

# The True Sport Long-Term Athlete Development Matrix

The True Sport Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) Matrix identifies ethical literacy as a key component of the overall Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) LTAD model.

Sport is a valuable public asset, one that impacts the community as well as its citizens. When sport is done right, these impacts have the potential to extend well beyond the commonly recognized health benefits associated with sport, including putting children and youth on a positive life course, building stronger and more inclusive communities, and contributing to economic and environmental sustainability. These benefits are realized when sport is good – when it is value-based and principles-driven. In Canada, we call good sport True Sport.

If we want sport to live up to its potential, we need to be intentional about ensuring that it reflects our shared values, and that the sport environment is positive. We must be deliberate to ensure that sport is accessible, affordable, excellent, inclusive, fun and fair. True Sport and Long-Term Athlete Development provide the opportunity to exercise this intention – to transform our desire for good sport into action.

As coaches, teachers, administrators and parents, we need to look at the larger picture for Canadian sport. We want to develop athletes who can compete at all levels of the spectrum. We want to foster recognition of the value of lifelong participation and wellness. We also want to develop individuals with strong character, good morals and strong ethics who will contribute positively in sport and in their communities. Through the lens of the LTAD’s athlete-centered approach, the True Sport Matrix provides guidelines to support this intention to develop well-rounded athletes and well-rounded citizens.

The True Sport Matrix is guided by the True Sport Principles – Go For It, Play Fair, Respect Others, Keep It Fun, Stay Healthy, Include Everyone and Give Back. The principles are simple enough to be understood at all stages of development. By living these principles, people can ensure that the benefits of sport such as the joy of achievement, the growth of community or the breaking down of social barriers will naturally flow. Although the True Sport Matrix has been created for coaches, whether you are a coach, volunteer, parent or athlete, it will inspire you to create ways to enhance ethical literacy at each stage of development.

Keep in mind that the True Sport Matrix is cumulative. Similar to physical literacy, ethical literacy progresses along the ages and stages of development whereby the ethical standards acquired in Active Start and FUNdamentals are relevant and central to an athlete’s ethical development throughout the rest of the stages.

## Ethical Standards for all ages and stages

- When children are introduced to activity and sport appropriately, they will have the necessary motor skills and confidence (physical literacy) to remain Active for Life in virtually any sport they choose.
- Share the True Sport Principles and have all members of your group (participants, coaches, parents) sign the True Sport Declaration. Use these principles to help guide your programming decisions.
- By using the LTAD stages, participants can ensure that they have the physical, mental, technical and tactical knowledge they need to stay involved in sport and be active for life.
- Remember you are not only building athletes, you are shaping people.
- A positive experience in sport is the key to retaining athletes after they leave the competition stream. We call that experience... True Sport.





### Go For It

Always strive for excellence and rise to the challenge, but never at the expense of others. Discover how good you can be.

### Play Fair

Play honestly and obey the rules, in letter and spirit. Winning is only meaningful when competition is fair.

### Respect Others

Show respect for everyone involved in creating a sporting experience, both on the field and off. Win with dignity and lose with grace.

**Stage 1:**  
**Active Start**  
*Discovering Sport*  
(Girls 0-6, Boys 0-6)

Children should participate in stimulating activities and games that develop basic movement skills in a FUN atmosphere.

- Encourage lots of different unstructured activities to promote physical literacy.
- Teach fundamental movements through play and unstructured games.
- Create an enthusiasm for attempting new physical experiences by keeping it fun.
- Recognize active parental involvement and support as key.
- Reward and recognize effort.
- Use the Active for Life website for age-appropriate activities that will develop physical literacy.

**Stage 2:**  
**FUNdamentals**  
*Fundamental Movement Skills*  
(Girls 6-8, Boys 6-9)

Players should participate in stimulating practices and games that develop basic technical skills in a FUN atmosphere.

- Teach the various fundamental movement skills and build overall motor skills.
- Encourage enrolment in multi-sport programs that offer a wide variety of different activities.
- Offer a variety of well-structured activities that develop basic skills.
- Continue to encourage all-round physical literacy .
- Become a trained or certified leader or coach for each stage of development.
- Continue to focus on effort, learning and skill development rather than outcome-focused games.
- Use process-driven activities, directing efforts towards goals.
- Introduce more complex games that increase problem-solving abilities.

**Stage 3:**  
**Learning to Train**  
*Fundamental Sport Skills*  
(Girls 8-11, Boys 9-12)

Players are introduced to disciplined training and begin to develop their understanding of principles of play alongside their skills practice.

- Teach overall sport skills and avoid excessive single-sport training while refining fundamental movement skills.
- Focus on shaping positive attitudes towards winning and losing.
- Develop the ability to focus through skill-based drills.
- Begin to understand the pursuit of personal excellence.
- Foster an appreciation for work ethic and its contribution to outcomes. Highlight examples, reward effort over outcome, and model good behaviours.
- Cultivate a sense of responsibility by encouraging athletes to lead warm-ups and maintain their personal equipment, or by assigning tasks such as picking up cones and setting up/taking down equipment.

**Stage 4: Training to Train**  
*Building Physical and Mental Capability*  
(Females 11-15, Males 12-16)

Skill training demands and training loads are increased to develop and refine skills. Tactics are also introduced and progressed.

- Consolidate basic sport-specific skills and tactics.
- Teach coping mechanisms for the physical and mental challenges of competition.
- Recognize the value of winning and losing.
- Teach athletes to honour the game by giving their best.
- Use motivational techniques to achieve success, especially in the face of adversity.
- Begin to identify athletes that are showing a drive to win and could pursue a high-performance stream.
- Continue to foster personal motivation and encourage athletes to document personal and/or team goals.

**Stage 5:**  
**Training to Compete**  
*High Performance Sport*  
(Females 16-23, Males 15-21)

Players who are proficient in their skills are exposed to quality sport environments which extend their capabilities.

- Athletes can begin to specialize in one sport and pursue an elite competitive stream.
- Provide year-round, high-intensity, individual event and position-specific training.
- Train athletes to peak for major competitions.
- Increase the emphasis on personal commitment to achieve individual and collective outcomes.
- Work with athletes to help them master the emotional elements of sport.
- Define excellence with athletes so they contribute to the shared objective.
- Provide training opportunities that maximize athletes’ mental readiness (e.g., preparation, positive attitude, perception, concentration, control).
- Encourage elite athletes to pursue the most intense training suitable for winning performances.
- Encourage athletes to participate in a variety of goal-setting exercises to help them stay focused.

**Stage 6:**  
**Training to Win**  
*High Performance Sport*  
(Females 18 +, Males 18 +)

Players are training and competing at the highest level. The focus of training shifts to optimization of performance.

- Apply rules consistently (as an individual) and reason through your behaviour as well as the behaviour of athletes, parents, officials and colleagues.
- Channel emotional energy.
- Advocate drug-free sport, equity, fair play, safety and non-violence.

**Active for Life**

At any stage in the LTAD model, regardless of their level of ability, players may decide to play a sport as a purely recreational sport so they can continue to enjoy the game and maintain lifelong wellness.

- Ensure that all children are given a solid foundation — technical, tactical, physical and mental — upon which to build their lifelong athletic abilities.
- Encourage participants to try new sports, stay involved and stay active, and always try to do their personal best.

- Emphasize equal participation for all. Focus on play rather than competition.
- Cultivate a sharing environment (e.g., people, equipment, attention, time).
- Teach listening skills through activities.
- Introduce sportsmanship (e.g., high fives for all, shaking hands).

- Ensure everyone participates equally at play, practice and competition.
- Have the participants play different positions and try different activities.
- Introduce simple rules.
- Begin to introduce concepts related to commitment (e.g., encourage participants to be responsible for their own equipment).
- Teach individual responsibilities.

- Ensure everyone gets to participate. Opportunities to compete are earned through effort and commitment, not just ability.
- Play by the rules. Encourage ethical discussions by asking “What would you do if...”
- Demonstrate and reward sportsmanship by highlighting good examples of fair play and by discussing situations that are considered unfair.

- Play by the rules. Encourage reflection on personal actions as well as those of parents, coaches and teammates.
- Explore the concept of controlling emotions.
- Promote ethical choices (e.g., no bending the rules, no drug use, no cheap shots).
- Explore why cheating violates the integrity of the game. Use situations to help athletes evolve their decision-making.

- Encourage athletes to be constructively critical of themselves and to use that energy positively.
- Make a Coaches Assessment Form available to athletes and parents.
- Speak out about social issues that matter to you and encourage athletes to do the same.

- Introduce co-operative activities.
- Encourage young athletes to help put away equipment, toys and games.

- Appreciate that not everyone learns the same way or at the same pace.
- Introduce skills and activities that foster teamwork and cooperation.
- Have athletes take time to share and learn from their teammates to build observation and communication skills.
- Model good behaviour when athletes are playing (e.g., avoid yelling, respect officials, shake hands after the game).
- Differentiate between fairness and justice.
- Legitimize feelings and challenges.
- Ensure that athletes understand the importance of respecting their surroundings (e.g., pick up after themselves, do not damage facilities).

- Introduce team-building exercises.
- Select players according to their behaviour both on and off the field of play.
- Demonstrate that actions have consequences, both good and bad.
- Define and demonstrate respect towards officials, players, coaches and parents.
- Teach players the values of sportsmanship, honesty, work ethic, respect for rules as well as loyalty to the team/club.
- Win with dignity and lose with grace. Celebrate and recognize athletes who demonstrate these principles.
- Encourage the expression of opinions in a respectful manner.

- Make a Coaches Assessment Form available to parents.
- Encourage debate surrounding tactical sport strategy among athletes.
- Support discussions about moral or ethical issues through scenarios and role playing.
- Strive for good team chemistry and a positive interaction between everyone involved in the game (coaches, parents, officials).

- Encourage athletes to be constructively critical of themselves and to use that energy positively.
- Make a Coaches Assessment Form available to athletes and parents.
- Speak out about social issues that matter to you and encourage athletes to do the same.

- Insist on respect for all at all times.
- Win with dignity and lose with grace.
- Reinforce positive behaviours that help build character and set standards.



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Development Matrix	
	<h3>Keep it Fun</h3> <p>Find the joy of sport and have a good time. Keep a positive attitude and look to make a positive difference, on the field and in your community.</p>
	<h3>Stay Healthy</h3> <p>Place physical and mental health above all other considerations and avoid unsafe activities. Respect your body and keep in shape.</p>
	<h3>Include everyone</h3> <p>Share sport with others, regardless of creed, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or ability. Invite everyone into sport to make it more meaningful for the whole community.</p>
	<h3>Give Back</h3> <p>Always remember the community that supports your sport and helps make it possible. Find ways to show your appreciation and help others get the most out of sport.</p>
<div>Stage 1: Active Start Discovering Sport (Girls 0-6, Boys 0-6) Children should participate in stimulating activities and games that develop basic movement skills in a FUN atmosphere.</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Use the CS4L/LTAD resources to ensure that physical activity skills and drills are fun and appropriate for this stage.</li><li>◦ Be creative in the use of equipment and of coaching/teaching methods.</li><li>◦ Teach parents, colleagues and administrators that by keeping it fun, kids will likely continue to stay involved in sport.</li><li>◦ Encourage parent-led activities.</li></ul>
<div>Stage 2: FUNdamentals Fundamental Movement Skills (Girls 6-8, Boys 6-9) Players should participate in stimulating practices and games that develop basic technical skills in a FUN atmosphere.</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Focus on learning and having fun. Introduce formal competition in moderation.</li><li>◦ Have a positive attitude.</li><li>◦ Discourage specialization in a single sport.</li><li>◦ Follow your sport's LTAD guide to coordinate structured, age-appropriate games and activities.</li><li>◦ Stress the importance of fun and developing friendships.</li><li>◦ Ensure access to ongoing professional development as it builds new skills for incorporating fun into every training session.</li><li>◦ Enrol in continuing education courses in coaching or sport as part of your overall development.</li></ul>
<div>Stage 3: Learning to Train Fundamental Sport Skills (Girls 8-11, Boys 9-12) Players are introduced to disciplined training and begin to develop their understanding of principles of play alongside their skills practice.</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Encourage participation in land-based, water-based and snow/ice-based activities.</li><li>◦ Introduce fun competitive elements (e.g., races between groups).</li><li>◦ Foster a strong work ethic.</li><li>◦ Maintain a high level of enjoyment while learning new skills.</li><li>◦ Accentuate the importance of friendships in the context of the team.</li><li>◦ Highlight good role models to ensure continued participation.</li><li>◦ Recognize that boys and girls learn differently and have fun doing different things.</li></ul>
<div>Stage 4: Training to Train Building Physical and Mental Capability (Females 11-15, Males 12-16) Skill training demands and training loads are increased to develop and refine skills. Tactics are also introduced and progressed.</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Ensure the joy of sport is central to counter increasing social pressures to drop out.</li><li>◦ Recognize that as athletes master skills, self-confidence will increase.</li><li>◦ Help athletes develop the skills they need to overcome challenges and celebrate the joy that comes from meeting those challenges.</li><li>◦ Focus on the joy that comes from the experience of participating in sport.</li><li>◦ Encourage a balance between the demands of sport, family, friends and school.</li></ul>
<div>Stage 5: Training to Compete High Performance Sport (Females 16-23, Males 15-21) Players who are proficient in their skills are exposed to quality sport environments which extend their capabilities.</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Foster continuous athletic improvement by maintaining a level of fun.</li><li>◦ Emphasize the joy of effort and the commitment to excel.</li><li>◦ Understand that the thrill of competition provides an opportunity to continuously learn and master new skills.</li><li>◦ Recognize the achievement of objectives.</li><li>◦ Stress the importance of social networks both in and out of sport.</li><li>◦ Accentuate the bond between athletes, their friends and the coach/athlete family dynamic.</li><li>◦ Recognize the relationship between an athlete's intrinsic motivation and participation at a higher level of competition.</li></ul>
<div>Stage 6: Training to Win High Performance Sport (Females 18 +, Males 18 +) Players are training and competing at the highest level. The focus of training shifts to optimization of performance.</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Increase knowledge about sport nutrition, doping, sport psychology, positive body image, fitness training, and proper equipment usage.</li><li>◦ Ensure athletes think about their future sporting life.</li><li>◦ Set the stage to remain healthy for life.</li></ul>
<div>Active for Life</div> <p>At any stage in the LTAD model, regardless of their level of ability, players may decide to play a sport as a purely recreational sport so they can continue to enjoy the game and maintain lifelong wellness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Try new sports and activities to keep the joy alive. Move from one sport to another (e.g., sprinting to bobsleigh, soccer to rowing).</li><li>◦ Participate for the enjoyment of it.</li><li>◦ Continue to create social connections to enhance your life.</li><li>◦ Find the joy that comes from maintaining a healthy active lifestyle.</li><li>◦ Seek new/additional ways to enhance your sport and recreational experience.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Find a positive work-life-play balance.</li><li>◦ Maintain healthy eating habits.</li><li>◦ Participate for the health benefits of an active lifestyle.</li><li>◦ Use sport as a stress reducer.</li><li>◦ Recognize that the transition from one sport to another always requires an adjustment period.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Be accepting of varying levels of ability and structure activities to accommodate them.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Transfer your knowledge back to your community by mentoring, coaching, or as a community sport leader or role model.</li><li>◦ Evolve as a participant – become a coach, an official, or an administrator.</li><li>◦ Consider sport-related careers such as coaching, officiating, sport administration, small business enterprises, or media.</li><li>◦ Find ways to encourage your community to take a stand.</li><li>◦ Rally your community to become a True Sport Community.</li></ul>