



Wellness to World Cup



Long-term Player Development

Soccer Canada LTPD: Wellness to World Cup



Active Start



FUNDamentals



Learn to Train



Train to Train



Training to Compete



Training to Win



Active for Life



Supporting wellness through to World Cup excellence

The diagram shows how the LTPD model accommodates athletes at all levels of interest, ability and achievement. After children enter at the Active Start stage and become physically literate, they can continue on a pathway towards excellence or choose to enter an "Active for Life" recreational stream. The model promotes maximum player retention for both optimum wellness and sporting excellence.

Soccer Canada LTPD:

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Growing the Beautiful Game

Soccer is the largest participation sport in Canada and the world, providing healthy physical activity for players at all levels of ability.

At the most basic level of participation, soccer promotes the integrated development and maintenance of the cardiovascular, musculoskeletal and neuromuscular systems. It helps in preventing many conditions and diseases (including heart disease, obesity, and osteoporosis) and enhances the well being of individuals across the nation.

At the high performance level, soccer is a vehicle for elite athlete achievement and hailed internationally as “The Beautiful Game.” It is played with finesse and skills that are difficult to master, and players progress through sequential stages of development to become “world class.”

Long-Term Player Development (LTPD)

LTPD is a program for soccer player development, training, competition, and recovery based on biological age (i.e. physical maturity) rather than chronological age. It is player centred, coach driven, and administration, sport science, and sponsor supported.¹

LTPD:

- Eliminates gaps in the player development system.
- Guides planning for optimal athlete performance at all stages.
- Provides a framework for program alignment and integration, from volunteer club coaches to national and professional teams.
- Follows scientific principles and practical coaching experiences.

Benefits for players & parents:

- Better understanding of what makes a good soccer program.
- More players learning at their level and having fun.
- Appropriate game and league structures (e.g. size of balls, goals, field etc.).
- More opportunity for players to realize their athletic potential.
- More coaches who are knowledgeable in leading safe, effective practices.

Benefits for coaches & clubs:

- Information and education on effective coaching and practice methods.
- Guidelines for appropriate game structures.
- Guidelines on appropriate competition levels.
- Established pathways for player development for all levels of ability and ambition.
- Affirmation of best practices for coaches and club administrators.

Benefits for all:

- Competitive behaviour is fostered in players, while over-competitive behaviour is discouraged in adults (e.g. coaches and parents).
- Players, parents, coaches, and administrators understand that players are unique and therefore different in interest and aptitude.
- Players stay involved in the sport throughout their lives (as players, coaches, referees or club administrators).
- Soccer grows, and lifelong wellness is promoted for players of all ages, genders, and levels of ability and disability.

LTPD benefits players, parents, coaches and clubs:

¹ Adapted from *Canadian Sport for Life: Long-Term Athlete Development Resource Paper*, Ottawa: Canadian Sport Centres, 2005. The complete document is available at www.Itad.ca.

STAGE 1: Active Start

U4 to U6 Female and Male

“FIRST KICKS”

1

Soccer contributes to the well-being of children by engaging them in the sport while teaching them the basic movements. At this introductory level, the objective is to get moving and to keep active.

Where: Home, daycare, schools, clubs, community, parks and recreation centres.
Why: Provide early opportunities for children to learn basic soccer elements.
Who: Technical leaders, parent coaches, parents, educators, caregivers.
Coaching: CSA Mini soccer course.

- **Physical** – Provide the environment for learning proper fundamental movement skills such as running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing and catching.
- **Technical** – The player and the ball – dribbling, kicking and shooting.
- **Tactical** – None.
- **Mental** – Fun, fascination, and passion for play.

Game Structure:

No competitive games – adult and child play together informally.

Recommended training times:

30 to 45 minutes

Season Length:

4 to 16 weeks Winter/Spring/Summer, indoor and/or outdoor.

Recommendations:

- Player success is encouraged. While the adult should challenge the child player, they should allow the child to “score” goals and “beat” the adult opponent.
- Adult discontinues play when the child has lost interest.



STAGE 2: FUNdamentals

U6 to U8 Female and U6 to U9 Male

“FUN WITH THE BALL”



At this stage, individual player development is paramount. Coaches and teachers should create a stimulating learning environment where the atmosphere is “Freedom and Fun.”

- Where:** Home, schools, clubs.
Why: Provide opportunities for children to learn basic soccer elements.
Who: Physical education teacher, parent coach, team coach, club head coach.
Coaching: CSA Community Children Course.

- **Physical** – Develop the ABCs of movement: agility, balance, co-ordination and speed, as well as running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing and catching.
- **Technical** – Movement exercises/games designed to promote a feel for the ball: gaining ball control in receiving passes, dribbling, passing less than 25m, kicking the ball forward, and shooting on goal.
- **Tactical** – Small children are egocentric – playing the ball is the most important objective; however, they now need to be introduced to co-operation between players. They gain understanding of the game through playing situations.
- **Mental** – Basic awareness of environment to build game intelligence and decision making.

Game Structure: Ranges from 3v3 to 5v5.

				FIELD SIZES		GOAL SIZES no larger than
Game format	Squad Size	Game Duration	Ball Size	Min/Max width	Min/Max length	
3 v 3 *	Max 6	2 x 15 min.	3/4	18 to 22m	25 to 30m	5f/1.52m X 8f/2.44m
4 v 4 *	Max 8	2 x 15 min.	3/4	20 to 25m	30 to 36m	5f/1.52m X 8f/2.44m
5 v 5 *	Max 10	2 x 15 min.	3/4	25 to 30m	30 to 36m	5f/1.52m X 8f/2.44m

* with or without goalkeeper - when no goalkeeper, reduce the goal size

Recommended training times: 30 to 60 minutes

Season Length: 12 to 20 weeks, indoor and/or outdoor.

Recommendations:

- No league standings – jamboree format – emphasis is on FUN.
- Players and game formats are organized to support the basic playing experiences.
- All players play equal time and try all team positions, including goalkeeping.
- The game structure progresses between ages from simple to more complex.
- Equal time should be allotted to practice and games.



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STAGE 3: Learning to Train

U8 to U11 Female / U9 to U12 Male “THE GOLDEN AGE OF LEARNING”

The effect of the role-model is very important at this stage. Children begin to identify with famous players and successful teams, and they want to learn imaginative skills. Skill demonstration is very important, and the players learn best by “doing.” Players move from self-centered to self-critical, and they have a high arousal level during basic skills training.

This is also an important time to teach basic principles of play and to establish a training ethic and discipline. Repetitions are important to develop technical excellence, but creating a fun and challenging environment is still essential for stimulating learning.



- Where:** Clubs, district development centers, schools.
Why: Player development and talent identification.
Who: Coaches, technical leaders, physical education teachers.
Coaching: CSA Community Children/Youth Course.

- **Physical** – This is an optimal window for trainability of speed, flexibility and skills.
- **Technical** – Building a greater repertoire of soccer related movements; technical skills are developed in training and within the context of basic soccer games.
- **Tactical** – Developing environment awareness and encouraging decision making – simple combinations, marking and running into space.
- **Mental** – Golden age of learning; intrinsic motivation is developed by the Fun and Enjoyment that foster desire to play; imagination, creativity, increased demands, discipline.

Game Structure: Ranges from 6v6 to 8v8.

Game format	Squad Size	Game Duration	Ball Size	FIELD SIZES		GOAL SIZES no larger than
				Min/Max width	Min/Max length	
6 v 6	Ideal 8/Max 10	2 x 25 min.	3/4	30 to 36m	40 to 55m	6f/1.83m X 14f/4.27m
7 v 7	Ideal 9/Max 12	2 x 25 min.	4	30 to 36m	40 to 55m	6f/1.83m X 16f/4.88m
8 v 8	Ideal 11/Max 14	2 x 30 min.	4	42 to 55m	60 to 75m	6f/1.83m X 18f/5.49m

Recommended training times: 45 to 70 minutes

Season Length: 16 to 20 weeks, indoor and/or outdoor.

Recommendations:

- Small leagues provide game fixtures, but no league standings are recorded.
- Players and game formats are organized to support the basic playing experiences.
- All players play equal time and try all team positions, including goalkeeping.
- The game structure progresses between ages from simple to more complex.
- The training to competition ratio should be 2 to 3 training sessions for every game.



STAGE 4: Training to Train

U11 to U15 Female / U12 to U16 Male

“IDENTIFYING THE ELITE PLAYER”



At this stage, elite soccer groups express interest in recruiting talented youth players. Care must be taken to recognize and protect the long-term interests of each player. Risks and issues can be avoided by ensuring that the development model remains “player centred.”

skill training as well as training loads should increase, thus provoking improvement in mental toughness, concentration and diligence. Awareness of tactics within the game becomes an important facet of the learning process. Players tend to be self-critical and rebellious, but they have a strong commitment to the team.

The optimal window of trainability for stamina begins with the onset of Peak Height Velocity (PHV), more commonly known as the adolescent growth spurt. The demands of

- Where:** National teams, NTCs, high schools & clubs.
Why: Player development and talent identification.
Who: Club head coaches & team coaches, Provincial & National team coaches.
Coaching: A Licence, National & Provincial B Licence, Community Senior course.

- **Physical** – Flexibility, disciplined warm-up and cool-down, agility, aerobic and anaerobic endurance, strength, core strength and stability, balance, nutrition and proper diet (pre-game, post-game, tournaments), prevention and care of injuries, importance of rest/recovery. Personalized programs needed in order to respect the growth spurt.
- **Technical** – Introduction of advanced techniques to those who are capable; technical acquisition in a more complex environment and position-specific skills.
- **Tactical** – Team work: development of tasks per unit (defensive, midfield or forward unit) and positional awareness through small-sided games and large-sided competitive matches.
- **Mental** – Pre-competition routine, introduction to mental preparation, goal setting, coping with winning and losing.

Game Structure: Ranges from 8v8 to 11v11. (Game transitions to 11v11 at U13 age.)

				FIELD SIZES		GOAL SIZES no larger than
Game format	Squad Size	Game Duration	Ball Size	Min/Max width	Min/Max length	
8 v 8	Ideal 11/Max 14	2 x 30 min.	4	42 to 55m	60 to 75m	6f/1.83m X 18f/5.49m
9 v 9	Ideal 12/Max 16	2 x 35 min.	4/5	42 to 55m	60 to 75m	6f/1.83m X 18f/5.49m
11 v 11	Ideal 16/Max 18	2 x 35 min.	5	FIFA Reg.	FIFA Reg.	8f/2.44m X 24f/7.32m

The Canadian Soccer Association highly recommends that no 11 a-side soccer be played before U13.

Recommended training times: 60 to 75 minutes

Season Length:

As players progress through this stage, they move towards year-round play that includes appropriate rest and recovery periods.

Recommendations:

- Appropriate ratio of training, competition and rest throughout year; periodized planning critical.
- Training to competition ratio should be between 5 to 12 for every game.
- National competitions held for regional all-star teams at U14 and U16.



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STAGE 5: Training to Compete

U15 to U19 Female / U16 to U20 Male

“DEVELOPING THE INTERNATIONAL PLAYER”



Athletes who are now proficient at performing basic and soccer-specific skills are working to gain more game maturity as they learn to perform these skills under a variety of competitive conditions.

Fulfillment of each player's potential depends on their own efforts, the support of teammates, and

the unselfish guidance of the coach. They must be exposed to quality playing and training environments which extend their mental, physical, tactical and technical capabilities to their limit. Players must have a sound understanding of soccer principles and concepts, and they should show emotional stability when confronted with pressure situations.

Where: Clubs, Provincial & National teams, NTCs, semi-pro teams, pro teams, university programs.

Why: Player development and talent identification for late developers.

Who: Club head coaches & team coaches, Provincial & National team coaches, pro team coaches, university coaches.

Coaching: A Licence and National B Licence.

- **Physical** – Further develop flexibility, correct warm-up and cool-down, agility, aerobic and anaerobic endurance, strength, core strength and stability, balance, nutrition and proper diet (pre-game, post-game, tournaments), prevention and care of injuries, importance of rest and recovery.
- **Technical** – Refinement of core skills and position specific-skills; continued development of advanced techniques and skills.
- **Tactical** – Decision-making tactical awareness, game appreciation, game analysis, match coaching, productivity, competitive proficiency.
- **Mental** – Increased player concentration, responsibility, discipline, accountability, goal setting, self-confidence, self-motivation, will to win, mental toughness, competitive mentality in practice and games; satisfy player's urge for competition; importance of being educated in the game (watch games on TV and National team games).

Game Structure: FIFA rules.

Game format	Squad Size	Game Duration	Ball Size	FIELD SIZES		GOAL SIZES
				Min/Max width	Min/Max length	
11 v 11	Ideal 16/Max 18	2 x 40 min.	5	FIFA Reg.	FIFA Reg.	8f/2.44m X 24f/7.32m
11 v 11	Ideal 16/Max 18	2 x 45 min.	5	FIFA Reg.	FIFA Reg.	8f/2.44m X 24f/7.32m

Recommended training times: 75 to 90 minutes

Season Length: Year-round play that includes appropriate rest and recovery periods.

Recommendations:

- Appropriate ratio of training, competition and rest throughout year; periodized planning critical.
- Training to competition ratio should be between 5 to 12 for every game.
- Players should play regularly in highly competitive professional and international match play.



STAGE 6: Training to Win

U18+ Female / U19+ Male

“BUILDING THE WORLD CUP PLAYER”



The majority, if not all, of the player's physical, technical, tactical, and psychological qualities are now fully established, and the focus of training has shifted to optimization of performance. They may still require additional tactical experience in high-pressure games to develop consistency. The focus is on the maximization of all capacities.

Where: National team program, semi-pro & professional teams
Why: High performance.
Who: National team coaches, and semi-pro and professional team coaches.
Coaching: A Licence.

- **Physical** – Individual fitness program for maintenance, improvement; work and recovery must be well monitored; periodization is critical.
- **Technical** – Further development of advanced techniques and skills; refinement of general skills and individual positional skills; game-related technical repetition under pressure.
- **Tactical** – High degree of decision making, leadership and game analysis skills; ability to adjust game plan and adapt playing strategies to suit changing demands.
- **Mental** – Increased concentration and responsibility, leadership, discipline, accountability, goal setting, self confidence, self motivation, will to win, mental toughness, competitive mentality, established pre-practice and pre-game routine.

Game Structure: FIFA rules.

Recommended training times: 75 to 90 minutes

Season Length:

Year-round play that includes appropriate rest and recovery periods.

Recommendations:

- Appropriate ratio of training, competition and rest throughout year; periodized planning critical.
- Training to competition ratio should be between 5 to 12 for every game.
- Players should play regularly in highly competitive professional and international match play.



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STAGE 7: Active for Life

Any age Female and Male

“SOCCER FOR HEALTH & GRASSROOTS GROWTH”

At any stage in the LTPD model, players may choose to play soccer as a purely recreational activity regardless of their level of ability or disability. Soccer can be enjoyed as an integral part of any personal lifelong wellness plan. Adult players can also become active in the coaching and administration of the sport. The recruitment and retention of players, coaches, referees and administrators is key to the ongoing development of both grass roots and elite soccer in Canada through the LTPD model.



Youth players continue

Players from U11 to U14 sometimes stop playing due to other interests, lack of success, shortage of playing opportunities, poor leadership, or other reasons. The LTPD model promotes personal success to ensure players stay involved in soccer and sport in general.

Elite players retire

After they retire from elite competition, advanced soccer players should receive support to pursue soccer careers as coaches, sport science specialists, mentors, referees or administrators. Soccer and its governing bodies benefit when suitable elite players are formally identified and retained within the fabric of the game.

Late newcomers arrive

Soccer attracts new players at all ages. Some start playing past the age of critical development because their son or daughter is involved in soccer, while others simply want to try a new sport. Learning new skills is encouraged while maintaining healthy physical conditioning and enjoyment.



- Where:** Clubs, communities, universities, and wherever the game is played.
Why: For the development of the game; for the right to play despite ability, age, or gender; for the joy of learning a new sport at any age.
Who: Coaches of all ages and genders.
Coaching: Community Senior course.

- **Physical** – Follow appropriate guidelines in the areas of endurance, strength and flexibility training to remain active.
- **Technical** – Learn new skills, or use and maintain skills already acquired.
- **Tactical** – Basic tactics are sufficient to enjoy the game at a recreational level.
- **Mental** – Focus on having fun, in addition to stress release and fitness discipline.

Game Structure: Adapt the game structure to suit the level of play, number of players, and available space.

Recommended training times: 75 to 90 minutes

Season Length:

Play can continue year-round with appropriate rest and recovery periods.

Recommendations:

- Access for players of all ages, genders and ability.
- Costs to players should be minimized to ensure maximum participation.
- No league standings – emphasis on FUN.



Soccer Canada LTPD: From Wellness to World Cup

Further Information

The LTPD model is designed to optimize Canadian excellence and lifelong wellness through soccer. By ensuring fun playing experiences for children, a suitable player development pathway for youth, and opportunities for lifelong participation for all players regardless of age, gender, ability or disability, LTPD provides a framework for the growth and success of the Beautiful Game in Canada.

For more information on LTPD, please visit www.canadasoccer.com and www.ltad.ca.



The Canadian Soccer Association

The Canadian Soccer Association, in partnership with its members, is dedicated to promoting the growth and development of soccer for all Canadians at all levels.

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Canada



The Canadian Soccer Association

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