school age children taking physical education as part of their school curriculum who also take part in community recreation such as local minor softball programs. Children are often put in "age-group" programs where the oldest children within the age-group have a significant advantage because they have had more time to develop and mature, are generally taller and heavier, and have had more time to develop their skills. All children in this stage should be given equal playing time and quality coaching because it is far too early to know which children will excel in the future.

- Participant characteristics:
 - Are generally involved in activities that parents or guardians sign them up for, and may have little choice in the matter
 - Attendance in programs is often dependent on others so missing activities is often beyond their control
 - Children are starting to compare their abilities to children around them. Children who think they are not "good enough" start to drop out of activities.
 - Female Participants
 - Girls are starting to place more emphasis on relationships with the other girls in the program than boys do at this stage
 - Program leaders need to take this into consideration and provide time for socialization

SEASON STRUCTURE

- Competition/Training Ratio: 30%/70%
- Pre-Season:
 - Early in Stage: 0 practices
 - Later in Stage: 8-12 practices
- Competitive Season: 8-10 weeks
- Softball-specific activities per week: 1-2 times for 90 minutes each
- Daily participation in unstructured and structured physical activities or sports



FUNDamentals (FUN)

MALES: 6 – 9 YEARS
FEMALES: 6 – 8 YEARS

FUNDamentals Basics:

- ✓ Keep it **FUN**.
- ✓ Encourage participation in many different sports and activities to create motor patterns that will facilitate sport-specific skill acquisition in later stages of athlete development.
- ✓ Create a variety of safe and stimulating environments in which children can play and develop fundamental movement skills (body control skills, locomotor skills, and object control skills) and motor skills (Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed or ABC's) on different indoor and outdoor playing surfaces, in/on the water, on ice and snow, and in the air.
- ✓ Develop player's confidence in ability to learn new skills.
- ✓ Introduce the basic rules and ethics of sports.
- ✓ Don't be concerned with winning or losing; focus on learning and having fun.
- ✓ Introduce remedial teaching if children do not have the same level of skills as their peers. This will limit kids from being excluded from pick-up games which can cause a significant amount of drop out. If kids enjoy participating, they will develop a love of sport and being active.
- ✓ Don't get caught in the specialization trap— developing all-around athletes at this stage is far better.



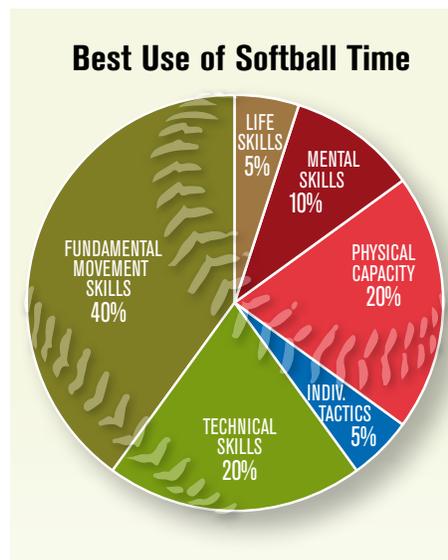
Athletes with Disabilities

Children with a disability should continue to be encouraged to take part in dynamic physical play with their able-bodied peers.

- Provide opportunities to grow fundamental movement skills like running/wheeling, throwing, catching, and striking.
- Minimize barriers and be cognisant of adaptive devices/equipment and support needs.
- Find out more about the child and their abilities, to create the most positive sport environment for everyone participating.

THE FIVE-SEGMENT MODEL

At every stage of LTPD, players need to develop stage and age appropriate skills and capacities in each of the 5 following areas: technical skills, tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills. Each capacity has different levels of importance at different points in a player's development. For the FUNdamentals stage this means:



- Types of Activity:
 - Unstructured play
 - Structured play
 - Instruction
- Wide range of activities on land, in/on water, on snow/ice, in the air
- Informal competitions and pick-up games
- Accumulate a minimum of 60 min. of active play every day

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS (FMSs)

The objective at this stage is to develop fundamental movement skills that lay the foundation for motor patterns that can then evolve into softball-specific skills in later stages. The focus for this stage is on making activities fun, on learning multiple fundamental movement skills and developing athleticism by improving agility, balance, coordination and movement speed.

Key fundamental movement skills to develop at this stage are:

- **ON LAND:**
 - Running, starting, stopping, changing direction, forward, backward and sideways movements; falling and rolling.
 - Catching, throwing, striking, and kicking to develop hand-eye coordination (using a wide variety of equipment and sizes of equipment with both the left and right hand/foot).
 - Agility, balance and coordination along with speed of movement.
 - Hitting different objects of various sizes (balls, shuttles, etc.) with a bat or racquet.
- **IN WATER:**
 - Floating, swimming and diving to develop body orientation skills and enhance child safety.
- **ON SNOW AND ICE:**
 - Skating, sliding and skiing.
- **IN THE AIR:**
 - Jumping and twisting, learning to control the body when not in contact with ground.

SLEEP

Duration: 10-11 hours + 30 minute nap between 2-4pm

- Reinforce 15-30 minute bedtime routine
- Avoid stimulation 1-2 hours before bed, control "screen time"
- Good nutrition and meal routines reinforce sleep routines
- Introduce independent sleep initiating behaviors



FUNdamentals (FUN)

MALES: 6 – 9 YEARS
FEMALES: 6 – 8 YEARS

PHYSICAL CAPACITY

	Development Priority (through play)		
	Low	Med.	High
Endurance		■	
Speed - Hand/Foot			■
Speed - Whole Body	■		
Speed - Endurance	■		
Relative Strength	■		
Strength - Endurance	■		
Explosive Power		■	
Flexibility		■	

NOTE

This is a good time to start working on hand and foot speed, and, especially for boys a good time to work on flexibility. Endurance and strength developed through vigorous play and games rather than specific training regimes.

MENTAL SKILLS

Ensure positive learning environment, that children understand everyone fails at times, and failing is important to learning as long as you keep trying.

Continue to develop Executive Function through games and activities that require rapid change in the player's focus (cognitive flexibility), holding multiple pieces of information in mind at the same time (working memory) and readiness to move without moving until a signal is given (inhibition control).

Games of imagination at this stage help prepare the child for later visualization and imagery activities.

Help children "listen to their bodies" so that they know how they feel when anxious, and how their body responds to physical activity.

Introduce simple challenges and goal setting, "can you jump over this rope", "can you hit the ball passed that line?"

LIFE SKILLS

Understands the relationship between effort and results.

Takes responsibility for being prepared for activity participation.

Is comfortable taking turns during activities, and cooperates with others who are playing.

Can be part of a team, and is sometimes a leader and sometimes a follower.

Helps prepare post-activity snacks and drinks, and understands that food and fluids are necessary for both life and sport participation.

Understands and can follow rules (particularly safety rules) for softball and other activities.

Understands that people come from different countries (cultures) and might do things differently.





FUNdamentals (FUN)

MALES: 6 – 9 YEARS
FEMALES: 6 – 8 YEARS

SOFTBALL TECHNICAL / TACTICAL SKILLS

While many children are introduced to softball during the FUNdamentals stage, it is not the right time to start intense softball-specific training. Activities that develop FMSs can have a softball flavour by using modified playground games. If children have been provided with a good base of FMSs early in this stage they may be ready to start to learn softball-specific skills late in this stage with minimal instruction on correct techniques. Introduce basic rules and the etiquette of the game using fun, modified games. The Timbits Softball Program is a great introduction to the sport of softball at this stage.

SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: **I** - Introduce, **D** - Develop, **C** - Consolidate, **R** - Refine, **M** - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE SKILLS	SUB-SKILL	I	D	C	R	M
HITTING						
Hitting Mechanics	Weight Transfer (From Back to Firm Front Side)	I				
	Stacked Position at Contact	I				
Eye/Hand Coordination	Bat Control	I	D			
Strike Zone Awareness		I				
Avoiding Pitch		I				
BASERUNNING						
Getting out of Batters Box		I	D			
Running to 1st Base		I	D			
Rounding Base		I	D			
SLIDING						
Bent Leg Slide		I				



FUNdamentals (FUN)

MALES: 6 – 9 YEARS
FEMALES: 6 – 8 YEARS

SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

DEFENSIVE SKILLS		SUB-SKILL				
		I	D	C	R	M
THROWING						
Overhand Throwing Mechanics	Elbows and Shoulders Level	■	■			
	Pull Front Elbow into Body on Shoulder Rotation	■	■			
	On Release Throwing Elbow Above Shoulder	■				
	Transition Footwork (Shuffle or Crossover)	■				
Flips and Tosses	■					
Throwing on The Run	■					
RECEIVING THROWS						
Soft Hands (Absorbing Ball)		■	■			
	Transfer	■	■			
FIELDING GROUND BALLS						
Ready Position		■	■			
Ground Ball Fielding Mechanics	Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot	■				
	Glove Fingers Point Down/Out Front and Down	■				
	Bum Down, Weight on Balls of Feet, Eyes Up, Chin down	■	■			
	Throwing Hand Follows Ball into Glove	■				
Glove Work	Forehand	■				
FIELDING FLYBALLS						
Flyball Fielding Mechanics	Wrist Back, Glove Above Forehead and Center of Body	■	■			
MULTIPLE PLAYER DEFENSIVE SKILLS						
Tag Plays		■				
PITCHING						
Pitching Mechanics	Leg Drive	■				
	Stacked or Power Position	■				
	Arm Action in Joint Sequence	■				
CATCHING						
Receiving Position		■				
Blocking		■				
Framing		■				
Throwing	Around Batter	■				
MIDDLE INFIELDER						
Relay Throws		■				
CORNER INFIELDER						
1st Base Skills	Footwork at Bag	■				
	Stretching	■				



FUNdamentals (FUN)

MALES: 6 – 9 YEARS
FEMALES: 6 – 8 YEARS

TACTICS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: I - Introduce, D - Develop, C - Consolidate, R - Refine, M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE TACTICS		SUB TACTIC				
BASERUNNING		I	D	C	R	M
Reading and Reacting	Coach Signals					
	Hit Ball					
	Lead Runner					
DEFENSIVE TACTICS		SUB TACTIC				
		I	D	C	R	M
Communication With Teammates Pre Pitch	Indicating the Number of Outs					
Communication With Teammates During Plays	Calling for the Ball					
	Calling Which Base to Throw to					
Angles to the Ball	Flyballs					
	Groundballs					





Learn to Train (L2T)

MALES: 9 – 12 YEARS
FEMALES: 8 – 11 YEARS

Long-Term Player Development in Softball

Softball Canada has a plan to systematically develop players once they enter the sport up until they reach their full potential. We call this process Long-Term Player Development (LTPD). This means:

- Teaching the right skills at the right time;
- Developing appropriate speed, strength, endurance and flexibility, and;
- Holding competitions suited to the developmental age of the players.

It's all about doing the right things, at the right time and in the right way.

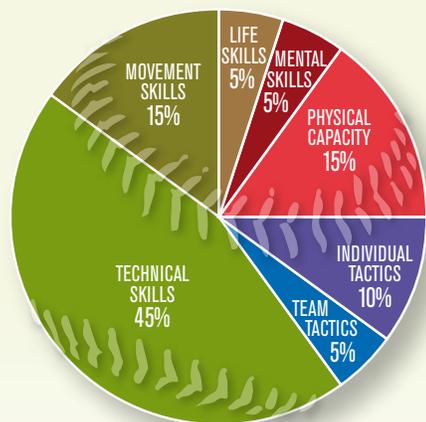
For more information about LTPD and more details about this stage, visit:

<https://softball.ca>

THE FIVE-SEGMENT MODEL

At every stage of LTPD, players need to develop stage and age appropriate skills and capacities in each of the 5 following areas: technical skills, tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills. Each capacity has different levels of importance at different points in a player's development. For the Learn to Train stage this means:

Best Use of Softball Time



ABOUT THE LEARN TO TRAIN STAGE

This is the stage from late childhood until the onset of the growth spurt at adolescence. With near-adult sized brains, these are often called the "skill-hungry" years. This is one of the most important periods of motor development. Children are developmentally ready to acquire softball-specific skills. Children learning to play softball are NOT miniature adults, and this means taking into account how 10-year olds learn new skills, how 12-year old bodies respond to different types of training, and what strategies and tactics kid's developing brains are capable of understanding. Children at this stage aren't generally capable of dealing with complicated tactics or strategy, but are very concerned with sport being "fair". Some examples for this stage include:

- This is a great time for kids to learn fundamental softball skills like batting, throwing, baserunning, pitching and fielding - and they need lots of reps and time for practice.
- It's a great time to build flexibility (especially for boys), but not a good time to work on strength and power.
- It's a stage of development where it is more important for kids to play than to win, and when everyone needs to be playing not sitting on the bench.
- It is way too early to know who will ultimately be the best softball players, or what positions players will ultimately excel at - so it's a time for everyone to try every position and have equal playing time.
- It's also way too early for children to focus on only one sport. They should be playing 3 or 4 different sports to build all-round athleticism.

Learn to Train Basics:

- ✓ Focus on keeping softball and physical activity FUN to further develop players' love of the game/physical activity and being part of a team.
- ✓ Further develop fundamental movement skills (FMSs) in a variety of environments (land-based, water-based, and snow/ice-based), including movement-to-music programs.
- ✓ Teach fundamental softball-specific skills (hitting, throwing, pitching, fielding and baserunning) and basic tactics essential to participate in softball.
- ✓ Introduce children to physical conditioning to develop age-appropriate stamina, strength, speed, skill and suppleness.
- ✓ Introduce children to basic mental skills.
- ✓ Develop all-round athleticism including agility, balance and coordination.
- ✓ Ensure children are involved in several sports and have them try different positions or events in each sport.
- ✓ Teach the basic rules and etiquette of softball.
- ✓ Establish appropriate competitive environments where the competition is positioned as a learning experience, designed to encourage and nurture players and where winning and results are not the top priority.
- ✓ Continue to encourage children to engage in unstructured and imaginative play every day.
- ✓ Enroll children in activities that continue to develop stamina, strength, speed, skill and suppleness.

SEASON STRUCTURE

- Competition/Training Ratio: 30%/70%
- Pre-Season:
 - Early in Stage: 0 practices
 - Later in Stage: 8-12 practices
- Competitive Season:
 - Early in Stage: 8-10 weeks
 - Later in Stage: 12-15 weeks
- Softball-specific activities per week:
 - Early in Stage: 1-2 times for 90 minutes each
 - Later in Stage: 2-3 times for 90 minutes each
- Players take part in 3-4 seasonal sports as part of year round activity



Learn to Train (L2T)

MALES: 9 - 12 YEARS
FEMALES: 8 - 11 YEARS

PHYSICAL CAPACITY

	Development Priority		
	Low	Med.	High
Endurance		■	
Speed - Hand/Foot			■
Speed - Whole Body		■	
Speed - Endurance	■		
Relative Strength	■		
Strength - Endurance	■		
Explosive Power		■	
Flexibility			■

NOTE

A key stage for developing hand and foot speed, and for developing flexibility.

Strength training should focus on body-weight exercises, and medicine balls. Introduce hopping and bounding for power development.

MENTAL SKILLS

	Skill Competence					
	I	D	C	R	M	
Confidence and Presence						■
• Positive attitude						
• Introduction to visualization						
Grit						■
• Motivation						
• Goal setting						
• Developing passion						
Resilience						■
• Mental toughness						
• Learning from mistakes						
Focus and Intensity Regulation						■
• Attention/focus						
• Arousal regulation - breathing						
Team Player						■
• Developing relationships						
• Communication skills						

NOTE

At this level skills and strategies can be introduced in a group setting to develop a foundation of mental skills.

Kids at this stage are not as self-conscious as during adolescence and this makes it a good time to introduce and practice sport psychology skills in a group setting.

LIFE SKILLS

Player takes responsibility for preparing equipment/clothes for training and competition.

Player takes responsibility for preparing pre-and post training snacks and drinks.

Player is comfortable traveling to and from training and competition as part of team/group.

Understands the rules and ethics of softball and makes conscious decision not to cheat.

Can be a leader and a follower when appropriate.

Appreciates diversity and accepts personal differences.

SLEEP

Sleep- Duration: 9.5-10 hours + 30 minute nap between 2-4pm

- Maintain 15-30 minute bedtime routine
- Monitor caffeine intake



Athletes with Disabilities

Children with a disability should be encouraged to take part in a wide range of sports and activities.

- Provide opportunities to develop sport specific skills like running/wheeling, throwing and catching a ball (with or without a glove), and hitting with a bat.
- Create a positive learning environment and be aware of different learning styles/needs.
- Adapt equipment, skills, and rules to allow athletes with disabilities to be activity engaged in softball.



Learn to Train (L2T)

MALES: 9 - 12 YEARS
FEMALES: 8 - 11 YEARS

SOFTBALL TECHNICAL / TACTICAL SKILLS

One of the most important periods of sports skills development for children is between the ages of 9 and 12, before the onset of the adolescent growth spurt. This stage is a sensitive period of accelerated adaptation to skill learning. Boys and girls are now developmentally ready to learn fundamental softball-specific skills which will lay the foundation for advanced softball skills in later stages. Instruction from qualified coaches on correct techniques and creating environments in which players get maximum repetitions of technical skills is key. This is also the time to learn basic rules and the etiquette of the game.

SKILLS		LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain				
		Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage				
OFFENSIVE SKILLS	SUB-SKILL	I	D	C	R	M
HITTING						
Hitting Mechanics	Loading (Front Foot to Hand Separation)	■	■			
	Weight Transfer (From Back to Firm Front Side)	■	■	■		
	Palm Up /Palm Down Through Contact	■	■			
	Stacked Position at Contact	■	■	■		
Eye/Hand Coordination	Bat Control	■	■	■		
Strike Zone Awareness		■	■	■		
Avoiding Pitch		■	■	■	■	
Pitch Recognition (After Release)	Spin Recognition and Reaction	■				
BUNTING						
Sacrifice (Mechanics)	Split Hands With Firm Grip	■	■			
	Barrell Above and in Front of Hands	■	■			
	Head/Eyes at Top of Strike Zone	■	■			
	Absorb the Ball (Contact End of Bat)	■				
Drag Bunt (Mechanics)	Move Through the Box to Pitcher (Back Foot to Pitcher)	■				
SLAP HITTING						
LH Running Slap	Cross Over Step Towards Shortstop	■	■			
	Hands Above Strike zone	■	■			
	Controlled Bat Path in a Downward Movement	■				
	Barrell Lags Behind Hands to Hit Ball to Left side	■	■			
BASERUNNING						
Getting Out of Batters Box		■	■	■		
Running to 1st Base			■	■		
Rounding Base	Question Mark Turn	■	■			
	J turn	■	■			
Lead Offs		■	■			
Tagging Up		■	■			
Stealing		■	■	■		
SLIDING						
Bent Leg Slide		■	■	■		
Dive Back		■	■			
Pop Up Slide		■				



Learn to Train (L2T)

MALES: 9 - 12 YEARS
FEMALES: 8 - 11 YEARS

SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

DEFENSIVE SKILLS		SUB-SKILL				
		I	D	C	R	M
THROWING						
Overhand Throwing Mechanics	Elbows and Shoulders Level	■	■	■		
	Pull Front Elbow into Body on Shoulder Rotation	■	■	■		
	On Release Throwing Elbow Above Shoulder	■	■			
	Ball Release Creates a 12-6 Rotation on Ball	■	■			
	Transition Footwork (Shuffle or Crossover)	■	■	■		
Side Arm Throwing	■					
Flips and Tosses	■	■				
Throwing on the Run	■	■				
RECEIVING THROWS						
Soft hands (absorbing ball)		■	■			
Transfer		■	■			
FIELDING						
GROUND BALLS						
Ready Position		■	■	■		
Ground Ball Fielding Mechanics	Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot	■	■			
	Glove Fingers Point Down/Out Front & Down	■	■	■		
	Bum Down, Weight on Balls of Feet, Eyes Up, Chin Down	■	■			
	Throwing Hand Follows Ball into Glove	■	■	■		
Glove Work	Forehand	■	■			
	Backhand	■	■			
	Shorthops	■				
FLYBALLS						
Flyball Fielding Mechanics	Get Behind the Ball, Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot	■				
	Wrist Back, Glove Above Forehead and Center of Body	■	■	■		
Flyball Footwork	Drop Step	■				
Flyball Catches	Basket Catch	■				
	Over Shoulder Catch	■	■			
Diving Catches	Feet First Sliding	■				
Playing the Sun		■				
Fielding At / Off Fence		■				
MULTIPLE PLAYER DEFENSIVE SKILLS						
Tag Plays		■	■			
Cut Offs		■	■			
Relays		■	■			
Rundowns		■				
PITCHING						
Pitching Mechanics	Leg Drive	■	■	■		
	Stacked or Power Position	■	■	■		
	Arm Action in Joint Sequence	■	■	■		
	Hides Pitches	■	■			
Pitches	Fastball	■	■			
	Change	■				
Control (In and Out of Strike Zone)	Throw to Multiple Locations	■	■			
	Throw One Pitch to Multiple Locations	■				
Pitch out		■				



Learn to Train (L2T)

MALES: 9 - 12 YEARS
FEMALES: 8 - 11 YEARS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: I - Introduce, D - Develop, C - Consolidate, R - Refine, M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

SKILLS		I	D	C	R	M
DEFENSIVE SKILLS						
	SUB-SKILL					
CATCHING		I	D	C	R	M
Receiving Position		I	D			
Blocking		I	D			
Framing		I				
Throwing	Around Batter	I	D			
	From Knees	I				
Giving Signals		I				
Balls at the Backstop		I	D			
MIDDLE INFIELDER		I	D	C	R	M
Double Play Footwork	Receiving	I	D			
	Throwing					
Relay Throws		I	D	C		
MIDDLE INFIELDER		I	D	C	R	M
Double Play Footwork	Receiving	I	D			
	Throwing					
Relay Throws		I	D	C		
CORNER INFIELDER		I	D	C	R	M
Fielding Bunts		I	D			
1st Base Skills	Footwork at Bag	I	D			
	Stretching	I	D			
	Picks	I				
OUTFIELD		I	D	C	R	M
Long Throw Mechanics	Approach to Ball	I	D			
Safety Catch		I	D			





Learn to Train (L2T)

MALES: 9 - 12 YEARS
FEMALES: 8 - 11 YEARS

TACTICS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: **I** - Introduce, **D** - Develop, **C** - Consolidate, **R** - Refine, **M** - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE TACTICS

SUB TACTIC

HITTING TACTICS

		I	D	C	R	M
Making Adjustments	From at Bat to at Bat or Within at Bat	I	D			
	From Pitcher to Pitcher	I	D			

BASERUNNING TACTICS

		I	D	C	R	M
Reading and Reacting	Coach Signals	I				
	Passed Ball/Wild Pitch	I	D			
	Hit Ball	I	D	C		
	Lead Runner	I	D	C		
1st and 3rd Steals		I				

HITTING/BUNTING TACTICS ON STEAL PLAYS

		I	D	C	R	M
Run and Bunt / Hit / Slap		I				
Fake Bunt		I				

DEFENSIVE TACTICS

SUB TACTIC

		I	D	C	R	M
Communication with Teammates Pre Pitch	Indicating the Number of Outs	I	D	C		
	Calling for the Ball	I	D	C		
Communication with Teammates during plays	Calling Which Base to Throw to	I	D			
	Calling Bunt/Slap/Steal	I	D	C		
	On a Hit Ball	I	D			
Backup Plays	On a Throw to a Base	I	D			
	Balls Hit to Infield and Outfield	I	D			
Coverage Plays (Defensive Movement)	Bunt Plays	I	D	C		
	Slap Plays	I	D			
	Steals	I	D	C		
	Passed Balls/Wild Pitches	I	D	C		
	Flyballs	I	D			
Angles to the Ball	Groundballs	I	D			

TEAM DEFENSIVE STRATEGY

		I	D	C	R	M
Defensive Positioning	Game Situation (# Outs, Score, Inning, Runners on Base)	I				
	Field or Environmental Conditions	I				
Situational Plays	Steal Defense	I	D			
	Bunt Defense	I	D			



Long-Term Player Development in Softball

Softball Canada has a plan to systematically develop players once they enter the sport up until they reach their full potential. We call this process Long-Term Player Development (LTPD). This means:

- Teaching the right skills at the right time;
- Developing appropriate speed, strength, endurance and flexibility, and;
- Holding competitions suited to the developmental age of the players.

It's all about doing the right things, at the right time and in the right way.

For more information about LTPD and more details about this stage, visit:

<https://softball.ca>

Throughout the next sections of the ADM, the Gold Medal Profile skills and attributes will be highlighted with this symbol 🍁. These are the technical, tactical, life, mental and physical skills and attributes that are significant to the GMP for the Women's National Team Program. To learn more on these benchmarks visit www.softball.ca.

ABOUT THE TRAIN TO TRAIN STAGE

This stage can “*make-or-break*” potential high performance athletes because this is a major fitness development stage for speed, strength and stamina. The onset of the growth spurt (typically between the ages of 12-16 in males and 11-15 in females) signifies the entry into this stage and has significant programming implications. All children go through a major growth spurt during adolescence, and this growth occurs about 2 years earlier in girls than in boys. There is also great variation in the age of onset of growth within children of the same sex. Very early maturing girls may start their adolescent growth as young as 8 or 9 years of age, and late maturing boys may not begin until age 14 or older. This huge variation in onset of growth is important because:

- Early maturing boys are often at a competitive advantage early in this stage since they are taller, heavier and stronger than their late maturing peers. And when their peers catch up developmentally often drop out because they may have taken short cuts in skill development because of their early physical advantage.
- Late maturing girls are often at an advantage early in this stage since their narrower hips and lack of breast development and adult fat deposits makes it easier for them to stop, start and change direction faster.
- Keeping early maturing females and late maturing males in the game throughout this stage is important to ensure the health of the nation and to ensure the best athletes continue playing softball.

Adolescence includes important periods of more rapid adaptation to physical training, including:

- For male and female players:
 - Whole body speed: stopping, starting and changing direction.
 - Stamina
- For female players:
 - Strength: after they have passed the time of Peak Height Velocity (PHV).
 - At this stage female players are sensitive to team dynamics, and to have them perform at their highest level coaches need to ensure that females are accepted by their team mates.
 - Coaches also need to ensure that they focus on encouraging healthy eating rather than on body weight in order to avoid triggering disordered eating and eating disorders.

THINGS TO NOTE ABOUT THIS STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT AND AN ATHLETE'S PATHWAY IN SOFTBALL:

Based on interest, available time, commitment levels and other considerations, players will often decide in this stage whether to pursue softball recreationally or competitively. Individuals interested in pursuing softball should consider making it one of their top 2-3 sports with their other favourite sport(s) in opposite seasons (i.e. softball in the spring and summer and other sports such as hockey, basketball, etc. in the late fall and winter). Competition should still be structured to focus on development rather than wins and losses. Athletes in the later part of the Train to Train stage may enter the Podium Pathway. It describes softball's excellence stages in LTPD and specifically applies to athletes on a trajectory towards podium results at the highest level of softball.

The majority of softball players over the age of 11 or 12 are in the Active for Life stage. Active for Life athletes come in all shapes, sizes, and abilities. They come to this stage with a wide range of previous softball skill, knowledge and experience. Active for Life is broken down into:

Competitive for Life: Anyone who is competitive but doesn't have the skills, the drive or the commitment to pursue the high performance pathway. Some Active for Life athletes have played at the highest level, and now want to continue competing but at a slightly lower level. They fall into the Competitive for Life category. Competitive for Life also covers athletes whose main enjoyment is to be competitive - regardless of their level of play.

Fit for Life: Anyone playing the game just for fun, personal satisfaction or for improved health. Fit for Life covers all those athletes who love the game, want to play, but do not want to be highly competitive. This doesn't mean they don't compete - it just means that the health and social benefits of playing are more important to them. Many Fit for Life athletes may not have ever played softball before, and so Learn To Play/Try Softball sessions and a welcoming softball environment are critical to attracting and keeping these players.



Train to Train (T2T)

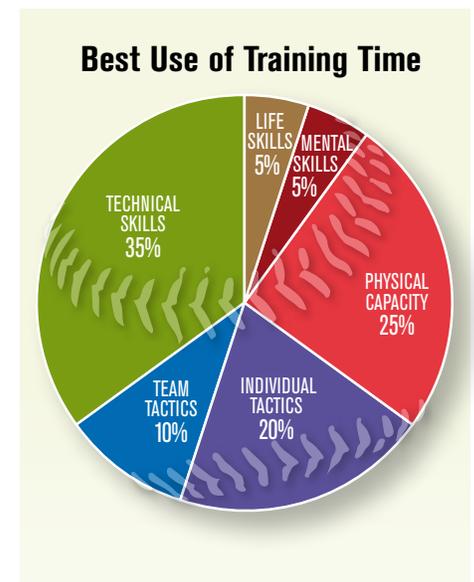
MALES: 12 – 16 YEARS
FEMALES: 11 – 15 YEARS

Train to Train Basics:

- ✓ Use a holistic approach in developing athletes by improving technical, tactical, physical capacities, mental and life skills so that athletes apply what they have learned in practices to competitive situations.
- ✓ Design and implement training programs to raise the athletes' performance capacity emphasizing the 5 S's (Stamina, Strength, Speed, Skills and Suppleness) which are based on where in the adolescent growth process a player has progressed. For this reason, the timing of training emphasis may differ between athletes depending on whether they are early, average, or late maturers.
 - Utilize single or double periodization plans to prepare athletes to effectively manage the annual schedule.
 - Emphasize flexibility training given the rapid growth of bones, tendons, ligaments and muscles.
 - Address the sensitive periods of accelerated adaptation to strength training:
 - For boys, this begins 12 to 18 months after PHV.
 - For girls, this begins with whichever of the following occurs first in the individual: menarche or the onset of Peak Weight Velocity (PWV). Some girls will experience PWV prior to menarche, while others will experience menarche prior to PWV.
 - Develop strength using formal weight training under the supervision of a qualified fitness instructor.
 - Develop aerobic capacity prior to PHV and aerobic power after PHV.
 - Further develop speed by using specific activities that focus on agility, quickness, and change of direction especially during the warm-up.
 - Understand the softball-specific skills required according to Softball Canada's Athlete Development Matrix and ensure that attention is given to establishing and reinforcing these skills at the appropriate time and using the appropriate method.
 - Consolidate all fundamental softball skills and tactics/strategies and introduce advanced softball skills and tactics/strategies.
 - Use a wide variety of methods in training to test players' technical, tactical, physical and mental competencies to ensure good decision making processes to select and implement the correct skill and/or tactics during competition.
 - Include competitive situations in the form of practice matches or competitive games and drills.
 - Train athletes in daily competitive situations in the form of competitive drills, challenges, and games during practice.
 - Develop the mental skills necessary to perform under pressure during competition.
 - ✓ Competition is most valuable when it is used to develop strategic and tactical understanding. The focus of competition must still be on the learning process/development and not the outcome (wins and losses).
 - Shift the ratio to 60% training (includes pre-season practices) and 40% competition (includes competition-specific training).
 - Too much competition wastes valuable training time to develop skills which is a key reason why many athletes hit a plateau during later stages.
 - Too little competition reduces the practical application and development of technique, tactics, and decision-making skills.
 - Introduce athletes to preparing to perform at identified competitions throughout the year in order to reach a peak performance at the decisive competition of the year.

THE FIVE-SEGMENT MODEL

At every stage of LTPD, players need to develop stage and age appropriate skills and capacities in each of the 5 following areas: technical skills, tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills. Each capacity has different levels of importance at different points in a player's development. For the Train to Train stage this means:



SEASON STRUCTURE

- Competition/Training Ratio: 40%/60%
- Pre-Season: 10-15 practices
- Competitive Season: 12-15 weeks
- Softball-specific activities per week:
 - Early in Stage: 2-3 times for 90 minutes each
 - Later in Stage: 3-4 times for 90 minutes each
- Players take part in 1-2 complementary sports as part of year round activity to continue to develop all-around athletic competency
- Players should play 2-3 positions in softball



Train to Train (T2T)

PHYSICAL CAPACITY

	Development Priority		
	Low	Med.	High
Endurance			
Speed - Hand/Foot			
Speed - Whole Body			
Speed - Endurance			
Relative Strength			
Strength - Endurance			
Explosive Power			
Flexibility			

NOTE

Develop power after Peak Height Velocity (PHV), and for female athletes focus on strength development after athlete has passed PHV.

Maintaining flexibility is particularly important for males during this stage.



Athletes with Disabilities

Athletes with a disability should be encouraged to take part in sports they like and feel they have success in.

- Provide opportunities to continue to develop softball specific skills, while ensuring mental skills are being developed and supported.
- Reach out to specific groups to ensure coaches have the knowledge, skills, techniques, and confidence to work effectively with all athletes.
- Adapt equipment, skills, and rules to allow athletes with disabilities to continue to be activity engaged in softball.

MENTAL SKILLS

	Skill Competence				
	I	D	C	R	M
Confidence and Presence					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing consistent confidence • Handling pressure situations • Visualization 					
Grit					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing passion and commitment • Integrating mental practice • Goal setting 					
Resilience					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental toughness • Learning from mistakes/obstacles • Emotion regulation and composure 					
Focus and Intensity Regulation					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting to identify optimal performance level • Attention/focus regulation (introduction of mindfulness and cue recognition) • Arousal regulation (breathing) • Developing routines 					
Team Player					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embraces and prepares for role • Relationship and communication skills • Leadership skills 					

NOTE

At this level skills and strategies can start to be individualized and developed.

For females at the stage, acceptance by peers is a critical prerequisite for training effort and should be structured into training by coaches.

LIFE SKILLS

Athlete arrives at venue ready and equipped to train or compete.

Athletes understand and implement sound nutrition and hydration protocol for daily living, training and competition.

Player is comfortable traveling independently to and from local training and competition, and arrives on time.

Athlete achieves balance between softball, school and social life.

Understands and appreciates cultural differences and values diversity among teammates and opponents.

Develops personal standards of behaviour, and commits to ethical, drug free sport.

SLEEP

Duration: 9 hours + 30 minute nap between 2-4pm

- Reinforce the importance of sleep routine
- Monitor for cumulative sleep debt (<9 hours/night or <56 hours/week)
- Monitor caffeine intake
- Do not train on an unrested body



SOFTBALL TECHNICAL / TACTICAL SKILLS

This is a critical stage for the development of high performance softball athletes both in technical/tactical skill development and in physical development. By the end of this stage athletes have generally made the commitment to pursue the high performance pathway or to play recreationally for the love of the game. A qualified coach is essential to ensure the proper development of the athlete at this stage.

SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE SKILLS		SUB-SKILL				
HITTING		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Hitting Mechanics	Loading (Front Foot to Hand Separation)	■	■	■		
	Weight Transfer (From Back to Firm Front Side)		■	■	■	
	Palm Up /Palm Down Through Contact		■	■	■	
	Stacked Position at Contact		■	■	■	
Eye/Hand Coordination	🍁 Bat Control		■	■	■	
Avoiding Pitch				■	■	
Pitch Recognition (After Release)	Spin Recognition and Reaction	■	■	■		
BUNTING		I	D	C	R	M
Sacrifice Mechanics	Split Hands With Firm Grip		■	■	■	
	Barrell Above and in Front of Hands		■	■	■	
	Head/Eyes at Top of Strike Zone		■	■	■	
	Absorb the Ball (Contact End of Bat)		■	■		
Drag Bunt Mechanics	Move Through the Box to Pitcher (Back Foot to Pitcher)	■	■	■		
Push Bunt		■				
SLAP HITTING		I	D	C	R	M
LH Running Slap	Cross Over Step Towards Shortstop		■	■	■	
	Hands Above Strikezone		■	■	■	
	Controlled Bat Path in a Downward Movement	■	■	■		
	Barrell Lags Behind Hands to Hit Ball to Leftside		■	■	■	
Stationary Slap		■	■	■		
BASERUNNING		I	D	C	R	M
Getting Out of Batters box				■	■	
🍁 Running to 1st Base				■	■	
🍁 Rounding Base	Question Mark Turn		■	■	■	
	J turn		■	■	■	
Lead Offs			■	■	■	
Tagging Up			■	■	■	
Stealing		■	■	■	■	
SLIDING		I	D	C	R	M
Bent Leg Slide			■	■	■	
Dive Back			■	■	■	
Head First Slide		■	■	■		
Back Door Slide		■	■	■	■	
Pop Up Slide		■	■	■		



SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

DEFENSIVE SKILLS		SUB-SKILL	I	D	C	R	M
THROWING							
Overhand Throwing Mechanics	Elbows and Shoulders Level			■	■	■	
	Pull Front Elbow into Body on Shoulder Rotation			■	■	■	
	On Release Throwing Elbow Above Shoulder			■	■		
	Ball Release Creates a 12-6 Rotation on Ball			■	■		
	Transition Footwork (Shuffle or Crossover)			■	■	■	
Side Arm Throwing		■	■	■			
Flips and Tosses			■	■	■		
Throwing on The Run			■	■	■		
RECEIVING THROWS							
Soft Hands (Absorbing Ball)				■	■	■	
Transfer				■	■	■	
FIELDING							
GROUND BALLS							
Ready Position				■	■	■	
Ground Ball Fielding Mechanics	Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot			■	■	■	
	Glove Fingers Point Down/Out Front & Down			■	■	■	
	Bum Down, Weight on Balls of Feet, Eyes Up, Chin Down			■	■	■	
	Throwing Hand Follows Ball into Glove			■	■	■	
Glove Work	Forehand			■	■	■	
	Backhand		■	■	■	■	
	Shorthops		■	■	■	■	
FLYBALLS							
Flyball Fielding Mechanics	Get Behind the Ball, Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot		■	■	■		
	Wrist Back, Glove Above Forehead and Center of Body			■	■	■	
Flyball Footwork	Drop Step		■	■	■		
Flyball Catches	Basket Catch		■	■	■		
	Over Shoulder Catch		■	■	■		
Diving Catches	Feet First Sliding		■	■	■		
	Head First Dive		■	■			
Playing the Sun				■	■		
Fielding At / Off Fence				■	■		
MULTIPLE PLAYER DEFENSIVE SKILLS							
Tag Plays				■	■	■	
Cut Offs				■	■	■	
Relays				■	■	■	
Rundowns			■	■	■		



Train to Train (T2T)

MALES: 12 – 16 YEARS
FEMALES: 11 – 15 YEARS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

SKILLS						
DEFENSIVE SKILLS	SUB-SKILL	I	D	C	R	M
PITCHING						
Pitching Mechanics	Leg Drive		■	■	■	
	Stacked or Power Position		■	■	■	
	Arm Action in Joint Sequence		■	■	■	
	Hides Pitches	■	■			
Pitches (Working on 1 Movement Pitch)	Fastball		■	■		
	Change		■	■		
	Drop	■	■			
	Rise	■	■			
	Curve	■	■			
Control (In and out of strike zone)	Throw to Multiple Locations	■	■	■		
	Throw One Pitch to Multiple Locations	■	■	■		
	Throw Multiple Pitches to One Location	■	■			
Pitch Out		■	■			
CATCHING						
Receiving Position			■	■	■	
Blocking			■	■	■	
Framing		■	■	■		
Throwing to Bases	Around Batter		■	■		
	From Knees	■	■			
Giving Signals			■	■		
Balls at the Backstop			■	■		
INFIELD						
MIDDLE INFIELD						
Double Play Footwork	Receiving	■	■	■		
	Throwing	■	■	■		
Relay Throws			■	■	■	
CORNER INFIELD						
Fielding Bunts			■	■		
1st Base Skills	Footwork at Bag		■	■	■	
	Stretching		■	■	■	
	Picks	■	■	■		
OUTFIELD						
Long Throw Mechanics	Approach to Ball		■	■	■	
	Crowhop	■	■	■		
Safety Catch			■	■		





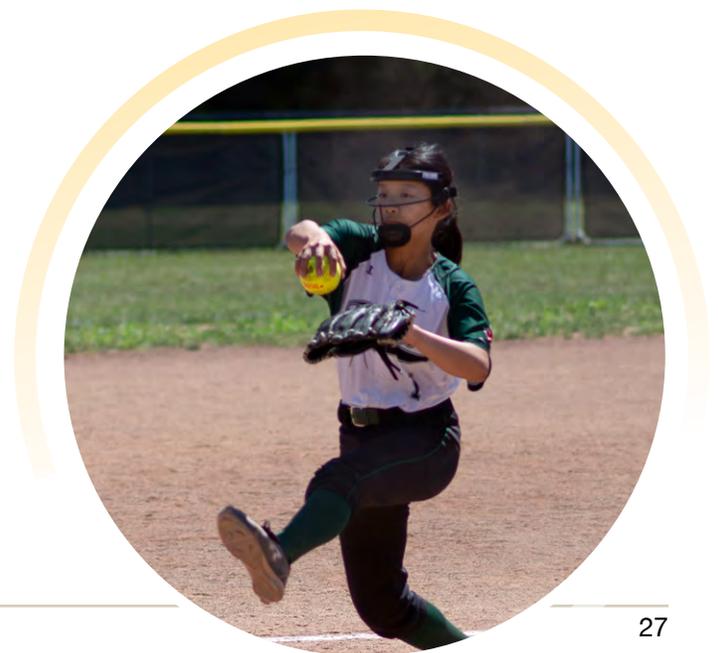
Train to Train (T2T)

MALES: 12 – 16 YEARS
FEMALES: 11 – 15 YEARS

TACTICS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE TACTICS		SUB TACTIC				
HITTING TACTICS		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Situational Hitting	Hitting With Runner on 3rd Less than 2 out	■	■			
	Hitting Strategy (Bunt, Slap, Hit Based on Defensive Positions)	■	■	■		
🍁 Making Adjustments	From at Bat to at Bat or Within at Bat		■	■	■	
	From Pitcher to Pitcher		■	■	■	
🍁 Pitch Recognition (Pre Release)	Picking Pitchers (Recognizing Pitches Before Release)	■				
	Recognizing Defensive/Catcher Positioning	■	■			
BASERUNNING TACTICS		I	D	C	R	M
Delayed Steal		■	■	■		
Reading and Reacting	Coach Signals		■	■		
	Passed Ball/Wild Pitch		■	■	■	
	Hit Ball		■	■	■	
	Lead Runner		■	■	■	
Blocking Throws Between Bases		■	■			
1st and 3rd Steals		■	■	■		
Rundowns	Escaping		■	■		
	Staying in Rundown to Advance Runner	■	■			
HITTING/BUNTING TACTICS ON STEAL PLAYS		I	D	C	R	M
Protecting the Runner		■	■	■		
Run and Bunt / Hit / Slap		■	■	■		
Fake Bunt		■	■	■		
Contact Play (Runner on 3rd)		■	■			
Squeeze Play		■	■	■		
COMMUNICATION		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Relaying Information About at Bats to Teammates		■	■			
🍁 Relaying Information to Hitter About Catcher Positioning (In/Out)		■	■			





Train to Train (T2T)

MALES: 12 – 16 YEARS
FEMALES: 11 – 15 YEARS

TACTICS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

DEFENSIVE TACTICS		SUB TACTIC	I	D	C	R	M
Communication With Teammates Pre Pitch	Indicating the Number of Outs			■	■	■	
	Defensive Positioning Communication		■	■	■		
Communication With Teammates During Plays	Calling for the Ball			■	■	■	
	Calling Which Base to Throw to			■	■	■	
	Calling Bunt/Slap/Steal			■	■	■	
Backup Plays	On a Hit Ball			■	■	■	
	On a Throw to a Base			■	■	■	
Coverage Plays (Defensive Movement)	Balls Hit to Infield and Outfield			■	■	■	
	Bunt Plays			■	■	■	
	Slap Plays			■	■	■	
	Steals			■	■	■	
	Secondary Plays		■	■	■		
	Passed Balls/Wild Pitches			■	■	■	
Fake Throw			■	■			
Angles to the Ball	Flyballs			■	■	■	
	Groundballs			■	■	■	
Pitcher/Catcher	Pitcher Game Management			■	■		
	Catcher Game Management (Pitcher and Team)		■	■	■		
	Calling Pitches		■	■			
TEAM DEFENSIVE STRATEGY			I	D	C	R	M
Defensive Positioning	Game Situation (# Outs, Score, Inning, Runners on Base)			■	■	■	
	Based on Current Hitting Tendencies or Pitches Being Thrown		■	■	■		
	Scouting Reports		■				
	Field or Environmental Conditions		■	■	■		
Set Plays	Pickoffs		■	■			
	1st and 3rd Plays		■	■	■		
Situational Plays	Steal Defense		■	■	■		
	Slap Defense		■	■			
	Winning Run and Bottom of Inning Defense		■	■			
	Bunt Defense		■	■	■		



ABOUT THE TRAIN TO COMPETE STAGE

This stage immediately follows the adolescent growth spurt. Train to Compete athletes are committed with recognized talent who have chosen the high performance pathway that few others pursue. They must strive to deliver consistent high performance results in both training and competition. Athletes should receive individualized tailored annual plans that address their shortcomings as well build on their strengths with an eye to future needs at the next stage. A one-sport focus towards softball and specializing in one position (but play 1-2 other positions) is recommended to achieve greatest results. Players are becoming more independent, responsible and accountable in making decisions that affect their training and playing performances including training on their own. Athletes are committed to high levels of year-round training and high level competitions and are striving to be valued members of Provincial and Junior National teams. All technical skills should be consolidated and moving to refined by the end of this stage. This is a critical time for strength and power development in both male and female players. Athletes begin to identify factors that contribute to their Ideal Performance State (IPS) and work towards achieving this state for every competition. Formal competition becomes more prominent in annual periodized training, competition and recovery plans, and includes major national and international events. Balancing sport participation/training with schooling, part-time work, family and relationships can be a challenge so time management skills are vital.

Female Players

- Players should be educated about sound nutrition, the risk posed by female athlete triad and about resources available to them if there are concerns about disordered eating or potential eating disorders.
- A sense of belonging remains important to female softball players at this stage

SEASON STRUCTURE

- Competition/Training Ratio: 50%/50%
- Pre-Season: 15-20 practices
- Competitive Season: 12-16 weeks
- Softball-specific activities per week: 4-8 times including fitness and mental skills training
- Players take part in complementary physical activities/sports in the off-season

Long-Term Player Development in Softball

Softball Canada has a plan to systematically develop players once they enter the sport up until they reach their full potential. We call this process Long-Term Player Development (LTPD). This means:

- Teaching the right skills at the right time;
- Developing appropriate speed, strength, endurance and flexibility, and;
- Holding competitions suited to the developmental age of the players.

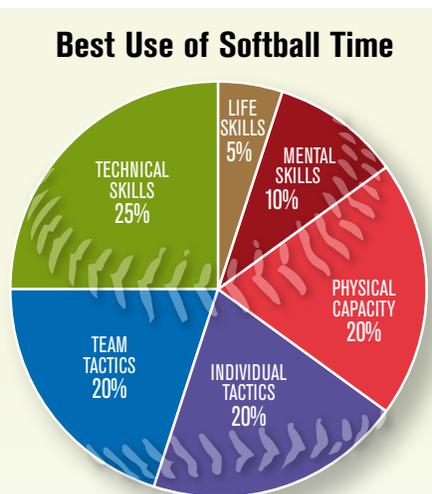
It's all about doing the right things, at the right time and in the right way.

For more information about LTPD and more details about this stage, visit:

<https://softball.ca>

THE FIVE-SEGMENT MODEL

At every stage of LTPD, players need to develop stage and age appropriate skills and capacities in each of the 5 following areas: technical skills, tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills. Each capacity has different levels of importance at different points in a player's development. For the Train to Compete stage this means:



Train to Compete Basics:

- ✓ Provide a year-round, high-intensity training program directed at individuals as well as the team as a whole which includes softball-specific training and testing.
- ✓ Design and implement training programs to raise the athletes' performance capacity emphasizing the 5 S's (Stamina, Strength, Speed, Skills and Suppleness) which is based on the individual needs of each player as well as the team as a whole.
 - Teach players, who are now proficient at performing fundamental and advanced softball-specific skills, to perform those skills under a variety of conditions during training and competitions.
 - Place special emphasis on optimum preparation by modelling high-level competitions in training in order to perform on a regular and consistent basis at identified major events domestically and internationally.
 - Individually tailor, to a greater degree, fitness programs, recovery programs, psychological preparation, and technical development to meet the player's individual needs, address each player's strengths and weaknesses and position-specific needs.
- ✓ Utilize periodization strategies to effectively manage the athlete's/team's annual and multi-year schedule including tapering and peaking for identified competitions, to accommodate the large increase in training volume in this stage.
- ✓ Change the training to competition ratio to 50% training to develop technical/tactical skills and improve fitness and to 50% competition and competition-specific-training.
- ✓ Introduce players to working with an Integrated Support Team (IST) consisting of a sport psychologist, nutritionist, exercise physiologist, strength and conditioning coach and a medical team (physician, athletic therapist, physiotherapist, massage therapist, chiropractor) to enhance player and team performances.
- ✓ Debrief and reflect post-training and post-competition to find ways to enhance athlete's future performances by identifying factors that contribute to their Ideal Performance State (IPS) and work towards achieving this state for every competition.
- ✓ Conduct critical evaluation of the program at regular intervals throughout the season with coach and player(s) thoroughly examining competition results, achievement of team and individual goals and how the player and team prepared. Together, the coach and player(s) will make modifications for the next cycle.



Train to Compete (T2C)

PHYSICAL CAPACITY

	Development Priority		
	Low	Med.	High
Endurance	■		
Speed - Hand/Foot			■
Speed - Whole Body			■
Speed - Endurance	■		
Relative Strength		■	
Strength - Endurance	■		
Explosive Power			■
Flexibility		■	

NOTE

Highest training priority is power development, and throwing/running speed.
At this stage objective is to maintain previously developed flexibility.

MENTAL SKILLS

	Skill Competence				
	I	D	C	R	M
Confidence and Presence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust sense of confidence and clear identity Embraces pressure situations Visualization 				■	
Grit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent passion and long-term commitment Consistent mental practice and preparation Clear goals and competition plans 				■	
Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental toughness Adversity as opportunity to improve Emotion regulation and composure 				■	
Focus and Intensity Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear understanding of and plan for getting to optimal performance level Attention/focus regulation (development of mindfulness, cue recognition, anticipation) Arousal regulation (breathing) 				■	
Team Player <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embraces and prepares for role Relationship, communication, and leadership skills Alignment with team culture on and off field 				■	

NOTE

At this level skills and strategies are refined and athletes are demonstrating consistent mental practice and mental performance.
Anxiety reduction and emotional control in high pressure situations becomes more important. Error reduction and good decision making are now critical.

LIFE SKILLS

Athlete committed to high performance and eventually making national teams.

- Athletes have refined sound nutrition and hydration protocols for daily living, training, competition and recovery.

Player is comfortable traveling independently to and from regional/national training and competition

Athlete maintains balance between softball, school and social life.

Understands and appreciates cultural differences and is comfortable with international travel experiences.

Understands doping control, avoids untested supplements, and is committed to drug free sport.

SLEEP

Duration: 8-10 hours +30 minute nap between 2-4pm

- Focus on reducing sleep debt. Get 56-70 hours of sleep/week
- Do not train if unrested and sleep deprived
- Avoid technology (screen time) before bed
- If you sleep is poor seek help



Athletes with Disabilities

Athletes with a disability should take part in sports they like and feel they have success in, becoming more specialized at this level.

- Provide opportunities to continue to develop softball specific skills, while introducing athletes to an Integrated Support Team, specific to their individual needs.
- Listen to the athletes as they are the experts on their own disability and know what adaptations they may require.
- If necessary, inform officials and opposing coaches of any adaptations to the equipment, skills, and rules, ensuring athletes with disabilities are able to compete at their full athletic potential.



Train to Compete (T2C)

MALES: 16 – 23 +/- YEARS
FEMALES: 15 – 21 +/- YEARS

SOFTBALL TECHNICAL / TACTICAL SKILLS

All technical/tactical skills should be highly consolidated and moving to refined by the end of this stage. Athletes are working with a Competition - Development or Competition - High Performance Certified coach to provide quality feedback and a year round, customized high-intensity training program. They are beginning to use specialists in areas such as strength and conditioning, sport psychology, and sport nutrition to further individualize their training. To increase the likelihood of future success, players must test their technical, tactical, physical and mental competencies in different circumstances and conditions.

SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE SKILLS						
SUB-SKILL						
HITTING		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Hitting Mechanics	Loading (Front Foot to Hand Separation)		■	■	■	
	Weight Transfer (From Back to Firm Front Side)			■	■	■
	Palm Up /Palm Down Through Contact			■	■	■
	Stacked Position at Contact			■	■	■
Eye/Hand Coordination	Bat Control				■	■
Strike Zone Awareness						
Avoiding Pitch						
🍁 Pitch Recognition (After Release)	Spin Recognition and Reaction		■	■	■	
BUNTING		I	D	C	R	M
Sacrifice Mechanics	Split Hands With Firm Grip			■	■	■
	Barrell Above and in Front of Hands			■	■	■
	Head/Eyes at Top of Strike Zone			■	■	■
	Absorb the Ball (Contact End of Bat)			■	■	
Drag Bunt Mechanics	Move Through the Box to Pitcher (Back Foot to Pitcher)		■	■	■	
Push Bunt			■	■		
SLAP HITTING		I	D	C	R	M
LH Running Slap	Cross Over Step Towards Shortstop			■	■	■
	Hands Above Strike zone			■	■	■
	Controlled Bat Path in a Downward Movement			■	■	
	Barrell Lags Behind Hands to Hit Ball to Left side			■	■	■
Stationary Slap			■	■		
BASERUNNING		I	D	C	R	M
Getting Out of Batters Box						■
🍁 Running to 1st Base						■
🍁 Rounding Base	Question Mark Turn			■	■	■
	J turn			■	■	■
Lead Offs				■	■	
Tagging Up				■	■	
Stealing						■
SLIDING		I	D	C	R	M
Bent Leg Slide						■
Dive Back				■	■	■
Head First Slide				■	■	
Back Door Slide				■	■	
Pop Up Slide						■



Train to Compete (T2C)

MALES: 16 - 23 +/- YEARS
 FEMALES: 15 - 21 +/- YEARS

SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

DEFENSIVE SKILLS		SUB-SKILL				
THROWING		I	D	C	R	M
Overhand Throwing Mechanics	Elbows and Shoulders Level			■	■	■
	Pull Front Elbow into Body on Shoulder Rotation			■	■	■
	On Release Throwing Elbow Above Shoulder			■	■	
	Ball Release Creates a 12-6 Rotation on Ball			■	■	
	Transition Footwork (Shuffle or Crossover)			■	■	■
Side Arm Throwing				■	■	
Flips and Tosses					■	
Throwing on the Run				■	■	
RECEIVING THROWS		I	D	C	R	M
Soft Hands (Absorbing Ball)						■
Transfer						■
FIELDING		I	D	C	R	M
GROUND BALLS						
Ready Position						■
Ground Ball Fielding Mechanics	Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot			■	■	■
	Glove Fingers Point Down/Out Front and Down			■	■	■
	Bum Down, Weight on Balls of Feet, Eyes Up, Chin Down			■	■	■
	Throwing Hand Follows Ball into Glove			■	■	■
Glove Work	Forehand			■	■	■
	Backhand			■	■	■
	Short hops			■	■	■
FLYBALLS						
Flyball Fielding Mechanics	Get Behind the Ball, Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot			■	■	■
	Wrist Back, Glove Above Forehead and Center of Body				■	■
Flyball Footwork	Drop Step			■	■	■
Flyball Catches	Basket Catch			■	■	■
	Over Shoulder Catch			■	■	■
Diving Catches	Feet First Sliding			■	■	■
	Head First Dive		■	■	■	
Playing the Sun				■	■	
Fielding At / Off Fence				■	■	
MULTIPLE PLAYER DEFENSIVE SKILLS		I	D	C	R	M
Tag Plays				■	■	
Cut Offs			■	■	■	
Relays			■	■	■	
Rundowns			■	■	■	





Train to Compete (T2C)

MALES: 16 – 23 +/- YEARS
 FEMALES: 15 – 21 +/- YEARS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: **I** - Introduce, **D** - Develop, **C** - Consolidate, **R** - Refine, **M** - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

SKILLS		I	D	C	R	M
DEFENSIVE SKILLS						
PITCHING		I	D	C	R	M
Pitching Mechanics	Leg Drive			C	R	M
	Stacked or Power Position			C	R	M
	Arm Action in Joint Sequence			C	R	M
	Hides Pitches		D	C	R	
Pitches (Mastering 2 Pitches and Working on 1)	Fastball			C	R	
	Change		D	C	R	
	Drop		D	C	R	
	Rise		D	C	R	
	Curve		D	C	R	
	Screw		D	C	R	
Control (In and Out of Strike Zone)	Throw to Multiple Locations			C	R	M
	Throw One Pitch to Multiple Locations			C	R	M
	Throw Multiple Pitches to One Location		D	C	R	
Pitch Out		D	C	R		
CATCHING		I	D	C	R	M
Receiving Position				C	R	
Blocking				C	R	
Framing				C	R	
Throwing to Bases	Around Batter			C	R	
	From Knees		D	C	R	
Giving Signals			D	C	R	
Balls at the Backstop				C	R	
INFIELD		I	D	C	R	M
MIDDLE INFIELD						
Double Play Footwork	Receiving		D	C	R	
	Throwing		D	C	R	
Relay Throws				C	R	M
CORNER INFIELD						
Fielding Bunts				C	R	
1st Base Skills	Footwork at Bag			C	R	M
	Stretching			C	R	M
	Picks		D	C	R	
OUTFIELDERS		I	D	C	R	M
Long Throw Mechanics	Approach to Ball			C	R	M
	Crow hop		D	C	R	
Safety Catch				C	R	



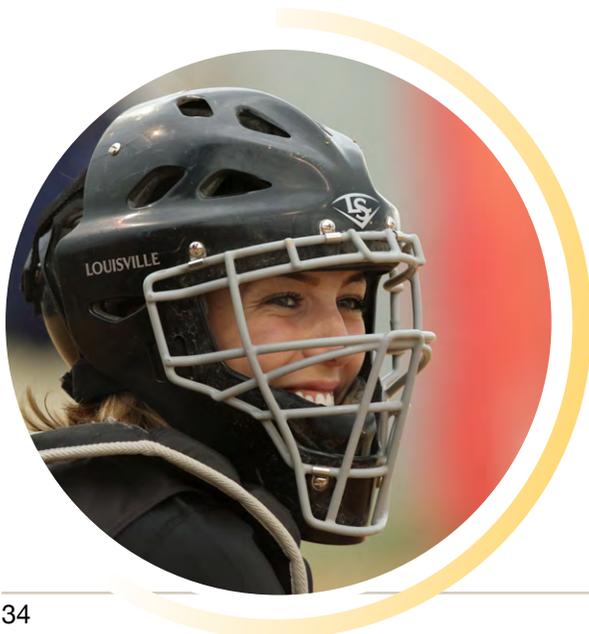
Train to Compete (T2C)

MALES: 16 - 23 +/- YEARS
 FEMALES: 15 - 21 +/- YEARS

TACTICS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE TACTICS		SUB TACTIC				
HITTING TACTICS		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Situational Hitting	Hitting Behind Runner	■	■	■	■	
	Hitting With Runner on 3rd Less Than 2 Out	■	■	■		
	Hitting Strategy (Bunt, Slap, Hit Based on Defensive Positions)		■	■	■	
🍁 Making Adjustments	From at Bat to at Bat or Within at Bat		■	■	■	
	From Pitcher to Pitcher			■	■	
🍁 Pitch Recognition (Pre Release)	Picking Pitchers (Recognizing Pitches Before Release)	■	■	■		
	Recognizing Defensive/Catcher Positioning	■	■	■		
BASERUNNING TACTICS		I	D	C	R	M
Delayed Steal			■	■	■	
Reading and Reacting	Coach Signals			■	■	
	Passed Ball/Wild Pitch			■	■	
	Hit Ball			■	■	
	Lead Runner			■	■	
Blocking Throws Between Bases			■	■	■	
1st and 3rd Steals			■	■	■	
Rundowns	Escaping			■	■	
	Staying in Rundown to Advance Runner		■	■	■	
HITTING/BUNTING TACTICS ON STEAL PLAYS		I	D	C	R	M
Protecting the Runner					■	
Run and Bunt / Hit / Slap				■	■	
Fake Bunt				■	■	
Contact Play (Runner on 3rd)			■	■		
Squeeze Play				■	■	
COMMUNICATION		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Relaying Information About at Bats to Teammates			■	■	■	
🍁 Relaying Information to Hitter About Catcher Positioning (In/Out)			■	■	■	





Train to Compete (T2C)

MALES: 16 - 23 +/- YEARS
FEMALES: 15 - 21 +/- YEARS

TACTICS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

DEFENSIVE TACTICS		SUB TACTIC	I	D	C	R	M
🇨🇦 Communication With Teammates Pre Pitch	Indicating the Number of Outs				■	■	
	Defensive Positioning Communication				■	■	
🇨🇦 Communication With Teammates During Plays	Calling for the Ball				■	■	■
	Calling Which Base to Throw to				■	■	■
	Calling Bunt/Slap/Steal				■	■	■
🇨🇦 Backup Plays	On a Hit Ball				■	■	
	On a Throw to a Base				■	■	
Coverage Plays (Defensive Movement)	Balls Hit to Infield and Outfield				■	■	■
	🇨🇦 Bunt Plays				■	■	■
	Slap Plays				■	■	
	Steals				■	■	■
	Secondary Plays			■	■	■	
	🇨🇦 Passed Balls/Wild Pitches				■	■	■
Fake Throw				■	■	■	
Angles to the Ball	Flyballs				■	■	
	Groundballs				■	■	
Pitcher/Catcher	🇨🇦 Pitcher Game Management				■	■	■
	🇨🇦 Catcher Game Management (Pitcher and Team)				■	■	■
	🇨🇦 Calling Pitches				■	■	■
TEAM DEFENSIVE STRATEGY			I	D	C	R	M
Defensive Positioning	Game Situation (# Outs, Score, Inning, Runners on Base)				■	■	
	Based on Current Hitting Tendencies or Pitches Being Thrown				■	■	■
	Scouting Reports		■	■	■	■	
	Field or Environmental Conditions				■	■	
Set Plays	Pickoffs				■	■	■
	1st and 3rd Plays				■	■	■
Situational Plays	Steal Defense				■	■	
	Slap Defense				■	■	■
	Winning Run and Bottom of Inning Defense				■	■	■
	Bunt Defense				■	■	



ABOUT THE LEARN & TRAIN TO WIN STAGE

Players in this stage are in the selection pool or have just made the Senior National Team but might not be role players. During this stage, players begin the transition from high-level national competitions to national multi-sport games and international competitions (i.e. Canada Summer Games, World Championships, Pan American Games and Olympic Games). Players start to learn to deal with the unique demands of competing on the international stage, which includes travel, jet lag, environmental factors, food considerations, and culture. The focus in the Learn and Train to Win stage is on preparing the player and team to consistently give the best possible performance on the international stage. Year-round, highly individualized, and softball- and position-specific training is required both within the team setting and by players on their own. Special attention should be paid to injury prevention, recovery and regeneration as players will be especially vulnerable to over-training due to the higher volumes of training. Athletes play a significant role in their own development at this stage. This can be a difficult stage for developing athletes who are close to, but have not been selected for national team duties. Those who have made the national team and who are carded often benefit from expense paid training and competition experiences, while those trying to make the team must often pay their own way. This may be a time when athletes are moving out from living with parents, may be at college or university, and/or may be seeking to establish both careers and stable adult personal relationships. These life factors may also limit softball aspirations.

Female Players

- Players should be educated about sound nutrition, the need for energy balance to support training and the risk posed by the female athlete triad including information about resources available to them if there are concerns about disordered eating or potential eating disorders.

Long-Term Player Development in Softball

Softball Canada has a plan to systematically develop players once they enter the sport up until they reach their full potential. We call this process Long-Term Player Development (LTPD). This means:

- *Teaching the right skills at the right time;*
- *Developing appropriate speed, strength, endurance and flexibility, and;*
- *Holding competitions suited to the developmental age of the players.*

It's all about doing the right things, at the right time and in the right way.

For more information about LTPD and more details about this stage, visit:

<https://softball.ca>

SEASON STRUCTURE

- Competition/Training Ratio: 60%/40% (training ratio includes pre-season practices)
- Pre-Season: 10-20 practices
- Competitive Season: 14-16 weeks
- Softball-specific activities per week: 6-9 times including fitness and mental skills training
- Daily participation in complementary physical activities/sports in the off-season

THE FIVE-SEGMENT MODEL

At every stage of LTPD, players need to develop stage and age appropriate skills and capacities in each of the 5 following areas: technical skills, tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills. Each capacity has different levels of importance at different points in a player's development. For the Learn and Train to Win stage this means:

Best Use of Softball Time





Learn & Train To Win Basics:

- ✓ Provide a year-round, high-intensity training program conducted in a quality, daily training environment.
- ✓ Design and implement training programs to raise the athletes' performance capacity emphasizing the 5 Ss (Stamina, Strength, Speed, Skills and Suppleness) and which is based on the individual needs of each player as well as the team as a whole.
 - Encourage players to make decisions about their training regimen.
 - Individually tailor, to a greater degree, fitness programs, recovery programs, psychological preparation, and technical development to meet the player's individual sport-specific needs, position-specific needs and address each player's strengths and weaknesses.
 - Teach players, who are now proficient at performing advanced softball and position-specific skills, to perform these skills under a variety of conditions at competition speed and intensity.
 - Refine psychological skills to produce the ideal performance state including setting, monitoring and adjusting outcome and process goals based on performance results.
- Maximize strength training to bring about overall improvement. Ensure that physical training programs employ the most advanced techniques and sport science information in order to minimize injuries.
- Place special emphasis on optimum preparation by modelling high-level competitions in training in order to perform on a regular and consistent basis to reach the podium at major domestic and international events.
 - ✓ Conduct testing procedures on athletes at regular intervals to monitor current performance level against desired performance level or benchmarks.
 - ✓ Utilize double or multiple periodization strategies to effectively manage the athlete's/team's annual and multi-year schedule, including tapering and peaking for major competitions, to accommodate the large increase in training volume in this stage.
 - ✓ Change the training-to-competition ratio to 40:60. Devote 40% of available time to developing technical and tactical skills and improving fitness (training ratio includes pre-season practices) and 60% to competition and competition-specific training.
- ✓ Arrange or select opportunities to compete against some of the best athletes/teams from other countries. Use minor competitions to rehearse strategies for major competitions.
- ✓ Work with an Integrated Support Team (IST) consisting of a sport psychologist, nutritionist, exercise physiologist, strength and conditioning coach and a medical team (physician, athletic therapist, physiotherapist, massage therapist, chiropractor) to enhance player and team performances.
- ✓ Debrief and reflect post-training and post-competition to find ways to enhance athlete's future performances by identifying factors that contribute to their Ideal Performance State (IPS) and achieving this state for every competition.
- ✓ Conduct critical evaluation of the program at regular intervals throughout the season and at season's end with coach and player(s) thoroughly examining competition results, achievement of team and individual goals and how the player and team prepared. Together, the coach and player(s) will make modifications for the next competition or cycle.





PHYSICAL CAPACITY

	Development Priority		
	Low	Med.	High
Endurance	■		
Speed - Hand/Foot			■
Speed - Whole Body			■
Speed - Endurance	■		
Relative Strength		■	
Strength - Endurance	■		
Explosive Power			■
Flexibility		■	

NOTE

Highest training priority is speed and explosive power, particularly explosive leg power for running and explosive arm power for throwing/pitching.



Athletes with Disabilities

Athletes with a disability should continue to take part in their specialized sport (without barriers) and compete at their full athletic potential.

- Provide opportunities to continue to refine sport specific and position specific skills while working with an individualized Integrated Support Team.
- Ensure coaches/managers possess the knowledge of competition classifications/divisions while adhering to equipment policies for devices/adaptations.
- Be cognisant of international travel/accommodation needs and plan for any possible barriers or interruptions.

MENTAL SKILLS

	Skill Competence				
	I	D	C	R	M
Confidence and Presence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust confidence driven by clear identity • Embraces pressure • Visualization to prepare to be confident 					■
Grit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent passion and perseverance • Consistent mental practice and preparation • Goal setting and competition plans 					■
Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental toughness • Adversity as opportunity to improve • Emotion regulation and composure 					■
Focus and Intensity Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued development of understanding of and plan for getting to optimal performance level • Attention/focus regulation (continued refinement of present moment, cue recognition, anticipation) • Arousal regulation (refining plans for getting to optimal zone) • Pre-game and in-game routines 					■
Team Player <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embraces and prepares for role • Relationship, communication, and leadership skills • Embraces and aligns with team culture on and off field 					■

NOTE

At this level mental skills and preparation are consistently utilized to continue to improve performance capabilities.

Anxiety reduction and emotional control in high pressure situations becomes critical.

Focus on error reduction and good decision making in high pressure situations.

LIFE SKILLS

Athlete committed to high performance and making national team.

Athletes have refined sound nutrition and hydration protocols for daily living, training, competition and recovery.

Player is comfortable traveling independently to and from international training and competition events.

Can maintain fitness and nutrition status when on-the-road for extended periods.

Athlete maintains balance between softball, work and relationships.

Understands and appreciates cultural differences and is comfortable with international travel experiences.

SLEEP

Duration: 8-10 hours +30 minute nap between 2-4pm

- Focus on reducing sleep debt
- Do not train if unrested and sleep deprived
- Avoid technology before bed
- If your sleep is poor seek help



SOFTBALL TECHNICAL / TACTICAL SKILLS

This is a stage during which physical capacities are optimized, and most technical/tactical skills are refined. The focus on softball-specific and position-specific training and testing is increased. Instruction and preparation are individualized in order to address each player's individual sport-specific and position-specific needs, strengths, and weaknesses.

SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE SKILLS

SUB-SKILL

HITTING		I	D	C	R	M
Hitting Mechanics Loading (Front Foot to Hand Separation) Weight Transfer (From Back to Firm Front Side) Palm Up /Palm Down Through Contact Stacked Position at Contact						
Eye/Hand Coordination	■ Bat Control					
Avoiding Pitch						

Pitch Recognition (After Release)	Spin Recognition and Reaction	I	D	C	R	M

BUNTING

Sacrifice Mechanics		I	D	C	R	M
Split Hands With Firm Grip Barrell Above and in Front of Hands Head/Eyes at Top of Strike Zone Absorb the Ball (Contact End of Bat)						
Drag Bunt Mechanics Move Through the Box to Pitcher (Back Foot to Pitcher) Split Hands With Firm Grip Barrell Above and in Front of Hands Head/Eyes at Top of Strike Zone Absorb the Ball (Contact End of Bat)						

Push Bunt						
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SLAP HITTING

LH Running Slap		I	D	C	R	M	
Cross Over Step Towards Shortstop Hands Above Strike zone Controlled Bat Path in a Downward Movement Barrell Lags Behind Hands to Hit Ball to Left side							

Stationary Slap						
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BASERUNNING

Getting Out of Batters Box		I	D	C	R	M
■ Running to 1st Base						
■ Rounding Base Question Mark Turn J turn						

Lead Offs						
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Tagging Up						
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Stealing						
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SLIDING

Bent Leg Slide		I	D	C	R	M

Dive Back						
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Head First Slide						
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Back Door Slide						
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Pop Up Slide						
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SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

DEFENSIVE SKILLS		SUB-SKILL				
THROWING		I	D	C	R	M
Overhand Throwing Mechanics	Elbows and Shoulders Level					■
	Pull Front Elbow into Body on Shoulder Rotation					■
	On Release Throwing Elbow Above Shoulder				■	■
	Ball Release Creates a 12-6 Rotation on Ball				■	■
	Transition Footwork (Shuffle or Crossover)					■
Side Arm Throwing				■		
Flips and Tosses				■		
Throwing on the Run					■	
RECEIVING THROWS		I	D	C	R	M
Soft Hands (Absorbing Ball)						■
■ Transfer						■
FIELDING		I	D	C	R	M
GROUND BALLS						
Ready Position						■
Ground Ball Fielding Mechanics	Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot					■
	Glove Fingers Point Down/Out Front and Down					■
	Bum Down, Weight on Balls of Feet, Eyes Up, Chin Down					■
	Throwing Hand Follows Ball into Glove					■
Glove Work	Forehand					■
	Backhand					■
	Short hops					■
FLYBALLS						
Flyball Fielding Mechanics	Get Behind the Ball, Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot					
	Wrist Back, Glove Above Forehead and Center of Body					■
Flyball Footwork	Drop Step					■
Flyball Catches	Basket Catch					■
	Over Shoulder Catch					■
Diving Catches	Feet First Sliding					■
	Head First Dive				■	■
Playing the Sun				■	■	
Fielding At / Off Fence					■	
MULTIPLE PLAYER DEFENSIVE SKILLS		I	D	C	R	M
Tag Plays						■
Cut Offs						■
Relays						■
Rundowns						■ ■





SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

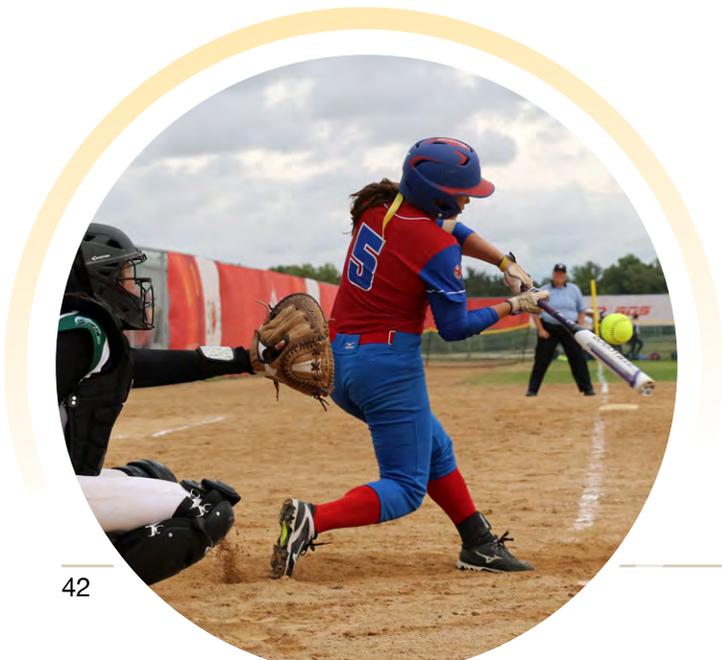
DEFENSIVE SKILLS						
SUB-SKILL						
PITCHING		I	D	C	R	M
Pitching Mechanics	Leg Drive					■
	Stacked or Power Position					■
	Arm Action in Joint Sequence					■
	Hides Pitches				■	■
Pitches (Mastering 2 or 3 Pitches)	Fastball				■	
	Change				■	
	Drop			■	■	
	Rise			■	■	
	Curve			■	■	
	Screw			■	■	
Control (In and Out of Strike Zone)	Throw to Multiple Locations					■
	Throw One Pitch to Multiple Locations					■
	Throw Multiple Pitches to One Location				■	■
Pitch Out				■	■	
CATCHING		I	D	C	R	M
Receiving Position					■	
Blocking					■	
Framing					■	
Throwing to Bases	Around Batter				■	
	From Knees				■	
Giving Signals					■	
Balls at the Backstop					■	
INFIELD		I	D	C	R	M
MIDDLE INFIELD						
Double Play Footwork	Receiving				■	■
	Throwing				■	■
Relay Throws					■	
CORNER INFIELD						
Fielding Bunts					■	■
1st Base Skills	Footwork at Bag					■
	Stretching					■
	Picks				■	■
OUTFIELDERS		I	D	C	R	M
Long Throw Mechanics	Approach to Ball					■
	Crow hop				■	■
Safety Catch					■	



TACTICS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: I - Introduce, D - Develop, C - Consolidate, R - Refine, M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE TACTICS	SUB TACTIC	I	D	C	R	M
HITTING TACTICS		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Situational Hitting	Hitting Behind Runner					
	Hitting With Runner on 3rd Less Than 2 Out					
	Hitting Strategy (Bunt, Slap, Hit Based on Defensive Positions)					
🍁 Making Adjustments	From at Bat to at Bat or Within at Bat					
	From Pitcher to Pitcher					
🍁 Pitch Recognition (Pre Release)	Picking Pitchers (Recognizing Pitches Before Release)					
	Recognizing Defensive/Catcher Positioning					
BASERUNNING TACTICS		I	D	C	R	M
Delayed Steal						
Reading and Reacting	Coach Signals					
	Passed Ball/Wild Pitch					
	Hit Ball					
	Lead Runner					
Blocking Throws Between Bases						
1st and 3rd Steals						
Rundowns	Escaping					
	Staying in Rundown to Advance Runner					
HITTING/BUNTING TACTICS ON STEAL PLAYS		I	D	C	R	M
Protecting the Runner						
Run and Bunt / Hit / Slap						
Fake Bunt						
Contact Play (Runner on 3rd)						
Squeeze Play						
COMMUNICATION		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Relaying Information About at Bats to Teammates						
🍁 Relaying Information to Hitter About Catcher Positioning (In/Out)						





TACTICS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

DEFENSIVE TACTICS		SUB TACTIC				
		I	D	C	R	M
Communication With Teammates Pre Pitch	Indicating the Number of Outs				■	■
	Defensive Positioning Communication				■	■
Communication With Teammates During Plays	Calling for the Ball					■
	Calling Which Base to Throw to					■
	Calling Bunt/Slap/Steal					■
Backup Plays	On a Hit Ball					■
	On a Throw to a Base					■
Coverage Plays (Defensive Movement)	Balls Hit to Infield and Outfield					■
	Bunt Plays					■
	Slap Plays					■
	Steals					■
	Secondary Plays				■	■
	Passed Balls/Wild Pitches					■
Fake Throw					■	■
Angles to the Ball	Flyballs				■	■
	Groundballs				■	■
Pitcher/Catcher	Pitcher Game Management				■	■
	Catcher Game Management (Pitcher and Team)				■	■
	Calling Pitches				■	■
TEAM DEFENSIVE STRATEGY		I	D	C	R	M
Defensive Positioning	Game Situation (# Outs, Score, Inning, Runners on Base)				■	■
	Based on Current Hitting Tendencies or Pitches Being Thrown				■	
	Scouting Reports			■	■	
	Field or Environmental Conditions				■	
Set Plays	Pickoffs			■	■	
	1st and 3rd Plays			■	■	
Situational Plays	Steal Defense				■	■
	Slap Defense				■	■
	Winning Run and Bottom of Inning Defense				■	■
	Bunt Defense				■	■



ABOUT THE LIVING TO WIN STAGE

There are relatively few athletes who reach this stage of development. The focus of this stage is to maximize performance in order to win medals at the Pan American Games, World Championship or Olympic level. Athletes reach full adult maturity in this stage. They pro-actively take full responsibility for self-assessment of their personal strengths and weaknesses, and work diligently with team coaches and Integrated Support Team experts (sport psychologist, strength and conditioning coaches and sport science specialists) to reduce and eliminate weaknesses. They are full-time athletes committed to the National Team training on a year-round, daily basis. Achieving competitive excellence at the highest level requires the full dedication of the athlete and team towards mastering every skill set in softball. Towards the end of this stage, athletes prepare for retirement and a smooth transition out of high performance softball.

Female Players

- Players should be educated about sound nutrition, the need for energy balance to support training and the risk posed by the female athlete triad including information about resources available to them if there are concerns about disordered eating or potential eating disorders.
- Childrearing assistance available for female players starting a family and wishing to continue to play.

Long-Term Player Development in Softball

Softball Canada has a plan to systematically develop players once they enter the sport up until they reach their full potential. We call this process Long-Term Player Development (LTPD). This means:

- Teaching the right skills at the right time;
- Developing appropriate speed, strength, endurance and flexibility, and;
- Holding competitions suited to the developmental age of the players.

It's all about doing the right things, at the right time and in the right way.

For more information about LTPD and more details about this stage, visit:

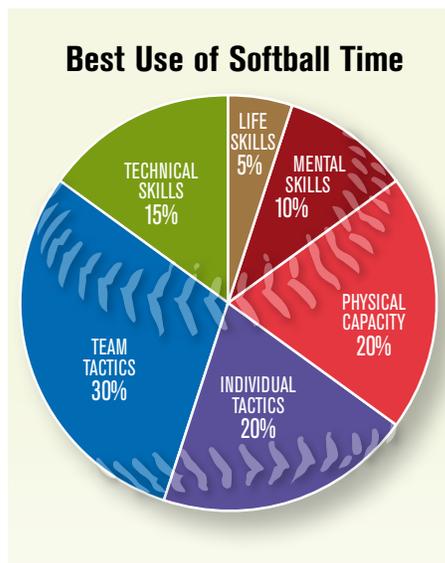
<https://softball.ca>

SEASON STRUCTURE

- Competition/Training Ratio: 75%/25% (includes competition-specific training)
- Pre-Season: 18-22 weeks of daily training
- Competitive Season: 14-16 weeks (possibly longer if climate permits or if travelling to warmer climates)
- Softball-specific activities per week: 9-12 times including fitness and mental skills training
- Daily participation in complementary physical activities/sports in the off-season

THE FIVE-SEGMENT MODEL

At every stage of LTPD, players need to develop stage and age appropriate skills and capacities in each of the 5 following areas: technical skills, tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills. Each capacity has different levels of importance at different points in a player's development. For the Living to Win stage this means:





Living To Win Basics:

- ✓ Provide a year-round, high-intensity training program conducted in a quality, daily training environment.
- ✓ Design and implement training programs to raise the athletes' performance capacity emphasizing the 5 Ss (Stamina, Strength, Speed, Skills and Suppleness) and which is based on the individual needs of each player as well as the team as a whole.
 - Encourage players to make decisions about their training regimen.
 - Individually tailor, to a greater degree, fitness programs, recovery programs, psychological preparation, and technical development to meet the player's individual sport-specific needs, position-specific needs and address each player's strengths and weaknesses.
 - Refine and maintain the world leading technical skills, tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills needed to be contributing members of the National Team with the ability to execute them on demand to win medals at international competitions.
 - Teach players, who are now proficient at performing advanced softball and position-specific skills, to perform these skills under a variety of conditions at competition speed and intensity.
 - Refine psychological skills to produce the ideal performance state including setting, monitoring and adjusting outcome and process goals based on performance results.
 - Maximize strength training to bring about overall improvement. Ensure that physical training programs employ the most advanced techniques and sport science information in order to minimize injuries.
- Place special emphasis on optimum preparation by modelling high-level competitions in training in order to perform on a regular and consistent basis to reach the podium at major domestic and international events.
- Ensure optimal nutrition, hydration, and sleep/rest.
- Be aware of and knowledgeable about how to deal with physical and/or mental fatigue.
- Incorporate frequent preventative breaks to ensure physical and mental recovery and regeneration.
- When traveling to different parts of the world:
 - Develop effective plans to minimize the impact of environmental factors such as jet lag, time change, altitude, pollution, and temperature/humidity.
 - Understand different cultural expectations.
 - Prepare for nutritional needs while on the road.
- ✓ Conduct detailed softball skill, physiological and biomechanical testing procedures on athletes at regular intervals to monitor current performance level against desired performance level or benchmarks.
- ✓ Utilize double or multiple periodization strategies to effectively manage the athlete's/team's annual and multi-year schedule, including tapering and peaking for major competitions, to accommodate the large training volumes and intensities in this stage.
- ✓ Change the training-to-competition ratio to 25% training and 75% competition, which includes competition-specific training activities.
- ✓ Arrange or select opportunities to compete against the best athletes/teams from other countries. Use minor competitions to rehearse strategies for major competitions.
- ✓ Work with an IST that is led by the head coach to ensure players and team reach high levels of performance.
- ✓ Work with an Integrated Support Team (IST) consisting of a sport psychologist, nutritionist, exercise physiologist, strength and conditioning coach and a medical team (physician, athletic therapist, physiotherapist, massage therapist, chiropractor) to enhance player and team performances.
- ✓ Debrief and reflect post-training and post-competition to find ways to enhance athlete's future performances by identifying factors that contribute to their Ideal Performance State (IPS) and achieving this state for every competition.
- ✓ Conduct critical evaluation of the program at regular intervals throughout the season and at season's end with coach and player(s) thoroughly examining competition results, achievement of team and individual goals and how the player and team prepared. Together, the coach and player(s) will make modifications for the next competition or cycle.
- ✓ Maintain a sport/life balance and pursue educational, employment, relationship, family and other life opportunities.



Living to Win (L2W)

MALES: 23+ YEARS
FEMALES: 19+ YEARS

PHYSICAL CAPACITY

	Development Priority		
	Low	Med.	High
Endurance		■	
Speed - Hand/Foot			■
Speed - Whole Body			■
Speed - Endurance		■	
Relative Strength			■
Strength - Endurance	■		
Explosive Power			■
Flexibility		■	

NOTE

Highest training priority is speed and explosive power, particularly explosive leg power for running and explosive arm power for throwing/pitching.

MENTAL SKILLS

	Skill Competence					
	I	D	C	R	M	
Confidence and Presence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust and resilience confidence driven by clear identity Thrives under pressure Visualizes success and uses for mental preparation 						■
Grit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent passion and perseverance Consistent formal mental practice and preparation Clear goals and competition plans 						■
Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental toughness Adversity as opportunity to improve Emotion regulation and composure 						■
Focus and Intensity Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear understanding of and plan for getting to optimal performance level Attention/focus regulation (present moment, cue recognition, anticipation) Arousal regulation (plan for optimal zone) Well-defined and consistently utilized pre-performance and in-game routines 						■
Team Player <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embraces and prepares for role Relationship, communication, and leadership skills Embraces and drives team culture on and off field 						■

NOTE

At this level mental skills and preparation are consistently utilized to perform to potential.

Anxiety reduction and emotional control in high pressure situations becomes critical.

Focus on error reduction and good decision making in high pressure situations.

LIFE SKILLS

Athlete committed to high performance and making national team.

Athletes have refined sound nutrition and hydration protocols for daily living, training, competition and recovery.

Player is comfortable traveling independently to and from international training and competition events.

Can maintain fitness and nutrition status when on-the-road for extended periods.

Athlete maintains balance between softball, work and relationships.

Understands and appreciates cultural differences and is comfortable with international travel experiences.

SLEEP

Duration: 8-10 hours +30 minute nap between 2-4pm

- Focus on reducing sleep debt
- Do not train if unrested and sleep deprived
- Avoid technology before bed
- If your sleep is poor seek help



Athletes with Disabilities

Athletes with a disability should maximize performance and compete at their highest athletic potential.

- Provide opportunities for year-round individualized and team training while working with Integrated Support Team experts.
- Ensure coaches/managers possess the knowledge of competition classifications/divisions while adhering to equipment policies for devices/adaptations.
- Be cognisant of international travel/accommodation needs and plan for any possible barriers or interruptions.



SOFTBALL TECHNICAL / TACTICAL SKILLS

At this stage all aspects of training and preparation are geared to winning at the Pan American Games, World Championships and Olympics. Because of this, training plans are multi-year and designed to allow the athlete to peak at critical times. Athletes train with help from an Integrated Support Team which is led by the National Team head coach.

SKILLS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE SKILLS						
SUB-SKILL						
HITTING		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Hitting Mechanics	Loading (Front Foot to Hand Separation)				■	■
	Weight Transfer (From Back to Firm Front Side)				■	■
	Palm Up /Palm Down Through Contact				■	■
	Stacked Position at Contact				■	■
Eye/Hand Coordination	Bat Control				■	■
Avoiding Pitch					■	■
Pitch Recognition (After Release)	Spin Recognition and Reaction				■	■
BUNTING		I	D	C	R	M
Sacrifice Mechanics	Split Hands With Firm Grip				■	■
	Barrell Above and in Front of Hands				■	■
	Head/Eyes at Top of Strike Zone				■	■
	Absorb the Ball (Contact End of Bat)				■	■
Drag Bunt Mechanics	Move Through the Box to Pitcher (Back Foot to Pitcher)				■	■
	Split Hands With Firm Grip				■	■
	Barrell Above and in Front of Hands				■	■
	Head/Eyes at Top of Strike Zone				■	■
	Absorb the Ball (Contact End of Bat)				■	■
Push Bunt					■	■
SLAP HITTING		I	D	C	R	M
LH Running Slap	Cross Over Step Towards Shortstop				■	■
	Hands Above Strike zone				■	■
	Controlled Bat Path in a Downward Movement				■	■
	Barrell Lags Behind Hands to Hit Ball to Left side				■	■
Stationary Slap				■	■	
BASERUNNING		I	D	C	R	M
Getting out of Batters box					■	■
🍁 Running to 1st Base					■	■
🍁 Rounding Base	Question Mark Turn				■	■
	J Turn				■	■
Lead Offs					■	■
Tagging Up					■	■
Stealing					■	■
SLIDING		I	D	C	R	M
Bent Leg Slide					■	■
Dive Back					■	■
Head First Slide					■	■
Back Door Slide					■	■
Pop Up Slide					■	■



SKILLS

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DEFENSIVE SKILLS		SUB-SKILL				
THROWING		I	D	C	R	M
Overhand Throwing Mechanics	Elbows and Shoulders Level				R	M
	Pull Front Elbow into Body on Shoulder Rotation				R	M
	On Release Throwing Elbow Above Shoulder				R	M
	Ball Release Creates a 12-6 Rotation on Ball				R	M
	Transition Footwork (Shuffle or Crossover)				R	M
Side Arm Throwing				R	M	
Flips and Tosses				R	M	
Throwing on the Run					R	M
RECEIVING THROWS		I	D	C	R	M
Soft Hands (Absorbing Ball)					R	M
Transfer					R	M
FIELDING		I	D	C	R	M
GROUND BALLS						
Ready Position					R	
Ground Ball Fielding Mechanics	Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot				R	M
	Glove Fingers Point Down/Out Front & Down				R	M
	Bum Down, Weight on balls of feet, eyes up, chin down				R	M
	Throwing Hand Follows Ball into Glove				R	M
Glove Work	Forehand				R	M
	Backhand				R	M
	Short hops				R	M
FLYBALLS						
Flyball Fielding Mechanics	Get Behind the Ball, Glove Foot Ahead of Throwing Foot				R	M
	Wrist Back, Glove Above Forehead & Center of Body				R	M
Flyball Footwork	Drop Step				R	M
Flyball Catches	Basket Catch				R	M
	Over Shoulder Catch				R	M
Diving Catches	Feet First Sliding				R	M
	Head First Dive				R	M
Playing the Sun					R	M
Fielding at / off Fence					R	M
MULTIPLE PLAYER DEFENSIVE SKILLS		I	D	C	R	M
Tag Plays					R	M
Cut Offs					R	M
Relays					R	M
Rundowns					R	M



SKILLS		LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ■ I - Introduce, ■ D - Develop, ■ C - Consolidate, ■ R - Refine, ■ M - Maintain				
		Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage				
DEFENSIVE SKILLS	SUB-SKILL	I	D	C	R	M
PITCHING						
Pitching Mechanics	Leg Drive				R	M
	Stacked or Power Position				R	M
	Arm Action in Joint Sequence				R	M
	Hides Pitches				R	M
Pitches (Mastering 2 or 3 Pitches)	Fastball				R	M
	Change				R	M
	Drop				R	M
	Rise				R	M
	Curve				R	M
	Screw				R	M
Control (In and Out of Strike Zone)	Throw to Multiple Locations				R	M
	Throw One Pitch to Multiple Locations				R	M
	Throw Multiple Pitches to One Location				R	M
Pitch Out				R	M	
CATCHING						
Receiving Position					R	M
Blocking					R	M
Framing					R	M
Throwing to Bases	Around Batter				R	M
	From Knees				R	M
Giving Signals					R	M
Balls at the Backstop					R	M
INFIELD						
MIDDLE INFIELD						
Double Play Footwork	Receiving				R	M
	Throwing				R	M
Relay Throws					R	M
CORNER INFIELD						
Fielding Bunts						
1st Base Skills	Footwork at Bag				R	M
	Stretching				R	M
	Picks				R	M
OUTFIELDERS						
Long Throw Mechanics	Approach to Ball				R	M
	Crow hop				R	M
Safety Catch					R	M



TACTICS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: I - Introduce, D - Develop, C - Consolidate, R - Refine, M - Maintain
Bold text - skill/tactic is a priority at this stage

OFFENSIVE TACTICS		SUB TACTIC				
HITTING TACTICS		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Situational Hitting	Hitting Behind Runner				R	M
	Hitting With Runner on 3rd Less Than 2 Out				R	M
	Hitting Strategy (Bunt, Slap, Hit Based on Defensive Positions)				R	M
🍁 Making Adjustments	From at Bat to at Bat or Within at Bat				R	M
	From Pitcher to Pitcher				R	M
🍁 Pitch Recognition (Pre Release)	Picking Pitchers (Recognizing Pitches Before Release)			C	R	M
	Recognizing Defensive/Catcher Positioning			C	R	M
BASERUNNING TACTICS		I	D	C	R	M
Delayed Steal					R	M
Reading and Reacting	Coach Signals				R	M
	Passed Ball/Wild Pitch				R	M
	Hit Ball				R	M
	Lead Runner				R	M
Blocking Throws Between Bases				R	M	
1st and 3rd Steals				R	M	
Rundowns	Escaping				R	M
	Staying in Rundown to Advance Runner				R	M
HITTING/BUNTING TACTICS ON STEAL PLAYS		I	D	C	R	M
Protecting the Runner					R	M
Run and Bunt / Hit / Slap					R	M
Fake Bunt					R	M
Contact Play (Runner on 3rd)					R	M
Squeeze Play					R	M
COMMUNICATION		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Relaying Information About at Bats to Teammates					R	M
🍁 Relaying Information to Hitter About Catcher Positioning (In/Out)					R	M





TACTICS

LEGEND FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT: I - Introduce, D - Develop, C - Consolidate, R - Refine, M - Maintain
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DEFENSIVE TACTICS	SUB TACTIC	I	D	C	R	M
🇨🇦 Communication With Teammates Pre Pitch	Indicating the Number of Outs					
	Defensive Positioning Communication					
🇨🇦 Communication With Teammates During Plays	Calling for the Ball					
	Calling Which Base to Throw to					
	Calling Bunt/Slap/Steal					
🇨🇦 Backup Plays	On a Hit Ball					
	On a Throw to a Base					
Coverage Plays (Defensive Movement)	Balls Hit to Infield and Outfield					
	🇨🇦 Bunt Plays					
	Slap Plays					
	Steals					
	Secondary Plays					
	🇨🇦 Passed Balls/Wild Pitches					
Fake Throw						
Angles to the Ball	Flyballs					
	Groundballs					
Pitcher/Catcher	🇨🇦 Pitcher Game Management					
	🇨🇦 Catcher Game Management (Pitcher and Team)					
	Calling Pitches					
TEAM DEFENSIVE STRATEGY		I	D	C	R	M
Defensive Positioning	Game Situation (# Outs, Score, Inning, Runners on Base)					
	Based on Current Hitting Tendencies or Pitches Being Thrown					
	Scouting Reports					
	Field or Environmental Conditions					
Set Plays	Pickoffs					
	1st and 3rd Plays					
Situational Plays	Steal Defense					
	Slap Defense					
	Winning Run and Bottom of Inning Defense					
	Bunt Defense					



Long-Term Player Development in Softball

Softball Canada has a plan to systematically develop players once they enter the sport up until they reach their full potential. We call this process Long-Term Player Development (LTPD). This means:

- Teaching the right skills at the right time;
- Developing appropriate speed, strength, endurance and flexibility, and;
- Holding competitions suited to the developmental age of the players.

It's all about doing the right things, at the right time and in the right way.

For more information about LTPD and more details about this stage, visit:

<https://softball.ca>

A note on Active for Life

A lot of athletes competing in softball, particularly players in their late teens or early 20s, are confused between being Competitive for Life and being on the Podium Pathway (Train to Train to Living to Win stages). If an athlete is not making progress towards the VERY highest level of International competition, they can be very good - but are still Competitive for Life.

SLEEP

Duration 7-9 hours +30 minute nap between 2-4pm

- Get your sleep!
- Maintain meal routines and always eat breakfast
- Learn to nap
- Do not train if you are fatigued or sleep deprived

ABOUT THE ACTIVE FOR LIFE STAGE

In this stage, athletes and participants enjoy lifelong participation in a variety of recreational and competitive opportunities in ALL the types of Softball (Fast Pitch, Slo-Pitch and Orthodox). Softball presents a unique opportunity because it allows players to challenge themselves mentally and physically, both in a team environment and as an individual. Not only can a player enjoy playing softball for a lifetime, but they can also become or stay involved in the sport as a coach, official, administrator, or volunteer.

Under ideal circumstances, athletes enter the Active for Life stage at one of two times:

1. While Physical Literacy is developed throughout an individual's lifetime, by the end of the Learn to Train stage some athletes choose to pursue softball according to the goals of the Active for Life stage.
2. After they have exited the Podium Pathway (Train to Train, Train to Compete, Learn and Train to Win and Living to Win stages).

The majority of softball players over the age of 11 or 12 are in the Active for Life stage. Active for Life athletes come in all shapes, sizes, and abilities. They come to this stage with a wide range of previous softball skill, knowledge and experience. Active for Life is broken down into:

- **Competitive for Life:** Anyone who is competitive but doesn't have the skills, the drive or the commitment to pursue the Podium Pathway. Some Active for Life athletes have played at the highest level, and now want to continue competing but at a slightly lower level. They fall into the Competitive for Life category. Competitive for Life also covers athletes whose main enjoyment is to be competitive - regardless of their level of play.
- **Fit for Life:** Anyone playing the game just for fun, personal satisfaction or for improved health. Fit for Life covers all those athletes who love the game, want to play, but do not want to be highly competitive. This doesn't mean they don't compete - it just means that the health and social benefits of playing are more important to them. Many Fit for Life athletes may not have ever played softball before, and so Learn To Play/Try Softball sessions and a welcoming softball environment are critical to attracting and keeping these players.

SEASON STRUCTURE

- Competition/Training Ratio: As desired by players. Recommend 90%/10%
- Pre-Season: 4-6 practices
- Competitive Season: 10-14 weeks (possibly longer if climate permits)
- Softball-specific activities per week: As often as desired by players
- Daily participation in sport or unstructured moderate intensity physical activities. Minimum of 60 minutes of moderate activity 3 times a week.



Athletes with Disabilities

Athletes with a disability should be encouraged to take part in physical activity and sport for life-long participation.

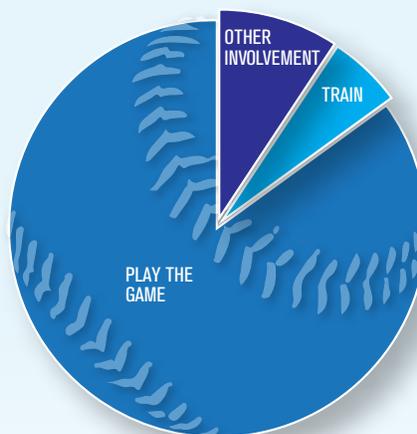
- Provide opportunities to participate in the game of softball (fastpitch, slo-pitch and orthodox) both recreationally and competitiveness.
- Minimize barriers and be cognisant of adaptive devices/equipment and support needs, while making sure the field of play is accessible.
- Allow rule and equipment adaptations to ensure athletes with disabilities can continue to be activity engaged in the sport of softball.

**Active For Life Basics:**

- ✓ Have fun.
- ✓ Introduce or welcome a new player to the game—they will thank you for it.
- ✓ Take some lessons from a qualified instructor.
- ✓ Play the game at your desired level for health, social engagement or the thrill of competition.
- ✓ Play in a charity softball tournament—you will be glad you did.
- ✓ Play softball with your family and friends.
- ✓ Practice makes perfect—hone your skills in the batting cage or by playing catch with a friend.
- ✓ Try different forms of the game - Fast Pitch, Slo-Pitch or Orthodox.
- ✓ Take on a new role in softball by becoming a coach, team manager, game official, or local, provincial or national administrator or Board Member.
- ✓ Provide a positive environment in order to encourage lifelong physical activity.
- ✓ Provide ongoing community programming for all ages and abilities that balances participation and competition.
- ✓ Provide programs for athletes with disabilities.

THE FIVE-SEGMENT MODEL

At every stage of LTPD, players need to develop stage and age appropriate skills and capacities in each of the 5 following areas: technical skills, tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills. Each capacity has different levels of importance at different points in a player's development. For the Active for Life stage this means:

Best Use of Activity Time

- Play the game for health, social engagement and satisfaction
- Give back to the game in another role

SOFTBALL SKILLS

All softball technical and tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills are developed in the Active for Life stage to meet the individual needs and aspirations of the athletes involved.

**ENCOURAGING PLAY:
BUILDING THE GAME**

Active for Life athletes in softball may be content to play with the technical and tactical skills they have already developed or they may wish to receive formal instruction.

Clubs and recreation facilities are encouraged to offer single-session "Try Softball" opportunities that are linked to instructional opportunities teaching the basics of the game and getting players started in informal competition play.

New Canadians and senior citizens may also benefit from simple "Learn to Play" instruction. These programs have the potential to make the sport better known to ALL Canadians, and to improve population health.

For Fit for Life players, building a strong social component to programs is important in attracting and retaining participants.

Competitive for Life athletes thrive when there are season-long leagues, and well scheduled competitions. Age-based Masters competitions at the local, Provincial, National and International level need to be further developed.

Competition organizers should build on Softball's well deserved reputation for always having an active social component to tournaments.





The current Softball Athlete Development Matrix is and will always be a “work in progress”. As new information emerges, the document will be updated and revised based on the best available information from softball experts, experts in growth and development and sport performance.

The ADM will change as the softball community continues to identify different or new needs. This document will evolve to better serve the softball community in Canada with your feedback so please **visit softball.ca to tell us your thoughts.**



OTHER RESOURCES

Softball Canada offers additional resources to aid in the development of the skills listed in this document. To find out more about what is available visit www.softball.ca

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