



## Ladder of Player Development

USA Hockey's American Development Model includes eight stages founded on proven long-term athlete development principles.



AGES 0-6

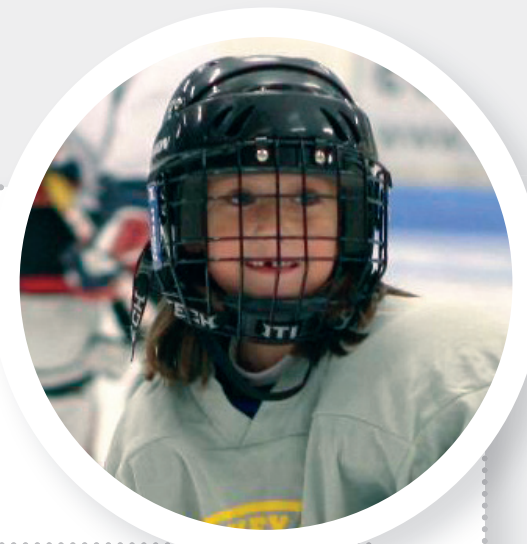
## ACTIVE START

This early development period is essential for acquiring fundamental movement skills (running, gliding, jumping, kicking, catching, striking, etc.) that form the foundation for more complex movements, thereby preparing children for a physically active lifestyle. USA Hockey encourages activity that incorporates fundamental movement skills in the four environments that lead to physical literacy: in the water (swimming), on the ground (athletics), in the air (gymnastics), on ice and snow (sliding and skating). Kids should start with a learn-to-skate program and then a learn-to-play program as their initial steps into hockey.

AGES 6-8 (FEMALE)  
AGES 6-9 (MALE)

## FUNDAMENTALS

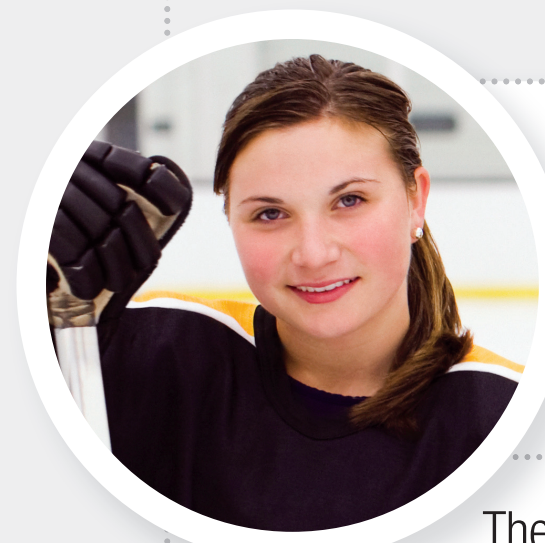
The objective of this stage is to refine fundamental movement skills and begin to acquire basic sport skills through fun-focused methods. This is the time when a foundation is set for future acquisition of more advanced skills. In this stage, the focus is on the development of physical literacy. Fundamental movement skills should be mastered and motor development emphasized, while participation in multiple sports and activities is encouraged. For optimal skill acquisition, the basic hockey skills of skating and puck control are introduced. Fun competitions are also introduced in a team environment.



AGES 8-11 (FEMALE)  
AGES 9-12 (MALE)

## LEARN TO TRAIN

This is the period during which accelerated learning of coordination and fine motor control occurs. It is the critical stage for the acquisition of hockey skills. What is learned or not learned in this stage will have a very significant effect on the level of play that is ultimately achieved in the athlete's future. Players in this development stage should be able to begin transferring skills and concepts from practice to games. Group interaction, team building and social activities should be emphasized. A smart balance of practices and games will promote the continued development and mastery of key hockey skills.



AGES 11-15 (FEMALE)  
AGES 12-16 (MALE)

## TRAIN TO TRAIN

The focus of this stage is to further develop sports-specific skills, begin to introduce competition, and start emphasizing support training to continue development of speed, strength and stamina while maintaining flexibility. Players should consolidate sports-specific technical skills with an increased emphasis on hockey and a reduction in the number of other sports played. A continued emphasis is also placed on the development of individual and group tactics. Social and emotional considerations are addressed by placing an emphasis on team-building, group interactions and social activities.

AGES 15-18 (FEMALE)  
AGES 16-18 (MALE)

## LEARN TO COMPETE

This is the time to prepare athletes for the competitive environment, continue to refine technical and ancillary skills, and develop the physical attributes. The focus is on optimizing fitness preparation and beginning to specialize in hockey. Training should be individualized to the athlete's particular needs in skill development, mental preparation, fitness and recovery. During this stage, training volume and intensity increases. Competitions become more important and the focus shifts to performance. Training emphasizes the development of position-specific technical and tactical skills under competitive conditions. Mental skills that contribute to performance are also emphasized.

