**LTAD and Gymnastics**

Most parents and carers would like their children to be active throughout life. Concerns about health, crime and national well-being have brought sport and physical activity into the political debate. All this, along with a generally held belief that, taught well, sport and physical education can develop qualities like self-confidence, leadership and teamwork, make sport a potential force for good. Many people remember the fun of sport, while others have less-enjoyable experiences. What benefits are there for my four-year-old son? As a pre-schooler, can he gain anything from FUNdamentals? The gymnastics model shown below is based on Dr Istvan Balyi’s LTAD model, which reflects a systematic and lifelong approach to the development of gymnasts. It encompasses all gymnasts, from non-competitive participants to those choosing an elite pathway. Regardless of which pathway a gymnast takes through a discipline, the principles of LTAD still apply.

The gymnastics model shown below is based on Dr Istvan Balyi’s LTAD model, which focuses on best practice at each stage of development and level of performance. Coaching and judging principles are important at each stage, but emphasisation that the age at which a gymnast will move through each stage will change for the various disciplines in the sport. In addition, gymnastics is different to sport and social development in an appropriate, enjoyable and comfortable environment. The range of activities offered through the British Gymnastics LTAD model is very extensive and designed to meet the needs of crawlers to toddlers. This early form package was developed in consultation with pre-school providers and, therefore, would fit in really well with their learning environment. The package can be accessed via the British Gymnastics website, www.british-gymnastics.org.

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**QUESTIONS**

Is LTAD important in Gymnastics?

It is sometimes said that LTAD is not inverting the wheel. Is this true? Gymnastics has followed the common principles of player/performer development for several years. However, LTAD has provided a well-defined and structured pathway, which is helping British Gymnastics to build on previous good practice and to further assist the prudent and logical development of all participants. The principles of LTAD not only apply to those choosing an elite pathway: the great thing about the whole LTAD model is that it applies to non-competitive gymnastic participants and even provides a sound basis for discussion in the best way to prepare a child for a sport or physical activity.

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**FUNDamentals**
Learning the ABCs of physical literacy

Enjoyable, challenging and progressive experiences
Can be at any age from 8 weeks to 8 years

This stage is important for developing:
- basic movement skills
- agility, balance and coordination
- running, jumping, landing and co-ordination
- physical attributes of:
  - speed
  - strength using own body weight.

Amount of physical activity including gymnastics (age-dependent):
- Could be 4 hours per week, rising to 6–8 hours with older children
- 30–90-minute sessions with high-volume, low-intensity activity

Type of competition:
- Formal (competition is not necessary)
- Participation should be in club-based displays and activities that are informal and fun.

Venues:
- Clubs
- Leisure/sports centres
- Community/ridge halls
- Schools

Coaches at this stage will be:
- Pre-school
- Level 1 Assistant Coach
- Level 2 Club Coach
- General or discipline-specific:
  - Level 1 Assistant Coach
  - Level 2 Coach
- Teachers:
  - Award Level

Amount of gymnastic activity (discipline and age-specific):
- Could be 15 hours per week
- 90–120-minute sessions and, according to growth, could be high-volume, increasing intensity activity

Type of competition:
- There should be a period of competition per year:
  - school- and/or club-organised
  - regional and/or national standard facilities

Amount of competition:
- There should be between 4 and 6 competitions per year

**Training to Learn**
Acquiring basic skills

Enjoying a healthy lifestyle
From approximately 7–9 years of age, depending on discipline, maturity and aspiration

This stage is important for developing:
- refined basic skills
- more focused discipline-specific skills
This stage is important for refining physical abilities of:
- moderate endurance
- speed
- strength
- flexibility

Be aware of growth issues.

Amount of gymnastic activity (discipline and age-specific):
- Could be 15 hours per week
- 90–120-minute sessions and, according to growth, could be lower volume, increasing intensity activity

Type of competition:
- There should be 1 period of competition per year:
  - school- and/or club-organised
  - regional and/or national standard facilities

Amount of competition:
- There should be between 4 and 6 competitions per year

Venues:
- Clubs
- Leisure/sports centres
- Community/ridge halls
- Schools

Coaches at this stage will be:
- General or discipline-specific:
  - Level 2 Club Coach
- Teachers:
  - Award Level

**Training to Train**
Acquiring key skills

Developing self-confidence
From approximately 10–14 years of age, depending on discipline, maturity and aspiration

This stage is important for developing:
- the advanced performance skills of:
  - adherence to level and discipline
  - systematic training programmes
  - the specific physical preparation of:
    - speed
    - strength
    - power
    - plyometric training

Be aware of growth issues.

Amount of gymnastic activity (discipline and age-specific):
- Could be 30–90 minutes per week
- 30–60-minute sessions of varying length, and according to type of training and growth, could have higher volume, increasing intensity activity

Type of competition:
- There should be 2 periods of competition per year:
  - school-, club-, county- or regionally organised
  - national and/ or internationally organised

Amount of competition:
- There should be between 8 and 10 competitions per year

Venues:
- Clubs
- Regional and national standard facilities
- Schools

Coaches at this stage will be:
- General or discipline-specific:
  - Level 3 Club Coach
- Teachers:
  - Award Level

**Training to Compete**
Acquiring advanced skills

Developing self-confidence
From approximately 14–16 years of age, depending on discipline, maturity and aspiration

This stage is important for developing:
- the advanced performance skills of:
  - adherence to level and discipline
  - systematic training programmes
  - the specific physical preparation of:
    - speed
    - strength
    - power
    - plyometric training

Be aware of growth issues.

Amount of gymnastic activity (discipline and age-specific):
- Could be 30–60 hours per week
- 120–180 minutes sessions of varying length, and according to type of training with high volume, and high intensity

Type of competition:
- There should be 3 periods of competition per year:
  - school-, club-, county-, regionally or nationally organised

Amount of competition:
- There should be between 10 and 15 competitions per year

Venues:
- Clubs
- Regional and national standard facilities
- Schools

Coaches at this stage will be:
- Sport-specific:
  - Level 5 High Performance Coach
- International Performance Coach

**Training to Win**
Refining and maximising skills

Enjoying the moment
From approximately 16 years of age, depending on discipline, maturity and aspiration

This stage is important for:
- refining and maximising performance skills of:
  - adhering to level and discipline
  - systematic training programmes
  - refining and maximising physical preparation:
    - speed
    - strength
    - endurance

Amount of gymnastic activity (discipline and age-specific):
- Could be 60–90 hours per week
- 180–210 minutes sessions of varying length, and according to type of training with high volume, and high intensity

Type of competition:
- There should be 3 periods of competition per year:
  - school-, club-, county-, regionally or nationally organised

Amount of competition:
- There should be between 15 and 20 competitions per year

Venues:
- Clubs
- Regional and national standard facilities
- Schools

Coaches at this stage will be:
- Sport-specific:
  - Level 5 High Performance Coach
- International Performance Coach

Retainment
Making choices

Completing lifelong participation
For senior and/or mature gymnasts

This stage is important for:
- maintaining peak performance
- changing competition participation level
- developing pathways for the exit from competition
- coaching
- management
- exploring pathways into other sports and sports occupations.

Venues:
- Clubs
- Regional and national standard facilities
- Schools

Coaches at this stage will be:
- Sport-specific:
  - Level 4 Senior Coach
- International Performance Coach

I KNOW THAT SPORT HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE PEOPLE’S LIVES. I HAVE ALWAYS ENJOYED RUGBY BUT HAVE ALSO BEEN FORTUNATE TO PLAY A WHOLE HOST OF DIFFERENT SPORTS FROM A YOUNG AGE. I HOPE THAT ALL CHILDREN HAVE SIMILAR ENJOYABLE OPPORTUNITIES TO PLAY AND KEEP ACTIVE THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES.

Pete Ackerley, Head of Development, England and Wales Cricket Board

RETAINING PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES.

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Pete Ackerley, Head of Development, England and Wales Cricket Board

MY COACH ALWAYS TELLS ME THAT THE REASON I AM DOING SO WELL AT MY PARTICULAR LEVEL IS THAT I LOVE CRICKET. MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, MY SPORT MAKES ME TRAIN HARD, WORKING TO BECOME FASTER, STRONGER AND BETTER THAN BEFORE. IT’S ME WHO WANTS TO WORK LIKE THIS BECAUSE I WANT TO RISE TO THE CHALLENGES OF GYMNASTICS.

Beth Tweddle, international performer