

Living True Sport ... from the Start

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 there is a positive sport environment. 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 and to foster recognition of the value of lifelong participation and wellness, but we also want to develop individuals with strong character, good morals and ethical literacy 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, parent, volunteer or athlete, it will inspire you to create ways to hone ethical literacy at each stage of development.

Keep in mind that the 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.

Physical and Ethical Literacy				Active for Life			
	Stage 1: Active Start Girls 0-6 Boys 0-6	Stage 2: FUNdamentals Girls 6-8 Boys 6-9 <i>Fundamental Movement Skills</i>	Stage 3: Learning to Train Girls 8-11 Boys 9-12 <i>Fundamental Sport Skills</i>	Stage 4: Training to Train Females 11-15 Males 12-16 <i>Building Physical & Mental Capability</i>	Stage 5: Training to Compete Females 16-23 +/- Males 15-21 +/- <i>High Performance Sport</i>	Stage 6: Training to Win Females 18 +/- Males 19 +/- <i>High Performance Sport</i>	Active for Life <i>A positive experience in sport is the key to retaining athletes after they leave the competition stream. We call that experience... True Sport.</i>
	At this stage, children should participate in stimulating activities and games that develop basic movement skills in a FUN atmosphere.	At this stage, players should participate in stimulating practices and games that develop basic technical skills in a FUN atmosphere.	This stage introduces players to disciplined training and begins to develop their understanding of principles of play alongside their skills practice. Repetitions are important to develop technical proficiency, but creating a fun and challenging environment is still paramount to stimulate learning and promote a love of the game.	At this stage, skill training demands and training loads are increased to develop and refine skills and tactics. Tactical awareness becomes an increasingly important facet of training, alongside mental toughness, concentration, and diligence.	Players who are proficient in their skills now train to refine their maturity in game play. They must be exposed to quality playing and training environments which extend their mental, physical, tactical and technical capabilities to the limit.	Players are training and competing at the highest level of national and international competition, from professional league play to international tournaments. The focus of training shifts to optimization of performance.	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.

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

Go For It <i>Always strive for excellence and rise to the challenge, but never at the expense of others. Discover how good you can be.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach overall sport skills & avoid excessive single sport training while refining all fundamental movement skills. Focus on shaping positive attitudes towards winning & losing. Develop the ability to focus through skill-based drills. Begin to understand the pursuit of personal excellence. Foster an appreciation for work ethic & 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 & maintaining their personal equipment, or by assigning tasks such as picking up cones & setting up/taking down equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate basic sport-specific skills & 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 & could pursue a high-performance stream. Continue to foster personal motivation & encourage athletes to document personal and/or team goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athletes can begin to specialize in one sport & pursue an elite competitive stream. Provide year-round, high intensity, individual event & position-specific training. Train athletes to peak for major competitions. Increase the emphasis on personal commitment to achieve individual and collective outcomes. Work with the athletes to help them master the emotional elements of sport. Define excellence <u>with</u> the 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 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all children are given a solid foundation and knowledge base — technical, tactical, physical & mental — upon which to build their lifelong athletic abilities. Encourage participants to try new sports, stay involved and stay active, & always try to do their personal best.
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<p>Play Fair <i>Play honestly and obey the rules, in letter and spirit. Winning is only meaningful when competition is fair.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure everyone participates equally at play, practice and competition. Have the participants play different positions & 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 the athletes evolve their decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply rules consistently (as an individual) & reason through your behaviour as well as the behaviour of athletes, parents, officials & colleagues Channel emotional energy. Advocate drug-free sport, equity, fair play, safety & non-violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote playing by the rules. Teach and live them as a group, regardless of your role.
<p>Stay Healthy <i>Place physical and mental health above all other considerations and avoid unsafe activities. Respect your body and keep in shape.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use LTAD resources & guidelines to foster active play. Use age-appropriate equipment. Model healthy behaviour. Make being healthy a fun thing. Start talking about the importance of taking care of our bodies. Provide caring and knowledgeable adults as role models. Create opportunities & encourage children to be active daily for a minimum of 60 minutes. Enhance emotional development & build social skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop skills through a combination of unstructured play in safe & challenging environments, & quality instruction from knowledgeable teachers, leaders or coaches. Encourage daily unstructured physical play with friends and family. Ensure an appropriate practice-to-competition ratio as per your sport’s LTAD guide. Make being healthy a cool thing. Introduce proper eating, sleeping and hydration habits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce nutritional concepts. Encourage your athletes to keep track of their daily physical activity levels & share them at practice. Recognize moods & begin to deal with emotions. Introduce the notion that drug use in sport is neither healthy nor fair. Enhance personal development through sport. Character development through sport participation translates well into life skills. Recognize that boys and girls grow and mature differently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce specific sport fitness training concepts (e.g., sport nutrition) & appropriate training techniques. Teach positive body image & educate athletes, parents, & coaches about normal body changes. Provide current anti-doping information. Recognize that sport can be a stress reducer. Empower athletes regarding positive imagery & foster positive self esteem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase knowledge about sport nutrition, doping, sport psychology, positive body image, fitness training, & proper equipment usage. Ensure athletes think about their future sporting life. Set the stage to remain healthy for life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a positive work-life-play balance. Maintain healthy eating habits. Participate for the health benefits of an active lifestyle. Use sport as a stress reducer. Recognize that the transition from one sport to another always requires an adjustment period.
<p>Keep it Fun <i>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.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the LTAD resources to ensure that physical activity skills & drills are fun & appropriate for this stage. Be creative in the use of equipment and of coaching/teaching methods. Teach parents, colleagues & administrators that by keeping it fun, kids will likely continue to stay involved in sport. Encourage parent-led activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on learning and having fun. Introduce formal competition in moderation. Have a positive attitude. Discourage specialization in a single sport. Follow your sport’s LTAD guide to coordinate structured, age appropriate games and activities. Stress the importance of fun & developing friendships. Ensure access to ongoing professional development as it builds new skills for incorporating fun into every training session. Enrol in continuing education courses in coaching or sport as part of your overall development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage participation in land-based, water-based and snow/ice-based activities. Introduce fun competitive elements (e.g., races between groups). Foster a strong work ethic. Maintain a high level of enjoyment while learning new skills. Accentuate the importance of friendships in the context of the team. Highlight good role models to ensure continued participation. Recognize that boys and girls learn differently and have fun doing different things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the joy of sport is central to counter increasing social pressures to drop out. Recognize that as athletes master skills, self-confidence will increase. Help athletes develop the skills they need to overcome challenges & celebrate the joy that comes from meeting those challenges. Focus on the joy that comes from the experience of participating in sport. Encourage a balance between the demands of sport, family, friends & school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster continuous athletic improvement by maintaining a level of fun. Emphasize the joy of effort & the commitment to excel. Understand that the thrill of competition provides an opportunity to continuously learn & master new skills. Recognize the achievement of objectives. Stress the importance of social networks both in & out of sport. Accentuate the bond between athletes, their friends and the coach/athlete family dynamic. Recognize the relationship between an athlete’s intrinsic motivation & participation at a higher level of competition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trynew sports & activities to keep the joy alive. Move from one sport to another (e.g., sprinting to bobsleigh, soccer to rowing) Participate for the enjoyment of it. Continue to create social connections to enhance your life. Find the joy that comes from maintaining a healthy active lifestyle. Seek new/additional ways to enhance your sport & recreational experience.

<p>Respect Others <i>Show respect for everyone involved in creating a sporting experience, both on the field and off. Win with dignity and lose with grace.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce co-operative activities. ○ Encourage young athletes to help put away equipment, toys & games. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciate that not everyone learns the same way or at the same pace. ○ Introduce skills & activities that foster teamwork & co-operation. ○ Have athletes take time to share & learn from their teammates to build observation & communication skills. ○ Model good behaviour when the athletes are playing (e.g., avoid yelling, respect officials, shake hands after the game). ○ Differentiate between fairness & justice. ○ Legitimize feelings & challenges. ○ Ensure that athletes understand the importance of respecting their surroundings (e.g., pick up after themselves, do not damage facilities). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce team building exercises. ○ Select players according to their behaviour both on & off the field of play. ○ Demonstrate that actions have consequences, both good & bad. ○ Define & demonstrate respect towards officials, players, coaches & parents. ○ Teach players the values of sportsmanship, honesty, work ethic, respect for rules as well as loyalty to the team/club. ○ Win with dignity & lose with grace. Celebrate & recognize athletes who demonstrate these principles. ○ Encourage the expression of opinions in a respectful manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make a Coaches Assessment Form available to parents. ○ Encourage debate surrounding tactical sport strategy amongst your athletes. ○ Support discussions about moral or ethical issues through scenarios & role playing. ○ Strive for good team chemistry & a positive interaction between everyone involved in the game (coaches, parents, officials). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage athletes to be constructively critical of themselves and to use that energy positively ○ Make a Coaches Assessment Form available to athletes & parents ○ Speak out against social issues that matter to you & encourage athletes to do the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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
<p>Include Everyone <i>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.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure your program is open and accessible to everyone. ○ Embrace diversity. ○ Create participation opportunities for athletes from all backgrounds (e.g., financial, faith, ethnicity, ability). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pair up athletes with others of varying skills sets to create opportunities to learn from each other and/or to learn new skills. ○ Ensure that athletes have the opportunity to try various positions, techniques & skills. ○ Create fun ways to welcome new athletes & their families to the program or team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accentuate the importance of being friendly, respectful & kind with teammates, parents, coaches, officials, and opponents. ○ Co-ordinate a try "All Sports in One Day" activity in your community . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intentionally set up your training groups to mix and match various skill sets & positions throughout the season. ○ Introduce team-building activities to help athletes & their families to get know one another & to learn more about each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Host a free drills & skills program for younger, less skilled players from your school, club or community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be accepting of varying levels of ability and structure activities to accommodate them.
<p>Give Back <i>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.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce junior athletes as role models/coaches in Active Start programs providing opportunities to give back. ○ Provide recycling at all facilities. ○ Share team responsibilities among all (e.g., bringing snacks, co-coaching, setting up or taking down equipment). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide opportunities for youth to participate in fundraising activities. ○ Advocate for quality physical education programs in the school curriculum. ○ Have participants set up & take down equipment before & after practice or competitions. ○ Respect your facilities (e.g., pick up garbage and water bottles after the activity, participate in the local seasonal environmental community clean up days). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Take up a cause. Get athletes to raise money for a charity or donate used equipment to those in need. ○ Have the athletes think about their preferred True Sport Principle & share their choice & rationale with their teammates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage social giving. ○ Create a youth activator position on your club's organizing committees to engage youth & solicit their input. ○ Encourage athletes to volunteer. High school students can log these hours for school credits in certain provinces. ○ Encourage coaches, athletes & parents to become officials. ○ Use the True Sport Principles to encourage dialogue on how athletes can give back to their community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage critical thinking and taking a stand on issues of importance. ○ Provide opportunities for athletes to share their experiences through public speaking and role modeling. ○ Become a True Sport champion & get your athletes to do the same. ○ Become a Canadian Sport for Life champion & get your athletes to do the same. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transfer your knowledge back to your community by mentoring, coaching, as a community sport leader or role model. ○ Evolve as a participant – become a coach, an official or an administrator. ○ Consider sport-related careers such as coaching, officiating, sport administration, small business enterprises or media. ○ Find ways to encourage your community to take a stand. ○ Rally your community to become a True Sport Community.