



Learn to Train Stage (L2T)

(Basketball Skills)

(Ages 8-11 females, 9-12 males)

This is the major motor learning stage. One of the most important periods of motor development for children is between the ages of 9-12 (Balyi and Hamilton, 1995; Brohms, 1985; Rushall; 1998; Viru et al., 1998 and 1999). During this time, children are developmentally ready to acquire the fundamental movement skills that are the cornerstones of all athletic development. The fundamental skills described previously as “physical literacy” should be taken to a higher level at this stage. In addition the basic basketball skills should be mastered, but participation in other sports is still encouraged.

Young athletes at this stage need to learn how to train at its most basic level. They should be introduced to the basic technical/tactical basketball skills and ancillary capacities including: warm up and cool down, stretching, hydration and nutrition, recovery and regeneration and mental preparation. Parents should be educated in this information (See www.ltad.ca; Developing Physical Literacy: A Guide for Parents of Children Ages 0 to 12 and Steve Nash Youth Basketball Parent’s Guide.) This knowledge base is developed even further in the later stages of athlete development.

This focus on training rather than on competing should be reflected in the annual competition calendar for this group of athletes. Too many competitions waste valuable training time. Conversely, not enough competition inhibits the practice of technical skills (decision making) and learning how to cope with the physical and mental challenges presented by competitions. The key is to find the proper balance. The Competition Review for Canadian Basketball will be tasked with determining the minimum number of competitions that allows the players to apply their skills in a competitive environment and develop games sense, but do not exceed the maximum number of games that will inhibit training and development.

Focus on the process not the outcome.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS:

If fundamental movement skills training are not developed between the ages of 8 to 11 for females and 9 to 12 for males, skills may not be fully recaptured at a later time (although carefully planned and early remedial programs can contribute to limited success.) For this reason fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills must still be stressed during this stage.

Fundamental Movement Skills

- Developed and refined

Fundamental Basketball Skills

Ready Position - Without Ball

- Develop and refine
- Movement - change of direction, change of pace and faking
- Vision - play with eyes up, scanning

Ready Stance - With Ball

- Triple threat
- Holding the ball
- Footwork - pivoting (front and reverse), using both feet to pivot on
- Movement with ball - jump stops, stride stops
- Starting - being able to push off effectively with both feet. With and without the ball

Dribbling

- Stationary dribbling with left and right hand
- Dribbling while moving with left and right hand in all directions
- Speed dribble, control dribble, change of direction dribble with left and right hand
- Vision - be able to handle the ball while scanning the floor

Passing and Catching

- Introduction or refinement of the basic stationary passes (chest, bounce, overhead, baseball)
- Passing and catching on the move
- Passing and catching against an opponent

Shooting

- Introduce BEEF (Balance, Eyes, Elbow, Follow through), concepts of shooting should become more exact
- Introduce or refine technique for lay-ups from both sides

Developing One on One Skills

- Triple threat stance, squaring up to the basket
- Reading the defence
- Ball fakes and foot fakes (small and quick)

Getting Open

- Moving to get open
- Coming to the pass
- Pivot to be an offensive threat

Defensive Stance on the Ball

- Introduce stance
- Moving in your defensive stance while staying between the player you are guarding and the basket
- Guarding the ball - maintain a gap between the defender and ball handler

Defensive Stance Away from the Ball

- Staying between the player you are guarding and the basket
- Seeing the player you are guarding and the ball
- Helping your teammates
- Recover to the player you are guarding as he/she receives the ball

PLAYING PRINCIPLES

Offensive Concepts

- Playing with the purpose of scoring
- Playing 1-on-1
- Spacing 3 to 4 metres
- Give and go
- Cut and replace/fill
- Read the defence to attack and score

Note: More time should be spent on offensive concepts than defensive concepts in this stage.

Defensive Concepts

- On the ball strategies - staying in stance between the player being defended and the basket
- Off the ball strategies - staying near the player being defended but always seeing the ball
- Towards the end of stage introduce defensive triangle (ball-you-man)
- Sprinting back on defence

GAME MODIFICATIONS

Use a smaller ball:

- Baskets should be 2.60 metres to 2.74 metres high;
- Play more 1-on-1, 2-on-2, 3-on-3, 4-on-4 as this allows more touches of the ball than 5-on-5;
- Play player-to-player defence;
- Everyone should play every position;
- Allow some violations to occur, but explain the rules;
- Equal playing time;
- Adjustments to the court size, substitutions and the length of the game;
- Early in this stage it is not recommended that a visible score be kept. Progress to keeping score towards the end of the stage;
- Rules that encourage the use of the basic skills over-elaborate tactics and strategies are recommended. For example, whoever rebounds the ball must advance the ball up the floor.





DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Physical Characteristics

Basic Characteristics

- Strength training using the athlete's own body weight should be used. Hopping and bounding can also be safely implemented;
- Speed can be trained during this stage, and this should be done during the warm-up phase of practise sessions;
- Stretching exercises should become a routine. Dynamic stretching should become a routine during the beginning of this phase, while PNF (proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation) can be implemented towards the end of the phase;
- The central nervous system (CNS) is almost fully developed.

Performance Capabilities

- Speed, agility, balance and coordination are still improving rapidly, and are fully trainable;
- A change in the center of gravity, length of limbs and core strength will determine the content of training.

Implications for Coaches

- A combination of biological and chronological age should be used to group players;
- Short duration of anaerobic (short bursts of energy) activities is recommended;
- Use warm up to further develop CNS activities.

The Five S's of Training and Performance during the Basketball Skills Stage:

Since this is the major **SKILL** learning stage, motor development should be emphasised. Accelerated adaptation to motor skills and coordination development, is from 8-11 years for females and from 9-12 years for males. It should be noted that this is a sensitive period. If the fundamental and basic sport-specific skills are not established before ages 11 and 12 respectively, then athletes may not reach their optimal or **genetic potential**. Skills will always be trainable but skills trainability gradually declines after 11 and 12 years of age. It should be developed before the onset of the growth spurt.

Stamina, Strength, Speed and **Suppleness** should be further improved by well sequenced training. Although there is less interference between the various training adaptations during FUNdamental and L2T two stages of training, a well laid-out training, competition and recovery program will optimize the various training effects.

Training competition ratios: 75 percent training to 25 percent competition ratio is recommended by experts during the L2T stage (4:1 training competition ratio vs. the 1:1 ratio that prevails presently). More training time allows for development of fundamental movement skills, fundamental sport skills, fundamental basketball skills, decision making and physical preparation. The competition review will address this topic.

At this stage, players should train in game like situations in the form of short scrimmages or competitive games and drills.

Athletes/teams in the L2T stage following the 4:1 practice to competition ratio will be better prepared for competition in both the short and long-term, than players who focus solely on competition and winning.

Mental and Cognitive Development

Basic Characteristics

- Athletes are excited to be participating;
- Athletes are eager to perfect skills.

Performance Capabilities

- Players have a strong fear of failure;
- Individual and specific direction and structure in the learning process is required. A variety of methods to measure success is important to maintain motivation.

Implication for Coaches

- Create optimum learning environment, match skill and drill levels;
- The coach's ability to demonstrate specific skills is important;
- Positive reinforcement is imperative.

Psychological Skills

- Players have the ability to recall specific information from memory;
- Players have the ability to use knowledge to interpret and draw conclusions;
- Players must feel it is OK to make mistakes. They cannot be afraid to try something for fear of failure;
- All players must learn to become team players.



Performance Indicators for Psychological Skills

- The player demonstrates the ability to absorb and apply coaching information to deal with a variety of situations;
- The player demonstrates ability to perform as a team player;
- Emphasis should be on learning and performing to the best of ability - not on winning.

Emotional Development

Basic Characteristics

- Players can accept responsibility;
- Players enjoy cooperation both with coach and teammates.

Performance Capabilities

- Values and attitudes are created and reinforced by the group;
- Some players may be less responsive due to a fear of failure.

Implications for Coaches

- Coach must provide strong direction. Supervision should be exercised by coach;
- Coach should gradually give players responsibility;
- Coach must not play favourites. Early matures often become leaders and (written negatively) excel in physical performance. It is important to treat all players as equals.

Ancillary Capacities

- Players can learn about communication skills and values such as respect, honesty, and integrity - values in dealing with others;
- Players begin to understand and apply, in conjunction with the coach:
 - Warm up and cool down
 - Hydration
 - Nutrition
 - Respect for environment and equipment
 - Health awareness
 - Recovery and regeneration

