



What is PLAY?



PLAY stands for Physical Literacy Assessment for Youth. It's a series of physical literacy assessment tools that were developed by [Canadian Sport for Life \(CS4L\)](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca) to determine the level of an individual's [physical literacy](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca).

PLAY comprises a suite of tools:

PLAYfun is a formal assessment of locomotor, object control and balance skills. The tool must be administered by a coach, physical therapist, exercise professional or trained individual who has knowledge of fundamental movement skills.

PLAYbasic is a simplified and quicker version of **PLAYfun**.

PLAYself is a tool used by children for their self-assessment of physical literacy.

PLAYparent is designed for parents of school-aged children to assess their child's level of physical literacy.

PLAYcoach is used by coaches, exercise professionals and physical therapists to evaluate a child's level of physical literacy.

PLAYinventory is an inventory of leisure-time activities that the child has regularly participated in during the past year.



This Issue:

PHYSICAL LITERACY

- Fundamental Movement Skills
- Fundamental Sport Skills
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- The ABCs

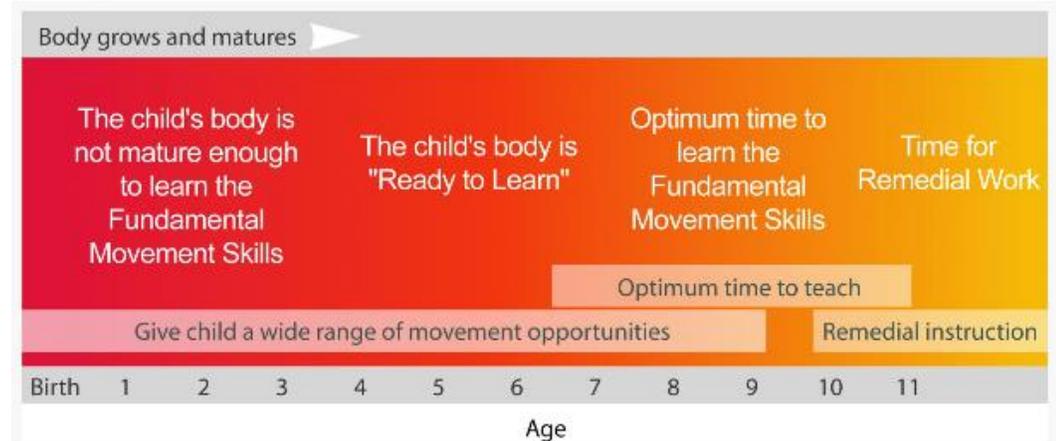
PHYSICAL LITERACY

Courtesy of our friends at Canadian Sport for Life (www.canadiansportforlife.ca)

Fundamental Movement Skills

Physical literacy is the combination of mastering fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills. It helps children involve themselves in and react to physical activities going on around them. Most skills require a series of developmental stages. If a stage is missed, development can be negatively affected.

For children to have success in sport – either for recreation or competition – it is important they master movement skills before sport skills, and fundamental sport skills before specific techniques. Learning fundamental sport skills before mastering the related fundamental movement skills can reduce performance ability later.



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Helping children learn fundamental movement skills

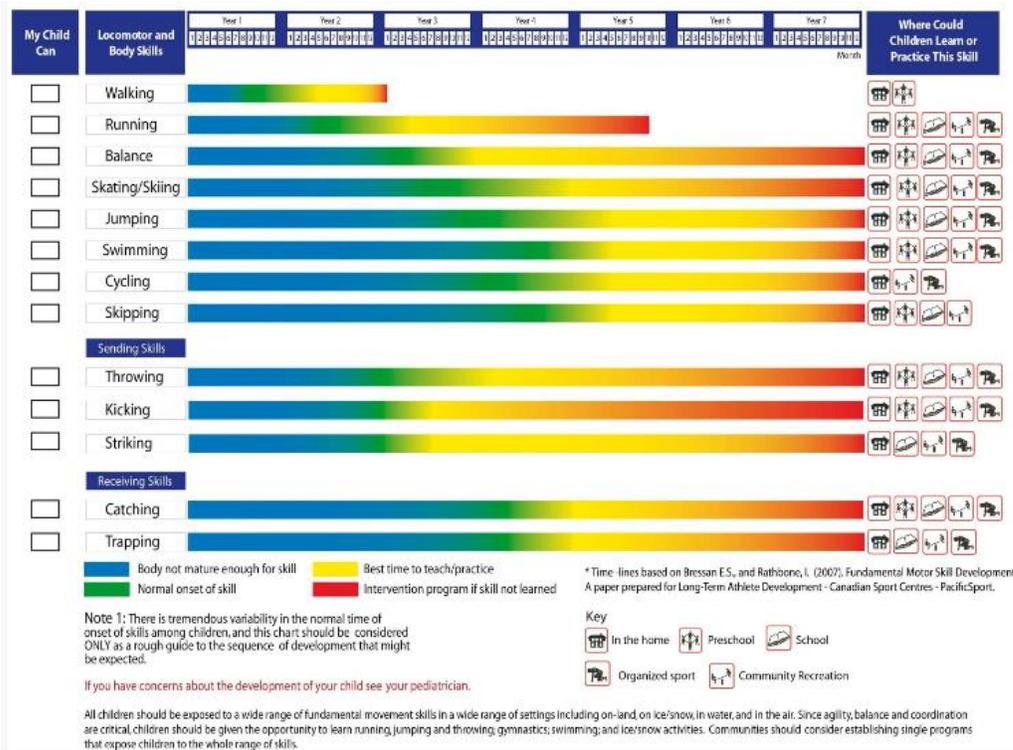
Almost all children learn their fundamental movement skills in the same sequence and go through the same phases:

When a child can learn a skill: As a child matures, nerve cells make more connections and muscles get stronger. Until the brain is mature enough and the muscles strong enough, the child simply cannot learn the skill. Children should be given opportunities to explore all possible movements in a safe yet challenging environment.

The child is ready to learn the skill: At a certain point in maturation, the child has the potential to perform a particular skill (the readiness factor). The combination of different equipment, simple instruction, fun practice and encouragement will build the child's confidence.

The optimum time to learn the skill: There is a "best" time for the child to learn each emerging skill. Simple instruction and practice will improve learning. Though best times vary, there is consistency in the skill-learning sequence. Figure 5 indicates best times for some common fundamental skills.

Time for remedial work: If the child goes too long without learning a skill, then learning it may become more difficult. However, the sooner the child starts to overcome the learning deficit the easier it will be for them to catch up – and develop the skill and confidence needed to be fully active with their friends and peers.



The ABCs: Useful In All Sports

Agility, balance, coordination, and speed are valuable in almost all sports. Developing these ABCs, as well as prediction and interception, is an important part of physical literacy, and can be achieved through involvement in a variety of sports and programs.

Some sports and activities are better at developing one or more of the ABCs than others. The key sports are:

- Gymnastics allows young children to learn and develop their agility, balance, and coordination.
- Athletics (track and field) builds speed and coordination.
- Skating and skiing provide opportunities for the development of balance, coordination and speed.
- **Soccer** helps with speed, agility, and coordination.
- In addition to developing confidence and safety in the water, swimming or Synchro (Aquasquirts) develops balance and coordination.
- Cycling (or skateboarding or horse riding) develops balance and the judgment of speed.

Prediction and interception, skills particularly necessary in stick, bat and racquet sports, round out the physical literacy requirements.

Various options exist for children in regards to sports and activities. But only school physical education programs provide the chance for every Canadian child to learn physical literacy. Parents and care-givers need to be proactive in finding appropriate options for their children.

Fortunately, there is a national move for sports to cooperate on the introduction of children to "clusters" of sports.

>> Learn more about [the ABCs](#).



Fundamental Sport Skills

Running, jumping, catching, kicking, throwing, swinging and hitting are the basic sports building blocks. Learning these fundamental sport skills allows children to play several sports with ease. Missing out on these skills can lead to a lifelong disconnect from recreation and sport.

There is an important difference between fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills.

Throwing is a fundamental movement skill. Acquiring this skill means:

- learning to throw lots of different sized balls
- with one or two hands
- at different speeds
- Sometimes for accuracy using targets and sometimes for distance.

When a child learns to throw a softball using a pitching motion, and tries to get the ball over home plate, they have moved from learning a fundamental movement skill to learning a fundamental sport skill.

Getting the Sequence Right

For children to have success in sport – either for recreation or competition – it is important they master movement skills before learning sport skills, and fundamental sport skills before specific techniques.

Learning fundamental sport skills before mastering the related fundamental movement skills actually reduces performance ability later.

Kicking skills:

In the fundamental movement skill stage, children learn the basic kicking action, ideally with each foot. They kick a variety of balls – kicking for distance, for accuracy, for height, and for control on the ground.

In the fundamental sport skill stage (e.g. soccer), children learn to kick a soccer ball without touching it with their hands. They learn how much power is required to pass, and how to use the inside of the foot to increase accuracy.

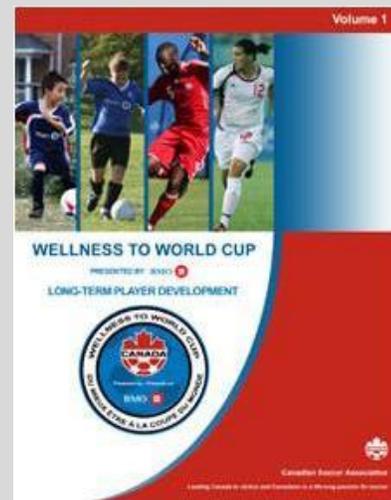
Catching skills:

In the fundamental movement skill stage, children learn to catch – with both hands, then with one. They catch balls of different sizes and weights – first while standing, then moving toward the ball. These skills can transfer to other sports.

In the fundamental sport skill stage (e.g. Baseball), children learn to catch a baseball using a baseball glove. The child eventually learns to catch the baseball when it is thrown and then when it is hit with the bat – learning to catch it at ever-greater distances.

LTPD Resources

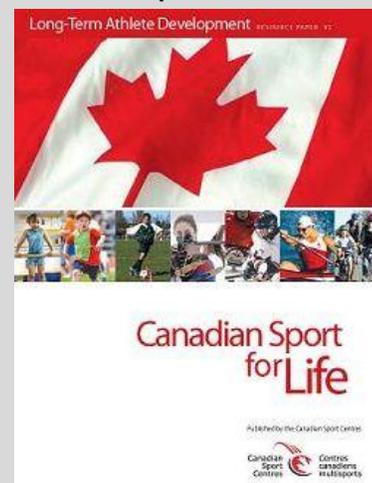
LTPD Volume 1



LTPD Brochure



Canadian Sport for Life LTAD



Missing out on physical literacy

Children like to play with other children who share their level of skill and who can “keep the game going”. If you can’t keep the game going, you won’t generally be asked to join in.

A child without fundamental movement skills is unlikely to willingly take part in an activity that requires proficiency in that skill. Being unable to perform even a single fundamental movement skill can seriously restrict later opportunities. This restricts both their choice of lifelong health-promoting activities and opportunities for sporting excellence.



Next Issue:

- Competition and LTPD
- Rest and Recovery Phases



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