

# Pickleball Long-Term Player Development



**PLAY FOR FUN**

**PLAY TO WIN**

**PLAY FOR LIFE**

**Play for Fun, Play to Win, Play for Life**  
**Pickleball Association of Ontario**  
**Long-Term Player Development†**

**Acknowledgements**

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## Foreword

The Pickleball Association of Ontario (**PAO**) has created this Long-Term Player Development framework to be a blueprint for all stakeholders involved with players of all ages. We have done this with the support of our funding partner, Ontario Trillium Foundation, as part of a national initiative in which every sport in Canada has developed a similar model.

The implementation of Long-Term Player Development is a milestone for Pickleball and for Canadian sport. For the first time, every Canadian sport organization is planning around a common framework which aligns the sport system and integrates health and education with sport and physical activity.

This document was developed by Pickleball experts, with the assistance of Sport for Life, and drawing on the experience and best practices of other sports. It outlines the key principles of the LTPD framework for Pickleball. The details of how LTPD will be implemented will be developed in future phases. The successful implementation of LTPD will lead to better and more skillful players, a thriving sport supported by quality coaches, officials and volunteers at all levels in Canada.

# What is Long-Term Player Development?

## What is the best way for a player to develop?

Long-Term Athlete Development is a development framework designed to answer that question. LTAD is a new wave in athlete development, based on the integration of sport science research with experience in working with players and coaches to develop a comprehensive set of development principles. LTAD takes the concept of periodization (the integration of competition, training, recovery, nutrition, and other elements of preparation to create a long-term training plan) to the next level, by integrating preparation over an entire career or lifetime, and considering the holistic development of the individual as well as his/her development as a player. Today, every Canadian sport organization is using LTAD as the basis for their long-term planning. More information can be found in the document “Canadian Sport for Life”, as well as other LTAD resource papers available at [www.sportforlife.ca](http://www.sportforlife.ca).

In Pickleball, following the example of some other sports, we will use the phrase “Long-Term Player Development” or LTPD for this framework. Pickleball players can enter the sport at any age, but have tended to enter in adulthood. In many cases players take up the sport after participating in tennis,

squash and/or other racquet sports. As a result, the framework for youth entry and development has not been extensively developed, but as the sport grows it is likely that more, younger players will be attracted to Pickleball.

A key LTPD premise is that participants will not only be more successful in sport, but healthier throughout life if they develop “physical literacy” at a young age – a wide range of skills that include movement, balance, throwing, catching, hitting, etc. The development of sound physical literacy skills, followed by ongoing learning and training introduced during “windows of optimal trainability” keyed to developmental ages and stages, is necessary for any athlete to reach his or her full potential. Missing a step, or introducing the “5 S’s” (stamina, strength, speed, skill and suppleness) too early or late, restricts the athlete’s potential and makes reaching the highest levels of performance more difficult. This is just as important for adult-entry players, who may have to improve skills and abilities later than the “optimal windows”. However, by understanding the 10 Key Factors of LTPD, coaches can help players of any age participate and achieve their aspirations more effectively.

# The 10 Key Factors of LTPD

Ten key factors influencing optimal athlete development have been identified:

## 01

### **The FUNdamentals:**

Basic physical literacy is the foundation for later athletic success. All athletes, regardless of their sport, are more likely to succeed if early in life they developed a wide range of movement, balance and object control skills.

## 02

### **Specialization:**

Broad-based skills and abilities must be developed first. Premature specialization (prior to age 12-14) may contribute to lack of essential skill development, overuse injuries, early burnout and early retirement from sport and physical activity.

## 03

### **Developmental Age:**

Young athletes may be early, average or late maturers in a range of physical, mental, cognitive and emotional qualities. It is essential to base athletic training on developmental age, not on chronological age. All too often, early maturers are identified for special attention and development, while it is the late maturers who may have the greater potential to become top athletes. It is also important to recognize that the early physical maturer may not be mentally or emotionally prepared for the challenges they appear ready to take on.



# The 10 Key Factors of LTPD

Ten key factors influencing optimal athlete development have been identified:

## 04

### **Trainability:**

Trainability is the responsiveness of individuals to training at different stages of growth and maturation. Windows of optimal trainability for the “S’s” of Stamina, Strength, Speed, Skill and Suppleness occur at different times- for example, stamina and strength trainability is linked to developmental age, while speed, skill and suppleness (flexibility) are linked to chronological age.

## 05

### **Physical, Cognitive, Mental and Emotional Development:**

A holistic approach to athlete development, considering all of these factors, is required for the best results. In addition to the five “S’s” of physical development, five additional “S’s” including Structure/stature (body type and growth), pPsychology, Sustenance (adequate nutrition, hydration and rest), Schooling (and stress), and Sociocultural factors must be considered. At any stage, over-emphasis on physical training and winning may not equip the athlete for the all challenges of high performance or for life outside sport. Developing the whole athlete, including character, ethics, and so on, should be the objective of every program.

## 06

### **Periodization:**

Periodization is the organization of a training program by manipulating modality, volume, intensity and frequency of training over long-term (multi-year) and annual time frames, using training, competition and recovery periods. LTPD, with its focus on lifelong development, sets context and direction for a sound, periodized training program.

# The 10 Key Factors of LTPD

Ten key factors influencing optimal athlete development have been identified:

07

## **Competition Calendar Planning:**

Optimal sport-specific competition calendars are required for all stages of LTPD. Too much competition, especially at younger ages, can detract from development of skills and fitness. Optimizing the competition calendar to meet athlete development needs, while it may create logistic challenges, is essential to LTPD.

08

## **Excellence Takes Time:**

Early research concluded it takes a minimum of 10 years and 10,000 hours of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels, but more recent research shows excellence can be attained in 7 years or even less in ideal conditions. No matter the sport or the training environment, there are no short-cuts. Excellence always takes time.

09

## **System Alignment and Integration:**

The best results can only be achieved when all organizations and individuals involved in sport are working together in an integrated, coordinated way to support athlete development and success. Coaches, other sport leaders, facilities, organizations and competitions must work together to create an environment that supports athlete development. The LTPD framework must be the focus of all sport leaders and organizations.

10


## **Continuous Improvement:**

Sport is continuously evolving. Our plans and our organizations must adapt continuously to innovations, research and changes in the sport environment. New research and practical experience will constantly enrich our understanding and approach to LTPD.



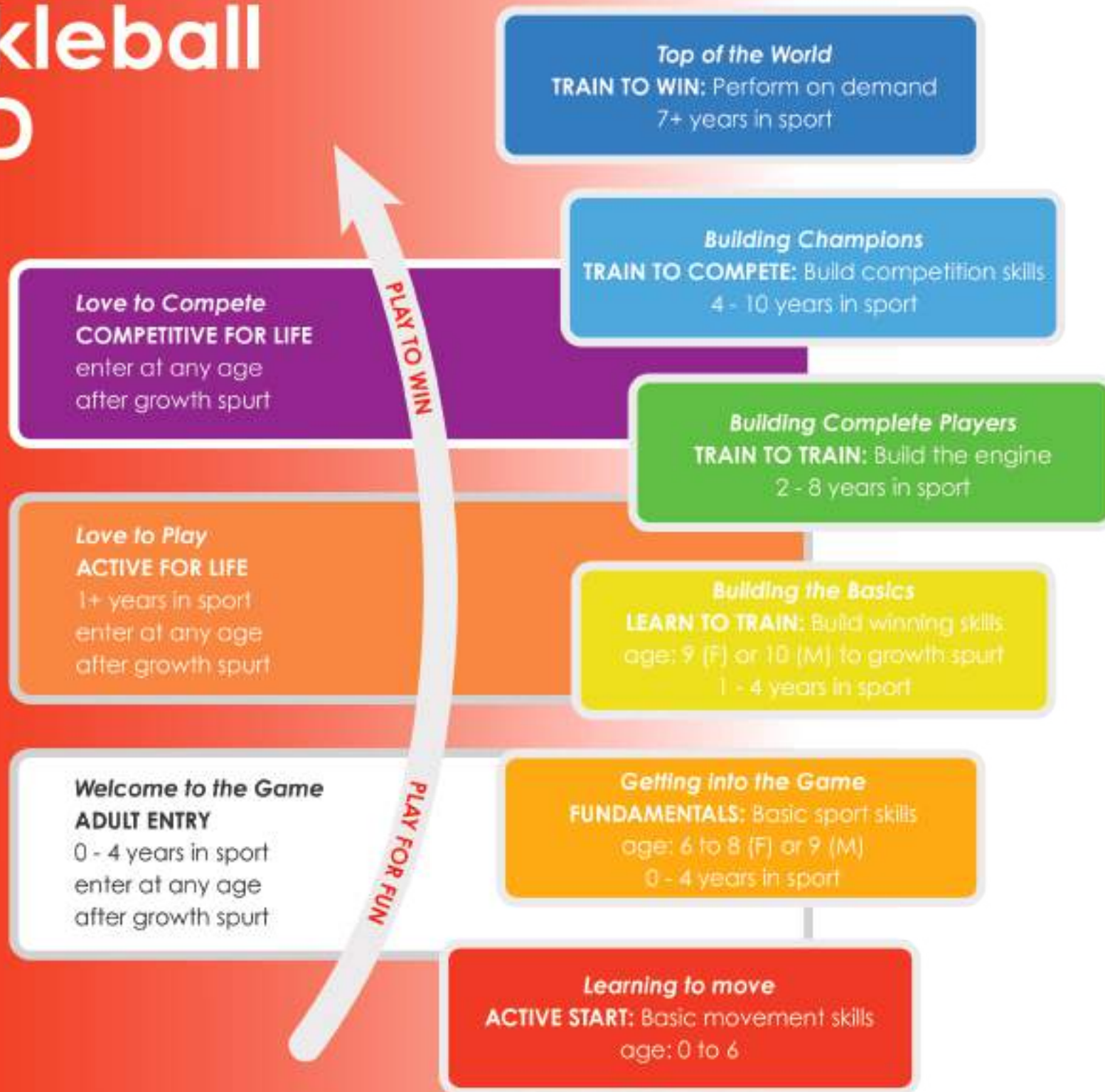
# STAGES OF LTPD

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The LTPD framework divides player development into a series of stages. Within each stage, appropriate development is essential. Only by following age-appropriate activities and building a foundation in each stage for the next can players optimally prepare to progress toward their goals.

# Pickleball LTPD



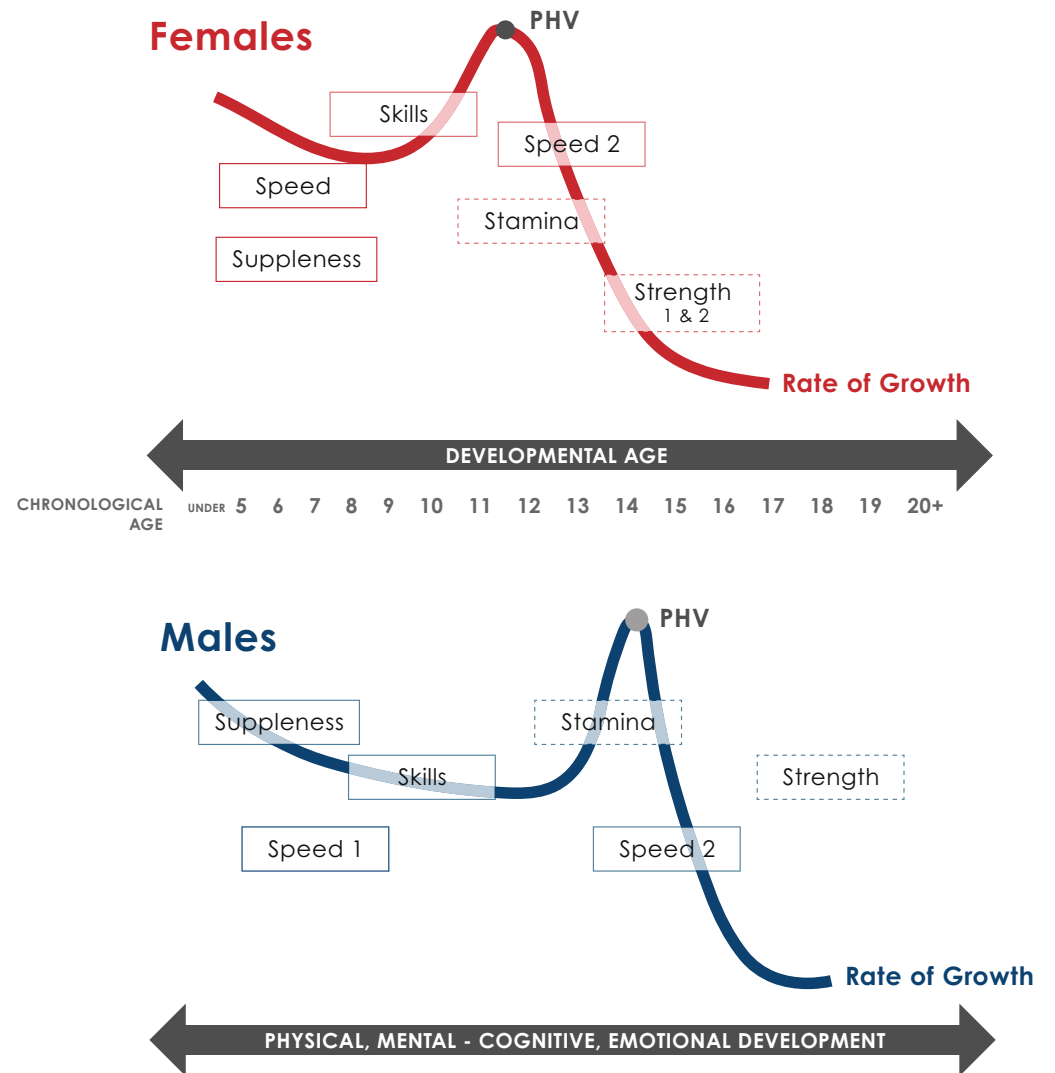


**In Pickleball**, many participants begin as adults and come to the sport with some foundation of physical literacy and fitness developed in other activities. No matter what their age, they must build sport specific skills and abilities and advance through stages of development. Therefore, two additional stages are included here: Adult Entry and Competitive for Life. For those who choose to participate but not pursue high performance, the Active for Life stage is open at any age after basic skills are developed.

In addition, for athletes with a disability (AWAD) two more stages are added: Awareness and First Involvement. These emphasize the need to make access to sport known to people with a disability, and then to ensure that the sport environment and first exposure are positive and welcoming. Information about LTPD for players with a disability can be found in the Sport for Life publication No Accidental Champions at [www.sportforlife.ca](http://www.sportforlife.ca).

# Sensitive Periods of Development

In young athletes, it is important to match training and competition to stage of development. Peak Height Velocity (PHV), the maximum rate of growth during the adolescent growth spurt, is the key marker event for windows of optimum trainability for some of the physical “S’s” of stamina, strength, speed, skill and suppleness. It is essential that the introduction of training of these S’s is based on developmental age, not chronological age. Development occurs at different times for different young athletes. If the windows are missed, the athlete may not develop to full potential. This underlines the importance of age-appropriate programs and optimal coaching and competition calendars in Pickleball. Coaches, especially, must have the expertise to identify the athlete’s stage and the programs and systems that will allow the athlete to train and compete appropriately to his or her potential. However, even if windows are missed, all systems are always trainable.







# Five More "S's" in Youth Development

Holistic development of young athletes depends on a balanced approach to training, competition and recovery which lays a solid foundation for each successive stage. Reference has already been made to the original five "S's" of physical development: Stamina (endurance), Strength, Speed, Skill and Suppleness (flexibility). The optimal development of these skills cannot occur without attention to five more "S's": Structure/stature (body type and growth), pPsychology, Sustenance (adequate nutrition and rest), Schooling (or Stress), and Sociocultural factors.

## 01

### **Structure/stature:**

The tracking of stature as a guide to developmental age allows planning to address the sensitive periods of physical (endurance, strength, speed and flexibility) and skill development. Diagnostics to identify strength and weaknesses is critical to factor "structure" properly into training plans.

## 02

### **pPsychology:**

Ultimately, the planning, implementing, and refining of mental strategies for high-level competition will have a large impact on podium performances. Consequently, the mental training program is critical at all stages of LTPD, as dealing with success and failure will determine whether the athlete continues in the sport and physical activity in general.



# Five More "S's" in Youth Development

## 03

### **Sustenance:**

Sustenance recognizes a broad range of components with the central theme of replenishing the body, including nutrition, hydration, rest, sleep, and regeneration, all of which need to be applied differently to training (life) plans depending on the stage of LTPD. Underlying sustenance is the need for optimal recovery management: the athlete moves to a 24/7 model which places a high degree of importance on the individual's activities away from the field of play. To achieve proper sustenance and recovery, the coach and/or parent must monitor recovery through the identification of fatigue.

## 04

### **Schooling (and Stress):**

When designing training programs for young athletes, the demands of school must be considered. This is not only limited to the demands placed by school sports or physical education classes but includes integrating school academic loads, duties, timing of exams and other stresses. For mature athletes, a similar approach must be taken to work. When possible, training camps and competitions should complement, not conflict, with the timing of major academic or work events. Overstress (the stress of life events over and above sport training) should be monitored carefully.

Interference from other school sports should be minimized, and communication between coaches responsible for delivering the training and competition programs is essential. Parents should work together with coaches to ensure a coordinated approach.



# Five More "S's" in Youth Development

A young girl with light brown hair, wearing a purple t-shirt and khaki shorts, is smiling and holding a black pickleball paddle and a yellow-green pickleball. The background is a blurred outdoor setting, possibly a park or sports field.

## 05

### **Sociocultural:**

Socialization through sport participation can involve broadening of perspective, including ethnicity awareness and national diversity. Within the travel schedule, recovery can include education related to the competition location, including history, geography, architecture, cuisine, literature, music, and visual arts. Proper planning can allow sport to offer much more than simply commuting between hotel room and field of play.

Sport socialization also must address sport subculture to ensure positive societal values and norms will be internalized via sport participation. Coaches and parents must guard against group dynamics which create a culture of abuse or bullying. Ethics training should be integrated into training and competition plans at all stages of LTPD. Overall, sociocultural activity does not interfere with competition activities: It is a positive contribution to the development of the person and the athlete.

# Why Does Pickleball Need LTPD?

LTPD is a framework for optimizing development by matching training, competition, and recovery to the needs of individual athletes. The following is from a general overview of Canadian sport prepared by Sport Canada's LTAD Expert Group, but many points apply to Pickleball as well:

## Coaches

- Coaches are under-educated about Long-Term Player Development
- Training methods and competition programs designed for male athletes are superimposed on female athletes
- Need more female coaches to act as role models for female players
- Lack of understanding of coaching athletes with a disability
- Coaches largely neglect the sensitive periods of accelerated adaptation to training
- Adult training programs are imposed on developing youth players
- Preparation is geared to the short-term outcome — winning — and not to the process
- Need to promote lifelong learning and development for coaches

## Organizations

- Developmental athletes over-compete and under-train
- Adult training and competition programs are imposed on developing athletes
- Chronological rather than developmental age used in training and competition planning
- Lack of training facilities
- Programming for profit vs. development
- Lack of entry level programs
- Clubs lack specific role and mandate linked to a coordinated system

## Parents

- Parents are under-educated about athlete development
- Parents may not understand the sport system and “which organization does what”
- Sports specialize too early in an attempt to win or to attract and retain participants; parents need to understand and resist this tendency
- FUN can be forgotten in pursuit of other goals

# Why Does Pickleball Need LTPD?

## Sport Leaders

- Competition system interferes with athlete development (skews or reduces training)
- Inadequate/inappropriate talent identification
- Limited integration between physical education in schools, community programs, and elite competitive programs
- Failure to integrate athletes with a disability
- Fundamental movement skills and sport skills are not taught in a comprehensive manner
- Lack of specialized development coaches - quality coaches are essential at all levels
- Forced to change mission/mandate in pursuit of funding



# Why Does Pickleball Need LTPD?

## **As a consequence of a deficient system, players may suffer:**

- Injury
- Poor movement skills
- Lack of proper fitness
- Poor skill development
- Lack of confidence and motivation arising from poor movement skill
- Bad habits developed from over-competing focussed on winning
- Undeveloped and unrefined skills due to under-training
- Females not encouraged to participate due to sociocultural norms and/or lack of playing time in facilities and programs
- Female athlete potential not reached due to male oriented programs
- Children not having fun as they participate in adult-based programs
- No systematic development of the next generation of national and international athletes
- Athletes pulled in different directions by school, club, and provincial organizations because of the structure of competition programs
- Remedial programs needed by provincial and national team coaches, to counteract the shortcomings of athlete preparation
- Fluctuating performance due to failure to follow a clear developmental pathway
- Failure to reach optimal performance levels in international competitions
- Athletes fail to reach their genetic potential and optimal performance level
- Athletes leave sport and want nothing to do with it later.

Pickleball's new Long-Term Player Development framework is designed to address these issues. By introducing LTPD principles and building an integrated development system around them, we can achieve greater participation and more competitive success.

# Why Does Pickleball Need LTPD?

To reach his or her potential and goals, a participant needs the right training and preparation, the right competitive opportunities, the right equipment, and the right nutrition, rest and regeneration...all at the right times. This Long-Term Player Development framework defines guidelines for stage-by-stage development from entry into the sport, through to high performance and/or active participation for life.

The LTPD model is a summary of key training and performance goals for players. This framework assumes sufficient infrastructure and support is provided; in other words, without adequate coaching, proper competition opportunities, and other key elements, players cannot expect to meet all the training and performance goals in the LTPD model. To support our coaches and players and achieve our goals for the sport, we must build an integrated, coordinated system of support “from playground to podium” and to lifelong involvement.

Of course, players are individuals. The LTPD framework consists of guidelines, and coaches, and sport leaders must be flexible in application to ensure that LTPD enhances Pickleball as an experience and a sport for all participants. All players deserve individualized programs and evaluation by a certified coach with an understanding of Long-Term Player Development. Guidelines should never be used to select or reject players from programs.

It is our hope and expectation that, as a result of developing and sharing this framework, leaders will know how to make decisions that benefit the long-term development of players, coaches will have a common guide for the design of annual plans and programs, and players will have the guidance and support they need to excel and to participate for a lifetime.





**Play for Fun • Play to Win • Play for Life**

*The Pickleball Long-Term Player Development Framework*



# The Pickleball Long-Term Player Development Framework

Pickleball is a sport for everyone. It is essential that the first exposure to the sport provides challenge, reward and enjoyment- in other words, that it is FUN. Fun is the basis for a lifetime in sport, a process of life-long development captured in the Long-Term Player Development framework.

The framework groups LTPD stages into three phases: Play for Fun, Play to Win, and Play for Life.

- Play for Fun represents youth and adult entry paths into the sport.
- Play to Win represents development on a competition path as far as the player wishes to go.
- Play for Life reminds us that the player can remain active in the sport for a lifetime, through social competition, and as a coach, official and sport leader.

Of course, this does not mean that fun is not an essential part of Play to Win, or that a Play for Life athlete cannot compete to win within his or her abilities. It is simply intended to represent a lifetime journey through the sport.

The central concepts of the LTPD framework are continuous learning, continuous improvement, and continuous enjoyment. It is the idea of progressive development from stage to stage, as far as the player wishes to go. It is the idea that every achievement is built on what came before, whether those skills were developed in Pickleball or in other sports, and that to reach his or her goals there is an ideal path in which every step is supported by a sound system of coaching, sport leadership, good facilities, and optimum competition. It is the idea of “Kaizen”, the Japanese word for continuous improvement- the understanding that where we are today is not our destination, but rather a foundation for tomorrow’s achievement.

# The Pickleball Long-Term Player Development Framework

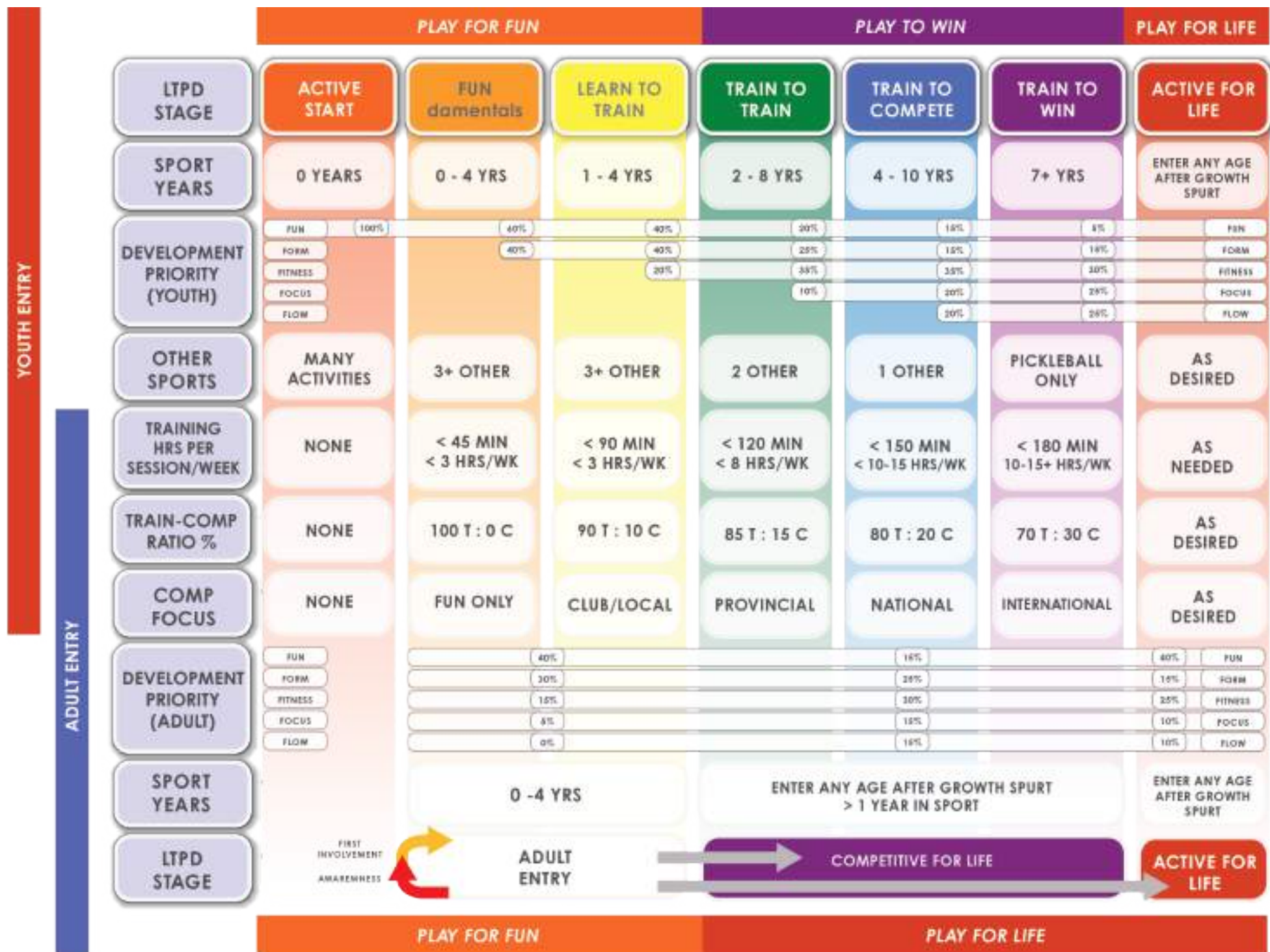
The following pages depict the journey through Pickleball, stage by stage, for players of all ages. They include the following headings:

- Stage name, age and years in sport;
- Overall objectives for the stage;
- Priorities, expressed as approximate percentage of time spent on Fun, Form (technical skill development), Fitness, Focus (mental preparation) and Flow (integration of abilities and development of “game sense” and competition skills);
- Benchmarks for training duration (minutes per session), training volume (sessions per week), competition volume and type, and coaching (relevant NCCP coach stream and context);
- Next stage in the framework, including optional paths;
- Notes

Remember that while every player must progress through every stage to reach the level to which they aspire, every player is also an individual. All abilities are always trainable. These objectives and benchmarks are guidelines for development, not a means to select or reject individual participants.



# Pickleball Long-Term Player Development Framework



# Play for fun

**Active Start** (age 0-6; 0 sport years) – “Learning to Move”

**FUNDamentals** (age 6-9; 0-4 sport years) – “Getting into the Game”

## OBJECTIVES:

Learn fundamental movement skills and link them together into sport skills through play. Build overall motor skills including paddle and ball. Emphasis on initiation, sport basics, and safety.

**(Note: Active Start and FUNDamentals are key motor and skill development stages for children. Adult-entry players must also have developed this physical literacy, if not in childhood, then later through a wide variety of sports and activities.)**

## PRIORITIES:

**Fun** – 100% (Active Start) to 60% (FUNDamentals)

**Form** – Up to 40% in FUNDamentals

**Fitness** – 0%- unstructured only; included in other activity.

**Focus** – 0%- unstructured only; included in other activity.

**Flow** – 0%- unstructured only; included in other activity.

## BENCHMARKS:

**Training duration** – No structured training (Active Start); up to 45 minutes/session (FUNDamentals)

**Training volume** – (FUNDamentals) 1-2 sessions per week, less than 3 hours in total

**Competition** – No formal competition in these stages. “Fun” competitions at end of stage.

**Coaching** – By parent, teacher, and (in FUNDamentals stage) (Community) Sport Initiation coach.

## NEXT STAGE: *LEARN TO TRAIN*

### Notes:

- Free (unstructured) play is essential in these stages.
- Help participants in this stage feel competent and comfortable with activity. Games should be non-competitive and focus on activity. No participant should be left out; elimination-type games are not appropriate.
- In the FUNDamentals stage, introduce Pickleball as one of a number of sport activities, an “ideal gateway to racquet sports”.
- Use paddle, ball and modified court to play other fun, skill-developing games, not specifically Pickleball. Follow a “Teaching Games for Understanding” approach (see “Closer Look- Teaching Games for Understanding”, page 44). Assess capability and progress through skills appropriately.



# Play for fun

**Learn to Train** (age 8F - 9M to 11F - 12M, 1 to 4 sport years) – “Building the Basics”

## OBJECTIVES:

Learn overall sports skills. Emphasis on fun and development of form.

## PRIORITIES:

**Fun:** 40%

**Form:** 40%

**Fitness:** 20%

**Focus:** 0%

**Flow:** 0%

## BENCHMARKS:

**Training duration** – Up to 90 minutes per session.

**Training volume** – Specific training 3-4 times per week, plus participation in other sports. Total Pickleball approximately 3 hours per week.

**Competition** – 2-4 local and club competitions, and up to 1-3 regional competitions per year; 90% training, 10% competition. Treat competitions as practice.

**Coaching** – Sport Initiation (Community stream).

## NEXT STAGE: TRAIN TO TRAIN

### Notes:

- A structured seasonal training program should be introduced at this stage.
- Participate in 2-3 other sports as well as Pickleball to develop comprehensive skills.
- Continue to play other fun, skill-developing games with paddle and ball. Follow a “Teaching Games for Understanding” approach. Assess capability and progress through skills appropriately.
- Creation of a skills development “badge program” would support this stage.
- Use standard court and equipment.
- Introduce competition at local/club levels.



# Play to Win

**Train to Train** (after PHV, 2 to 8 sport years) – “Building Complete Players”

## OBJECTIVES:

Build aerobic condition, develop speed and strength towards the end of the stage, and further develop and consolidate sport-specific skills. Emphasis on refining form and building fitness.

## PRIORITIES:

**Fun:** 20%

**Form:** 25%

**Fitness:** 35%

**Focus:** 10%

**Flow:** 10%

## BENCHMARKS:

**Training duration** – Up to 120 minutes per session.

**Training volume** – Sport-specific training 3-5 times per week including fitness training. Total approximately 8 hours per week including 2-3 hours of fitness training.

**Competition** – 5 to 6 local, 2 regional or provincial competitions per year. Introduce 1-2 national or international competitions at end of stage. 80% training, 20% competition.

**Coaching** – Competition Stream: Introduction to Competition.

## NEXT STAGE: TRAIN TO COMPETE OR COMPETITIVE FOR LIFE OR ACTIVE FOR LIFE

### Notes:

- A structured, periodized program with single or double periodization is recommended.
- Avoid using competition for selection. Compete for development and learning- initial development of focus skills.
- Reduce the number of other sports, but maintain exposure to multiple disciplines for development and future choice. Refine form.
- For young players, coaches must be aware of the rapid changes to physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities in this period and provide individual training approaches. Performance may decrease due to these changes during puberty and post-puberty so additional support will be needed.





# Play to Win

## Train to Compete (4 to 10 sport years) – “Building Champions”

### OBJECTIVES:

Optimize physical preparation and sport-specific skills. Learn competition and performance skills. Emphasis on perfecting form, refining fitness and focus, increasing competitive ranking, development of high-level competition skills (flow).

### PRIORITIES:

**Fun:** 15%

**Form:** 15%

**Fitness:** 35%

**Focus:** 20%

**Flow:** 20%

### BENCHMARKS:

**Training duration** – Up to 150 minutes per session.

**Training volume** – Sport-specific technical, tactical and fitness training 5-10 times per week. Total up to 10-15 hours per week including 4-6 hours fitness training.

**Competition** – 5-6 local, regional, provincial, and 5-6 national, international competitions per year. International competitions by end of stage. 70% training, 30% competition.

**Coaching** – Competition Stream: Competition Development.

### NEXT STAGE: TRAIN TO WIN OR COMPETITIVE FOR LIFE OR ACTIVE FOR LIFE

#### Notes:

- Year-round, high intensity training. Single or double periodization (2 x 24 weeks) recommended. Training program focuses on building on strengths and remediation of weaknesses.
- Use functional analysis of flexibility and strength to develop a periodized strength training program as part of training program. Focus on preventing or overcoming imbalances, core strength, specific strength and endurance.
- Specialization; reduce participation in other sports and increase Pickleball participation.
- Increase in number and level of competitions; model competitions in training. Exposure to top-level competition.



# Play to Win

**Train to Win** (7+ sport years) – “Top of the World”

## OBJECTIVES:

Optimize physical preparation, competition and performance skills. Emphasis on perfecting focus and flow, maximizing ranking, and performance on demand in top-level competitions.

## PRIORITIES:

**Fun:** 5%

**Form:** 15%

**Fitness:** 30%

**Focus:** 25%

**Flow:** 25%

## BENCHMARKS:

**Training duration** – Up to 180 minutes per session.

**Training volume** – Sport-specific technical, tactical and fitness training 5-10 times/week. Total 10-15+ hours per week.

**Competition** – As necessary and available. 70% training, 30% competition.

**Coaching** – Competition Stream:  
Competition High Performance.

## NEXT STAGE: COMPETITIVE FOR LIFE OR ACTIVE FOR LIFE

### Notes:

- Specialization in one discipline - indoor plus outdoor training.
- Year-round, high intensity training. Single or double periodization (2 x 24 weeks) recommended. Training program focuses on fine-tuning strengths.
- Use functional analysis of flexibility and strength to develop a periodized strength training program as part of training program. Focus on preventing or overcoming imbalances, core strength, specific strength and endurance.
- Integration of physical and mental training, expert-level skills, and competition experience to achieve “flow”.
- Increased number and level of competitions. Use some competitions to model upcoming key competitions.
- Train to peak for major competitions.



# Play for Life

**Adult Entry** (any age after PHV, typically 30+; 0 to 4 sport years) – “Welcome to the Game”

## OBJECTIVES:

Learn overall Pickleball skills.  
Emphasis on development of form.

## PRIORITIES:

**Fun:** 40%

**Form:** 40%

**Fitness:** 20%

**Focus:** 0% - introduce as part of other activities.

**Flow:** 0% - introduce as part of other activities.

## BENCHMARKS:

**Training duration** – Up to 90 minutes per session.

**Training volume** – Specific training 3-4 times per week, may participate in other sports. Total Pickleball approximately 3 hours per week.

**Competition** – Few, fun local/club competitions only; treat any competitions as practice.

**Coaching** – (Community) Sport Initiation.

## NEXT STAGE: COMPETITIVE FOR LIFE OR ACTIVE FOR LIFE

### Notes:

- Participate in other activities and sports, as well as Pickleball to maintain skills and fitness.
- Creation of a skills development “badge program” would support this stage.
- Promote skill transfer from other sports including racquet sports.
- Use standard court and equipment.
- Competition is not a focus in this entry/development phase, but fun and informal competition at local/club levels may be included.



# Play for Life

**Competitive for Life** (any time after PHV and basic skills developed) – “Love to Compete”

## OBJECTIVES:

Build aerobic condition, develop speed and strength towards the end of the stage, and further develop and consolidate sport-specific skills. Emphasis on refining form, building and maintaining fitness, and developing mental and tactical competition skills.

## PRIORITIES:

**Fun:** 15%

**Form:** 25%

**Fitness:** 30%

**Focus:** 15%

**Flow:** 15%



## BENCHMARKS:

**Training duration** – Up to 120 minutes per session.

**Training volume** – Sport-specific training 3-5 times per week including fitness training. Total approximately 8 hours per week including 2-3 hours of fitness training.

**Competition** – 6-12 local, regional or provincial competitions per year. Possibly 2-4 national or international competitions per year. 70% training, 30% competition.

**Coaching** – Competition Stream: Introduction to Competition.

## NEXT STAGE: COMPETITIVE FOR LIFE OR ACTIVE FOR LIFE

### Notes:

- The Competitive for Life player is focused on performance.
- A structured, periodized program with single periodization is recommended. Maintain a level of training appropriate to individual goals, age and capacity to recover.
- Maintain participation in some other sports for development and future choice.
- Develop recovery routine and support recovery through adequate nutrition.

# Play for Life

**Active for Life** (enter at any time after PHV and/or basic skills developed) – “Love to Play”

## OBJECTIVES:

Maintain lifelong physical activity through fun and social participation in Pickleball. Give back to the sport as a volunteer, coach, official or administrator.

## PRIORITIES:

**Fun:** 40%

**Form:** 15%

**Fitness:** 25%

**Focus:** 10%

**Flow:** 10%

## BENCHMARKS:

**Training duration** – As desired.

**Training volume** – As desired.

**Competition** – As desired.



## Notes:

- Training and competition may range from social to high intensity depending on the particular goals and abilities of the player.
- Age group competitions.
- Give back to the sport as a volunteer, coach, official or administrator.



# Pickleball with a Disability

Pickleball has not formalized a pathway and program for athletes with a disability (AWAD), and as yet there are few examples of Pickleball programs for disabled players. Wheelchair Pickleball is played in some places, but there are many other ways to integrate players with physical or intellectual disability into the sport. Tennis can be considered a role model for the development of programs, as can Volleyball with development of sitting volleyball. More can be done to make the sport known and accessible to persons with a disability.

This requires additional emphasis on two areas- awareness and first involvement. Awareness means increasing the visibility of Pickleball among persons with a disability. Many persons with a disability are not aware of opportunities in sport, or believe that they will not be able to participate. Increased promotion of the sport to disabled persons may help increase the number of AWAD entering the sport.

Then comes “first involvement”. “First involvement” usually refers to the first time an athlete encounters a sport, or has an opportunity to try a sport. It is important to understand that “first involvement” works both ways- when the athlete meets the sport and coach, and when the coach meets the athletes. For both coach and athlete, first contact may bring apprehension or fear. The athlete may

be asking: “Can I do this? Will I be accepted?”

Pickleball can pioneer new approaches and adaptations to make the sport more accessible and welcoming. What might *Sitting Pickleball* look like? *Four-a-side Pickleball*? How can the ball be modified to increase its visibility, or reduce its speed? How might a paddle be integrated with a prosthetic arm?

It can take more courage for an athlete with a disability to try a new sport. Pickleball coaches and sport leaders can do their part to help more players take part by understanding the Awareness and First Involvement stages and by actively inviting persons with a disability to try Pickleball. For more information, see the Sport for Life publication No Accidental Champions at [www.sportforlife.ca](http://www.sportforlife.ca).





# Coach Development

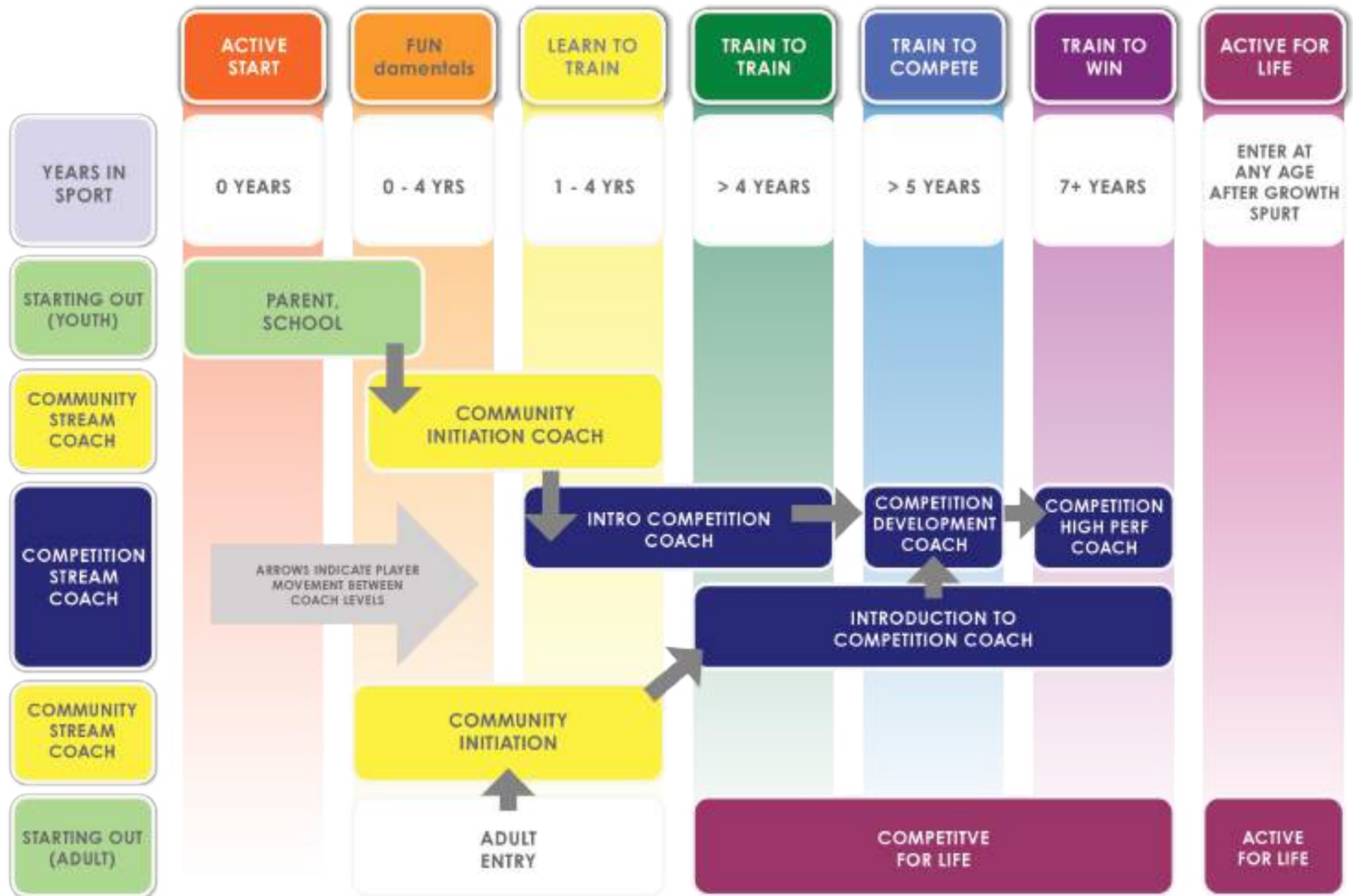
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Coaches are the backbone of the sport system. Vital to the development of players at all stages, they are leaders and organizers in community sport (Active Start to Learn to Train) and technical experts at provincial and national levels (Train to Compete to Train to Win). Coaches must have the expertise to identify the stage of maturation of the player and the programs and systems to allow that player to train and compete appropriately to his or her potential. We need more good coaches at all stages,

and every coach must have a clear understanding of LTPD principles. Getting more and better coaching for Canadian players is an essential task for sport leaders.

Pickleball is currently developing a coach education program consistent with the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) with the expectation of NCCP approval. The following diagram shows the proposed Pickleball “Coach Development Model” (CDM) in relation to the LTPD framework:

# Coach Development Model



## Coach and Leader Development

When the system provides adequate support, and the player attains the key competencies in each stage including previous, foundational stages, then the player is able, within his or her own limitations, to reach the highest level of performance. Everyone – player, parent, coach, club, association – has to get it right for the player to reach his or her full potential. By following the LTPD model and participating as both player and builder, we can create a system that allows players to reach their potential.



# Planning for Success- Activating LTPD

This LTPD framework will help put Canadian Pickleball on course for the future, with more players enjoying the sport longer, and achieving more competitive success. However, no framework makes a difference until it is put into action.

In the development of this framework, a number of key issues for Canadian Pickleball were identified. By taking the following steps, we can build a sport based on an integrated player development system which provides seamless support to all players from entry into the sport through to Active for Life.

## **First priority: Coaching**

1. Develop a Pickleball coach education program which meets the standards of the National Coaching Certification Program, and apply for NCCP approval of the program.
2. Increase the number of trained coaches at all levels, and ensure they have a solid understanding of LTPD.
3. Improve communication and cooperation between coaches. Hold annual coach training/development seminars in each province, and support coach development via outside conferences (e.g. CAC Sport Leadership, Sport for Life Summit).

## **Second priority: Leaders**

4. Develop and deliver an expanded officials development program.
5. Create more leadership training opportunities in cooperation with the provincial associations.
6. Host regular conferences and NSO-PSO Presidents meetings to focus on development issues and identify and recruit new leaders.

## **Third priority: Organizations**

7. Integrate player development (i.e. the LTPD framework) into all aspects of organization such that Pickleball is truly “player centered”. For example, consider how player development can be integrated into governance (e.g. committee structures), strategic and operational plans, budgets, policies and procedures.
8. Provide standardized policies, standards and agreements on the Pickleball Canada web site. Explore creation of Pickleball Canada-PSO agreements to help coordinate efforts and delineate clear responsibilities in the area of player development.

## **Fourth priority: Competitions**

9. Review and modify the format of competitions as needed to ensure appropriate progression for all stages of player.
10. Educate coaches on the appropriate use of different levels of competition to meet player development goals.
11. Standardize stage-appropriate national and provincial championship formats such that each has a development consistent with the level/ stage of eligible players.
12. Plan and develop modified competitions and formats accessible to players with a disability. This should include not only wheelchair Pickleball, but modified formats for players with hearing, vision, and other forms of physical disability. Develop a parallel program for players with intellectual disability, e.g. Special Olympics.



## RESOURCES

*Biathlon Canada LTAD Model Vol.1, 2006.* Ball, A.,(ed.) Biathlon Canada, Ottawa, ON. ISBN 0-9781096-0-0  
*Canadian Sport for Life, 2005.* Balyi, I., Cardinal, C., Higgs, C., Norris, S., and Way, R. Canadian Sport Centres, Vancouver, BC. ISBN 0-9738274-0-8

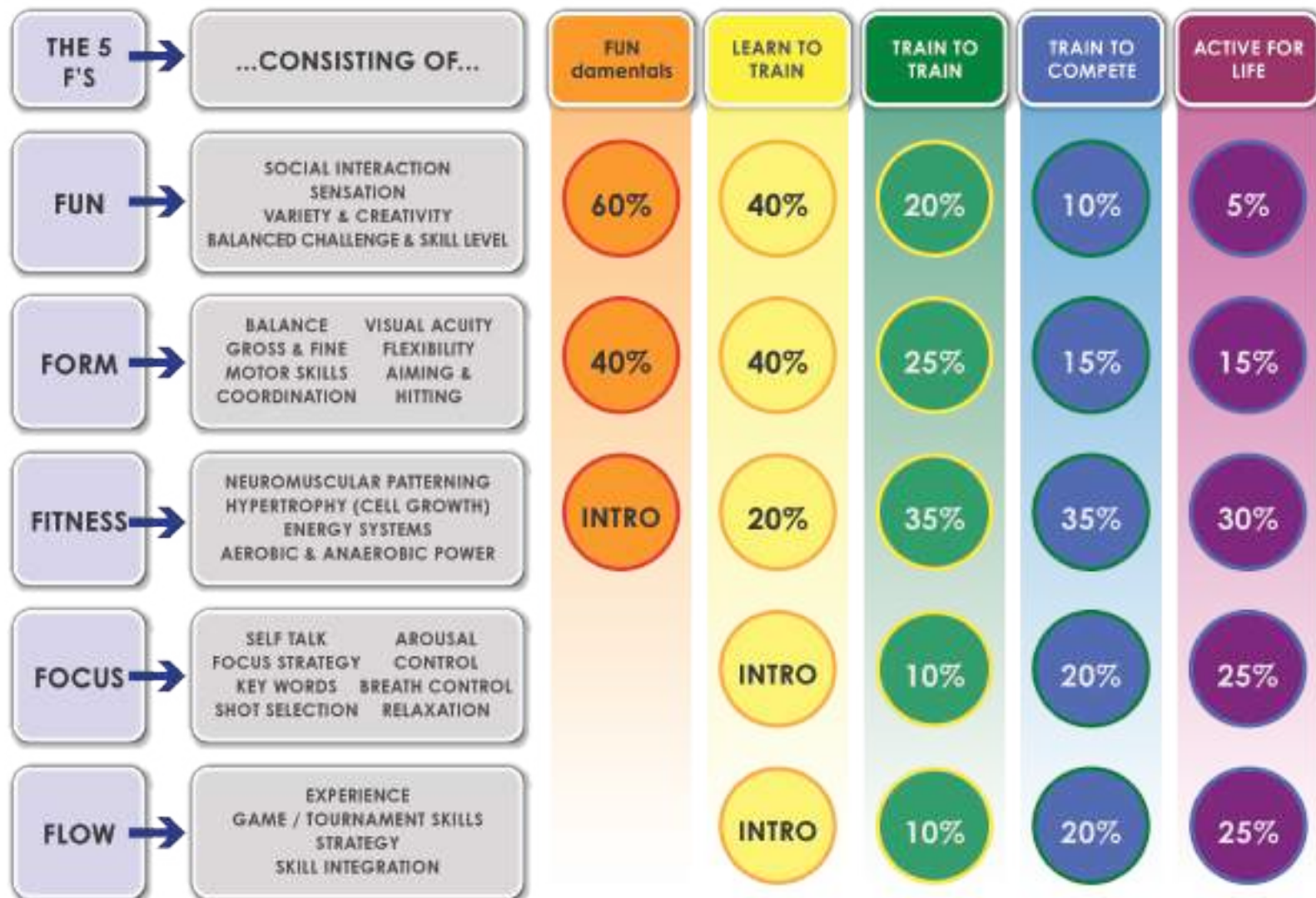
*Coaching Athletes with a Disability, 2005.* Coaching Association of Canada, Ottawa ON.  
*Long Term Player Development Guide for Golf in Canada, 2007.* Royal Canadian Golf Association/Canadian Professional Golf Association, Ottawa, ON.

*No Accidental Champions, 2006.* Balyi, I., Cardinal, C., Higgs, C., Norris, S., and Way, R. Canadian Sport Centres, Vancouver, BC. ISBN 0-9738274-3-2

# Closer Look: Balancing Physical, Motor and Mental Training Factors

The priorities of Fun, Form, Fitness, Focus and Flow rest on a foundation of physical, motor and mental competences. These become increasingly integrated as the player develops, so it is essential to understand the fundamentals and how to progressively introduce and train them. This diagram shows the components of these factors as well as recommended percent of training time in each of the LTPD stages. Note: these are guidelines. Extra time for remediation must be added if development was incomplete in preceding stage(s).

% Training Time in Physical and Mental Factors Across LTPD Stages



# Closer Look: Skill Development- Youth

Alongside physical and mental preparation, Pickleball demands a high degree of skill. The table below provides guidelines for the acquisition, consolidation and refinement of essential skills in each LTPD stage for youth.

STAGE		Active Start 0 to 6	FUNDamentals 6 - 8 (F), 9 (M)	Learn to Train 8/9-11(F), 12(M)	Train to Train 11/12-15(F), 16(M)	Train to Compete Age 15+ >5	Train to Win Age 17+ >7
AGE		0	0- 4	1-4	>4	>5	>7
YEARS IN SPORT		0	0- 4	1-4	>4	>5	>7
NCCP COACH		No formal coach	Comm. Init.	Intro. Comp.	Intro. Comp.	Comp. Dev.	Comp. HP
DEVELOPMENT	(X= none, A=Acquire, C=Consolidate, R=Refine, V=Vary)						
1. TECHNICAL							
1.1 Basics	1.1.1 Grip	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.1.2 Stance	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.1.3 Ball control on paddle	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.1.4 Striking stance and swing (forehand)	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.1.5 Striking stance and swing (backhand)	A (late)	A, C	R	R	V	V
1.2 Serve	1.2.1 Basics: position, grip, stance, swing	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.2.2 Direction	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.2.3 Distance	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.2.4 Height	A	A, C	C, R	R	V	V
	1.2.5 Speed	A	A, C	C, R	R	V	V
	1.2.6 Spin	-	A	C, R	R	V	V
1.3 Ground strokes	1.3.1 Basics: position, grip, stance, swing	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.3.2 Direction	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.3.3 Distance	A (late)	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.3.4 Height	A (late)	A, C	C, R	R	V	V
	1.3.5 Speed	A (late)	A, C	C, R	R	V	V
	1.3.6 Spin	-	A	C, R	R	V	V
1.4 Volleys	1.4.1 Basics: position, grip, stance, swing	A (late)	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.4.2 Direction	A (late)	A, C	R	R	V	V
	1.4.3 Distance	A (late)	A	C, R	R	V	V
	1.4.4 Height	A (late)	A	C, R	R	V	V
	1.4.5 Speed	A (late)	A	C, R	R	V	V
	1.4.6 Spin	-	-	C, R	R	V	V

# Closer Look: Skill Development- Youth

STAGE		Active Start 0 to 6	FUNDamentals 6 - 8 (F), 9 (M)	Learn to Train 8/9-11(F), 12(M)	Train to Train 11/12-15(F), 16(M)	Train to Compete Age 15+ >5	Train to Win Age 17+ >7
AGE		0	0- 4	1-4	>4	>5	>7
YEARS IN SPORT							
NCCP COACH		No formal coach	Comm. Init.	Intro. Comp.	Intro. Comp.	Comp. Dev.	Comp. HP
DEVELOPMENT	(X= none, A=Acquire, C=Consolidate, R=Refine, V=Vary)						
1.5 Net shots	1.4.1 Basics: position, grip, stance, swing	-	A	C	R	V	V
	1.4.2 Direction	-	A	C	R	V	V
	1.4.3 Distance	-	A	C	R	V	V
	1.4.4 Height	-	A	C	R	V	V
	1.4.5 Speed	-	A	C	R	V	V
	1.4.6 Spin	-	-	A, C	R	V	V
2. TACTICAL							
2.1 Rules	2.1.1 Basic rules	-	A	A, C	R	R	R
	2.1.2 Advanced rules	-	-	A	C	R	R
2.2 Situational	2.2.1 Basic court positioning	-	A	A, C	R	R	V
	2.2.2 Positioning with partner	-	A	A, C	C	R	V
	2.2.3 Partner communication	-	A	A	A, C	R	V
2.3 Decisional	2.3.1 Basic game sense	-	A	A, C	C	R	
	2.3.2 Anticipation and movement	-	A	A, C	C	R	V
	2.3.3 Shot selection	-	A	A, C	C	R	V
	2.3.4 Deception	-	-	A	C	R	V
3. PHYSICAL							
3.1 Agility	3.1.1 Forward/backward	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	3.1.2 Lateral	A	A, C	R	R	V	V
	3.1.3 Footwork (e.g. split steps)	-	A	C	R	R	V
	3.1.4 Change of direction	A	A,C	R	R	V	V
3.2 Flexibility	3.2.1 Flexibility	A	C	R	R	R	R
3.3 Speed	3.3.1 Speed	-	-	A	C	R	R
3.4 Strength	3.4.1 Strength	-	-	A	C	R	R
3.5 Endurance	3.5 Endurance	-	-	A	C	R	R
4. MENTAL							
4.1 Awareness	4.1.1 Game situation	-	A	C	R	R	V
	4.1.2 Opponent assessment	-	-	A	C	R	R
4.2 Focus	4.2.1 Focus (proper attentional focus)	-	A	C	C	R	R
	4.2.2 Re-focus	-	-	A	C	R	R
4.3 Self-control	4.3.1 Self-awareness	-	A	C	C	R	R
	4.3.2 Control techniques	-	-	A	C	R	V
4.4 Rehearsal	4.4.1 Mental rehearsal	-	-	A	C	R	V
4.5 Self-assessment	4.5.1 Post game assessment/planning	-	-	-	A	C	R

# Closer Look: Skill Development- Adult

The table below provides guidelines for the acquisition, consolidation and refinement of essential skills in each LTPD stage for adult entry players. Compared to youth, development is compressed for adult players, who are physically mature and have developed transferrable sport skills.

STAGE		ADULT ENTRY	Competitive for Life	Active for Life
AGE		18+	30+	30+
YEARS IN SPORT		0-4	> 3-5	> 1
NCCP COACH		Comm. Init./Intro.Comp	Intro. Comp/Comp.Dev't	Comm. Ongoing
DEVELOPMENT	(A=Acquire, C=Consolidate, R=Refine, V=Vary)			
<b>1. TECHNICAL</b>				
1.1 Basics	1.1.1 Grip	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.1.2 Stance	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.1.3 Ball control on paddle	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.1.4 Striking stance and swing (forehand)	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.1.5 Striking stance and swing (backhand)	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
1.2 Serve	1.2.1 Basics: position, grip, stance, swing	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.2.2 Direction	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.2.3 Distance	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.2.4 Height	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.2.5 Speed	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.2.6 Spin	A	C, R, V	C, R
1.3 Ground strokes	1.3.1 Basics: position, grip, stance, swing	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.3.2 Direction	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.3.3 Distance	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.3.4 Height	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.3.5 Speed	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.3.6 Spin	A	C, R, V	C, R
1.4 Volleys	1.4.1 Basics: position, grip, stance, swing	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.4.2 Direction	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.4.3 Distance	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.4.4 Height	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.4.5 Speed	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.4.6 Spin	A	C, R, V	C, R
1.5 Net shots	1.4.1 Basics: position, grip, stance, swing	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.4.2 Direction	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.4.3 Distance	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.4.4 Height	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.4.5 Speed	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	1.4.6 Spin	A	C, R, V	C, R

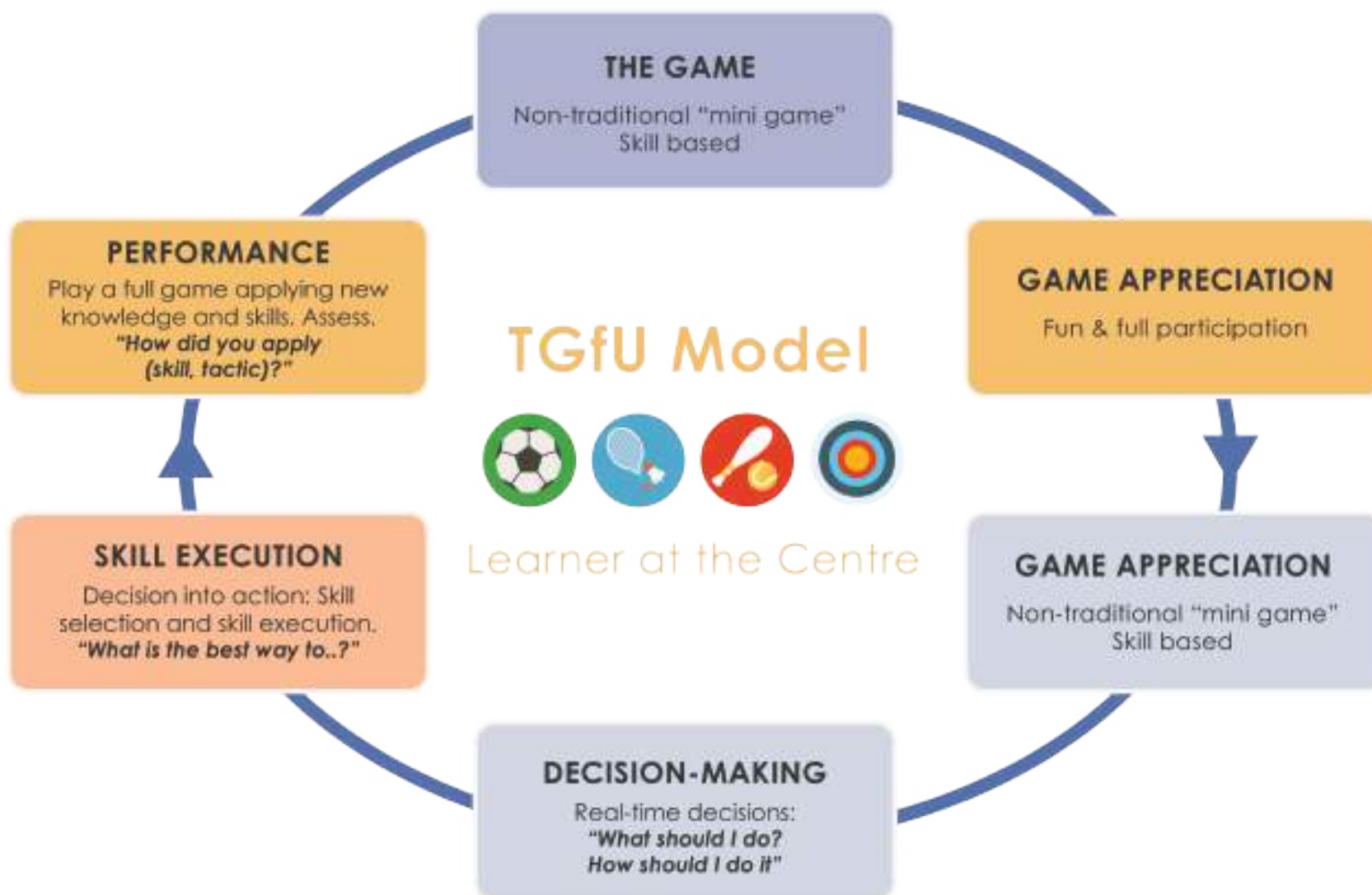


# Closer Look: Skill Development- Adult

STAGE		ADULT ENTRY	Competitive for Life	Active for Life
AGE		18+	30+	30+
YEARS IN SPORT		0-4	> 3-5	> 1
NCCP COACH		Comm. Init./Intro.Comp	Intro. Comp/Comp.Dev't	Comm. Ongoing
DEVELOPMENT	(A=Acquire, C=Consolidate, R=Refine, V=Vary)			
<b>2. TACTICAL</b>				
2.1 Rules	2.1.1 Basic rules	A, C	C, R	C, R
	2.1.2 Advanced rules	A	C, R	C, R
2.2 Situational	2.2.1 Basic court positioning	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	2.2.2 Positioning with partner	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	2.2.3 Partner communication	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
2.3 Decisional	2.3.1 Basic game sense	A, C	C, R, V	C, R
	2.3.2 Anticipation and movement	A	C, R, V	C, R
	2.3.3 Shot selection	A	C, R, V	C, R
	2.3.4 Deception	-	A, C, R, V	A, C, R
<b>3. PHYSICAL</b>				
3.1 Agility	3.1.1 Forward/backward	A	C, R, V	C, R
	3.1.2 Lateral	A	C, R, V	C, R
	3.1.3 Footwork (e.g. split steps)	A	C, R, V	C, R
	3.1.4 Change of direction	A	C, R, V	C, R
3.2 Flexibility	3.2.1 Flexibility	A, C	C, R	A, C
3.3 Speed	3.3.1 Speed	A, C	C, R	A, C
3.4 Strength	3.4.1 Strength	A, C	C, R	A, C
3.5 Endurance	3.5 Endurance	A, C	C, R	A, C
<b>4. MENTAL</b>				
4.1 Awareness	4.1.1 Game situation	A	C, R	C, R
	4.1.2 Opponent assessment	A	C, R, V	C, R
4.2 Focus	4.2.1 Focus (correct attentional focus)	A	C, R	C, R
	4.2.2 Re-focus	A (late)	A, C, R, V	C, R
4.3 Self-control	4.3.1 Self-awareness	A	C, R	C, R
	4.3.2 Control techniques	A	C, R, V	C, R
4.4 Rehearsal	4.4.1 Mental rehearsal	A (late)	C, R	C
4.5 Self-assessment	4.5.1 Post game assessment and planning	A (late)	C, R	C

# Closer Look: Teaching Games for Understanding

Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) is a games-based teaching and coaching model designed to build greater understanding of games, while increasing physical activity, engagement, motivation and enjoyment. Typically, a TGfU approach is built around four basic types of game: Target games; Striking and Fielding games; Net and Wall games; and Invasion games. With the knowledge of how to play these basic types of games, participants can quickly adapt skills and tactics to traditional sports.



# Closer Look: Teaching Games for Understanding

Following LTPD principles and the TGfU model, the best way to help participants learn movement and sport skills is by maximizing engagement in activities, experimentation, creativity, and questioning. Participants play the short, non-traditional games and then are asked practical questions and discuss the use of concepts, tactics and strategies. This develops decision-making and tactical exploration with skill development.

Activities should be designed so everyone is playing almost all the time. For example, the coach/instructor may:

- Briefly explain the next activity: “Now in the next game, let’s see how many times you can hit the ball into these different buckets...”
- Demonstrates some key movements: “You can swing the paddle like this (demonstrate) if you are farther from the target, but if you are closer, try like this (demonstrate)...”

And then quickly get the participants into action. After a few minutes playing the modified game,

- Ask thinking questions about the activity: “How did your swing change as you tried to hit the ball to closer or farther targets? Did you position your feet differently? Why?”

Other than the basic description and demonstration, there is no in-depth skill instruction. Instructors let the participants figure it out. Some will be more proficient right away and others less, and that’s OK. The instructors do not spend time on “perfecting” skills with the group or individuals. Only if the majority of the group seems confused or unable to perform a certain action, should the instructors stop the action and offer an additional explanation or demonstration. Let them play- they will learn faster and retain the knowledge better!

TGfU helps build “games sense”, an important part of physical literacy. Games sense is the knowledge and understanding necessary to “read” a game, anticipate patterns of play, and use movement and tactical skills to respond appropriately and creatively to game situations. These are cognitive or “thinking” skills, not only physical skills. Participants with games sense interact with teammates, opponents and the game positively and develop decision-making, confidence and a sense of mastery.

# Closer Look: Definitions

## **Abstract Thinking**

Thinking about processes, objects and events that may or may not have real world representation.

## **Aerobic Endurance**

Ability to exercise for long durations using aerobic energy systems.

## **Aiming/Hitting**

Hitting a target with an object.

## **Agility**

The ability to move quickly in three dimensions while remaining in control of the movement.

## **Balance**

Ability to remain upright while moving. Includes static balance and balancing while moving or gliding.

## **Coordination**

Moving several parts of the body serially or simultaneously to achieve movement.

## **Core Strength and Stability**

Strength of the core muscles of the trunk, including chest, back and abdomen, which provide an “anchor” for the effective use of arm and leg muscles.

## **Fine Motor Skills**

Movements controlled by small muscles, e.g. hand or finger movements.

## **Goal Setting**

The ability to set targets for future behaviours or outcomes.

## **Gross Motor Skills**

Large movements of the limbs and body using multiple joints and muscle groups.

## **Memory**

Ability to retain and recall instructions, information, and experiences.

## **Mental Models**

Ability to understand and manipulate mental models of real-world processes.

## **PHV or Peak Height Velocity**

The maximum rate of growth during the adolescent growth spurt.

## **Physical Literacy**

Competence in diverse movement skills, and the resulting confidence and motivation to be active for life. Foundational to sport success.

## Closer Look: Definitions

### **Speed 1**

Speed increases due to improvements in neuromuscular coordination.

### **Speed 2**

Speed increases due to improvements in energy systems, anaerobic alactic and lactic.

### **Strength 1**

Strength increases due primarily to increases in neuromuscular coordination, not muscle fiber growth.

### **Strength 2**

Strength increases due primarily to increases in lean muscle mass- hypertrophy.

### **Strength-endurance**

Muscular strength and endurance, allowing repeated static or dynamic muscular contractions with reduced levels of fatigue.

### **Visual Acuity**

Ability to discriminate edges and see objects at various distances.





