

LEARN TO TRAIN

STAGE 3: FINDING THE EDGE (LEARN TO TRAIN) & STAGE 4 : GETTING CENTERED (TRAIN TO TRAIN)

The third and fourth stage in South Africa's LTPD program is FINDING THE EDGE and GETTING CENTERED. This is the LEARN TO TRAIN and TRAIN TO TRAIN stage and here we begin to see more differences between females and males in terms of growth, development, and maturation. Therefore, training and coaching adaptations are necessary specific to age and biological sex. Continued development of basic movements and skills as well as the introduction of more complex figure skating skills are essential.

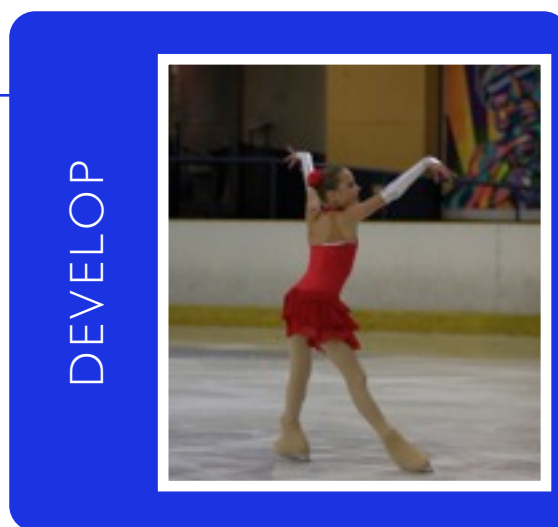
The chronological ages of participants in this stage are:

LEARN TO TRAIN	FEMALE	MALE
FINDING THE EDGE (ENTRY) / GETTING CENTERED(EXIT)	7-11	8-12

PHILOSOPHY: *This stage is defined by technical development rather than chronological age. It is the TECHNICAL development that is the most important characteristic at this stage. The time spent training should not be greater than others, but the range of SKILLS acquired should be substantial. Performance and mental training skills can be identified, but should not overshadow the skill development.*

General Objectives

- To increase the commitment level of athletes
- To develop language and rules of figure skating
- To develop the ability to train in different ways (private and group lessons)
- To develop and consolidate sport specific skills, while developing motor skills (agility; balance' coordination; rhythm,, space orientation, speed) and control of movement
- To demonstrate a good understanding of the mechanics of jumping and spinning
- To further develop their understanding of artistic training
- To introduce conditioning, off-ice technical jumping skills and fundamental mental skills, which includes concentration, self-motivation, visualization, relaxation, positive self-talk and goal setting
- To create awareness and enthusiasm for various testing and competitions available
- Introduce ancillary capacities (warm-up, hydration, cool-down and stretching)



The Sensitive Period

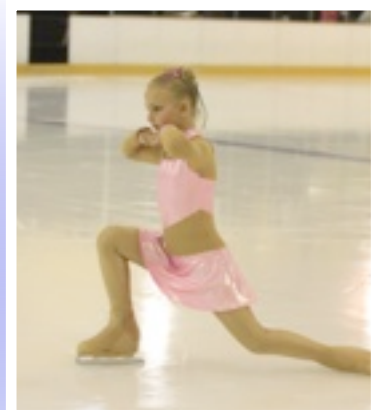
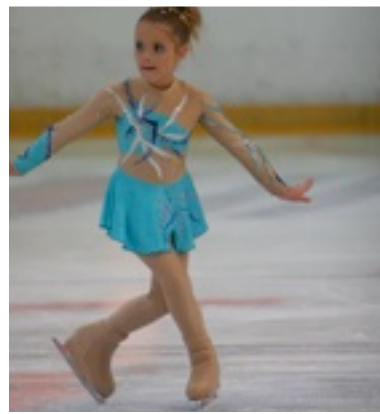
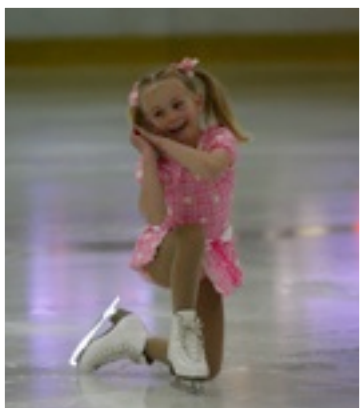
The following physiological factors must be introduced and developed through specific programming and coaching and in accordance with age and gender:

- *Skills (“golden age”: 8-12)*
- *Speed (female: 6-8; male: 7-9)*
- *Suppleness (flexibility) (female/male: 6-10)*
- *Stamina (at the onset of PHV-peak height velocity)*

Guiding Principles

In order to allow athletes to develop and acquire the skills outlined, the LEARN TO TRAIN and TRAIN TO TRAIN stage must:

- Focus on technical training. Artistry, choreography and musicality should come under the umbrella of technical training.
- Be adapted for individual needs and talents. The frequency of practice and number of repetitions must be high enough to ensure learning.
- Adhere to the idea that 70% success rate is required for learning to occur
- Adhere to the principal that the athlete should spend more time training than competing.
- Include the monitoring by coaches of PHV (PEAK HEIGHT VELOCITY) and the sensitive period, flexibility, speed, endurance and strength according to age and biological sex.
- Coaches should be knowledgeable on growth development and maturation processes.
- Introduce single periodisation (i.e seasonal and multi-year planning).
- Provide resources that include parent education.
- Include regular assessments and evaluations which are done primarily by the coach and which includes constructive and clear feedback to both athlete and parents (guardians).



MISSION OF THE COACH

- LEARN TO TRAIN / TRAIN TO TRAIN -



The mission of the coach is to teach the basic sport specific skills and elementary artistic expression essential to participate. Coaches must also introduce physical conditioning and fundamental mental skills. Sport specific skills are coupled with motor skill development. Coaches should continue to encourage children to be involved in several sports in the early part of this stage.

While the skater's parent(s)/guardian(s) will act as her/ his manager in this stage, the coach will act as the director of development. Coaches have the option to train as a technical specialist but are also responsible for regular assessments and evaluations of a skater's progression. Coaches have the ability to teach/transfer information in a manner appropriate to age, gender and an ability to teach good skill technique.

All coaches potentially train world-class athletes but simply at a different stage of their development. Therefore, coaches of athletes in this stage of development need to understand figure skating at a level far beyond that at which their skaters may currently perform so they can provide relevant training at the appropriate time in preparation for the skater's future. Coaches should always be able to provide a rationale for why they are teaching a certain skill or concept and how they are using a skater's time.



FEMALES (7-11) and MALES (8-12)

SPORT SPECIFIC SKILLS:

This chart represents the skills that participants should be able to demonstrate or show a relative mastery of the skills, all dependent on the amount of time spent on the Learn to Train Stage.

MOTOR SKILLS	<p>Continued development of balance, agility and coordination demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing awareness of the relationship between speed and lean • Kinesthetic awareness: repeating shapes and pathways; following movement through space; recognizing steps and being able to describe them, movement combinations, perception of movement in self, opposition of legs, arms and torso • Use of the blade and interaction with the ice — changing the balance point (gliding, rocking, sliding), multiple turning/twisting and leaning tasks, use of the toe pick, production and manipulation of force • Understanding the movement of the joints — backbone, hip joint, head, legs and arms, rotational movement of the spine line • Skater's perception of their own body rhythm
TECHNICAL	<p>Edges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Able to perform well-controlled strong, fast edges including a back change of edge •Lean, depth of curve, and control demonstrated on both feet and all edges <p>Turns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Able to perform step sequences with simple, clean edges and turns •Demonstration of multiple turns executed with flow in both directions and on both feet •Multiple turns, brackets, counters, choctaws and loops are introduced and developed •Skaters should begin learning the rocker mechanism <p>Stroking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Demonstration of a very good crosscut technique including push with the blade, acceleration, maintenance of speed and flow and body carriage •Able to vary the timing of crosscuts with ease in both directions both forwards and backwards <p>Jumps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Able to perform single jumps with speed and control •Able to execute single Axels and two or more clean double jumps •Developing double/double combination •Some understanding of how doubles will become triples •Consistent and correct air and landing position <p>Spins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All forward and backward spinning positions and changes of positions well executed •Able to perform combination spins that include all three basic positions •Demonstration of some basic position variations with minimal to no loss of speed and control <p>Field Moves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ability to perform both supported and unsupported spiral positions as well as other field moves (i.e. spread eagles, Ina Bauers, pivots, etc.) •Demonstrated ability to maintain speed and flow in basic field movement positions •Learning to perform simple field moves in transitions
ARTISTRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletes should be able to demonstrate an understanding of beat, tempo and simple rhythmic patterns through movement. • Introduce various musical themes and instill an appreciation of the differences. • Introduce use of full body and different levels of movement (i.e high, medium, low) • Participation in ballet and other types of dance training in addition to off-ice classes.

FEMALES (7-11) and MALES (8-12)

General Skills

General skills (i.e physiological, psychological and social) are developed through involvement in the sport, and determines the overall development of the individual.

PHYSIOLOGICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased development of motor skills, speed and suppleness • Ability to perform basic strength training movements using own body weight, medicine balls and stability balls • Beginning to demonstrate appropriate levels of stamina
PSYCHOLOGICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fundamental mental skills should be acquired which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus and anxiety management strategies - Goal setting - Mental preparation for practice, testing and competition - Positive self-awareness / self-concept
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge of the rules and ethics of sport • Some ability to act as both leader and follower and a demonstrated ability to cooperate with others • Ability to take risks and / or meet challenges presented • Learning to measure success through self-evaluation • Understand that education remains the most important priority

On Ice Training

Coaches, parents and support teams must recognise that only purposeful practice with the correct training skills will ensure progress. The table below outlines a progression from the time of entry into the EXPLORER (learn to train) stage to the point of exit. Ice time more than doubles from entry to exit within this stage.

FINDING THE EDGE (LEARN TO TRAIN): ENTRY STAGE

Session length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 to 60 minutes on-ice with 15 min warm-up prior • Maximum one session per day
Days / week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 - 4 days / week
Weeks / year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum: 20 weeks / year • Ideal: 30 to 40 weeks / year

GETTING CENTERED (TRAIN TO TRAIN): EXIT STAGE

Session length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 to 60 minutes on-ice, with 15 min warm-up prior • 1 - 2 sessions / day
Days / week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 - 5 days / week
Weeks / year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum: 40 weeks / year • Ideal: 44 weeks / year

The relative amount of time skaters may practice various activities is tabled below as a percentage of their total ice time at the ENTRY (LEARN TO TRAIN) and EXIT (TRAIN TO TRAIN) stage.

Skills / Activities	ENTRY	EXIT
TECHNICAL	100%	60%
	This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edges / Turns • Jumps • Spins • Stroking • Field Movements 	This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edges / Turns • Jumps • Spins • Stroking • Field Movements
	Priority given to edges/turns, jumps and spins	Priority given to jumping
PROGRAM COMPONENTS		40%
		•This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Movement • Ice dancing • Program development
		Priority given to program development

Off Ice Training

In the LEARN TO TRAIN and TRAIN TO TRAIN Stage, skaters should participate in a variety of other sports and activities to become better athletes and more well rounded skaters in both body and mind. As in the ICE FRIENDS (ACTIVE START) and 'COOLEST PLACE IN TOWN' (FUNDAMENTALS) stage, the specific types of activities will depend on the specific socio-cultural context of the athlete but coaches, parents, and clubs are encouraged to explore the different opportunities that exist in their communities. That said, at this stage of development more sport-specific activities such as off-ice technical jumping classes should be introduced to help with body development and awareness and the understanding of movement patterns. It is important to note that the proportion of on-ice to off-ice activity is also seasonal and subject to periodization. Knowledge of the intentions behind warm-up, cool-down, stretching, nutrition, hydration, and rest and recovery should be encouraged.

At point of entry into LEARN TO TRAIN, skaters should be participating in one to two hours of sport-specific off-ice activity each week, for 20 to 40 weeks of the year. At point of exit of the TRAIN TO TRAIN stage, skaters should be participating in three hours of formalized off-ice activity each week, 44 weeks of the year.

Competition

At the point of entry and the earlier phases of the LEARN TO TRAIN stage, emphasis should remain on technical development and training time, with a minimum of competition. At the entry point, one competition per year progressing gradually to between two and four is sufficient. Four to six competitions per year is more than adequate at the exit of the TRAIN TO TRAIN stage. These competitions will be a combination of element and skill performance and programs, with a focus more on skills in the earlier stages of development. Performances will include the presentations of programs; however, skill presentations should remain the primary focus in this stage of development.

