



Player Development at the Active Start Stage (0 to 6 years old)

Active Start introduces and develops 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 is fun activities, on learning multiple fundamental movement skills, and developing agility, balance, coordination, and movement speed. This is a time during which basic human movement patterns are developed and 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.

General Sport Development

Encourage:

- **75%** Unstructured (child led) & **25%** structured (adult led) play
- Children should be involved in unstructured physical activity for at least 60-minutes a day

Fundamental Movement Skills

- FMS skills are learned through the process of "play" with limited technical instruction

Mental and Cognitive Development

- Understand that events are connected, although their interpretation may not always be logical
- Know the difference between fantasy and reality. But they still play "pretend," which becomes increasingly inventive

Emotional Development

- Want to please & be liked by their friends, though they may sometimes be mean to others
- Blur fantasy and reality when they are stressed or have extreme emotions. They may develop new fears as a result of their active imaginations.

Ethical and Social Skills

- Agree to rules most of the time
- Understand the idea of "mine" & "yours," but may have trouble sharing toys at times
- Start to understand the feelings of others, But they are still most focused on themselves

Coaching Tips

- Provide a series of challenges with both successes & failures to develop confidence
- Create mini-challenges to extend children's comfort range
- Ensure activities are fun and allow for social connectedness
- Use modified equipment & distances
- Include a variety of fundamental movement skills, not just softball-specific skills
- Include lead-up games with lots of action and repetition involving all players
- Avoid long lines – Split the group up if need be or increase rotations in the drills to keep players active and engaged
- Involve more than 2 teams on the field at one time
- Ensure a maximum of 6 versus 6 for games that rotate players through all positions and ensure equal playing time

Desired General Outcomes

Children:

- Learn to love of being physically active
- Learns to take turns during activities, and cooperates with others who are playing
- Understands, remembers and can follow simple rules (particularly safety rules) for activities

Parents Understand:

- It is not the right time to start softball-specific training
- Focus more on fundamental movement skill development with a softball's Timbits Softball Program
- Physical development is developed through active play. Unstructured play (led by the children) is most effective with adults ensuring safety