

## Active Start

Ages 0-6



Starting at infancy, parents must provide opportunities for children to be physically active every day in a safe, fun environment. Physical activity through play is an essential part of a child's development. Activity should incorporate fundamental movement skills in the 4 environments of that lead to physical literacy:

In the water: Swimming  
On the ground: Athletics  
In the air: Gymnastics  
On ice and snow: Sliding (skiing, skating)

### Physical Development:

- Provide physical activity everyday regardless of weather conditions
- Starting at infancy, provide infants, toddlers and preschoolers with opportunities to participate in daily physical activity that promotes fitness and movement skills for a minimum of 60 minutes a day
- Encourage play, as it is an essential part of physical and mental development
- Develop basic gross motor skills and coordination with large muscle groups through unstructured activity
- Develop basic movement skills such as running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing, catching, swimming, wheeling and skating that form the base of physical literacy. These motor skills are the building blocks of more complex movement and help lay the foundation for lifelong physical activity and athletic development

### Psychological Development:

Activity is essential for development; among its benefits, physical activity enhances:

- Development of brain function
- Social skills
- Emotions, attitudes and imagination
- Confidence and positive self-esteem
- Stress reduction by quality of sleep

Design activities that help children to feel competent and comfortable participating in a variety of fun challenging sports and activities.

**The Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) window of opportunity for this stage is the initiation of movement skills, running, jumping, kicking, throwing, catching, swimming, sliding etc.**

### Programs:

USA Hockey member clubs offer 6 & Under (Mite) programs as well as a first-year participant Learn to Play program.

### USA Hockey's key focus for this stage:

- Help ensure our participants gain physical literacy
- Develop a passion for hockey in all children
- Encourage daily physical activity
- Provide the opportunity to explore a new surface (ice) and mode of locomotion (skating)

- Develop on-ice balance, coordination and agility
- Introduce basic skating movement skills through a Learn to Skate program
  - Preferably without use of a hockey stick

#### **Training and Competitive Environment:**

- **Training/Competition Ratio:** No formal competition, activity games and small area games should be incorporated in every ice session
- **Training Volume:** 1 to 2 times hockey per week, with session lengths no longer than 50 minutes at Learn to Play and 6 & Under (Mite) levels.
- **Training Year:** 4 weeks/month, 4 month/year
- **Team Composition:** Teams should consist of a maximum of 9 to 13 skaters. The goaltender position is excluded during this stage of development.
- **Team Structure:** Players can be grouped into teams of like abilities, with the overall focus on evenly distributing the player ability pool across all teams.
- **Competition format:** No formal competition

#### **USA Hockey recommends that parents guide their children to be physically active in building a base of physical literacy**

- **Structured and unstructured free play**
- **Activities that include swimming, running, jumping, balance, agility, gliding**