

LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT



How to provide the best growth for the athletes in our sport

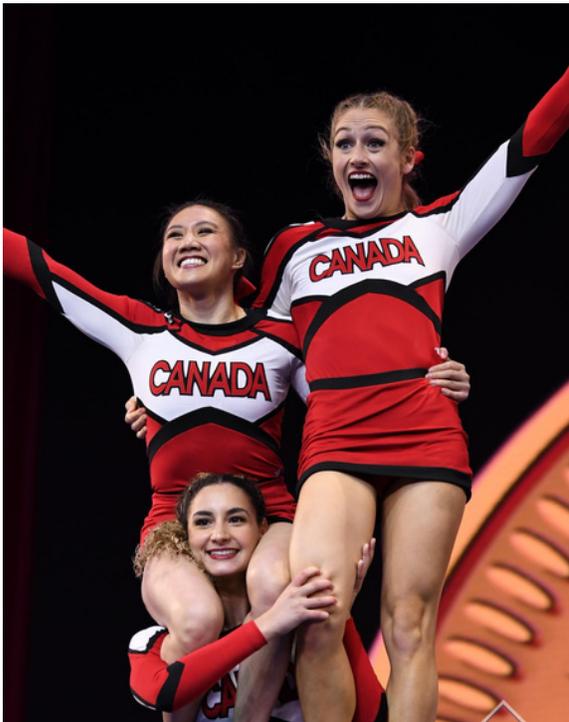


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INTRODUCTION TO CHEER CANADA

Cheer Canada wants to acknowledge this land's First Peoples, who are the traditional guardians of the ceded and unceded territory we call Canada. As the National Sport Organization (NSO) for the sport of Cheer in Canada, we have the responsibility to acknowledge our dependence on and relationship with the land upon which we live and cheer, and to prioritize reconciliation. We encourage everyone to build relationships with Indigenous knowledge keepers, and to support Indigenous communities and individuals. Let's pursue an inclusive, respectful path towards a better future for the country, people and sport.

In Canada, cheerleading is a sport that continues to grow in popularity. The International Cheer Union (ICU) recognized Cheer Canada as the official governing body for cheerleading in our country in 2011. In 2016, Cheer Canada adopted a new governance structure with a renewed effort and mission. Cheer Canada's Long-Term Development Framework will serve as the basis for our "Long-Term Development" plan in Canada.

There are two disciplines of cheer in Canada: Cheerleading and Performance Cheer (Dance). There are many divisions and streams within both Cheerleading and Performance Cheer. For purposes of this document, the term 'cheerleading' will be all encompassing. For more information on specific skills and divisions within each discipline, please reference the Cheer Canada Athlete Development Matrix.

The goal of Cheer Canada's Long-Term Development Framework is to provide a basis of knowledge for Long-Term Development (LTD) in cheerleading across Canada. The purpose of having an LTD Framework specific to cheerleading is to provide a framework that enables optimal long-term development and encourages an overall physically active lifestyle for all ages. It takes into account growth, maturation and development, trainability and sport system alignment.



Our LTD Framework contains a broad overview of development that is applicable to all sports, as well as some cheerleading specific details. Science, research and decades of experience all show when children are introduced to activities and sport, using the appropriate stages of development, they build the necessary motor skills and confidence to help stay active throughout all stages of their lives. By following the LTD Framework, an athlete will acquire the physical, mental, technical, strategic and life skills that are required in order to stay healthy, happy and active for life. Sport will not only shape an athlete, but aid in shaping the type of person they will become in everyday life. Our LTD Framework outlines best practices and what cheerleading as a sport is striving towards in Canada.

Cheer Canada understands that cheerleading is still a relatively young sport and in some programs, cities and provinces, it may take months or even years for programs to reflect all of the best practices presented in Cheer Canada's LTD Framework. We have included age groups, levels and how best to assist athletes in their growth and development to become the best athletes they can be. Cheer Canada aims to update this resource as more cheerleading specific data and research within Canada becomes available.

The Cheer Canada LTD Framework builds on the Sport for Life resource "Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity 3.0". Cheerleading specific references have been used throughout our LTD Framework, while following the Sport for Life framework.

Cheerleading has expanded its participation, and is now the chosen sport of many Canadians. Cheer Canada is committed to the growth and development of our sport across the country. Our LTD Framework will assist our community as we navigate national governance, outline our priorities, define our mission and work towards our ambitious goals.

Cheer Canada's Mission, Vision and Values

The LTD framework is produced by Cheer Canada and is consistent with the Organization's mission, vision and values.

OUR MISSION

To provide the foundation for a positive Cheerleading experience in Canada.

OUR VISION

We are the leader in Cheerleading, unified and aligned nationally and globally.

OUR VALUES

- **Community:** We support and collaborate with our stakeholders across Canada in pursuit of our Vision.
- **Integrity:** We are fully transparent and accountable to our community and we establish high ethical standards.
- **Active Commitment to Respect:** We advocate daily for inclusivity, diversity and accessibility in our sport; rooted in our commitment to equity and fair treatment of all Cheer participants.
- **Focus on Athletes:** Our decision making is guided by the athlete experience, from grassroots to the podium, with a focus on SAFE and FUN Cheer.
- **Excellence:** We always strive for excellence, in all aspects of Cheer.

Sport and Physical Activity in Canada

Sport and physical activity remain powerful agents for developing individuals and society as a whole. The benefits of physical activity, expressed in many ways through structured and unstructured sport, recreation, active living and play, are universally recognized for their vital contributions to health and well-being. At the same time, their value toward overall human development and social-economic enhancement is under-appreciated.

Fortunately, there is a growing awareness of the ways sport and physical activity can shape society for the better. It is within sport and physical activity's reach to improve health and well-being, inclusion, gender equality and to address other social challenges. Countries that understand the value of sport and physical activity and implement coherent development strategies reap rewards for their citizens and communities, including improved social cohesion, reduced spending on healthcare, better mental health and other economic benefits.

Cheer Canada is committed to the principles of Sport for Life. Our national cheerleading community is continuously expanding our efforts to provide opportunities for participants at all levels in all age groups. Cheerleading has an established leveling system and Performance Cheer has developed different styles to maximize participation. We have adopted divisions to encourage involvement from participants living with a variety of disabilities.

Cheerleading is progressive, inclusive and diverse. Our sport is internationally recognized for its modern approach and appeal to participants of all backgrounds, ethnicities, abilities and orientations.



A Truly Canadian Approach

To be truly world-leading, Canada cannot simply copy other systems. For Canadian athletes to achieve sustained international sporting success and for all Canadians to be active for life, we need a made-in-Canada system. Canada is already a leader in the global cheerleading movement. Our excellence in all facets of sport are world renowned. Cheer Canada is committed to building upon these achievements and experiences to further develop our uniquely Canadian approach to cheerleading. The social values, political systems, and economic realities in our country all influence the manner through which cheerleading is organized coast to coast. It has allowed us to build a model and framework that is highly respected and valued worldwide.

There is a significant opportunity for our Canadian values to be shared with our international cheerleading community, and to further our impact both at home in Canada and everywhere our sport is practiced.



The growth of cheerleading in Canada depends on the implementation of a Long-Term Development approach. Community sport and physical activity participation in Canada has declined, physical education programs in schools are marginalized and the sport delivery system in Canada remains fragmented. There has been rapid growth of “for profit” sport businesses offering ever more specialized “elite” training at ever-younger ages. There is more to do to create the ecosystem we need, one which inspires every Canadian to pursue both excellence and physical activity for life.

About this Resource

The Cheer Canada LTD Framework is a resource for all participants in our cheerleading community, and the Canadian sport ecosystem at large. It provides relevant and useful information for participants, athletes, parents, guardians, coaches, administrators, industry professionals, cheerleading enthusiasts and governing bodies. All parties are encouraged to read through and become familiar with this resource. It can also be used as a model for others to follow or as a way to highlight the progress and achievement we have experienced.

Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity is a framework for the development of every child, youth and adult to enable optimal participation in sport and physical activity. It takes into account growth, maturation and development, trainability and sport system alignment.

The framework recognizes that the cognitive, emotional, moral and psychological and social development of children are important components of maturation and significantly contribute to progress in sport from introductory play, all the way up to and including world-leading performances.

Ultimately, both sporting excellence and an active, healthy population are outcomes of a sport and physical activity development process that is top quality, well-designed, inclusive of all and optimally implemented. Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity is a uniquely Canadian, world-leading design – now is the time to fully implement this model.

Canadian Sports at a Glance

Coaches who engage in the Athlete Long-Term Development model and its practices are more likely to support participants to reach their full athletic potential, help reduce the drop out and increase opportunities for prospective athletes. Canadian Women and Sport released statistics in their 2020 Rally Report that showcase the need for Canadian sport organizations to model best practices in efforts to increase retention and opportunity for athletes.

Only 4 per cent of girls (compared to 9% of boys) achieve the recommended levels of daily physical activity.

If a girl doesn't participate in a sport by the time she's 10 years old, there's only a 10% chance she'll be active when 25.

Fewer Canadian youth are participating in sport. In 2010–2011, parents reported 74% of children and youth participate in sport. Based on the current report data, this rate has fallen by at least 14% over the last decade. Under 60% of boys and girls participate in sport now. This rate is much lower for girls.

Parents, Guardians, Participants

For parents and participants, this resource helps to explain what to expect at different stages of development. It explains in detail why certain ages and levels are at certain stages and why it is imperative for athletes to work through safe and developmentally appropriate progressions before moving onto the next level or skill. It will help them understand the choices that are made by their program and coaches.

Coaches, Gym Owners and Scholastic Representatives

The art of coaching and program design also play significant roles in the framework development, and for coaches who must make multiple day-to-day coaching decisions, the framework extrapolates from currently available scientific literature. For example, coaches, gym owners and scholastic representatives could refer to the framework at different stages to ensure their programs and teams are following the appropriate progressions for participants of all ages.

Marginalized groups

One of the most persistent issues within the Canadian Sport ecosystem is the way specific groups continue to be marginalized. As a result, girls and women, individuals with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, newcomers to Canada, the LGBTQIA2S+¹ community, aging adults, those living in poverty and those living in isolated communities remain underserved and under-supported. Many sport and physical activity programs have not adequately engaged and worked with these populations to design and deliver quality experiences that meet their unique needs. Cheer Canada will continue to strive to build the detailed components required for each group, and will distribute information with the goal of building appropriate and meaningful Long-Term Development pathways for all citizens in Canada.



¹ LGBTQIA2S+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or Questioning), Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit and the countless affirmative ways in which people choose to self-identify. We use this acronym due to its broad scope. However, we recognize that this is a time of change in terms of language around sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, and that “Gender and Sexually Diverse Community” is used more prominently by various groups in certain sectors.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Cheer Canada's Commitment

Cheer Canada is an inclusive organization and welcomes full participation of all individuals in programs and activities, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status or family status.

Our LTD Framework was developed to reflect appropriate and applicable objectives for every individual involved in the sport of cheerleading, across a broad range of categories.

Cheer Canada recognizes the benefits of diversity, equity and inclusion, and strives to be a leader in helping to build diverse, welcoming and inclusive environments.

Every participant is unique, and supporting individual differences at each stage of development will help improve coaching objectives and individual goal setting, keeping athletes involved in the sport of cheerleading for life.

Cheer Canada is committed to:

- offering educational opportunities for coaches, gym owners, participants, athletes and the wider community to better understand and implement the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy²;
- increasing knowledge and understanding of, and reducing barriers to, participation in Cheer Canada programs, training and coaching opportunities;
- ensuring a governance structure, sport and work environment that encourages, promotes and provides fair and equitable participation;
- continuing to incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion into its strategic plan, actions and operations, including management, sponsorship, marketing, media and communications;
- ensuring equal opportunity when developing, updating or delivering Cheer Canada programs, policies and projects;
- seeking opportunities to enhance diversity that encourage balanced representation;
- ensuring diverse participants have equitable opportunity for excellence;
- prohibiting discriminatory practices;
- reviewing all instances of discrimination according to the Code of Conduct³ and/or Discipline and Complaints Policy⁴; and
- monitoring and evaluating its inclusion, equity and diversity progress.

Cheer Canada encourages the coach and athlete communities to provide feedback. How can we take additional steps to create a safe and inclusive space for all? Email us your insights, advice or concerns: executivedirector@cheercanada.ca.



² Linked Website: <https://cheercanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Policy.pdf>

³ Linked Website: <https://cheercanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Code-of-Conduct-and-Ethics-Policy-Cheer-Canada-20200101.pdf>

⁴ Linked Website: <https://cheercanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Discipline-and-Complaints-Policy-Cheer-Canada-20200101.pdf>



Supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Each person looks at the world differently, through different lenses that shape perceptions, attitudes and actions. Cheer Canada encourages the cheerleading community to ask some difficult questions: Are we providing inclusive and welcoming environments for all people in cheerleading? Are we showing the next generation that cheerleading welcomes everyone? Do coaches and leaders in the cheerleading industry model diversity, equity and inclusion best practices? The goal of this section is to help everyone involved to become more knowledgeable about participant barriers in sport.

What is diversity?

A diverse coaching environment acknowledges the differences in age, gender, education and background. It acknowledges individuals' unique life experiences, qualities and characteristics.

What is equity?

Coaching for equity is not just about providing participants with access or opportunity in sport. It is about providing access to opportunities by supporting each participant in ways that are important to them and fit their personal needs.

What is inclusion?

An inclusive coaching culture embraces, respects and values differences in people regardless of physical ability, location, race, age, socioeconomic status, citizenship, creed, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status or family status

Additional Resources:

- [Diversity and Inclusion – Coaching Association of Canada](#)⁵
- [Cheer Canada's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy – Cheer Canada](#)⁶

⁵ Linked Website: <https://coach.ca/diversity-inclusion>

⁶ Linked Website: <https://cheercanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Policy.pdf>

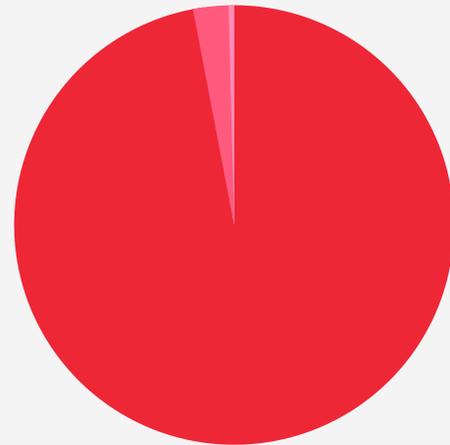
Build Your Knowledge

Women in Sport

Canadian statistics tell us that by age 14, girls drop out of sport at two times the rate of boys. In addition to high female drop out rates, another study reported that women occupy only 19 per cent of the head coach positions in Canadian universities and only 17 per cent of the athletic director positions. There is a clear lack of female retention and leadership in sport. Table 1 highlights Canadian statistics of women and girls in sport.

Cheer Canada's members by gender (2020)

- Women (97%)
- Men (2.6%)
- Undefined (0.4%)



By age 13, 7 out of 10 youth will quit sport.

1 in 3 girls drop out of sport compared to 1 in 10 boys.

For every boy that quits sport, 6 girls quit.

Up to 80% of mechanical injuries can be prevented.

40% of all child and youth emergency room visits are from sport and recreation⁷.

Table 1. Canadian Statistics of Women and Girls in Sport

However, cheerleading is a sport that is dominated by women and girls: 97 per cent of Cheer Canada's members are women (see chart). Often, girls seek out cheerleading because it is known for its ability to foster the growth of positive relationships, the building of life skills and the maintenance of physical, emotional and mental health and well-being. In Canadian sport, girls and women make up only 38 per cent of both competitive and recreational athletes⁸. While cheerleading is above that average, we are still aware there are barriers affecting their participation in the sport. Cheer Canada aims to help coaches hone knowledge and skills that will provide a quality experience to help keep girls in the gym and active for life.

⁷ Powering Better Sport Through Gender Equity. (2020, December 14). Retrieved December 21, 2020, from <https://womenandsport.ca/>

⁸ Canadian Women and Sport, Rally Report (Rep.). (2020). Retrieved <https://womenandsport.ca/resources/research-insights/rally-report/>

Cheerleading in Canada has created an opportunity for girls and women to become active in sport. However, longstanding false beliefs, upheld by an institutional bias, favour male participation in sport over that of females. These perceptions have a measurable, negative impact on female socialization in general and on their experience in sport. Creating a positive social environment that intentionally fosters a sense of belonging is integral to the retention of girls in sport and physical activity. For many male athletes, good performance creates a stronger sense of social belonging. In contrast, for many female athletes, feeling a strong sense of social belonging will enhance their performance and retention in the sport⁹.

As athletes progress in the sport, sport-related injuries may be more prevalent due to the higher risk skills, powerful tumbling and intensive practices. Canadian Women in Sport released a study in 2020 stating that female athletes are six times more likely to sustain a non-impact ACL injury than their male counterparts. In addition, studies have shown that 80% of these injuries could have been avoided. By following our LTD Framework, we aim to reduce the percentage of preventable injuries.

Training norms and expectations in sport tend to have a significant male bias. Exercise physiologist and nutrition scientist Dr. Stacy Sims (PHD) states that it is important for female athletes to train to their unique physiological needs rather than against them. This requires planned stages of training and recovery. Resources to help coaches to better meet the needs of female athletes include:

- ROAR, How to Match Youth Food and Fitness to Your Female Physiology for optimum performance, great health and a strong, lean body for life. By Dr Stacy T. Sims
- Canadian Women and Sport
 - [She Belongs, Building Social Connection for Lasting Participation in Sport](#)
 - [Rally Report](#)
 - [Gender Equitable Boards](#)
 - [Actively Engaging Women and Girls, Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors](#)
- [Keeping Girls in Sport \(eLearning module\)](#) (Retrieved from Jumpstart)

Participants Living with Disabilities

Participating in physical activity has many health benefits .¹⁰ Healthy individuals are more likely to participate fully in society and are less likely to develop medical problems that draw on limited health care resources. We have a collective interest in helping to ensure that all Canadians are active, fit and healthy. And yet, Canada has a critical problem with low levels of physical activity, in particular among persons with disabilities. Approximately 22% of Canadians have a sensory, intellectual or physical disability and some of these persons may have more than one disability .

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⁹ She Belongs, Building Social Connection for Lasting Participation in Sport (Rep.). (2020). Retrieved October 26, 2020, from Canadian Women and Sport website: https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/She-Belongs_Canadian-Women-Sport.pdf

¹⁰ Physical Activity. Retrieved March 25, 2021, from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>

¹¹ New Data on Disability in Canada in 2017 (2018). Retrieved April 5, 2021 from Statistics Canada website: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2018035-eng.htm>

Certain studies indicate that as low as three per cent of these individuals may be participating in regular organized physical activity¹². Too few persons with disabilities are able to participate due in part to barriers such as:

- A lack of accessible facilities and available programs for persons with disabilities;
- A lack of information regarding the sport opportunities that do exist, and the health research that can assist and encourage persons with disabilities to become active;
- Increased costs for specialized equipment and for transportation; and
- A lack of coaches and other people who can help train participants with disabilities.

Recent research on sport participation has shown that 25% of athletes with a disability report negative experiences in sport, and a disproportionate number report being subjected to abuse and discrimination at the hands of organizers, coaches and other athletes¹³. Awareness and knowledge about how to effectively engage participants living with disabilities is crucial in all aspects of cheerleading.

Cheerleading in Canada provides specific coaching, training and programs for participants with a disability.

Cheerleading promotes:

- Independence
- Self-esteem and self-awareness
- Opportunities to connect to peers
- Access to positive role models
- The courage to try new challenges
- Physical Literacy
- Likelihood of living a physically active life



Learn more about how to eliminate barriers and create safe and inclusive spaces for athletes living with disabilities.

- [Sport For Life, No Accidental Champions: LTAD for Athletes with a Disability \(2nd Edition\)](#)
- [Coaching Athletes with a Disability \(eLearning module from the Coaching Association of Canada\)](#)

LGBTQIA2S+ in Cheerleading

An increasing number of Canadians, and at a younger age than in the past, are identifying as LGBTQIA2S+. According to a survey conducted by Egale Canada (2009), 26% of students identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning¹⁴. For a youth based team of 15–20 players, this could translate into five or more athletes. For the adult population, an estimated five to 15% identify as LGBTQIA2S+.

Younger participants or athletes and younger coaches are feeling more comfortable with sexual and gender diversity. This is evidenced by the fact that more LGBTQIA2S+ participants, athletes and coaches are coming out during their career, rather than waiting until they retire.

¹² Level the playing field: A natural progression from playground to podium for Canadians with disabilities (Rep.). (2012, June). Retrieved October 26, 2020, from Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights website: <https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/Committee/411/ridr/rep/rep07jun12-e.pdf>

¹³ Jones, S. (2020, February 26). Representing the needs of athletes with a disability. Retrieved October 26, 2020, from <http://www.disabilitypolicyalliance.ca/sports-culture-recreation/representing-the-needs-of-athletes-with-a-disability.html>

¹⁴ Egale Canada. (2009). First national climate survey on homophobia in Canadian schools. Access at: www.egale.ca/extra/CG_Taylor__Climate_Survey__Phase_One_Report.pdf

Today, Canadian sport has more allies stepping up and speaking out. Allies are people committed in words and actions to counteracting LGBTQIA2S+ phobia, discrimination or harassment of their LGBTQIA2S+ family members, friends, coworkers and teammates. An increasing number of sport organizations recognize the need to provide supportive environments for all participants, athletes, coaches, volunteers, staff and other members. As a result, there is a need to have a better understanding of LGBTQIA2S+ issues in sport¹⁵.

Learn more about supporting those who identify as LGBTQIA2S+:

- [Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches A Practical Resource for Coaches](#) (Retrieved from Canadian Women and Sport)
- [Canadian Women in Sport: We are Sport, LGBTQI2S Inclusion](#) (Retrieved from Canadian Women and Sport)
- [One Team](#) (Retrieved from Olympic.ca)

Canadian Newcomers

Newcomers to Canada may have established their routines but they may not have integrated into their communities. They may struggle to find a place in Canada well after they arrive, and sport and physical activity can be important for helping them find a sense of belonging¹⁶. Canadian Cheerleading has a responsibility to ensure that cheerleading is accessible to all. Awareness is the first step to becoming empathetic to the unique circumstances that prevent some newcomers from fully participating in sport and physical activity.

Many newcomers are keenly interested in taking part in both traditional and non-traditional sports and activities in Canada, but organizations may need to take different approaches to engage them. Awareness cultivates an understanding of the range of opportunities that exist for sport and physical activity, and how to get involved. To this end, Cheer Canada is striving to develop awareness and communication plans to help everyone learn how to successfully engage and create inclusive spaces for all.

Learn more about inclusion of Newcomers to sport:

- [Sport for Life for All Newcomers To Canada Creating Inclusion of Newcomers in Sport and Physical Activity](#) (Retrieved from Sport for Life)

Indigenous Long-Term Participant and Athlete Development

Cheer Canada understands that mainstream pathways to sport and sport opportunity are not easily accessible, and may not align with Indigenous needs or experiences. Cheer Canada intends to close the gap by outlining the key elements that need to be considered when planning, developing and implementing programs for and with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous communities.

In 2008, the Canadian government apologized for their attempt at cultural genocide to the Indigenous people. Even though Canada has taken strides to rectify the painful history, systemic racism and discrimination are still deeply rooted in many Canadian systems and policies.

¹⁵ Birch-Jones, J. (2017). Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches (Rep.). Retrieved 2020, from Coach.ca, Athletes Can, Canadian Woman and Sport website: https://coach.ca/sites/default/files/2020-02/LeadingTheWay_v2017.pdf

¹⁶ Sport for Life for ALL NEWCOMERS TO CANADA Creating Inclusion of Newcomers in Sport and Physical Activity (Rep.). (2018). Retrieved 2020, from Sport For Life website: <https://sportforlife.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Inclusion-for-New-Citizens.pdf>

Indigenous peoples across Canada live diverse experiences and will have had different experiences with systemic and overt forms of discrimination, including (but not limited to) racism. Against this backdrop, sport means different things to different Indigenous peoples and groups. For many Indigenous peoples, the primary purpose of sport is to build self-esteem among youth. Sport for Life and the Aboriginal Sport Circle explain that sport and activity give youth a sense of purpose and direction, and, in some cases, help them to engage in more appropriate activity during their free time while they find their way in the world¹⁷.

In the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada | Calls to Action for Sports and Reconciliation (2015), sport and recreation are identified as tools for social development to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. This is the underlying rationale for the resources listed below – to save lives and to build healthier Indigenous peoples, who contribute to healthier communities. A by-product of that is more Indigenous participants pursuing sport excellence and standing on the podium. The resources below seek to provide guidance for that sport journey – from the playground to the podium – and everywhere in between.

- [Indigenous Sport For Life: The Indigenous Long Term Participant Development Pathway 1.2](#)
- [Indigenous Long Term Participant Development Pathway – Sport Organization Guide](#) (Retrieved from Sport for Life)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Report \(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, 2015, p. 10\)](#)
- [Aboriginal Coaching \(eLearning Module\)](#) (Retrieved from the Coaching Association of Canada)





GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Cheer Canada's Long-Term Development model is built on four guiding principles:

Quality Programming

The quality of a participant or athlete's experiences in cheerleading settings helps to shape how they will develop and what they will be like as adults. Quality programs and services are essential to all levels and disciplines in the spectrum of cheerleading, from recreational to elite training. Cheer Canada aims to equip gyms with the tools to create quality programming that puts the needs of participants first and understands that quality programs are only possible through the commitment of cheerleading organizations, staff and volunteers to follow a process of continual improvement.

Athlete-Centered Coaching

Although coaches are traditionally responsible for assessing performance and formulating solutions, athletes are able to develop cognitive and emotional skills better when they are given autonomy to find solutions that enhance their own performance. Cheer Canada encourages an athlete-centered approach to coaching to allow for optimal training experiences that are developmentally appropriate for athletes.

Inclusion

The sport of cheerleading has the power to build bridges where barriers to participation exist. Cheer Canada aims to act as a facilitator for integration of long-term development, with a goal to ensure that all children and youth have the right to benefit from cheerleading, without discrimination, and regardless of physical ability, location, race, age, socioeconomic status, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status or family status. Barriers to participation in sport are respective, complex and far-reaching. Safe, welcoming and accessible cheerleading programs are the first step to broadening diversity and act as a great start to breaking down barriers so that all interested participants have equal opportunity to engage in cheerleading.

Collaboration

A collaborative culture is regular, deliberate and only occurs if it is initiated. It is integrated into the processes of how people do their work and into the attitudes people display around their work. Cheerleading organizations can increase the quality of their programming by working together. Each group plays a key role in aligning and institutionalizing long-term development to ensure appropriate sport opportunities are available. Together we can develop a well-aligned sport system that meets the developmental needs of all participants, and that acknowledges all contributions to the sport.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS IN SPORT

Cheer Canada is committed to ensuring a participant's rights are met within sport to help retain athletes and set them up for long term success within sport.

1. SAFETY – Participants are entitled to practice and compete in a space that meets health and safety standards and supports both their physical and mental health.
2. FRIENDSHIP AND ENJOYMENT – The ability to work as a team is integral to any success a team will have. Participants are entitled to training environments that place relationship building at their core.
3. COMPETENCY – While an understanding of and ability to demonstrate skills denote competency in an activity, athletes must be provided the opportunity to experience the sport from as many positions as possible in order to become well-rounded athletes. In keeping with current sport related research, athletes should be encouraged to participate in multiple sports rather than solely participate in cheerleading. At the very least, younger athletes should try different positions within cheerleading. Coaches are responsible for facilitating opportunities to extend athlete knowledge and ability when appropriate
4. INFLUENCE – An athlete must feel that they are able to provide their opinion regarding how they participate in their sport. Having said this, coaches, club owners and parents are reminded that the weight of the child's opinion must be measured against their maturity level as per the "Rights of Children" document by the Government of Canada. Athletes should be supported in their desire to seek additional training both separate from and complementary to cheerleading.
5. THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE – Participants have the free will to determine the number of sports they wish to participate in. Athletes should also have the right to state the level of commitment they wish to give to a team by choosing which stream of the sport (Performance Cheer/Cheer/Cheer Abilities) they wish to participate in (ex. Recreational, Prep, Scholastic, All-Star, etc.).
6. COMPETITIONS FOR ALL – Participants will dictate whether they participate in competitive or recreational programs, therefore ample opportunities to participate in either division should be available. In keeping with the Cheer Canada strategic plan to encourage inclusivity, programs should be offering training/competition programs that are open to all people regardless of ability. Cheerleading is a vibrant competition-based sport and Cheer Canada offers competitive divisions in Novice, Prep, All-Star, Scholastic, Collegiate and Cheer Abilities with performance opportunities for Recreational teams.
7. ON THE PARTICIPANT'S TERMS – The age, physical development and maturity of an athlete will dictate the types of training opportunities and competitions a participant will engage in. As with any activity, athletes should be made aware of the risks inherent in the sport of cheerleading.

QUALITY SPORT



Figure 1. Quality Sport Cycle

Building a Better System

For all Canadians to benefit from Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity, we must remove barriers to participation and performance, and help make our systems more effective.

These shortcomings and the resulting consequences are presented below, not as deterrents, but as an educational opportunity for the growth and improvement of cheerleading programs within Canada. Identifying areas of improvement can direct our attention towards necessary research efforts that can help gain valuable insights and offer a more cohesive approach when training participants at all developmental stages, in facilities across the Nation. For cheerleading to remain successful, the sport must evolve year after year. A unified and dedicated approach, using the LTD framework, can aid in eradicating the gaps and shortcomings that we collectively encounter as a sport.

Addressing these points will undoubtedly have a positive influence on our National approach to programming, effectively strengthening participant and athlete inclusion and development for life. The implementation of the LTD principles will enable Canadian cheerleading associations to provide their participants with positive and safe sport experiences.

The following are some of the shortcomings that are commonly faced in cheerleading:

- Not all sport facilities and programs are accessible to low-income and non-traditional participants.
- Categories and divisions are based on chronological age, not developmental stages.
- Age categories within the cheerleading age grid are very wide for some divisions.
- Athlete preparation is often geared to the short-term outcome and not to the individual development process. Too early in the athlete's career, the attention may focus on running the routine instead of individual development.
- Cheerleading does not follow compulsory requirements, which can result in overlooking the development of fundamental skills.
- Gender differences in training and competition needs are often poorly understood.
- Developmental training needs of participants with a disability are not widely understood and would benefit from specific coach education tailored to coaching participants with a wide variety of needs.
- For several years, cheerleading coaches did not have access to adequate training. The development of training for coaches is still underway, but there is currently no national coach certification program for cheerleading in Canada.
- In terms of coaches' training, each province recommends their own certification which causes a great variation in the content of training from one province to another.
- Parents and caregivers are often not educated about Long-Term Development, and as a result do not have the necessary information to make informed choices for their children. This often leads to pressure to level up too quickly.
- Drop out rates for youth are high, particularly for girls which is worrying for a sport that is predominantly female, like cheerleading.
- Cheer Canada's competition framework is not based on the principles of Long-Term Development which might interfere with the athlete's developmental needs.
- Talent identification systems and tools are not yet developed, and early success is often mistaken for long term potential.
- Early over-specialization is encouraged by the industry and by commercial interests in an attempt to attract and retain participants. For example, participants often begin training in one position (flying, basing, backing) based on the team's needs, and may not have the opportunity to try additional positions.
- Currently, safe sport policies, procedures and practices are applied inconsistently across the country.

Consequences of these shortcomings

- Potential talent is excluded from sport.
- Poor movement capability, limited skill development, and lack of proper fitness.
- Developmental athletes often over-compete and under-train.
- Undeveloped and unrefined skills due to under-training.
- Bad habits developed from over-competition focused on winning.
- Female athlete potential not reached due to inappropriate programs.
- Children not having fun as they play in adult-based programs.
- Developing athletes pulled in different directions by school, club and provincial teams because of the structure of competition programs.
- Over-specialization leading to burnout, injury and limited development.
- Reduced participation of youth in sport and physical activity, especially by girls.
- Remedial programs, implemented by provincial and national team coaches, frequently implemented to counteract the shortcomings in athlete preparation.
- Athletes failing to reach their genetic potential and optimal performance level.
- Failure to reach optimal performance levels in international competitions.
- Athletes may be exposed to harmful conditions with damaging consequences to their overall well-being.
- Individual sport leaders are not held to account for unethical, irresponsible, or illegal actions.
- Negative behaviours emerge and in some cases harm can occur.

To date, implementation in Canada and other nations indicates that following the Long-Term Development framework helps address these shortcomings and enhances sport systems.





KEY FACTORS UNDERLYING LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT

There are key factors that affect the success of Long-Term Development in cheerleading. They operate at three levels: the individual (Personal Factors), each sport and physical activity, supporting organization (Organizational Factors) and across the Canadian system as a whole (System Factors). To help all participants enjoy and reach their potential in cheerleading and physical activity, we must understand and consistently consider these key factors.

Personal Factors

The Personal Factors are particularly important for parents/caregivers, teachers, instructors and coaches to consider as they plan quality programs for young participants and athletes.

1. **Developing Physical Literacy** in the early stages lays the foundation for later success and life-long engagement in physical activity for health.
2. **Quality Environments:** By providing enhanced learning and training environments from a very early age, greater physical literacy and improved sport-specific cheerleading skills are developed. Individuals carry this advantage to subsequent stages of Long-Term Development. A quality training and competition environment is a safe space: physically, mentally, cognitively and emotionally.
3. **Developmental Age:** People grow and develop at different rates. When designing training, competition and recovery programs for cheerleading, each individual's stage of growth and development must be considered. Long-Term Development addresses the complete physical, mental, cognitive and emotional development of the athletes, not just physical characteristics and performance qualities. Training, competition, and recovery programs within cheerleading should take into account the mental, cognitive and emotional development of each individual, with room for adaptation. The developmental age often differs between individuals, including boys and girls who are the same chronological age, so this factor should be taken into consideration when working with all teams.
4. **Sensitive Periods:** As children grow and develop, there are times when different types of practice and training will have a greater effect. These "sensitive periods" provide a special opportunity to train and develop important cheerleading specific skills and more broad physical capabilities that have a greater return on time invested, and can impact athletic performance throughout the life course.

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5. **Predisposition:** Not all individuals are equally capable in all sports, and cheerleading is no different. Both enjoyment and success are directly related to how proficient an athlete can become in cheerleading. Sampling many sports during Learn to Train and early Train to Train can help athletes find sports and physical activities that they enjoy and to which they are well suited.
 6. **Excellence Takes Time:** For a cheerleader to reach their full potential, they require well-planned, progressive and high-quality training over many years. Success cannot be rushed, and in many cases, cheerleaders may have pursued sport for 8-12 years of training and competing before mastering the activity. Intense specialization may produce short term winners, but this often hinders long-term development and ultimate athletic success, and can lead to burnout and overuse injuries.
 7. **For Life:** An over-the-life-course approach acknowledges that there are critical periods in early life when social and cognitive skills, habits, coping strategies, attitudes and values are more easily acquired. These early abilities and skills develop durability in a person's health in later life. It also considers life transitions, from later adolescence to early adulthood, for example, where life trajectories and future health can change positively or negatively. Taking a life-course approach, leaders are encouraged to reflect on the effects of cheerleading programs on their participants and athletes years into the future.

Organizational Factors

Organizational Factors inform the ways sport, recreation, education and other organizations create and deliver programs for their participants and athletes.

1. Cheer Canada will regularly update their **Long-Term Development** framework to ensure they are incorporating the latest sport, societal and science developments.
2. **Long-Term Development** is most successful when it is fully embedded in a sport organization. This includes governance, the competition structure and rules, coaching education and officials' development. Even Cheer Canada's committees should use this tool in order to make decisions.
3. **Awareness and First Involvement:** Participants need to be made aware of a wide range of sporting and physical activity opportunities, and their first involvement in cheerleading should be a positive, safe, welcoming and inclusive experience.



4. **Different Activities** have different demands and different pathways.

a. High acrobatic: Sports such as gymnastics, diving and figure skating are typically considered early specialization sports, while other acrobatic and aesthetic sports such as artistic swimming and freestyle skiing consider themselves early introduction but later (standard) specialization, recognizing the benefits of early introduction to acrobatic movement.

High kinesthetic: Activities where developing an early “feel” for the environment or equipment is important. Examples would be swimming, soccer, racquet sports and dance.

Common (standard): Typical timing of specialization, with peak performance in late-20s or early-30s.

c. Late specialization: Sports in which peak performance can occur in the mid-30s or later, such as golf, rowing or triathlon.

d. Transfer: These may be sports that individuals do not generally take part in prior to late adolescence, such as bobsleigh; or sports to which athletes tend to successfully

e. transfer from other similar sports, such as from gymnastics or diving to aerial skiing or cheerleading.

5. **Appropriate Specialization:** There are optimal times to specialize in a sport or physical activity and this depends on the type of sport. Specialize too early, and athletes may limit their development and success at older ages. Specialize too late, and the athlete may miss key developmental opportunities. Except in early specialization sports such as gymnastics, figure skating and diving, athletes should not specialize until their early teens. Participation in a wide range of sports and activities prior to specialization is recommended to build a high level of physical literacy and well-rounded sport skills.

6. **Periodization:** Periodization is time management of training in annual and seasonal training plans in order to bring about optimal improvements in athlete performance at the right times. Periodization plans connect the Long-Term Development stage of the athlete with the training and development requirements for that stage. Periodization in cheerleading will be included in the Athlete Development Matrix.

7. **Competition:** Athletes need to train and compete according to training-to-competition ratios that develop skills and fitness while preventing injury and burnout. The quality of competition and the timing of competitive events need to serve the needs of the athletes, allowing them to test the stage-appropriate skills they are developing.

8. **Transitions:** Development in sport has many transitions — the transition into a sport, the transition between Long-Term Development stages, transition between sports, and the transition to be active for life. Transitions that are well planned and well executed maximize sport talent enabling individual potential to be reached.

System Factors

System Factors are important for policy-makers and organization leaders, informing the ways organizations cooperate and collaborate to build an optimal system.

1. **Collaboration:** There is an opportunity to improve collaboration between organizations, sectors and systems to support the optimal development of the individual to succeed in the sport of cheerleading.
2. **System Alignment:** Many sports work with Sport for Life, Own the Podium, the Coaching Association of Canada and others to create programs and resources. To avoid confusion it is essential that content (e.g. skills, drills and tactics/strategy), and the language used to describe it, be consistent across all resources. It is equally important that cheerleading specific content at Learn to Train and Train to Train merge seamlessly with the demands of our sport's excellence stages of the Podium Pathway including Winning Style of Play and Gold Medal Profile where appropriate.
3. **Safe and Welcoming:** The system should plan to welcome all participants by providing Safe Sport programming. Diversity is a reality and corresponding participant-centered programs supporting diversity are a necessity in cheerleading.



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5. **Diversification:** To develop a well-rounded individual, it is important that they participate in many activities and multiple sports. Parents must not be pressured to choose a single sport for their child too early. Because sport and physical activity is delivered by sport-specific organizations, local early childhood programs, in recreation programs, by physical education and school sport, and by active living programs offered within the health system, there is a need to ensure that programs are aligned, that individuals are not pulled in different directions by different programs, and that the overall demands placed on the individual are kept reasonable.
 6. **Long-Term Development:** Excellence takes time, so it is essential organizations build systems that don't create pressure for immediate success. Systems, business models, processes and metrics (e.g. series points or rankings) must not influence sport leaders and coaches to favour earlier and more intense sport specialization – particularly pressure to participate in a single sport year-round. Sport organizations and funding agencies must reward long-term impact over short-term outputs.
 7. **Continuous Improvement:** The concept of continuous improvement is integral to Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity. By constantly seeking improvements in our understanding and practice, this framework will continuously evolve to accommodate new breakthroughs in sport science and physical literacy research, new innovations in technology and evolving best practices for cheerleading in coaching and instruction.
 8. **Evidence Based:** To shift from an old paradigm, evidence supporting the new is critical. This means assessment, monitoring and research in all aspects of physical activity programming and practice.



LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity

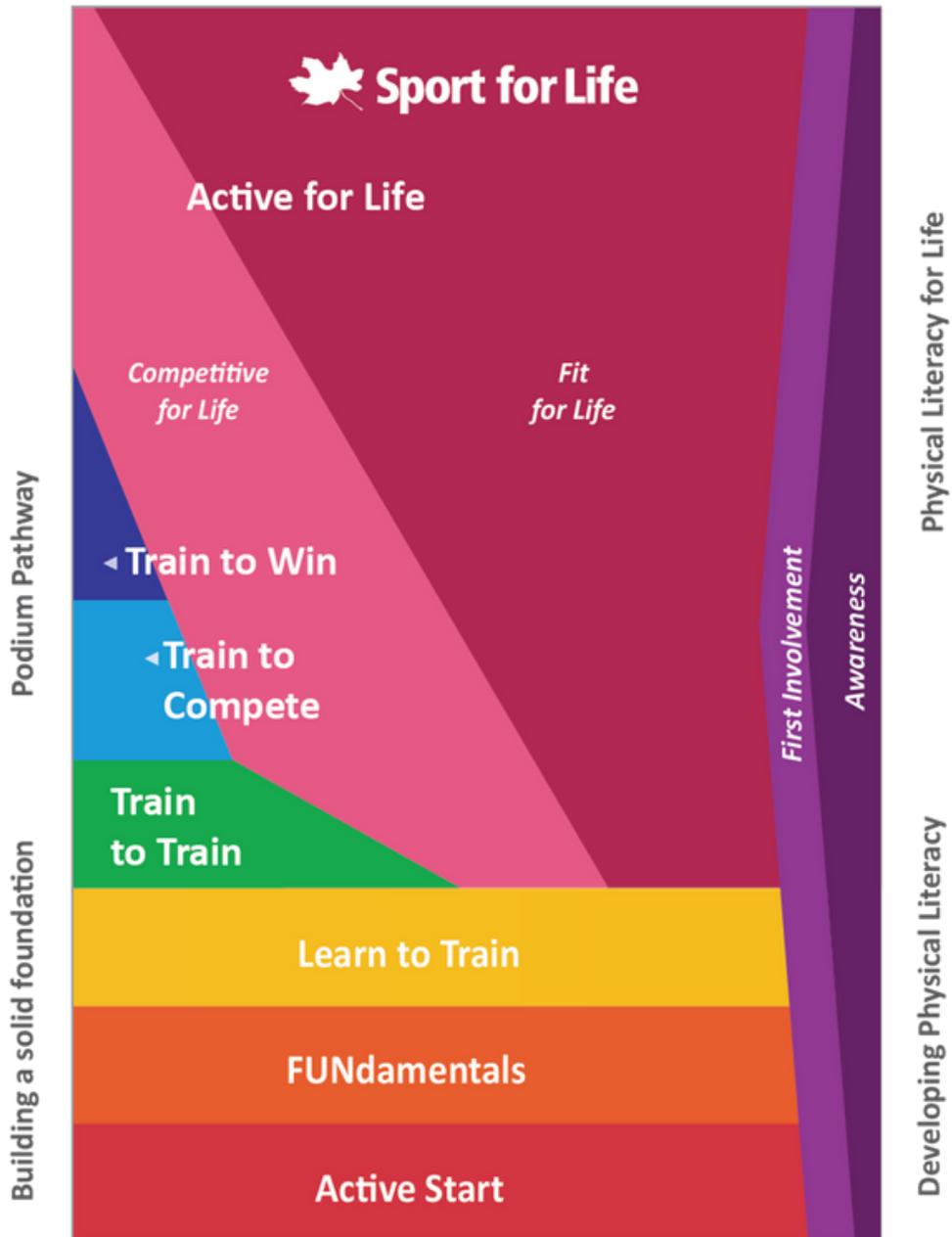


Figure 4. Sport for Life Rectangle. Copyright© 2021 Sport for Life

Awareness and First Involvement

Children, youth and adults' participation in sport and physical activity is critical in creating a more active, healthier population and to generating sporting success for Canada. The process of getting people involved in cheerleading (and keeping them involved) has two distinct pre-stages: Awareness and First Involvement.

Awareness	First Involvement
<p>This stage promotes an understanding of the opportunities to get involved in cheerleading as a sport or as a physical activity. It highlights opportunities for persons of all abilities to participate in cheerleading, become an athlete, coach, judge, etc., and to go as far as their ability and motivation will take them. In Awareness, prospective participants and leaders are informed of the range of activities available to them and how they can take part.</p> <p>Cheer Canada's Communication and Public Relations Committee plays a big role in bringing awareness of our sport to the country. They use multiple platforms (various social media, Cheer Canada's website, the blog, newsletters, etc.) in order to promote the sport. The provincial/territorial cheerleading organizations also play a role in bringing awareness to our sport in each province.</p> <p>Learn more about what is happening in cheerleading in Canada through our social media channels:</p> <p> https://www.instagram.com/cheer_canada</p> <p> https://twitter.com/cheercanada</p> <p> https://www.facebook.com/CheerCanada/</p> <p> https://www.linkedin.com/company/cheer-canada-ons-nso/</p>	<p>Once someone knows about a sport or activity and decides they want to try it out, their first experience with that activity becomes critically important.</p> <p>A positive first involvement in cheerleading is likely to bring them back to continue, and a negative experience makes their return far less likely. Accordingly, organizations need to train coaches and develop programs that provide suitable orientation for any and all prospective participants, helping them to feel confident, comfortable and safe in their surroundings, and welcome among peers and training personnel.</p> <p>Organizations should carefully plan the first experience of new participants to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no barriers to participation, especially for persons with a disability and those from visible and invisible minorities • That new participants feel included, knowing they will be welcomed back the next time; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Make sure there is a clear procedure to welcome new participants in the organization, such as coaches or other employees being there early to welcome each participant and to answer parents' questions.

Awareness	First Involvement
<p>Being made aware of sport and activity options is particularly important for underserved groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls and Women, • Individuals with disabilities, • Indigenous Peoples, • Newcomers to Canada, • LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, • Aging adults, and • Those living in poverty. • Those living in isolated communities. <p>For example, opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity are not always well known to the general public. The purpose of Awareness is to inform the general public and prospective participants, of all abilities and backgrounds, about the range of opportunities available. To this end, cheerleading organizations need to develop awareness plans to make their offerings and resources known.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That new participants have the opportunity to get to know current participants; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Activities to get to know other participants, encourage team play throughout the practice. • That it is affordable for participants to get in, and stay involved; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Participants and parents should have the option to participate in an affordable recreational or pre-competitive program before enrolling in a more expensive competitive program. • That there are appropriate facilities and equipment; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The participant's first experience is a good opportunity to show them the facility and the equipment that will be used throughout the season. • The leader of the program has the appropriate skills to adapt to the participant's needs.



Physical Literacy

Physical literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.

Physical literacy is a catalyst for change. From the World Health Organization and the Public Health Agency of Canada to sector-specific policies including the Canadian Sport Policy, the Recreation Framework and Active 2020, the concept of physical literacy has become a key element in the way we think about physical activity. The importance of physical literacy development is now embedded in provincial/territorial and municipal plans, policies and curriculum.

Physical literacy is a lifelong journey. It begins to develop in early childhood, and grows into a greater array and complexity of skills, capacities and understandings during adolescence and adulthood.

At different stages of life, physical literacy may serve different purposes and address different needs for different individuals. For some people, physical literacy will provide a foundation for athletic success, while for others it may provide the means to pursue a vocational career. For everyone, it will provide the means to live a healthy active lifestyle at all stages of life and grant the opportunity to age gracefully in good health.

Providing a quality physical literacy experience should be the key focus of everyone involved in delivering physical activity, including teachers, coaches and recreation leaders, administrators and policymakers in education, sport, recreation and health. Different individuals, groups and sectors of society are involved at different stages, and it is important that they work together for the benefit of children and adults who may be physically active with different groups or organizations.

Additional resources for coaches, parents and athletes to learn more about physical literacy can be found [HERE](https://sportforlife.ca/portfolio-view/developing-physical-literacy-building-a-new-normal-for-all-canadians/) (https://sportforlife.ca/portfolio-view/developing-physical-literacy-building-a-new-normal-for-all-canadians/).



Figure 5. Physical Literacy Cycle. Copyright© 2021 Sport for Life

Training, Recovery, and Meaningful Competition

Training, recovery and meaningful competition are critical components of Long-Term Development in sport and physical activity.



DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE TRAINING:

- increases duration, volume and intensity progressively,
- is based on the stage of physical development of the participant or athlete,
- supports the individual needs of participants,
- incorporates equipment and playing spaces that are appropriate for the stage of the participant and athlete,
- uses movement preparation as part of warm-up, and
- develops all round athleticism and general fitness before sport-specific fitness.

OPTIMUM RECOVERY:

- recognizes that recovery is as important as training,
- is sufficient to allow participants to recuperate before their next training session or competition,
- recognizes that quality sleep can help in skill learning and retention as well as in physical recovery, and
- requires post-training and post-competition nutrition.

Females in Sport

Historically training norms and programs have been developed with a male bias, which does not always support women's developmental needs. It is important for coaches to encourage athletes to listen to their bodies during training and to support and encourage proper recovery, nutrition and progressions.

Although the participation of women and girls in sport remains largely imbalanced when compared to participation of men and boys, most researchers are in agreement that the consistent and continued participation of women and girls in sport has had a major impact on achieving gender equality in certain contexts.

(Sportanddev.org. (n.d.). Retrieved December 21, 2020, from <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more/gender/role-sport-addressing-gender-issues-0>)

MEANINGFUL COMPETITION:

- is designed to support what has been practiced in training,
- is modified in terms of duration, size of mat, and rules to match developmental stage of participants,
- offers equal competition opportunities by keeping participants in events rather than eliminating them (A finals, B finals, C finals, round robins and crossovers),
- in the early stages, focuses on the process of competing and using recently learned skills in competitive situations — not on results,
- is in the “challenge zone” — not too difficult or too easy, resulting in close competition without blowouts or humiliating defeats, and
- cuts down on travel time and cost.

Building a Solid Foundation

The first three stages: Active Start, FUNdamentals and Learn to Train are designed to give Canadians the best possible start in sport and physical activity.

- Active Start is about mastering basic human movements and developing habits of physical activity;
- FUNdamentals is about developing fundamental movement skills and enjoying being physically active; and
- Learn to Train is about learning a wide range of foundation sport skills.

Children pass through these stages in large part simply because they are growing and developing. Adults, when learning a new sport or physical activity, may completely bypass the first stages based on where they are developmentally. Transition from stage to stage is therefore developmentally based.



ACTIVE START

Aged 0 to 6 / No formalized competition, only Exhibition Events

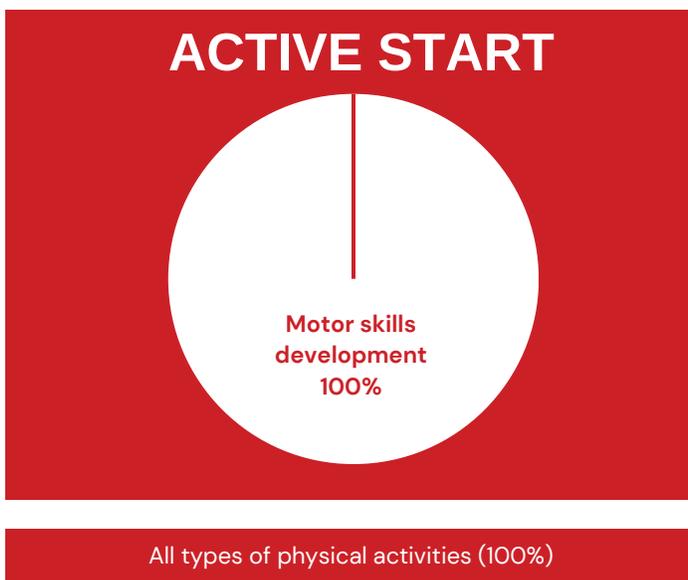
At this stage, physical activities have to be fun and part of the child’s daily routine. Their involvement in cheerleading will help meet the 24-hour movement guidelines for young children of being active for 180 minutes/day.

They will be exposed to body movement, teamwork and rhythm. Participants at this age will typically be involved in cheerleading once a week for an hour. Fundamental building principles will be taught while athletes maintain constant contact with the performance surface. The focus will be on balance, movement

patterns, motions and basic tumbling shapes (e.g.: plank position, all fours, bear). Children will normally learn a dance or a routine by copying a coach or leader positioned at the front of the floor.

Encourage play:

- Structured and adult-led play (25 per cent)
- Unstructured and child-led play (75 per cent)
- Create mini-challenges to extend children’s comfort range
- Ensure activities are fun and allow for social connectedness



Skills for Life	
Specifics	Examples
Working Memory	Clapping beats, rainstorm, who is missing, repeat/act after me, songs, etc.
Cognitive Flexibility	Follow the leader, command to action, command to location, storytelling through play and actions, etc.
Self-Control	Freeze dance, musical numbers, races, act like an animal, etc

Cheerleading Specific Skills			
	Specifics	Description	Example
Motor development	Locomotions	Basic locomotions	Hopping, running, skipping, grapevine
	Jumps	Jumping and landing	Straight jumps, tuck jumps, star jumps
	Rotations	Rotating their body on different axes	Forward or backward rolls, log roll on a mat
	Balance	Development of balance on the ground	Standing on one foot
Tumbling	Introduction	Weight bearing on hands	Plank position, all fours, bear
Dance	Introduction	Holding simple motions	High V, low V, hands on hips
Stunts (on the ground)	Introduction	Introduction to stunting on the ground	Paperdoll of liberties on the ground
Performance Cheer Specific Skills			
	Specifics	Description	Example
Technique	General	Balance	Standing on one foot
		Body awareness	Pointing and flexing toes
	Jazz/Pom	Introduction to technique	Walking/running on balls of feet
	Hip Hop	Learn to Groove	Bounces to the beat

Musicality	Rhythm	Exposure to music & understanding of rhythm	Clapping or stomping on the beat
Movement	Travelling Steps	Basic gross motor skills	Walking like different animals
	Footwork	Introduction to footwork	Ball change, chassé
Execution	Spatial Awareness	Understanding the space around them	Skipping in circles with others



FUNDAMENTALS

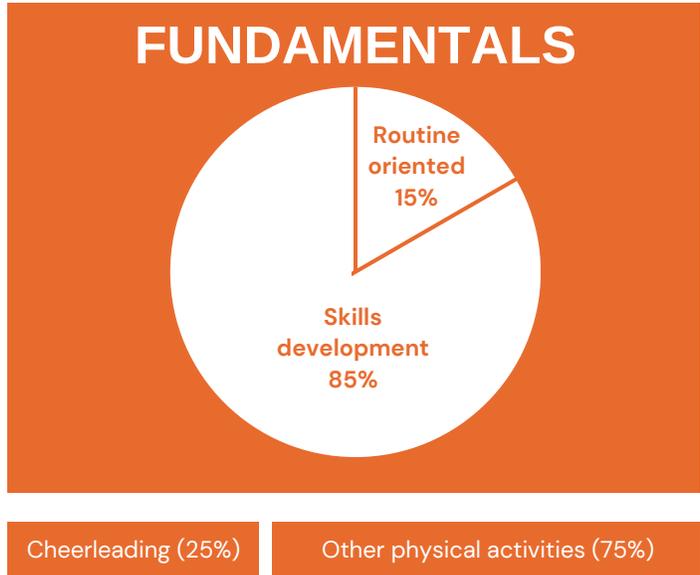
Aged 6+ / Exhibition and Regional Events

At this stage, athletes continue their development of physical literacy. They develop fundamental movement skills, with emphasis on participation and having fun on a daily basis. They are introduced to simple rules and etiquette of sport, with a focus on fair play and respect for others.

Athletes at this age will be exposed to basic cheerleading specific skills. They may train for a longer period of time or more than once a week and will start working towards a beginner level routine. Class time is devoted to fundamental movement skills in warm up and games,

and skill basics including tumbling, building, motions, jumps, flexibility and movement are introduced. Athletes at this stage start working on memorization and performance skills (e.g.: showmanship, athleticism, connection with the crowd).

Depending on each athlete’s physical development, some athletes may not be able to train all positions. This is often dependent on team composition. Although training multiple positions is not imperative, it is recommended athletes try as many as possible as the athlete’s physical development may make them an ideal candidate for a different position later on in their cheerleading career.



Skills for Life	
Specifics	Examples
Working Memory	Mix and match memory games, add-on dance games, command and action games, etc.
Cognitive Flexibility	Traffic Lights, Dodgeball variations, Line Tag, etc.
Inhibition Control	Simon Says, Minute to Win it challenges, stunt circles, dance circles, clapping or counting to motions, etc.

Cheerleading Specific Skills

	Specifics	Description	Example
Dance	Complexity	Start combining motions together	Choreography with a motion every two counts
Jumps	Jumps	Integrate basic skills into jumping	Tuck jump, star jump, etc.
Tumbling	Introduction	More advanced weight bearing	Choreography with a motion every two counts
	Shaping	Body shape awareness	Straight, hollow, arch, etc.
Dance	Introduction	Holding simple motions	High V, low V, hands on hips
Stunts	Security	Introduction to security in stunts	How to be an effective spotter, how to fall, how to catch carefully, etc.
	Height	Introduction to stunting off the ground	Walking/running on balls of feet
	Dismounts	Introduction to dismounts	Pop down, how to catch in a cradle position, cradles, etc.
Pyramids	Pyramids	Introduction to pyramids	How to hold arms, how to stunt close to another stunt, etc.

Performance Cheer Specific Skills

	Specifics	Description	Example
Technique	General	More advanced balance – introduce multiple body shape holds and balances	Upper body and lower body shapes, relevé. Introduction to name of positions and terminology
		Flexibility – Introduce increasing range of movement and posture	Utilizing active flexibility such as battement

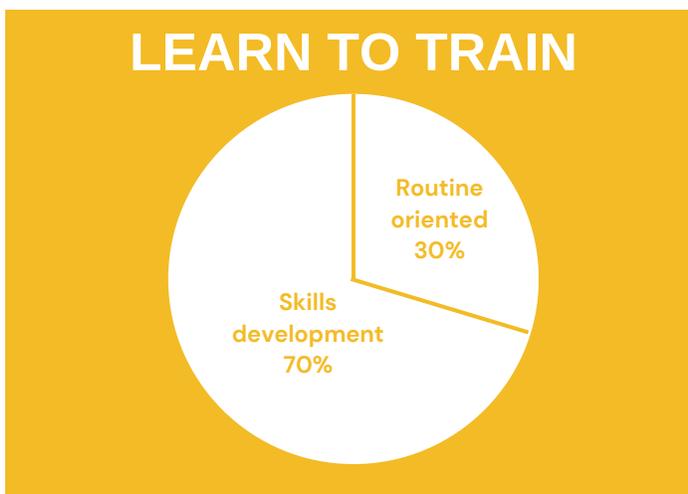
	Jazz/Pom	Introduction to explosive movement	Sauté
		Posture and turn out	Shoulder blades back and down and rotate turnout is rotation of the leg at the hips which causes the feet to turn outward
	Hip Hop	Learn different styles of Hip Hop	Popping and locking, animation, krump, house
Musicality	Rhythm	Exposure to different music and understanding of off beat rhythms	Clapping or stomping on the beat
Movement	Coordination	Introduce use of the full body and different levels of movement (e.g. high, medium)	Arms and feet moving simultaneously in different patterns
	Rotation	Introduce twisting, spins and rotational movements	Chainé turns, spotting
Execution	Spatial Awareness	Introduction to awareness of their body and space relative to others	Connecting more than one formation



LEARN TO TRAIN

Aged 8–9 + / Regional Competition Events

At this stage, athletes are still developing their physical literacy. They train in an environment that promotes and supports fun and friendship. Take into account the fact that individuals vary in physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional and moral development. During off season, athletes should still be encouraged to participate in multiple sports as over-specializing in a single-sport by engaging in year-round training can lead to negative physical and psychological health implications.



Cheerleading (33%)

Other sports or physical activities (66%)

Even over-specialization in a particular area within the sport of cheerleading can pose challenges to an athlete's development. For example, an athlete may identify as a flyer/top person in cheerleading, but fail to comprehend the importance of athlete versatility within a team. Athletes should strive to understand how every position on the team works together as a cohesive unit, regardless of whether or not they perform that position on a consistent basis. However, an athlete's physical development should be kept in mind as some positions may not be ideal or safe.

This stage includes introducing recreational participants as well as emerging athletes to competitive participation at regional events. Participants may enter this stage at a range of ages but not earlier than age 8–9 at the onset of the growth spurt. Many participants will enter cheerleading at later ages, moving through Awareness and First Involvement into the Learn to Train stage, where fundamental cheerleading skills are developed. Training can be minimal as some teams might only have one practice per week. However, athletes looking to progress quickly on an individual level should train at least twice a week, and to a maximum of 3 times a week. Classes are structured to work towards a completed routine.

At this stage, it is important to build up physical capabilities through the use of a medicine ball, weighted shoes and exercises using the athlete's own body weight, with additional focus on building flexibility and speed. Warm up and conditioning should be tailored to include activities that will help perfect beginner level skills. Intermediate skills should only be introduced once beginner skills have been demonstrated proficiently. Jumps, dance and motions are trained with more advanced tempo and execution and routines involve levels and formation changes and

movement on 'and' counts. Mentally and emotionally, athletes practice working as a team and taking direction from others in non-authoritative roles. Also, there should be an introduction to ancillary lessons: warm up/cool down, nutrition, hydration and recovery including sleep and mental preparation such as anxiety control, focus, relaxation and imagery.

Skills for Life	
Specifics	Examples
Goal Setting	Mix and match memory games, add on dance games, command and action games, etc.
Teamwork	Traffic Lights, Dodgeball variations, Line Tag, etc.
Self Efficacy	Simon Says, Minute to Win it challenges, stunt circles, dance circles, clapping or counting to motions, etc.

Cheerleading Specific Skills			
	Specifics	Description	Example
Dance	Complexity	Start combining more complex motions	Involve footwork, levels (floor work), partner work, formation changes, etc.
	Synchronization	Introduction to being synchronized with others	
Jumps	Jumps	Integrate jump skills into jumping	Toe-touch, hurdler, pike, etc.
Tumbling	Running	Tumbling using power and speed	Round off, handsprings, etc.
	Standing	Introduction to connecting jumps to tumbling	Straight jump back handspring, toe-touch back handspring, etc.
	Flipping	Introduction to flipping in tumbling	Punch front, round off back, etc.

Stunts	Height	Introduction to stunting at extension level	Cupies, extended 1 legged stunt, etc.
	Twisting	Introduction to twisting in stunts	$\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ turn transitions to and from stunts
	Inversion	Introduction to being inverted in a stunt	From being inverted on the ground to being inverted at waist or shoulder level
	Release moves	Introduction to release moves (from keeping a connection to fully releasing)	Connected tic-toc and switch ups to released tic-toc and switch ups
Pyramids	Pyramids	More complex pyramids (from keeping a connection with a base to fully releasing)	Shoulder level 1 legged stunts connected, braced released, etc.
Tosses	Tosses	Introduction to tosses	Tosses drills, straight tosses, toe-touch tosses, twisting tosses, etc.
Conditioning	Conditioning	Introduction of sport specific strengthening and stretching	Body weight training



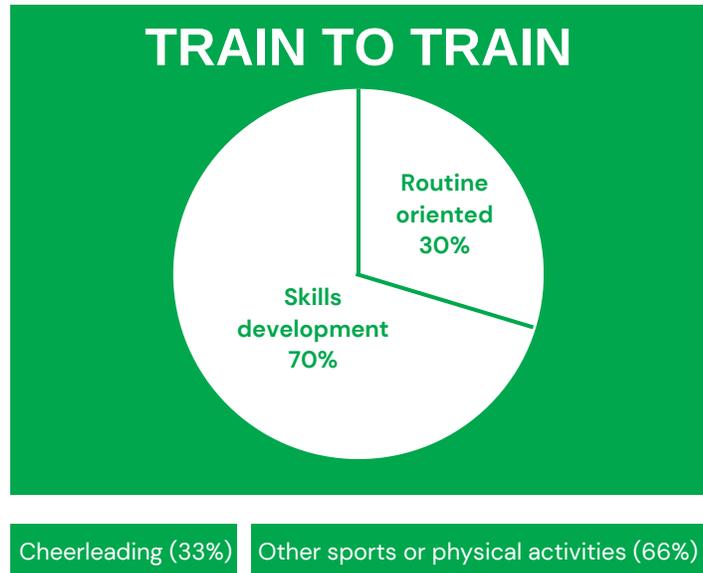
Performance Cheer Specific Skills

	Specifics	Description	Example
Technique	General	Power – Introduction of jumps	Travelling jumps such as grand/side jeté and stationary jumps like russians, tilt jumps, calypso, etc.
		More advanced flexibility – Continue to increase the range of Motion	Increase whole body flexibility, in multiple directions
	Jazz	More advanced jumps and turns	Pirouettes, Baryshnikov
	Pom	Uniformity	Kick lines
	Hip Hop	Placement of movement	Precision and strength in movement
Musicality	Rhythm	Understanding and connecting with more complex rhythmic patterns, instrumentation, tempos. Develop an understanding of musical phrasing.	Exposure to different genres of music and dance
Movement	Coordination	Use of multiple body parts together at the same time smoothly and efficiently. Advanced ability for sharp and precise movements.	Combining more complex and intricate combinations of motions and footwork at an advanced speed
	Rotation	Advanced twisting, spins and rotational movements	Introduction of tumbling, rolls, back walkovers, front walkovers
Execution	Uniformity	Development of awareness of their body and space relative to others	Creating teamwork, unison and synchronization

TRAIN TO TRAIN

Aged 11-12+ / Provincial Competition Events

It is at the Train to Train stage, which often starts in early adolescence, where the future of many athletes is determined. Train to Train coincides with the transition from childhood to adulthood, when many individuals make the decision to strive for excellence and commit to being an athlete, in the full sense of the word; or decide that they will no longer commit the time, energy and resources to achieving excellence in their sport. Unfortunately sometimes that decision is made for them, through injury, lack of opportunity, or barriers to progression. They still need to evolve in an environment that promotes and supports fun and friendship. Greater attention is given to mental preparation and athletes are encouraged to develop an ethical approach to sport including respect for opponents and fair play and commitment to doping-free sport.



At this stage, athletes are training intermediate skills and should be practicing a minimum 5-6 hours per week which can include team cheerleading practice, separate tumbling sessions or privates and individualized flexibility and conditioning. This is to ensure mastery of lower level skills is achieved prior to progression of skills. Jumps, motions and dance continue the path of increased difficulty and pace. Precision and speed should be emphasized at this stage.

In this stage, athletes should be able to perform more advanced skills in more intricate or advanced patterns. When an athlete is new to cheerleading at this stage, individualized training plans should be set as the acquisition of new tumbling skills typically becomes physically more difficult as the athlete ages past this stage. Train to Train is the entry to the Podium Pathway for a small number of athletes. Most others will go from Train to Train straight to Competitive for Life (Active for Life).

Not all athletes on a team will necessarily be at the same stage individually. A team may be made up of some Learn to Train athletes who entered later, along with mostly Train to Train athletes. Coaches should be aware that Learn to Train priorities should be included in their training to ensure optimal development in the sport. While planning practices, coaches should

be aware of where each individual fits into the pathway despite being part of a larger team that may be competing at a certain level together.

At this stage, athletes go through a major fitness development stage: aerobic and strength. The onset of the adolescent growth spurt and the time of Peak Height Velocity (PHV) are key markers and growth must be tracked. Athletes are introduced to free weights with emphasis on correct technique. Sport-specific training should occur multiple times per week in addition to regularly scheduled training including complementary sports.

Special issues with the Train to Train stage

Train to Train is critical for the development and retention of athletes. At this stage, the athletes will typically commit to high performance, enter the “Active for Life” stage, or even drop out of sport. There is so much going on in the lives of youth during adolescence that it is not surprising many drop out of sport or physical activity.

A collaborative, coherent approach among coaches, organizations and system stakeholders is needed to support the Train to Train athlete’s continued development toward excellence, or transfer into ongoing activity for life. When these stakeholders understand the issues and show patience in development, more youth will be retained in sport and physical activity and progress to Train to Compete. Table 2 showcases some of the barriers athletes may face in the Train to Train stage.



TRAIN TO TRAIN ATHLETES...

...feel that Sport is	...report that they	...lack balance	Other issues
Too focused	Don't feel welcome	Demands by multiple sports	Unqualified coaches
Too expensive, too far away	Have poor leadership	Demands by multiple teams	Training not developmentally appropriate
Not athlete centered	Feel unsafe (physically)	No athlete planning between sports	Prone to injury
No longer fun, is unfair	Feel unsafe (psychologically)	Academic and life demands not considered	Training is not periodized
Too easy or too hard	Feel a lack of support	Meaningless competition	Training load increased too rapidly
Taking up too much time	Can't balance sport, school, friends and part-time work	Conflict between club and school - rec. and club etc.	Not making sufficient progress

Table 2. Barriers athletes may face in the Train to Train stage

Additional Resources: [Keeping Girls in Sport \(eLearning module\)](#) (Retrieved from Jumpstart)



Skills for Life	
Specifics	Examples
Leadership	Goal setting activities, warm up lead, team debrief lead, Follow the Leader, etc.
Self-Motivation	Celebrate all results, positive approach to mistakes, small, measurable goals, regular breaks, proper nutrition, transparent coaching, see and share the big picture, etc.
Communication	Mat talk, counting, team debriefs, conflict mediation, group challenge games like Minefield, Silent line up, blind back drawing, etc.
Confidence	Clear expectations, athlete appreciation, team debriefs, warm fuzzies etc.

Cheerleading Specific Skills			
	Specifics	Description	Example
Dance	Complexity	Combination of complex motions	Involve intricate footwork, levels (floor work), partner work, formation changes, etc. at a fast pace
Jumps	Jumps	More intricate jumps connection	Multiple jumps connected
Tumbling	Standing	Connecting jumps to tumbling with speed and power	From a jump connected to a back handspring to a jump connected to a back handspring tuck
	Flipping	More complex flipping in tumbling	Back tuck to back layout, punch front to front step out, powerful backhandspring to whip
	Twisting	More complex twisting in stunts	From rotating a ½ to extension to 1 ½ twist

Stunts	Inversion	More complex inversion in a stunt	From inversion to the ground at waist level to shoulder level, introduction to being released from an inverted position to a non-inverted position, being inverted at extended level
	Release Moves	More complex release moves	Introduction to helicopters, from releasing at waist level to releasing at shoulder level and extension level, from releasing with 1 trick to 2 tricks
	Height	From mainly stunting at shoulder level to mainly stunting at extended level	
Jumps	Jumps	More intricate jumps connection	Multiple jumps connected
Pyramids	Pyramids	Complex pyramids	Double braced flips, releasing to and from extension with 1 bracer, from releasing to same bases to changing bases
Tosses	Tosses	More complex tosses involving 1 or 2 tricks	Toe-touch toss, twisting toss, kick twist toss, double twist toss, etc.
Conditioning	Conditioning	Introduction of sport specific strengthening and stretching	Body weight training
Performance	Performance	Athletes should demonstrate confidence while performing their skills with genuine enthusiasm	

Performance Cheer Specific Skills

	Specifics	Description	Example
Technique	General	Power – More advanced jumps	Travelling jumps with multiple movements such as switch splits, reverse jetés, tour jetés
		More advanced flexibility – Continue to increase the range of motion	Scorpions, scales, splits in all directions
	Jazz	More advanced jumps and turns	Pirouettes, Baryshnikov
	Pom	Uniformity & synchronization	Kick lines with multiple kinds of kicks and directional changes
	Hip Hop	Placement of movement	Precision and strength in movement
Musicality	Rhythm	Show diversity in rhythms and quality of movement	Stretch through movement, strong end points
Movement	Tumbling	Connecting tumbling skills	Valdez, aerials, multiple walkovers, cartwheels
	Partner Lifts	Introduction of lifts and trust and security in lifts	Introduction lifts
	Connections	Introduction of connecting phrases, lifts, jumps and formations with better flow	
Execution	Uniformity	Create a uniformed polished look to routine with precision and accuracy	Creating teamwork, unison and synchronization, dancing through formations
	Performance	Be expressive, musical, and highly stylized. Mastery of movement and audience involvement.	Showcase the authentic style performing Pom/Jazz/Hip Hop

COMPETITIVE FOR LIFE

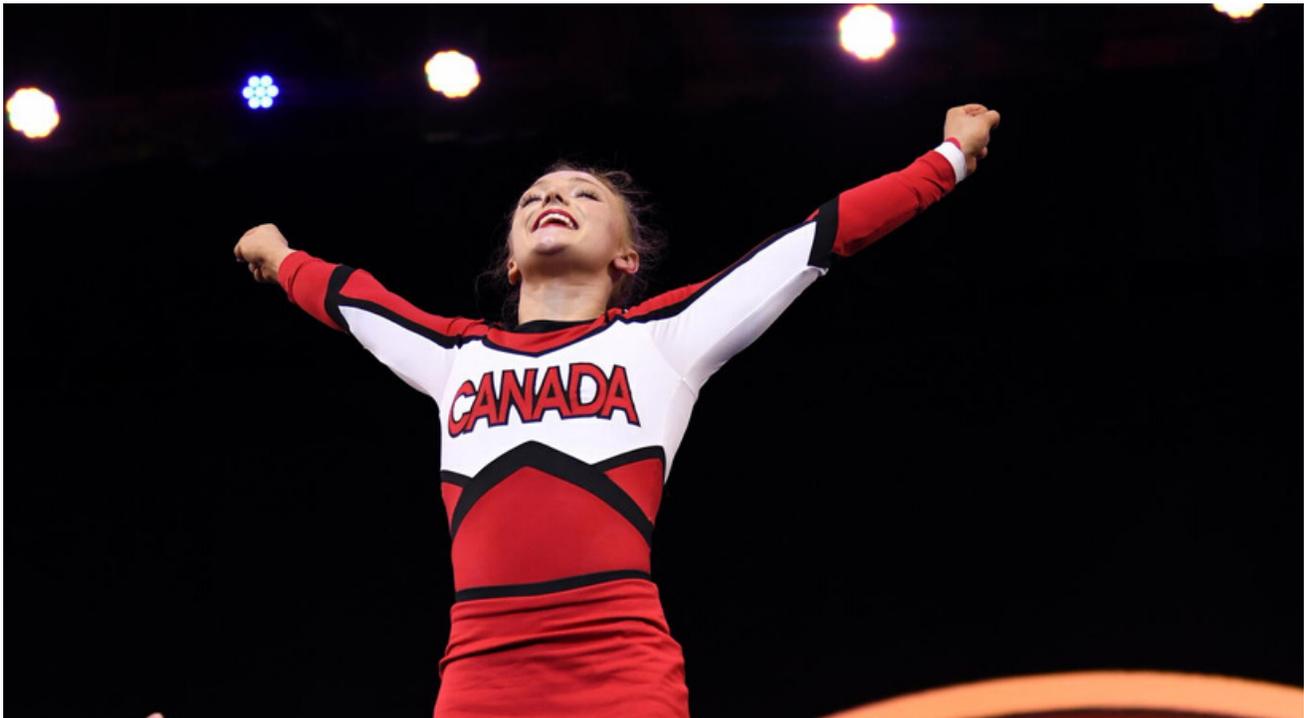
Aged 13+ / Local, Provincial, National and International Competition Events

After the Train to Train stage, athletes will move either to the Podium Pathway or Competitive for Life. Athletes in the Competitive for Life stage can be at any level of cheerleading with an interest in continuing to compete.

Athletes may move between Competitive for Life and the Podium Pathway depending on their skills and the amount of time spent focusing on their sport and level.

Competitive for Life is the phase of Active for Life for those who compete within the formal structure of their sport. Those athletes could participate in categories like U18, Open or Masters. It differs from Fit for Life because competitive athletes are striving to improve and to win, and they train accordingly.

Not all athletes on a team will necessarily be at the same stage individually. A team may be made up of some Learn to train athletes who entered later along with mostly Train to Train athletes. Coaches should be aware that Learn to Train priorities should be included in their training to ensure optimal development in the sport. While planning practices, coaches should be aware of where each individual fits into the pathway despite being part of a larger team that may be competing at a certain level together.



The Podium Pathway

The Podium Pathway is about developing high performance, well-rounded athletes capable of winning at the highest levels of international competition, and bringing home medals from the world stage. The Podium Pathway stages are:

- **Train to Compete:** Is generally for athletes in national development teams, la relève, or NextGen squads. These are outstanding athletes who have a serious chance of representing their national teams. In some sports, the Podium Pathway may begin at the end of the Train to Train stage as athletes are specializing within their primary sport for selection to international age group competitions.
- **Train to Win:** Is reserved for athletes who have a realistic chance of securing a spot on one of the National Teams (not including Junior) representing the country on the world stage. These athletes are the best of the best in the sport.

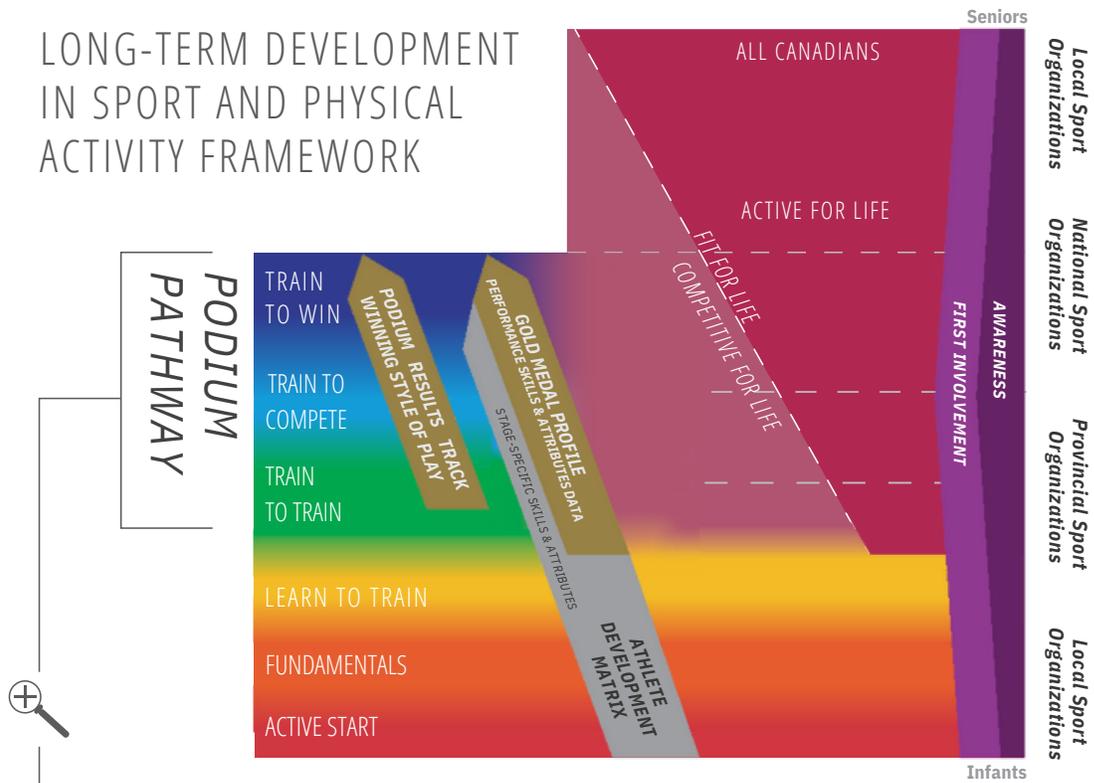
Athletes enter the Podium Pathway based on performance, demonstrating their acquisition and development of skills (refer to Gold Medal Profile or Athlete Development Matrix). Note: while the Podium Pathway is often referred to for Olympic or Paralympic Sports, Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity refers to the Podium Pathway as all sports that host World Championships.

PODIUM PATHWAY PRINCIPLES

Podium Pathway is:

1. A concept that can be used by all Canadian organizations committed to high-performance sport.
2. A component of an NSO's Long-Term Development framework that specifically addresses identification and development of podium potential athletes.
3. Integral to guiding key foundational skills in physical literacy stages.
4. An approach to targeted excellence that identifies an enhanced daily training and competition environment needed to achieve podium performances.
5. An evidence-based approach to determining and defining critical performance components and standards for achieving podium-level results.
6. A development and implementation process shared by NSO high performance and development staff along with provincial/territorial sport organization leaders.

LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FRAMEWORK



PODIUM PATHWAY

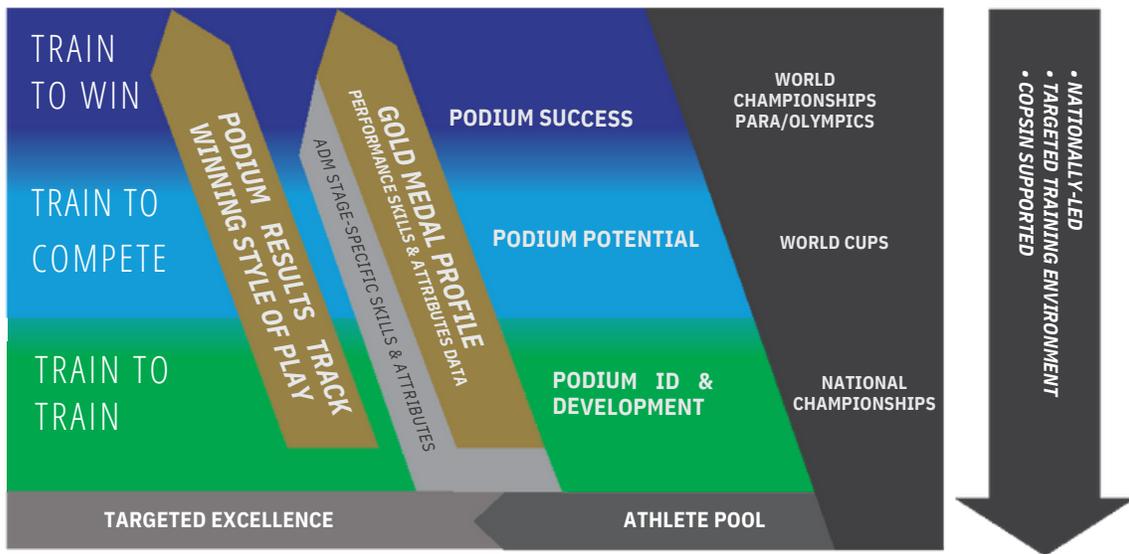


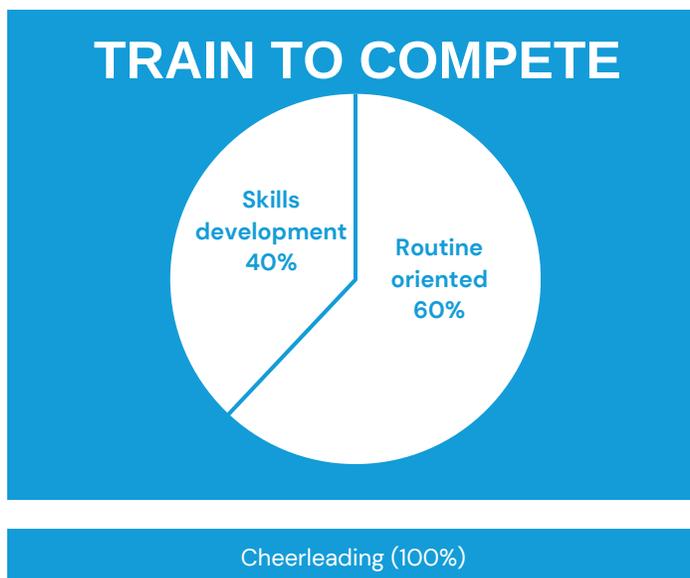
Figure 6. Podium Pathway. Copyright© 2021 Sport for Life

TRAIN TO COMPETE

Dependent on sport progress / National Team Competition Events

At this stage, athletes require specialized coaching. The athletes are encouraged to specialize in one sport and in one specific position within this sport.

They should go through advanced mental preparation, and practice under highly competitive conditions. They should learn how to balance sport, work, school, family, friends and other life obligations. An emphasis should be put on an ethical approach to sport including respect for opponents, fair play and commitment to doping-free sport.



Technical, tactical and physical training in cheerleading should occur multiple times a week for 2-3 hours per session in different capacities (e.g. watching technical videos, stretching, home workouts, practicing choreography, private lessons, extra classes, all in addition to team practices). In this stage athletes should specialize in their building position. After an athlete has reached their maximum height, they will likely have a permanent home position in cheerleading, however, this is not the case for Performance Cheer as there are no building positions.

Conditioning should include weight training as athletes at this stage are beyond the end of the adolescent growth spurt where muscle gain will start to make a difference when performing building skills. Tumbling and flexibility may suffer due to muscle growth so attention should be given to those areas.



Skills for Life

Specifics	Examples
Mental Focus	Activities that teach focusing on what the athlete can control, meditation, routine visualization, box breathing, journaling, team debriefs, athlete reflection time, problem solving.
Mental Toughness	Practice self talk, mat talk, team gratitude, growth mindset activities.
Self Efficacy and Confidence	Coach and athlete meetings, celebrate small accomplishments, positive reinforcement, positive communication exercises between athletes, warm fuzzies, team problem solving.

Cheerleading Specific Skills

	Specifics	Description	Example
Dance	Complexity	Combination of complex motions at a fast pace	Involve multiple footwork, levels, partner work and formation changes. Should be executed with excellent uniformity of technique and synchronization and precision of movement
Jumps	Jumps	Synchronized jumps connection executed with height, flexibility and strength	Triple (and more) jumps including variety
Tumbling	Standing	Connecting jumps to an inversion or to a twisting tumbling skill	Toe-touch connected to a back tuck or a front tuck/pike, back handspring full
	Flipping	Flipping on 2 axis in standing/running tumbling	Progression from a layout to a full, double full, arabian
	Twisting	Complex twisting in stunts	From rotating 1 ½ twist to double, twisting helicopters
	Dismounts	Complex dismounts involving up to 2 ¼ twists	Double down from arabesque

Stunts	Inversion	Complex inversion in a stunt	Downward inversion from extended level
	Release Moves	Complex release moves	Release from extended to extended, twist in release to or from an extended stunt
	Height	Mostly stunting at extended level	
	Pace	Combining stunting skills with a fast pace	
Pyramids	Pyramids	Complex pyramids	Single braced flips, flipping while changing bases, flipping and twisting, connected one legged stunt at extension
Tosses	Tosses	Complex tosses involving 2 or 3 tricks	Kick twist, kick double twist, hitch kick twist, hitch kick double twist
Conditioning	Conditioning	More specific physical training outside of team practices to focus on building strength and endurance to assist with confident performances and athlete injury prevention	
Performance	Performance	Athletes should demonstrate excellent effectiveness in performing a comprehensive and positive memorable experience	

Performance Specific Skills

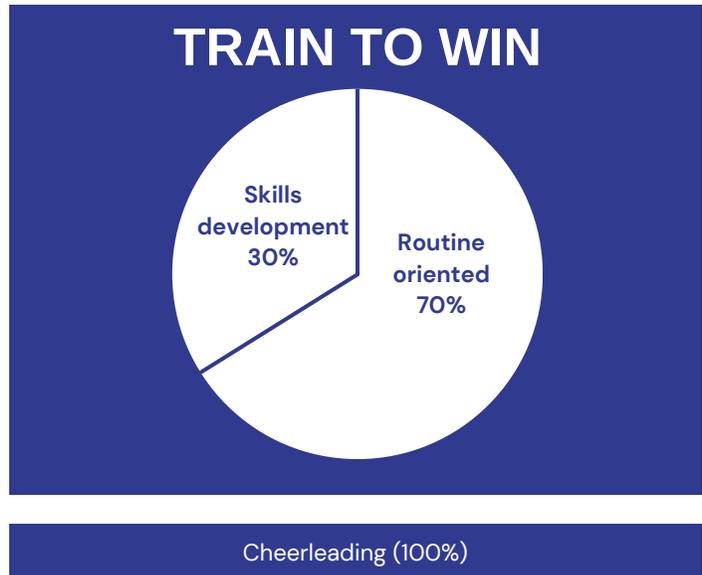
	Specifics	Description	Example
	General	Power - More advanced jumps	Connecting multiple jumps with other technical elements
		More advanced flexibility - Continue to increase the range of motion	Hyper flexibility

Technique	Jazz	More advanced turns – Show control	Multiple rotation pirouettes, different body position in turn, pump turns
	Pom	Sharpness with uniformity	Kick lines with multiple kinds of kicks and directional changes
	Hip Hop	Placement of movement	Precision and strength in movement
Musicality	Rhythm	Understanding and connecting with more complex rhythmic patterns, instrumentation, tempos. Develop an understanding of musical phrasing.	
Movement	Tumbling	Learn power tumbling skills	Back/front handsprings, punch fronts, connection multiple backsprings and non power tumbling skills
	Partner Lifts	Advancement of lifts and trust and security in lifts	Introduction lifts
	Connections	Mastery of connections	
Execution	Uniformity	Create a uniformed polished look to routine with precision and accuracy	Creating teamwork, unison and synchronization
	Performance	Athletes should demonstrate excellent effectiveness in performing a comprehensive and positive memorable experience	Showcase the authentic style performing Pom/Jazz/Hip Hop

TRAIN TO WIN

Dependent on sport progress / International Competition Events

This stage is reserved for athletes competing at the highest level: International Federation World Championships and eventually, Olympics and Paralympics. It is important to keep in mind that an athlete will not automatically be in the Train to Win stage based on an international team placement. The athlete's stage is determined by their individual development and skill set. The focus is on podium performances at highest-level international events and is reserved for those on the senior national teams or those who have the skills to be placed on senior national teams.



At this level, athletes are training to compete nationally and internationally on club and national teams year-round. These athletes will start to take on the planning of their own training because athletes in this age group will have other life commitments such as work or higher education. They will need to address any physical, mental or emotional deficiencies that may hinder their performance. At this stage, athletes are expected to have exceptional mental toughness, internal motivation and to make lifestyle choices to maximize performance and support their well-being. Training should be focused on the athletes' strengths and weaknesses as individuals and as a team. As cheerleaders cannot apply for funding or earn money professionally, they have to juggle their own competing demands.

In order to succeed at this level, a minimum of 6–8 hours of weight, speed and aerobic training should be included in addition to 4–6 hours of team practice a week to put together a competitive routine.

For motions, dance and jumps, athletes who have reached this stage progressively should have no problem maintaining their coordination, which will allow them to allocate time to other areas. For athletes with less cheerleading experience, (e.g. an athlete from another sport) more time may have to be spent on continuing to learn movements specific to cheerleading.

For tumbling, advanced skills should be expected from athletes at this level unless they have not been exposed to cheerleading before. The key is to continue training the advanced skills beyond the competing level each season to ensure personal growth.

Skills for Life	
Specifics	Examples
Knowledge of Rules and Scoring	Athlete involvement in team decision making, routine creation and skill selection.
Self-Discipline	Include incentives in daily training, team meetings, coach check-ins, daily journal or training log.
Sense of Belonging	Team building activities, group experiences, team meetings, conflict resolution practices, team expectations.
Humility	Athlete autonomy, team challenges, athlete critiques, warm fuzzies, team debriefs.
Goal Setting	Focus on the process of reaching the goal rather than the goal itself by setting daily goals and expectations.

Cheerleading Specific Skills

	Specifics	Description	Example
Dance	Complexity	Combination of complex motions at a fast pace	Involve multiple footwork, levels, partner work and formation changes. Should be executed with excellent uniformity of technique and synchronization and precision of movement
Jumps	Jumps	Synchronized jump connections executed with height, flexibility and strength	Triple (and more) jumps including variety
Tumbling	Standing	Connecting jumps to an inversion or to a twisting tumbling skill	Toe-touch connected to a back tuck or a front tuck/pike, back handspring full, hurdler back handspring double
	Flipping	Flipping on 2 axes in standing/running tumbling	Progression from a layout to a full, double full, arabian
	Twisting	Complex twisting in stunts	Double up, twisting helicopters
	Dismounts	Complex dismounts involving up to 2 ¼ twists and twisting free flipping	Double down from arabesque, front flip down, layout down with half a rotation

Stunts	Inversion	Complex inversion in a stunt	Rewinds, released inverted to non-inverted with ½ or 1 twist, free flipping transitions, side-somi or front free flipping to a stunt
	Release Moves	Complex release moves	Twisting release to or from an extended stunt, release from prep level or below to inverted prep level stunt, free flipping transitions, side-somi or front free flipping to a stunt
	Height	Stunt at extended level	
	Pace	Combining stunting skills with a fast pace	
Pyramids	Pyramids	Complex pyramids at 2 or 2 ½ height	Twisting and flipping while changing bases, 2 ½ pyramids
Tosses	Tosses	Complex tosses involving 3 or 4 tricks or inversion	Kick double twist, hitch kick double twist, layout, arabian, arabian twist, full, pike open twist
Conditioning	Conditioning	More specific physical training outside of team practices to focus on building strength and endurance to assist with confident performances and athlete injury prevention	
Performance	Performance	Athletes should demonstrate excellent effectiveness in performing a comprehensive and positive memorable experience	

Performance Specific Skills

	Specifics	Description	Example
Technique	General	Placement – Proper positions and stamina of technique	Mastery proper turn out and posture – Grounded and urban movements
	Jazz	More advanced turns – show control	Fouetté turns, fouetté turns with change in spot, fouetté turns with multiple body positions
	Pom	Sharpness with uniformity	Synchronized kick lines executed with height, flexibility and strength
	Hip Hop	Complexity and speed of movement	Mastery of strength and speed of movement in stylized Hip Hop
Musicality	Rhythm	Advanced sense of rhythm and body placement through creative movements to music	Perfection of variety of rhythms and flow
Movement	Tumbling	Learn hands free tumbling	Addition of tucks, and layouts
	Partner Lifts	Advancement of lifts and trust and security in lifts	Increase flow in mounts and dismounts in routine
	Flow	Mastery of connections	Seamless flow to routine
Execution	Uniformity	Mastery of accuracy and intricacy	Creating teamwork, unison and synchronization
	Performance	Athletes should demonstrate excellent effectiveness in performing a comprehensive and positive memorable experience	Showcase the authentic style performing Pom/Jazz/Hip Hop

ACTIVE FOR LIFE

Once in Cheer, always a leader. This stage welcomes cheerleaders of all ages, backgrounds, and performance levels. Athletes are participating for enjoyment, satisfaction or for the resultant health benefits. This stage provides opportunities to learn new skills, to be part of a performing group and even to travel internationally to compete. For those who wish to try a new aspect of cheerleading, there are opportunities for coaching, judging, volunteering and working in the sport.

In fact, this stage includes:

- **Competitive for Life** is the phase of Active for Life for those who compete within the formal structure of their sport. Those athletes could participate in categories like Masters, Open, Semi-Professional or Professional. It differs from Fit for Life because competitive athletes are striving to improve and to win, and they train accordingly.
- **Fit for Life** is the phase for those who participate simply because they get satisfaction from the sport or physical activity. They may, from time to time, compete at a recreational level, but that is not their primary purpose. Fit for Life also describes those who engage in non-sporting physical activity.
- **Sport and Physical Activity Leaders** include those individuals who contribute in ways other than being an athlete or participant in the sport or activity itself, such as coaches and instructors, officials, administrators and those involved in sport science and medicine.

An individual is not restricted to one of these pathways at any given time. Often, individuals in the Active for Life stage will be actively involved in multiple pathways.

As you can see, this stage is for anyone who has ever participated in cheerleading. It welcomes athletes at advanced ages and athletes with a disability. It allows everyone and anyone to continue to have fun with cheerleading, gain fitness and learn the fundamentals of cheerleading at a level that suits their age, interests and ability.

Athletes can come once a week for an hour each time, 3 times a week for 2 hours each time, or whatever is offered by their nearest cheerleading program. There are no restrictions on what they can learn as long as the progression of skill learning is followed.

Physical literacy, increased activity, recreational sport and being “Fit for Life”, can be the gateway to a healthier Canada. The benefits of regular physical activity are well documented: sustained long term health, increased social connectedness, improved general mental and physical well-being and better quality of life. Yet in spite of the clear evidence demonstrating the numerous benefits associated with regular exercise, particularly for mature adults, only 15% of Canadian adults meet national physical activity recommendations. Rates of sport participation have declined in the past several decades among Canada’s growing population of older adults.

Ultimately, both sporting excellence and a healthy, active population are outcomes of Long-Term Development.

Unique Pathways

Each athlete's journey through sport and physical activity is unique. Individuals will take a variety of pathways as seen in Figure 7. Ideally all pathways lead to the individual reaching their potential and later being active for life.

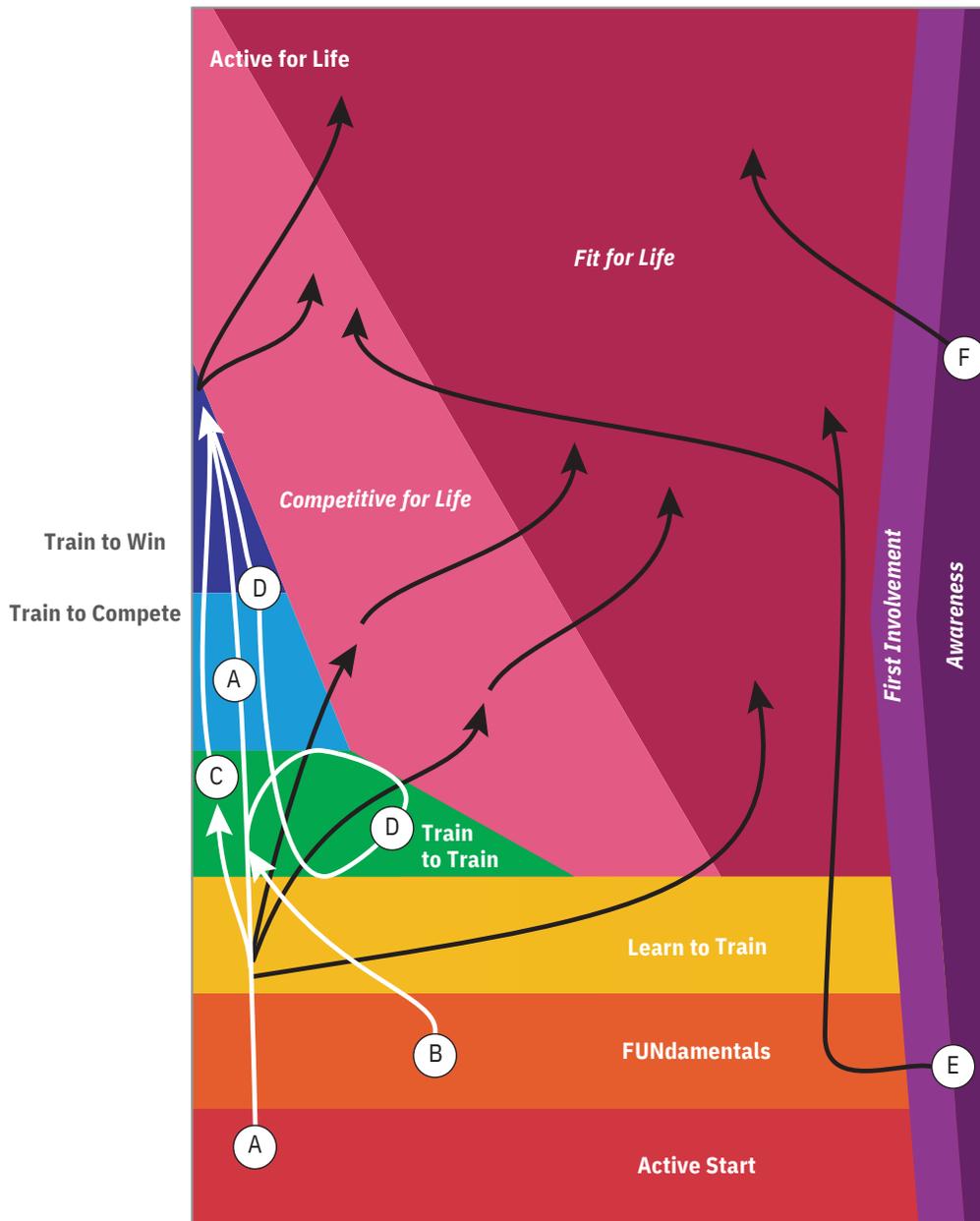


Figure 7. Unique Pathways. Copyright© 2021 Sport for Life

GLOSSARY

All-Star Cheerleading: All-Star Cheerleading is the competitive club portion of our sport. Athletes train at All-Star gyms across the country to compete their 2 minutes and 30 seconds routines at local, national and international events. All-Star teams can range in size from 5–36 athletes, typically averaging 15–20 athletes. All -Star Clubs in Canada range from small gyms with fewer than 100 athletes, to large programs, with hundreds of athletes in multiple locations. All-Star gyms may offer Cheerleading, Performance Cheer and Cheer Abilities programming.

Athletes: People who benefit from programming and coaching, with a specific goal in mind, for all levels of interest and ability and in all cheerleading disciplines. (adapted from BCSC (BC Sport Cheer))

Basket toss: A toss involving 2 or 3 bases and a spotter – 2 of the bases use their hands to interlock wrists. (ICU Glossary)

CC: Cheer Canada; the National Sport Organization for cheerleading in Canada

Chronological Age: The amount of time that has passed from the date of birth to the given date. It is age in terms of years, months, days, etc.

Coaches: People who design and implement training programs that respect the principles of LTD (borrowed from BCSC)

Early Specialization: Athlete focus on one specific sport (or position within a sport) without developing key skills that are formed through multi-sport participation. Athletes may choose to quit another sport in order to streamline their time and energy towards a specialization in one sport or position within a sport.

Gender: When the term girl/boy/woman/man/female/male is used, please read as ‘those who identify as’ girl/boy/woman/man/female/male.

ICU: International Cheer Union; The international governing entity for cheerleading

LTAD: Long-Term Athlete Development

LTD: Long-Term Development

NSO: National Sport Organization

Parents: People who understand and support the importance in child development, and who must understand coaching decisions and be supportive partners in athlete progression, training and competition (borrowed from BCSC LTAD)

Participants: People involved in an activity or sport, regardless of skill level or experience

Periodization: Time management of training in annual and seasonal training plans in order to bring about optimal improvements in athlete performance at the right times. Periodization plans connect the Long-Term Development stage of the athlete with the training and development requirements of that stage. A sport program based on single periodization has one competition period per year that usually ends with one major event. For example, regular competitions followed by a championship at the end of the season.

Performance Cheer: Also known as dance, consists of team routines where competitors perform choreographed dances in three different categories offered by Cheer Canada – Pom, Hip Hop and Jazz. Canadian All Star, Scholastic and Cheer Ability divisions are available, with a wide range of age divisions and team sizes. Performance scoring consists of three score sheets that separate the components of team dance routines – Choreography, Technical Execution and Group Execution. All Performance categories and divisions are judged on the same score sheets with style specific elements outlined on the technical execution score sheet.

Podium Pathway: The sport-defined excellence stages of Long-Term Development and specifically applies to athletes on a trajectory toward podium results at the highest level of their sport

PTSO: Provincial and Territorial Sport Organization(s) – who provide resources for club development and ensure that provincial development programs, competitive structure and major events respect and support the principles of LTD (borrowed from BCSC LTAD)

Scholastic Cheerleading: Encompasses competitive and non-competitive programs with athletes ranging from Primary school to Collegiate/University level. Cheerleading began as a sideline activity used to increase school spirit at games and pep-rallies and has evolved into a highly athletic sport of its own while retaining those traditional elements that make Scholastic Cheer unique. This form of cheerleading showcases routines that feature music and a traditional cheer/chant integral to the Scholastic Cheer culture. The Cheer portion is choreographed to encourage audience participation and may be enhanced by using props, stunts, tumbling, school Mascots and authentic energy. Teams may elect to be competitive or decide to take a more traditional approach of boosting school spirit at games and events, while some choose to fulfill both roles. These attributes make Scholastic Cheer a unique, diverse, and dynamic sport. Scholastic cheer may also offer Performance Cheer programs.

Sport Development: Aims to build strong and quality sports programs, develop physically equipped athletes, develop the coaching and administrative infrastructure, and to create opportunities for individuals to participate in sporting activities from beginner to elite level, while recognizing the important role that sport can play a role in enhancing health and well-being within the community.

Sport FOR Development: Programs that combine sport and play with other non-sport components to enhance their effectiveness. They are delivered in an integrated manner to attain organizational inclusivity and as a tool to build life skills in participants.

*For additional cheerleading term definitions, please see ICU Cheerleading Glossary: <https://cheerunion.org/cheerleadingglossary/>

*For additional performance cheer term definitions, please see ICU Performance Cheer Glossary: <https://cheerunion.org/performancecheerglossary/>

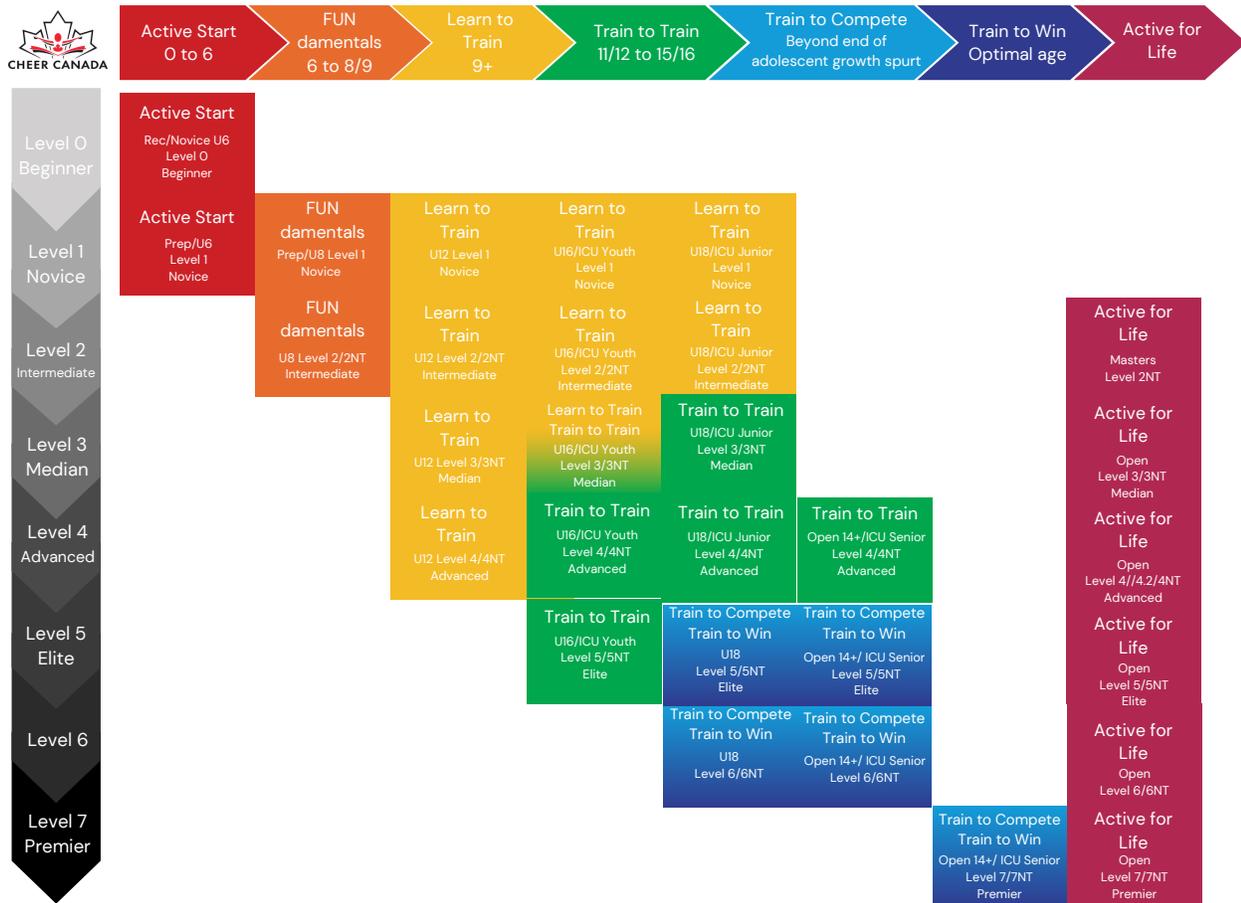
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Current Cheer Canada Division Lists:

- [All Star](#)¹⁸
- [Cheer Abilities](#)¹⁹
- [Performance Cheer](#)²⁰
- [Scholastic Cheer](#)²¹

Cheer Canada Cheerleading Stages and Framework

Team cheerleading:



Performance cheer:



¹⁸ Linked Website: <https://cheercanada.ca/education/all-star-cheer/>

¹⁹ Linked Website: <https://cheercanada.ca/cheer-abilities/>

²⁰ Linked Website: <https://cheercanada.ca/education/performance-cheer/>

²¹ Linked Website: <https://cheercanada.ca/education/scholastic-cheer/>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This overview of the Long-Term Development for Sport and Physical Activity for Cheer Canada and the sport of cheerleading in Canada was produced by an LTD Committee comprised of the following individuals:

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Caitlyn Nelson – ON
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- Sport Development Committee
- Technical Committee
- Performance Cheer Subcommittee

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