



Active Start (AS)

ABOUT THE ACTIVE START STAGE

Very rapid development of physical skills with some functional abilities like Executive Function occur in this stage. Executive Function is a set of closely related skills that allow a developing child to work effectively with the information in their brains, focus their attention, filter out distractions, and quickly switch mental gears from one task to another. Children who miss out on opportunities to develop these abilities may have a more difficult time later in life.

In this stage, it is important for children to be encouraged to lead a healthy and active lifestyle by making physical activity fun. Physical Literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life. It begins to develop in early childhood and grows during adolescence and adulthood. In Active Start, the development of a wide repertoire of basic human movements and Fundamental Movement Skills (FMSs) will not only make the acquisition of more sport-specific skills possible later in development, but more importantly will provide the tools required to develop healthy habits of physical activity through their lifetime. Children should be provided with an abundance of opportunities to develop a variety of FMSs such as locomotion (travel) skills, object manipulation skills and body management skills in all environments (on land, in/on water, on ice/snow and in the air).

The Participants

These are young children who are generally not involved in organized softball activities until very late in this stage. Softball Canada has an interest in starting kids off on the right foot, and ensuring that they develop the skills, capabilities, and attitudes that will allow them to grow into proficient softball players as they mature. The Timbits Softball Program was created to do just that.

SEASON STRUCTURE

Late in this stage players are introduced to fun, playground games with a softball twist using the Timbits Softball Program.

- Pre-Season: No pre-season suggested
- Competitive Season: 8-10 weeks with 10-20 combined practice/modified game sessions lasting 60 minutes each
- Softball-specific activities per week: 1-2 times
- Daily participation in unstructured and structured physical activities or sports

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>

Active Start Basics:

- ✓ Create a safe and stimulating environment with minimal adult interference where a child's love of being physically active for a life time is developed. This means setting up opportunities for active play, and letting children both control what and how they play, but also negotiate with other children about how to play together. Too much adult intervention in minor disagreements prevents children from learning important communication and social skills.
- ✓ Provide organized physical activity opportunities for at least 30 minutes a day for toddlers and 60 minutes for preschoolers.
- ✓ Provide unstructured play opportunities for at least 60 minutes per day and up to several hours per day for toddlers and preschoolers with no child inactive for more than 60 minutes at a time except while sleeping.
- ✓ Use a wide range of equipment and regularly rotate for variety and experience.
- ✓ Emphasize fundamental movement skills (FMSs), agility, balance, coordination and speed (ABCs).
- ✓ Be patient and understand that children will master fundamental movement skills at different rates.
- ✓ Develop habits of being physically active every day.
- ✓ Increase executive function, along with communication and social skills.
- ✓ But most of all - Keep it **FUN!** Ensure children **ENJOY** being physically active with friends and family.

Physical literacy

is the...



...to be

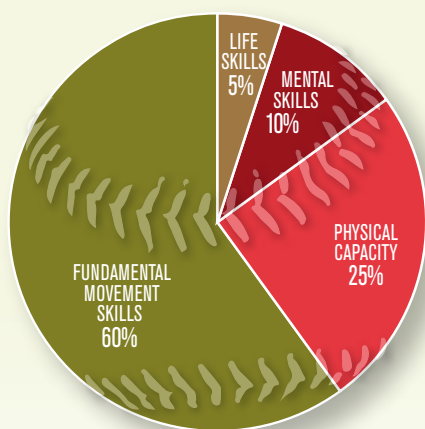
Sport for Life active for life



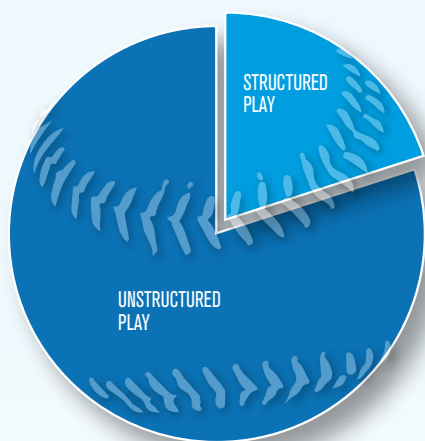
THE FIVE-SEGMENT MODEL

At every stage of LTPD, players need to develop stage and age appropriate skills and capacities in each of the 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 Start stage this means:

Best Use of Softball Time



Best Use of Activity Time



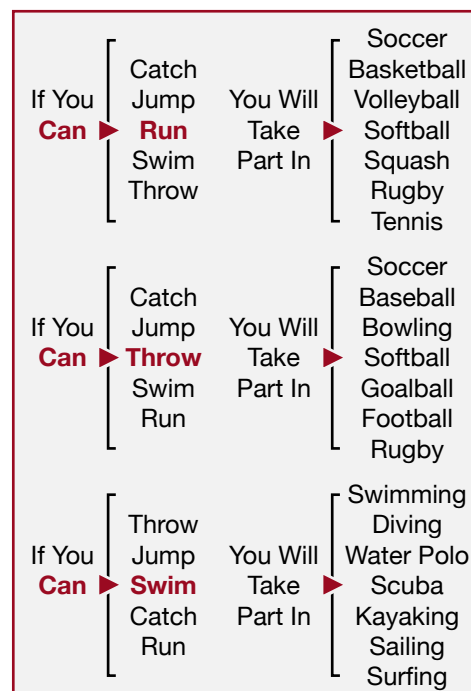
- Active play is a combination of unstructured play and structured play
- Suggestions for activities:
 - Alternate active play and rest throughout the day
 - Accumulate a minimum of 60 min. of active play every day
 - Ensure kids have active, adult role models

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS (FMSs)

The objective of this stage is to introduce and develop fundamental movement skills that lay the foundation for motor patterns that can then evolve into sport-specific skills later in a child's development. The focus should be on making activities fun, on learning multiple fundamental movement skills and developing athleticism by improving agility, balance, coordination, and movement speed. This is a time during which basic human movement patterns are developed, executive function increases, habits of daily physical activity are established and a positive attitude towards physical activity and vigorous play is created. Learning should occur through play rather than instruction, with unstructured play being more effective. Playing outside in natural settings has been shown to be very effective in meeting these objectives.

Key fundamental movement skills to develop at this stage are:

- ON LAND:
 - Running, starting, stopping, changing direction, forward, backward and sideways movements; falling and rolling.
 - Catching, throwing, striking, and kicking to develop hand-eye coordination (using a wide variety of equipment and sizes of equipment with both the left and right hand/foot).
 - Agility, balance and coordination along with speed of movement.
 - Hitting different objects of various sizes (balls, shuttles, etc.) with a bat or racquet.
- IN WATER:
 - Floating, swimming and diving to develop body orientation skills and enhance child safety.
- ON SNOW AND ICE:
 - Skating, sliding and skiing.
- IN THE AIR:
 - Jumping and twisting, learning to control the body when not in contact with the ground.



Structured Play

Is organized and led by an adult who decides when and where the child will play and what equipment or toys they will play with. The child follows the adult lead, and, if more than one child is playing the adult mediates any disputes. The child makes few, if any decisions and may come to rely on others telling them what to do. This is not ideal for developing Executive Function.



Unstructured Play

Is when children decide when, where and how they will play and what equipment or toys they will play with. The role of the adult leader is to ensure safety and provide a stimulating environment. If more than one child is playing, the adult mediates any disputes only when it is clear the children involved cannot resolve it themselves. The child makes most decisions, and negotiates conflict which assists in developing Executive Function.





Active Start (AS)

MALES: 0 - 6 YEARS
FEMALES: 0 - 6 YEARS

PHYSICAL CAPACITY

	Developed through Active Play		
	Low	Med.	High
Endurance	■		
Speed - Hand/Foot	■		
Speed - Whole Body	■		
Speed - Endurance	■		
Relative Strength	■		
Strength - Endurance	■		
Explosive Power	■		
Flexibility	■		

NOTE

Physical capacity is developed through active play. Unstructured play (led by the children) is most effective with adults ensuring safety. Outdoor play on different surfaces is recommended as this encourages development of agility, balance and coordination.

MENTAL SKILLS

Ensure a positive physical activity environment and active adult role models.

Focus on development of Executive Function through games and activities that require rapid change in the player's focus (cognitive flexibility), holding multiple pieces of information in mind at the same time (working memory) and readiness to move - without moving until a signal is given (inhibition control).

Games of "make believe" expand children's thinking.

Ask children to feel their heart beat, and listen to their breathing.

Encourage children to cooperate in play towards the end of this stage.

Provide a visually stimulating environment, and brightly coloured physical activity equipment.

LIFE SKILLS

Learns to interact with adults other than parents/caregivers, and understands that different adults have different roles.

Actively takes part in group activities, can follow simple instructions, and imitates actions in "follow-the-leader" activities.

Learns to take turns during activities, and cooperates with others who are playing.

Learns to share toys and activity equipment.

Understands, remembers and can follow simple rules (particularly safety rules) for activities.

Can articulate what is dangerous about different areas (near roads for example) when engaged in physical play.



Athletes with Disabilities

Children with a disability should be encouraged to take part in dynamic physical play with their able-bodied peers.

- Provide opportunities to learn fundamental movement skills like running/wheeling, throwing, catching, and striking.
- Minimize barriers, and be cognisant of adaptive devices/equipment and support needs.
- Develop a "can do" expectation of success when a child tries an activity.
- Have fun!

SOFTBALL TECHNICAL / TACTICAL SKILLS

Some children who are developmentally ready may be introduced to softball late in the Active Start stage. However, it is not the right time to start softball-specific training. Children who pick up a bat and ball and imitate parents or older siblings should not be discouraged, but organized softball is not recommended until the child is ready. When a child is ready, parents should look for programs that focus more on fundamental movement skill development with a softball flavour like the Timbits Softball Program.

SLEEP

Sleep Duration: 10-12 hours

- Establish stable sleep routines and bedtime routine
- Introduce independent sleep initiating behaviours