

The Swimmer Pathway

Long-term Athlete Development (LTAD) Disability Swimming



Introduction

Long-term Athlete Development (LTAD) is about achieving optimal training, competition and recovery throughout an athlete's career, particularly in relation to the important growth and development years of young people.

This leaflet should be used in conjunction with "The Swimmer Pathway: Long-term Athlete Development" document (April 2003), and is a guide to the considerations for athletes with a disability.

The suggested ages for each LTAD stage are here to provide a guideline. Due to many reasons, the rate of development in some athletes with a disability may vary significantly both physically and cognitively.

7 stages

1. Pre-school - *Stepping Stones*
2. Fundamentals - *Multi Aquatics*
3. Learning to train - *Swim Skills*
4. Training to train - *Talent Development*
5. Training to compete - *Podium Development*
6. Training to win - *Podium Performers*
7. Sport for Life - *Active Lifestyles*



1. Pre-school - Stepping Stones

Age: Females 0 - 5 Males 0 - 6

Awareness and first experiences of movement patterns linking to play.

The lifelong importance of an active start for children with a congenital disability cannot be over emphasised. Positive first experiences of exercise and active play perform a crucial role in developing young athletes and maintaining an active lifestyle - 'Sport for Life'.

2. Fundamentals - Multi Aquatics

Age: Females 5 - 8

Males 6 - 9

The movement literacy skills needed by children with a disability vary greatly depending on the nature and extent of their disability and should include all such skills learned by non-disabled children, where appropriate. Whether it be children or adults with an acquired disability, it is critical that individuals effectively learn the FUNDamentals of new movement and sport specific skills so that these skills can be applied to a wide range of sports and recreational activities before specialising into a single sport.

Above all, children/those with newly acquired disabilities, should be active and have fun at this stage in developing basic movement literacy by working on:

- **Agility, balance, coordination and speed**
- **Running, throwing, jumping and catching skills***
- **Following simple rules and sport ethics**
- **Multi sport skills**
- **Gliding, buoyancy, kicking and rotation***

*Where appropriate



Volume/intensity of training

- Moderate volume
- Varied intensities

Swimming specific skills

- Development of all 4 strokes, where appropriate

Fundamental opportunities:

- Learn to swim schemes
- School swimming lessons/clubs
- Swimming clubs
- Multi skill clubs

Number and length of sessions:

- Multi – sport activities 5-6 times per week, where appropriate
- 30-45 minutes

Amount of competition

Unlimited

Delivery

For individuals with an impairment the activities need to be adapted to suit the individual by considering the range of movement, coordination, limb loss, paralysis, visual impairment.

Children with a disability face difficulties in acquiring FUNDamental skills because:

- Overly protective parents, carers, rehabilitation facility staff, teachers and coaches shield them from the bumps and bruises of childhood play
- Aquatic activity is not always accessible or appropriate for disabled children within schools
- Some teachers/coaches do not welcome children with a disability to their activities due to a lack of knowledge about delivering inclusive programmes

3. Learning to train - Swim Skills

Age: Females 8 - 11

Males 9 - 12

This stage is important for learning specific swimming skills for specialisation and building technique.

Some congenital disabilities are known to influence childhood and adolescent development and the timing of puberty; however much more research is needed before a full understanding is achieved. Although the timing of puberty may vary, the sequence of development that the adolescent goes through usually does not. It is likely that there will be variations in the ages at which optimum periods of trainability occur. At this stage it is critical that effective communication takes place with swimmer, parent and teacher/coach.

- **Learning swimming specific skills**
- **Flexibility training**
- **Core stability development**
- **Development of kinaesthetic awareness**



Volume/intensity of training

- According to biological development, however likely to be high volume with increasing intensity

Swimming specific skills

- Improvement of all 4 strokes, where appropriate
- Sculling and 'feel for water'
- Development of starts & turns

Number and length of sessions

- Swimming specific training 3-6 times per week, where appropriate, plus participation in other sports
- 1-1½ hour sessions

Training Opportunities

- School swimming lessons/clubs
- Swimming clubs
- Training squads

Type of competition

- Regional Pan disability
- NDSO Development Galas
- Schools competitions

Considerations

- Consideration must be given to each athlete's cognitive and developmental age rather than chronological age
- At this stage athletes need to be applying for classification

4. Training to train - Talent Development

Age: *Females 11 - 14*
Males 12 - 15

This stage is important for building the engine through:

- Skill development
- Aerobic conditioning
- Speed training
- Flexibility training
- Technical development
- Core stability work
- Body awareness and stroke adaptations



Volume/intensity of training

- According to biological age
- High volume and low intensity

Swimming specific skills

- Development of aerobic base plus all 4 strokes (150m/200m IM), where appropriate

Number and length of sessions

| | |
|----------|---------------------|
| S1-S4/5 | 3-5 times per week |
| S5-S7 | 6-9 times per week |
| S7/8-S14 | 7-11 times per week |

- Incorporating a land based training programme, 1-2 hours where appropriate

Training opportunities

- School swimming lessons/clubs
- Swimming clubs
- Regional and/or National training squads/camps

Type of competition

- Regional and Junior National Pan Disability
- NDSO Nationals
- the asa County Championships
- the asa Regional Championships
- UKSG
- Junior international Invitational competitions (GBR)

Considerations

- Awareness of potential overuse injuries during this high volume phase

Other

- Swimmers will need to be classified to at least a National level at this stage and hold a current Functional Ability Card (FAC)

5. Training to Compete - Podium Development

Age: *Females 14 - 16*

Males 15 - 18

This stage is important for optimising the engine through:

- **Specific technical skill training**
- **Maximum and core body strength training**
- **Tactical preparation**
- **Mental edge preparation**
- **Event specialisation**
- **Physical conditioning**



Volume/intensity of training

- High volume
- Increasing intensity
- Anaerobic development

Number and length of sessions

| | |
|----------|---------------------|
| S1-S4/5 | 3-5 times per week |
| S5-S7 | 6-9 times per week |
| S7/8-S14 | 7-11 times per week |

- Supported by a land based training programme, 1-2 hours where appropriate

Swimming specific skills

Start to compete in a wider range of events based on strokes or distance (but not on both)

Training venues

- Swimming clubs
- Regional squads
- High Performance Centres (World Class Pathway athletes)
- NDSO training camps
- World Class Pathway Training Camps (World Class Pathway athletes)

Type of competition:

- Home Country Nationals
- British Championships
- Pan disability Nationals
- the asa Regional Championships
- Junior/Senior international invitational competitions (GBR)
- Major Championships (GBR)

6. Training to Win - Podium Performers

Age: *Female 16+*

Male 18+

This stage is important for maximising the engine through:

- **Speed training**
- **Strength development**
- **Specific technical skill development**
- **Flexibility maintenance**
- **Advanced tactical preparation**
- **Advanced mental edge preparation**
- **Individualised training**

Volume/intensity of training

- Developed periodisation

Swimming specific skills

- Event specific specialisation

Number and length of sessions

| | |
|----------|---------------------|
| S1-S4/5 | 3-5 times per week |
| S5-S7 | 6-9 times per week |
| S7/8-S14 | 7-11 times per week |

- Supported by optimal land based training programme, 1-2 hours where appropriate

Training venues

- Swimming clubs
- High Performance Centres (World Class Pathway athletes)
- World Class Pathway Training Camps (World Class Pathway athletes)

Types of competition

- Home Country Nationals
- Pan Disability nationals
- British Championships
- Planned international competitive opportunities targeting the Paralympic Podium





7. Sport for life - Active lifestyles

All ages

This stage is important for:

- **Maintaining individual health and fitness**
- **Developing leadership skills**
- **Volunteering opportunities**
- **Socialising**
- **Career advancement**

Volume and intensity

- To suit individual personal choice

Number and length of sessions

- 3-5 active sessions per week

Type of competition available

- Masters competitions
- Club events
- Swimathon
- Charity events

Training venues

- Swimming clubs
- Lane swimming
- Open Water

Volunteers specific to disability swimming:

- Officials/Referees
- Classifiers
- Event volunteers
- Tappers
- Coaches
- Team managers
- Support staff
- Physios



For more information about **how to get involved** in disability swimming, download and complete the Swimmer ID Tracker Form from the British Swimming website. www.britishswimming.org

To find out more about the **Pathway to the Paralympic Podium**, download the Competitive Development Continuum from the British Swimming website www.britishswimming.org

Terms explained

NDSO - National Disability Sports Organisation
FAC - Functional Ability Card
the asa - Amateur Swimming Association
UKSG - UK School Games

GBR - Great Britain
IM - Individual Medley
4 strokes - Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle

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