

ACTIVELY ENGAGING WOMEN AND GIRLS

FUNdamental Stage Considerations

Females ages 6-8*

Canadian Sport For Life (CS4L) is a movement to improve the quality of sport and physical activity. Active for Life is the final destination for all Canadians in **Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD)** – a training, competition and recovery pathway guiding an individual's experience in sport and physical activity from infancy through all phases of adulthood.

During the **FUNdamental stage**, girls should participate in a variety of activities to develop competence in fundamental movement skills, including the ABCs of agility, balance, coordination and speed. Competence in fundamental movement skills is a core element of **physical literacy** – the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.

THE GENDER GAP

Research from the University of Manitoba documented significant gaps between girls and boys in movement competence and confidence. They found that by age 7, girls were less likely to have the basic skills (e.g. jumping, throwing, kicking) to participate competently in many sports and physical activities. Girls were also less likely to self-report the requisite skills, knowledge, motivation, and ability to participate. These gaps widened with age. Lower competence and confidence amongst girls led to the disassociation of happiness with physical activity, and contributes to lower physical activity rates and short- and long-term impacts on their physical and mental health. The cause of these differences is a complicated mix of social norms, family and community priorities, cultural and religious beliefs, and systemic barriers. Families, caregivers, teachers, coaches, and program leaders have an important role to play in addressing the gaps.

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- **Move more** – The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity per day for children and youth. Support girls' participation in a variety of activities that use movement skills across environments – on the ground, in the air, in water, and on ice and snow. Regular participation will build movement skill competence and confidence.
- **Be active together** – Play outside, practice skills, or try a new sport or activity together. Be an active role model and

*Stage-related ages are guidelines only, and should consider developmental appropriateness and variations in readiness due to psycho-social factors.

share your passion for sport and physical activity. Talk about the importance of active living to physical and mental health.

- **Insist on quality** – Engage girls in quality programs that are aligned with LTAD, led by trained or certified coaches and instructors, and designed to introduce a variety of sports and physical activities and build her competence and confidence in a wide range of movement skills.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS, COACHES AND PROGRAM LEADERS

- **Focus on fundamental movement skills** – Be intentional about building the skills and knowledge of girls – acquisition is an outcome of quality instruction and practice. Educate yourself about skill development and progressions, physical literacy, quality programming, and the psycho-social factors that affect girls and young women.
- **Redefine fun** – For girls, the successes and failures associated with mastering new skills and accomplishing goals in a social environment is fun and will build their confidence. Incorporate fundamental movement skill and sport skill development in all programs to support positive outcomes and help girls build their physical literacy to be active for life.
- **Actively outreach** – Use innovative strategies to promote opportunities for all girls to be active. Ensure programs are accessible in terms of skill level, cost, time of day, location, and cultural appropriateness. Create new partnerships to access underserved communities to improve health in your community.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

LTAD Stage Considerations for Female Athletes series – <https://womenandsport.ca/learning-opportunities/presentations/long-term-development-for-women-and-girls/>
Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors – <https://womenandsport.ca/resources/publications/actively-engaging-women-and-girls/>
Other Actively Engaging Supplements
Recommendations for Teachers and School Administrators
About CS4L and LTAD – www.sportforlife.ca
Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines – <https://csepguidelines.ca/>
Physical Literacy Assessment for Youth Tools – www.physicalliteracy.ca
Activities and resources for parents – www.activeforlife.com

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