



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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Softball Canada's Athlete Development Matrix (ADM)

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.





Softball Canada's Athlete Development Matrix (ADM)

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.

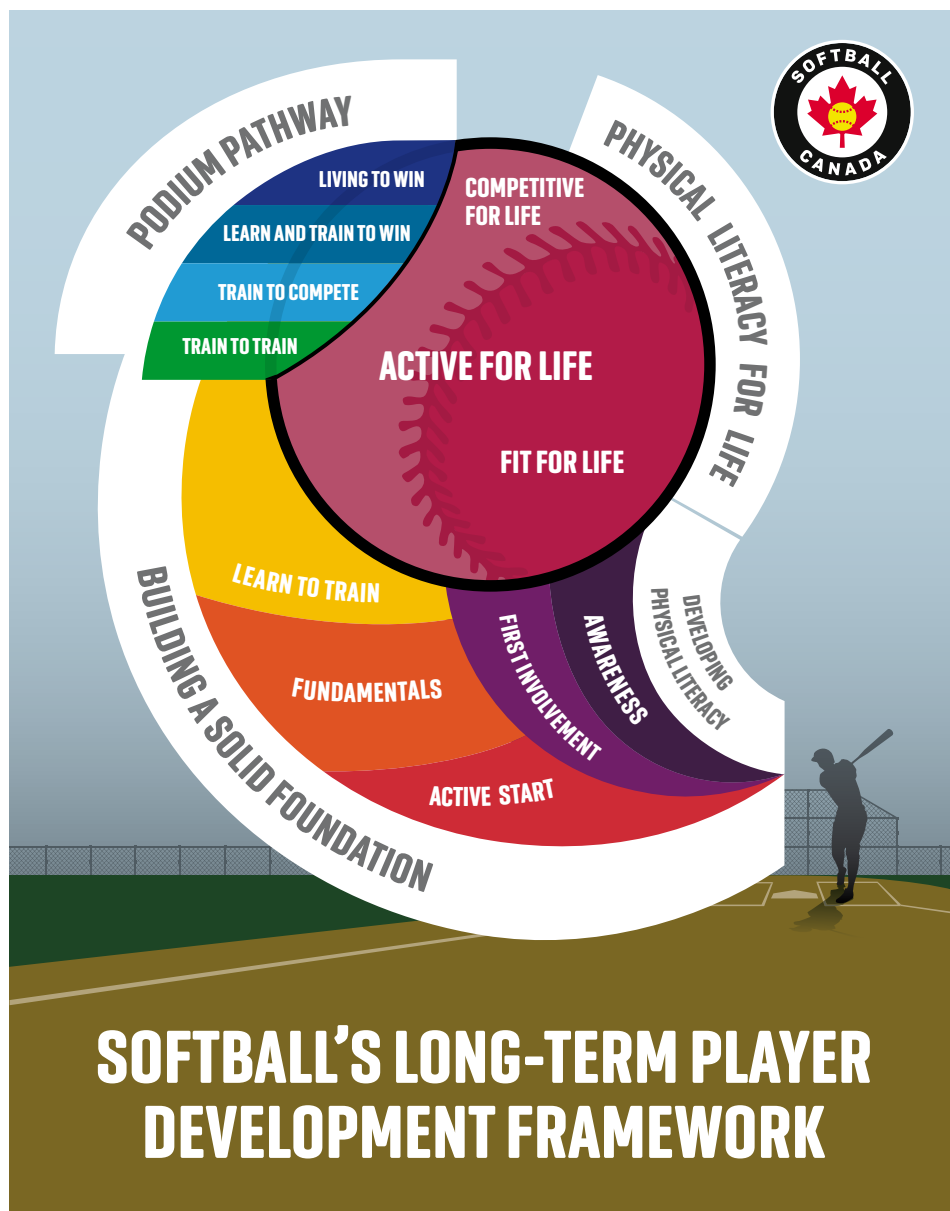
First involvement refers to the first experiences participants have in sport. In this phase it is critical to ensure individuals have a positive first experience in an activity as negative first experiences can lead to non-participation. Organizations and leaders need to create a safe, welcoming, and 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.



Softball Canada's Athlete Development Matrix (ADM)

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.

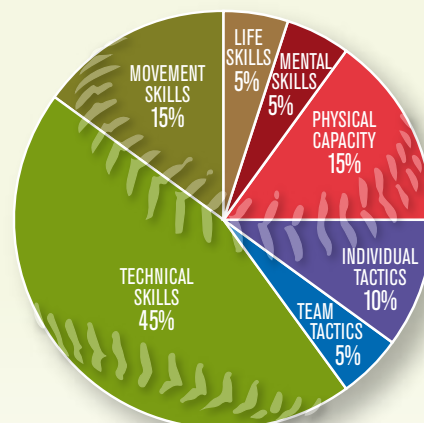
Keep the above definitions in mind as you work your way through the document.



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





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.

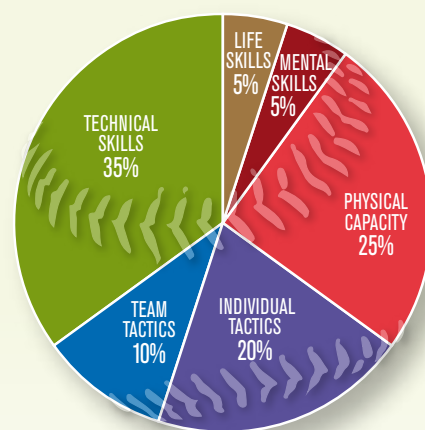
Fit for Life: Anyone playing the game just for fun, personal satisfaction or for improved health. Fit for Life covers all those athletes who love the game, want to play, but do not want to be highly competitive. This doesn't mean they don't compete - it just means that the health and social benefits 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 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:

Best Use of Training Time**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)

MALES: 12 – 16 YEARS
FEMALES: 11 – 15 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

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.

MENTAL SKILLS

	Skill Competence				
	I	D	C	R	M
Confidence and Presence					
Developing consistent confidence					
Handling pressure situations					
Visualization					
Grit					
Developing passion and commitment					
Integrating mental practice					
Goal setting					
Resilience					
Mental toughness					
Learning from mistakes/obstacles					
Emotion regulation and composure					
Focus and Intensity Regulation					
Starting to identify optimal performance level					
Attention/focus regulation (introduction of mindfulness and cue recognition)					
Arousal regulation (breathing)					
Developing routines					
Team Player					
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



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.



Train to Train (T2T)

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

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



Train to Train (T2T)

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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)

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DEFENSIVE SKILLS

SUB-SKILL

🍁 PITCHING

		I	D	C	R	M
Pitching Mechanics	🍁 Leg Drive		D	C	R	
	Stacked or Power Position		D	C	R	
	Arm Action in Joint Sequence		D	C	R	
	Hides Pitches	I	D			
Pitches (Working on 1 Movement Pitch)	🍁 Fastball		D	C		
	🍁 Change		D	C		
	🍁 Drop	I	D			
	🍁 Rise	I	D			
	🍁 Curve	I	D			
🍁 Control (In and out of strike zone)	Throw to Multiple Locations	I	D	C		
	Throw One Pitch to Multiple Locations	I	D	C		
	Throw Multiple Pitches to One Location	I	D			
Pitch Out		I	D			

🍁 CATCHING

		I	D	C	R	M
Receiving Position			D	C	R	
🍁 Blocking			D	C	R	
Framing		I	D	C		
🍁 Throwing to Bases	Around Batter		D	C		
	From Knees	I	D			
Giving Signals			D	C		
Balls at the Backstop			D	C		

🍁 INFIELD

		I	D	C	R	M
MIDDLE INFIELD						
Double Play Footwork	Receiving	I	D	C		
	Throwing	I	D	C		
Relay Throws			D	C	R	
CORNER INFIELD						
Fielding Bunts			D	C		
1st Base Skills	Footwork at Bag		D	C	R	
	Stretching		D	C	R	
	Picks	I	D	C		

OUTFIELD

		I	D	C	R	M
🍁 Long Throw Mechanics	Approach to Ball		D	C	R	
	Crowhop	I	D	C		
Safety Catch			D	C		





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





Train to Train (T2T)

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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					



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.





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**

REFERENCES

- Canadian Sport for Life. (2015). Long-Term Athlete Development – Athlete Development Matrix. *Canadian Sport for Life*, 1.
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