



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>

A note on Active for Life

A lot of athletes competing in softball, particularly players in their late teens or early 20s, are confused between being Competitive for Life and being on the Podium Pathway (Train to Train to Living to Win stages). If an athlete is not making progress towards the VERY highest level of International competition, they can be very good - but are still Competitive for Life.

SLEEP

Duration 7-9 hours +30 minute nap between 2-4pm

- Get your sleep!
- Maintain meal routines and always eat breakfast
- Learn to nap
- Do not train if you are fatigued or sleep deprived

ABOUT THE ACTIVE FOR LIFE STAGE

In this stage, athletes and participants enjoy lifelong participation in a variety of recreational and competitive opportunities in ALL the types of Softball (Fast Pitch, Slo-Pitch and Orthodox). Softball presents a unique opportunity because it allows players to challenge themselves mentally and physically, both in a team environment and as an individual. Not only can a player enjoy playing softball for a lifetime, but they can also become or stay involved in the sport as a coach, official, administrator, or volunteer.

Under ideal circumstances, athletes enter the Active for Life stage at one of two times:

1. While Physical Literacy is developed throughout an individual's lifetime, by the end of the Learn to Train stage some athletes choose to pursue softball according to the goals of the Active for Life stage.
2. After they have exited the Podium Pathway (Train to Train, Train to Compete, Learn and Train to Win and Living to Win stages).

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 Podium 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.

SEASON STRUCTURE

- Competition/Training Ratio: As desired by players. Recommend 90%/10%
- Pre-Season: 4-6 practices
- Competitive Season: 10-14 weeks (possibly longer if climate permits)
- Softball-specific activities per week: As often as desired by players
- Daily participation in sport or unstructured moderate intensity physical activities. Minimum of 60 minutes of moderate activity 3 times a week.



Athletes with Disabilities

Athletes with a disability should be encouraged to take part in physical activity and sport for life-long participation.

- Provide opportunities to participate in the game of softball (fastpitch, slo-pitch and orthodox) both recreationally and competitively.
- Minimize barriers and be cognisant of adaptive devices/equipment and support needs, while making sure the field of play is accessible.
- Allow rule and equipment adaptations to ensure athletes with disabilities can continue to be activity engaged in the sport of softball.



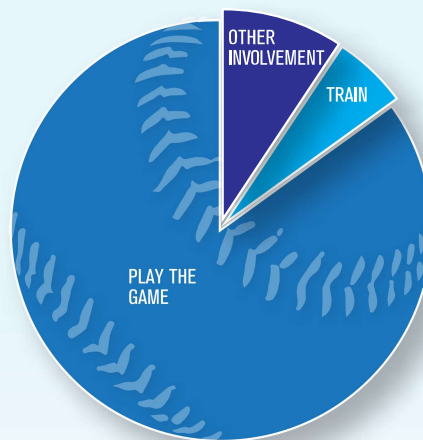
Active For Life Basics:

- ✓ Have fun.
- ✓ Introduce or welcome a new player to the game—they will thank you for it.
- ✓ Take some lessons from a qualified instructor.
- ✓ Play the game at your desired level for health, social engagement or the thrill of competition.
- ✓ Play in a charity softball tournament—you will be glad you did.
- ✓ Play softball with your family and friends.
- ✓ Practice makes perfect—hone your skills in the batting cage or by playing catch with a friend.
- ✓ Try different forms of the game - Fast Pitch, Slo-Pitch or Orthodox.
- ✓ Take on a new role in softball by becoming a coach, team manager, game official, or local, provincial or national administrator or Board Member.
- ✓ Provide a positive environment in order to encourage lifelong physical activity.
- ✓ Provide ongoing community programming for all ages and abilities that balances participation and competition.
- ✓ Provide programs for athletes with disabilities.

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 Active for Life stage this means:

Best Use of Activity Time



- Play the game for health, social engagement and satisfaction
- Give back to the game in another role

SOFTBALL SKILLS

All softball technical and tactical skills, physical capacities, mental skills and life skills are developed in the Active for Life stage to meet the individual needs and aspirations of the athletes involved.

ENCOURAGING PLAY: BUILDING THE GAME

Active for Life athletes in softball may be content to play with the technical and tactical skills they have already developed may be content to learn informally just from watching others play or they may wish to receive formal instruction.

Clubs and recreation facilities are encouraged to offer single-session "Try Softball" opportunities that are linked to instructional opportunities teaching the basics of the game and getting players started in informal competition play.

New Canadians and senior citizens may also benefit from simple "Learn to Play" instruction. These programs have the potential to make the sport better known to ALL Canadians, and to improve population health.

For Fit for Life players, building a strong social component to programs is important in attracting and retaining participants.

Competitive for Life athletes thrive when there are season-long leagues, and well scheduled competitions. Age-based Masters competitions at the local, Provincial, National and International level need to be further developed.

Competition organizers should build on Softball's well deserved reputation for always having an active social component to tournaments.

