

# triathlon

## parent guide

teck

Triathlon  
CANADA



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## Thank You

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# Introduction

Greetings to all parents and guardians ... welcome to triathlon for youth. As a parent, you play a vital role in your child's experience, enjoyment, and path through sport. The philosophy of triathlon as a lifestyle activity that can be enjoyed by people of all levels and backgrounds is the same for youth and adults. However, the practice of triathlon is vastly different for young people. Youth triathlon focuses on developing a wide variety of skills, movement challenges, and the ability to move at very fast speeds. This booklet is designed as an introduction to the philosophy, skills, and development pathway of Canadian children and youth in triathlon.

## Triathlon For Youth

In Canada, Triathlon activities for children and youth are guided by the National Kids of Steel® and National Youth Development Programs. These programs follow the principles of LTAD, or Long Term Athlete Development. You will read more on Triathlon Canada's LTAD model later in this manual. LTAD ensures that young athletes are engaging in the most efficient, safe, and fun practice activities for their stage of growth and athletic abilities. Below is a snapshot of what the LTAD model does and does not focus on for children and youth before and during their growth spurt.

### Triathlon for youth emphasizes:

- ☐ fun and friendship
- ☐ skills in all sports (swim, bike, run, transitions)
- ☐ swimming and aquatic abilities
- ☐ riding bikes as often as possible for fun, fitness, and transportation
- ☐ speed of movement
- ☐ participation in a wide variety of sports
- ☐ seasonal participation in formal triathlon activities

### Triathlon for youth DOES NOT encourage:

- ☐ long distance training
- ☐ year-round triathlon training
- ☐ specialization in one sport before puberty
- ☐ formal workouts like intervals or longer speed sets
- ☐ modified adult programs; training with adults



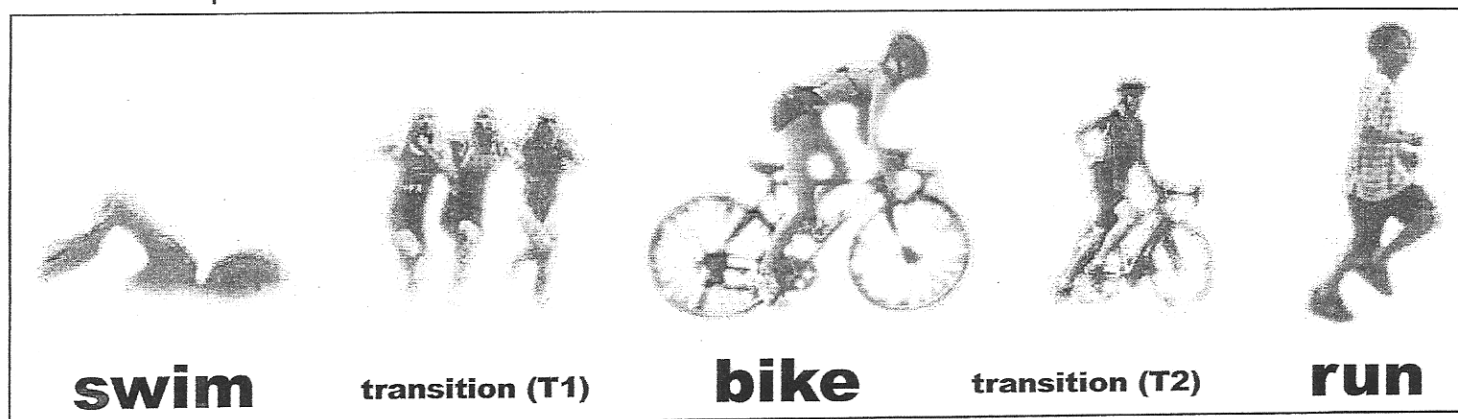
Children and youth need to enjoy what they do; they need to feel a part of the process; they need social support; and they need their leaders to both "hold on and let go" at the same time.

## When All is Said and Done... It Must be FUN

Why do children participate in sport? The #1 answer is **to have fun**. Fun means different things to different people. Some people enjoy spending time with friends, others like to master new skills, many people live for the feelings sport provides, and a few like to succeed through winning. Fitness feels GOOD. Being with friends and doing something healthy feels good. Let's make sure that beyond all other information about sport process, progress, skill, and technique that our leaders - our parents, guardians, teachers, and coaches - are ensuring that sport is FUN for young athletes. If they enjoy it, they will stay in it. Then we can work on technique and training. Happy splashing, spinning, and stomping!

# What is Triathlon?

Triathlon is a sport that combines swimming, cycling, and running in one continuous event. Athletes move from swim to bike and then from bike to run without stopping. The part of triathlon between each sport is called a TRANSITION. Transitions are often called the 4th sport in triathlon and involve their own unique set of skills.



There are other events in the "Triathlon family", including Aquathlon, Duathlon, and Winter Triathlon. Aquathlon and duathlon are the most common multisports other than triathlon.

**Aquathlons** are run-swim-run or swim-run events.

**Duathlons** are run-bike-run or bike-run events.

**Winter Triathlons** involve running, mountain biking (snow), and cross country skiing.

## Triathlon in Canada

Triathlon involves three lifetime fitness sports, so it allows athletes of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to participate. In triathlon you will see children, youth, adults, parents, grandparents, paratriathletes, novice participants and expert competitors all in the same events. The people in triathlon are like family enjoying personal challenge while feeling healthy, fit and having fun.



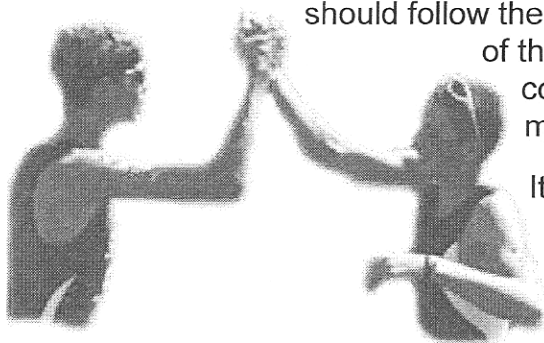
Triathlon began as a challenge for athletes in individual sports. It presented them with an opportunity to try something new, train different activities (cross train) and have fun with friends and teammates. Age group triathletes (non-Elite athletes) can compete at community, provincial, national, and international levels. There is an Age Group World Championship just as there is an Elite World Championship. Elite athletes are professional athletes and race in 'draft legal' events. This means they can draft, or cycle right behind or beside other athletes on the bike. In the year 2000, Triathlon made its debut at the Sydney Olympic Games where Canada's Simon Whitfield won the gold medal!

Most provinces in Canada have a triathlon PGB or Provincial Governing Body that organizes provincial Multisport events. Triathlon Canada is the National Governing Body for triathlon in Canada. Kids of Steel® or KOS is the Canadian National Youth Development program which includes races, clinics, camps, and other events that adhere to the guidelines of Canada's LTAD (Long Term Athlete Development) model.



# Triathlon Values

In triathlon, there are several important guiding principles. Every athlete, parent, coach, and official should follow these guidelines when they are training, racing, and in other areas of their lives. Parents can help by modeling, encouraging, and communicating these values to their athletes. Triathlon teaches more than just sport. It teaches you about life!



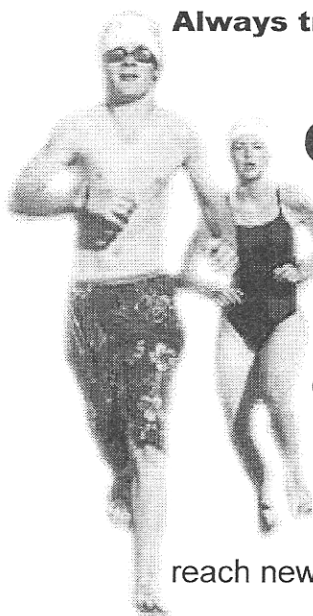
It is critical that parents, coaches, and other leaders not only know these values but **TEACH** and **MODEL** them to young athletes. By doing this we foster the positive influences of triathlon on body, mind, *and* soul.

## Respect

People from different countries, cities, communities, and cultures all compete side by side in triathlon. Encourage everyone. Cheer on all people whatever their ability, age, gender, ethnicity, or background. Whether you are having a good day or a bad day, make sure to celebrate everyone's achievements, no matter how large or small.



**Always treat others the way you want to be treated.**



## Challenge (Finishing is Winning)

Triathlon and Multisport events are challenging. It takes a lot of tenacity, effort, and determination to reach the finish line. In triathlon, every finisher is a winner. Triathlon teaches you that although there are challenges in life, you have control over how you react to difficulties or obstacles. By looking for the positive aspects in all situations, you will start to spread this attitude among your community in other areas of life.

**If at first you don't succeed, TRI, TRI again!**

Triathlon emphasizes the **FUN** of working hard to achieve goals and reach new heights as an athlete and person.

## Community

Triathlon creates community. Even at top level races, you will see the fastest athletes return and cheer on the final finishers. Everyone enjoys the company of training partners, common fitness pursuits, and personal goals. You can go to races and see three generations participating from the same family. It is this community that makes triathlon unique and special. By participating in triathlon you are joining a community that spreads positive energy and role models fitness to our everyday communities. Reach for the stars... and have fun!

**When you finish your race, always turn around and congratulate the next person to the line. Next race they will do the same for you.**



# Triathlon Distances and Rules

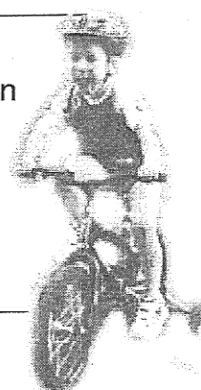
Triathlon offers something for everyone. There are events of all distances for kids, youth, and adults alike. In Canada, the National program that oversees distances and rules is called Kids of Steel® or KOS. It is run by Triathlon Canada and there are KOS events sanctioned by individual provinces across the country. KOS emphasizes finishing as winning and the great feelings you get by participating in sports. The KOS program encourages participation as a focus and the development of SKILLS in triathlon such as technique in all the sports. Below is a summary of KOS distances and some simple rules of triathlon.

## Race Distances

NOTE these distances are **MAXIMUM** distances in each sport. Triathlons can be shorter, but not longer, than the maximums. Young athletes do not need to train long distances. It is much more important to develop good **TECHNIQUE** when athletes are young (before the growth spurt).

### KOS Distances: Ages as of Dec. 31 of the current season

6-7 years	50m swim	1.5km cycle	500m run
8-9 years	100m swim	5km cycle	1km run
10-11 years	200m swim	5km cycle	2km run
12-13 years	300m swim	10km cycle	3km run
14-15 years	500m swim	10km cycle	4km run
16-19 years	750m swim	20km cycle	5km run

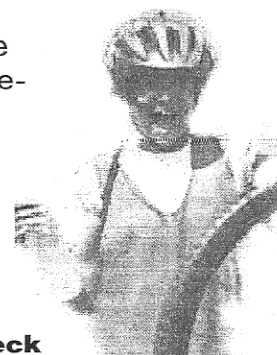
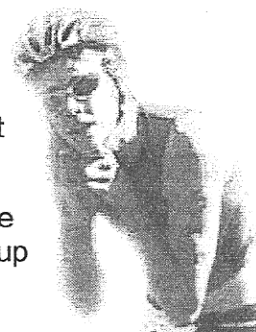


### Other Common Adult Triathlon Distances

Sprint Distance	750m swim	20km cycle	5km run
Olympic Distance	1.5km swim	40km cycle	10km run
Half Iron Distance	2km swim	90km cycle	21km run
Iron Distance	3.8km swim	180 km cycle	42km run

## Triathlon Rules

- ☐ Athletes must show respect to themselves, other participants, officials, and spectators at all times. Have fun!
- ☐ Athletes must wear a certified helmet (clipped up) at ALL TIMES when in contact with the bike. Athletes must clip their helmet up BEFORE touching the bike and leave it clipped up until their bike is racked after the cycle.
- ☐ Athletes must cover their torso (chest and stomach) on the bike and run.
- ☐ Athletes under the age of 14 may *not* use aero bars or race wheels. Athletes may use clipless pedals if the cleat is recessed (in the sole of the shoe) and the clips are double-sided (mountain bike style). No cages are permitted on pedals.
- ☐ Safety before speed. Be aware and race with care.
- ☐ Athletes may *not* ride their bikes in transition. (Athletes must walk or run their bikes to the MOUNT LINE before the cycle and get off their bikes at the DISMOUNT line after the cycle).



For a complete list of the rules go to [www.triathloncanada.com](http://www.triathloncanada.com); click on **Programs** then **Teck Kids of Steel®** then **KOS and Youth Development Rules**.

# Triathlon Equipment

Only a minimum amount of inexpensive equipment is required to complete a youth triathlon. Below is a list of items athletes will need to complete an event.



## the swim

- ☐ a swim suit (must have)
- ☐ goggles (highly recommended)
- ☐ swim cap (optional but some races provide all athletes with caps)

## the bike

- ☐ a certified helmet that fits properly
- ☐ a bike (any type will do—mountain bikes are recommended for KOS athletes)
- ☐ shirt, singlet, or swim suit to cover the chest and stomach (must have)



## the run

- ☐ running shoes (with good support)
- ☐ shirt, singlet, or swim suit to cover your chest and stomach (must have)

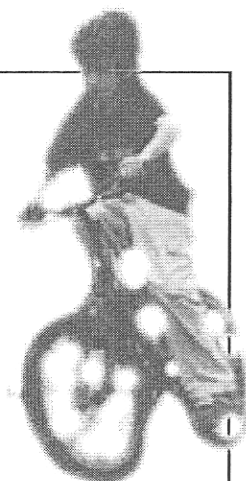
## other items (optional)

- ☐ water bottle
- ☐ elastic number belt (to pin your number on)
- ☐ sun glasses
- ☐ hat or visor (if sunny or raining)
- ☐ towel (for drying feet)

## Important Safety Notes

**Helmets** should be certified by: CSA (Canadian Standards Association), ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials), BS (British Standard), AS (Australian Standard), SNELL, or CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission in the U.S.). See Safe Kids Canada (website). [www.sickkids.ca](http://www.sickkids.ca).

- ☐ **Cycling helmets** are only designed for one hard crash, even if they do not look damaged. Replace helmets after a crash or if a helmet has been thrown or dropped repeatedly on a hard surface.
- ☐ **Avoid borrowing** or buying used helmets.
- ☐ **Replace helmets** at least once a year if children and youth are riding often.
- ☐ **Complete a thorough bike check** before each ride (see p. 15) and take the bike in for regular maintenance at a bike shop.
- ☐ **Brakes.** Ensure athletes can reach the brakes comfortably, brake pads are not worn, and the brakes work quickly and effectively.
- ☐ **Size.** Ensure the bike size fits your athlete and will not cause injury (see p. 15).



# Growth and Development

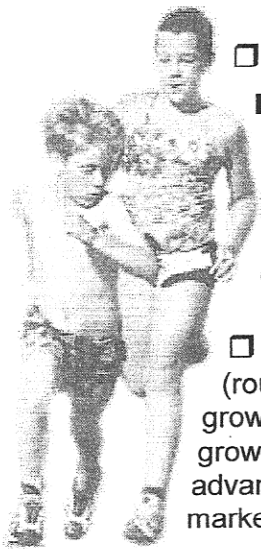
Now that you have some basic information about the sport, the next section reviews key principles related to growth, development, practicing, and skill learning. It is vital for parents to understand the principles of athlete development, the importance of skill learning at young ages, and why we support, but do not push, athletes in sport through their growing years.



## Growth and Development

All people follow a similar path from childhood to adulthood. Maturation describes where a child or youth is located on that path throughout their growth years- in other words, how close they are to adult maturity. Maturation encompasses physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth. As you read the points below, consider their implications on young athletes in sport.

- ❑ **Children mature at different rates. “Biological processes have their own timetables, and do not celebrate birthdates.”** (Malina & Bouchard, 2004) E.g. a group of 10-year olds (chronologically) will range from 8 to 12 years in maturation. One child might be the equivalent of 12 years in physical growth while their best friend may only be 8 years physically.
- ❑ **Growth occurs at different rates in physical, social, emotional, and cognitive domains.** For example, a youth athlete may understand (cognitive) a skill they must perform but be unable to perform it physically. Another athlete may grow early and be proficient at physical training but lack the emotional focus and desire to engage in advanced practices.

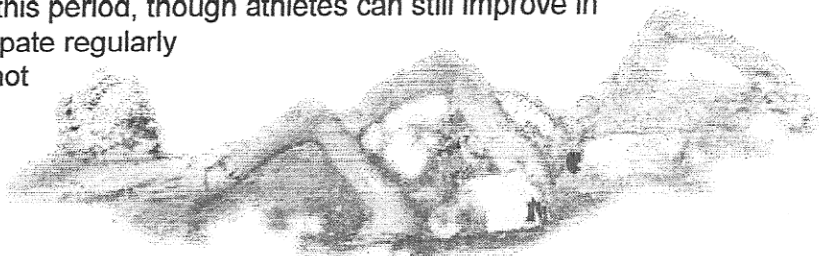


- ❑ **Youth may grow “slowly and steadily” or make large gains and then plateau for some time.**

- ❑ **Girls, on average, grow and develop approximately 1 to 2 years faster than boys in all domains.** This difference is greatest during the pubescent years and can affect perception of body image, sensitivity about body changes, and holistic maturity (social, cognitive, psychological).

- ❑ **The largest growth spurt occurs during puberty or the adolescent years** (roughly ages 11-14 in girls and 13-16 in boys). The period during this spurt when youth are growing the most quickly in height is called Peak Height Velocity (PHV). It is not until AFTER this growth spurt, with its accompanying hormones and muscle mass, that youth can tolerate more advanced physiological training. Much of the Triathlon LTAD model is built around this growth marker so children are not trained “too hard too early”.

- ❑ **Many female youth experience a plateau or even decline in performance during early- to mid adolescence.** Athletes should be educated and prepared for this period which can last up to 3 years. Many athletes drop out of sport during this period, though athletes can still improve in fitness and skills if they enjoy sport and participate regularly during this phase. Success at 10 years does not predict success at 16 or 25 years. Staying involved in a variety of sports prior to puberty provides a solid foundation of physical literacy and fitness for future athletic success.

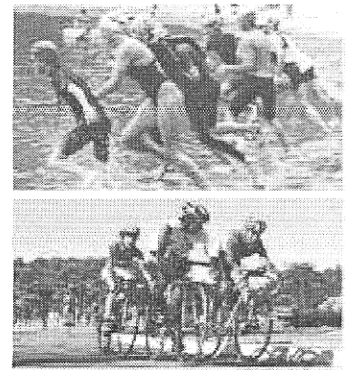
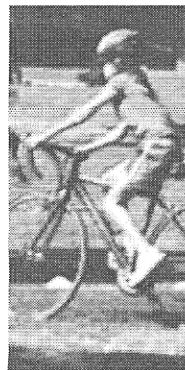
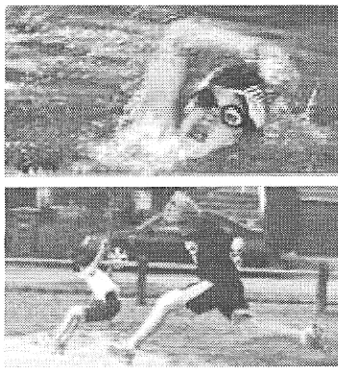
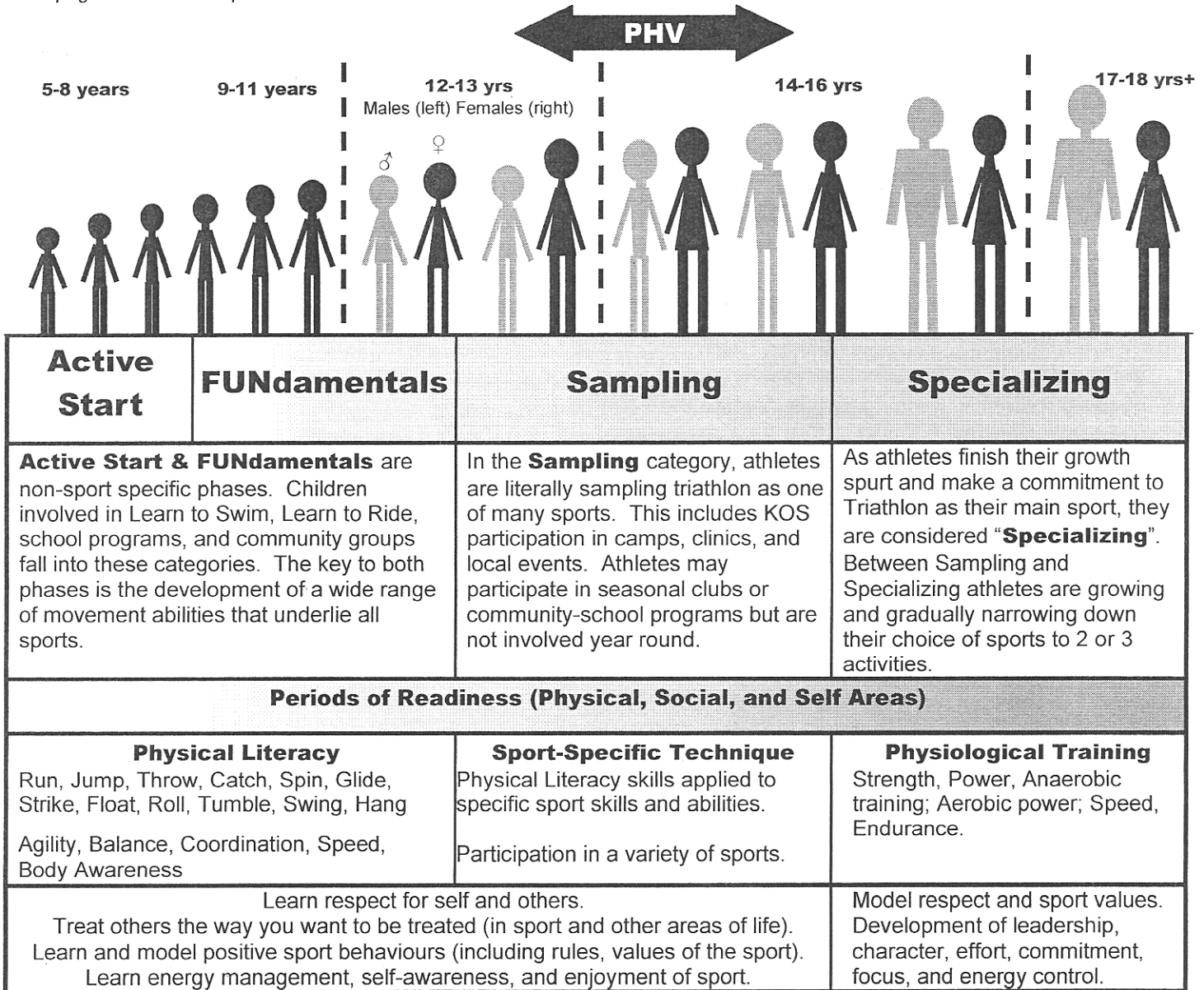




# LTAD: Long Term Athlete Development

Triathlon participation and training for youth are guided by Triathlon Canada's LTAD model which is based on the literature in growth and development. Below is a synopsis of the LTAD phases applicable to young athletes: **Active Start** and **FUNDamentals** (non sport-specific) followed by **Sampling** and **Specializing**. At any point from Sampling onward athletes may move into a parallel stream called **Active For Life** which is a participation-based avenue for fitness and fun at all ages.

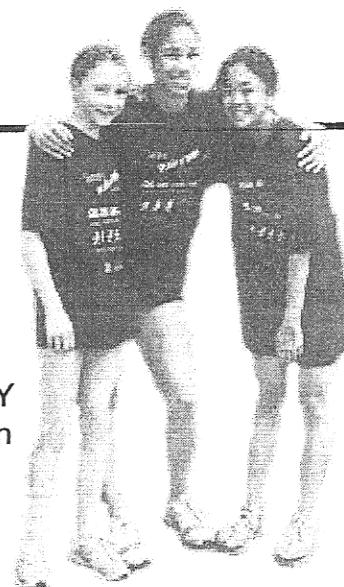
\*See page 16 for the complete model.





# LTAD Advice

The recommendations of LTAD promote long, healthy, enjoyable lives in sport for all people. Triathlon is considered a "late maturing" sport, meaning that athletes do not reach their peak until mid to late 20's and even into their 30's. A body must be trained over time until it is fully mature in order to meet the demands of racing at the top levels and completing longer distance races as an adult. That being said, the feel for movements (e.g. feel for water, feel for riding a vehicle on two wheels) and technical elements of sport are **EARLY MATURING** elements that must have a strong foundation prior to puberty. An absolutely critical part of this foundation is love for sport and creativity through **PLAY**.



## Periods of Readiness

Athletes do not progress in a linear fashion. In other words they might improve in some areas, then plateau while other areas improve. During the growth years there are certain "periods of readiness" where the human body and mind are at ideal phases of development to tackle certain athletic challenges, skills, or abilities. A few that pertain to triathlon are:

- **swimming** (all strokes, feel, technique, water play) prior to puberty
- **cycling** (balance, learning to ride, feel for the bike) prior to puberty
- **tumbling, vestibular (balance), and gross motor (whole body) movements** from 4-7 years
- **sport-specific skills & techniques** from 8-12 years (prior to puberty)
- **learning the values of sport** (foundations from ages 7 to 13)
- **self-concepts** (esteem, belief - foundations 8-12 years)
- **longer distances, higher speeds, intensities, and structured training** (post-puberty; after PHV)

Now, how do you "train" these? The answer might surprise you. As parents, the greatest gift you can give your child in triathlon is the opportunity to explore, enjoy, and experiment with their own creativity through **PLAY**. All the above will develop naturally if children are permitted to explore their environment and enjoy movement in the pool, on their bikes, in the trails, on the streets, and in the home.

## Let Them Play

Play is a child's way of exploring the world. As children get older, their need for play doesn't lessen—in fact, it increases—but we tend to devalue it's importance. We want our children to excel in academics, learn an instrument, and to become computer literate, and in the process we deprive them of their time for unstructured play and sport. Yet their bodies still need it. And their minds certainly need exercise to release energy so they can stay focused on a task when they need to. Common sense reminds us of the paradox that we need to move so that we can be still.

It is so important that we don't project our adult perceptions of sport onto our children. Let them play, learn some new skills, and make friends. **Kids want to play, and although they are developmentally and physically highly receptive to learning new skills, this has to be done in a fun context.** Structured and unstructured activities should be fun and children should be developing physical literacy. We must find ways...of letting our kids use their imaginations to create play. (Laumann, 2006, pgs 35, 36, 118, 121)



# Triathlon Skills for Family Fun

So now what? It is time to get out the door and have fun! This next section outlines some basic skills in each of the sports that parents and young athletes can enjoy playing and practicing together. See the Triathlon: Athlete Guide for more specific technical tips.

## In the Pool...

- ☐ Enroll in swimming lessons or join a swim club.
- ☐ Play in the water (a lot!) Tag, water polo, or water basketball are all fun games to play in the pool.
- ☐ Practice kicking, breathing, and swimming in all strokes (front crawl, back crawl, breaststroke, and butterfly).
- ☐ Gradually work up to swimming some fun endurance. Start at 50% of the KOS distance for your athletes' age group and each week do a little more until they can complete the distance.
- ☐ Swim in lakes or the ocean (parallel to the shore, stay shallow enough to touch the bottom).
- ☐ Make waves in the pool for your athlete to swim through.
- ☐ Create a buoy and swim around it to simulate open water practice.



## On the Bike...

- ☐ Ride as a family; ride to school; ride to buy groceries; ride as often as you can.
- ☐ Change hand positions while riding - hands wide on the bars, narrow (beside the stem), one hand riding, no-hand riding, waving, signaling, and so on.
- ☐ Ride standing and sitting when going uphill. Challenge your athlete to keep a quick, constant spin or rhythm (called cadence) when pedaling. Maintain a steady cadence (no pausing!) when standing or sitting uphill, riding downhill, and spinning on flat roads.
- ☐ Change gears in time to keep a steady spin up and down hills. Practice riding over obstacles. Be creative and create mountain bike challenges with pool noodles, slabs of wood, Styrofoam, and other items.
- ☐ Practice tricks like stopping suddenly and keeping your balance on the pedals without falling (track stand). Pick up a water bottle or cone while riding past it (shifting balance). Ride through a homemade obstacle course of cones or cans. Make jumps and zig-zag paths then ride on them.

## On the Run...

- ☐ Play running games like soccer, ultimate, and tag.
- ☐ Map a fun route around the neighbourhood that is 75 to 100% of your athletes' KOS distance. (End up at a coffee shop for a hot or cold drink depending on the season!)  
\*You can do this in cycling as well. E.g. Ice Cream Rides.... Historical Rides... choose landmarks to go see.
- ☐ Follow the Run Rhymes for good technique (eyes high; fleet feet; grin & win; fall tall).

## For Transitions...

- ☐ Create homemade obstacle courses to push bikes through like in transition.
- ☐ Have your athlete create a fun circuit at the playground or at home that includes getting on and off their bike, running with their bike, and other creative moves.
- ☐ Put all your shoes and socks in a large pile. Have a race to put them on.

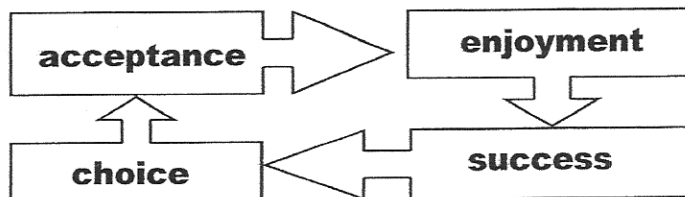
# Supporting the Motivation

Now that you know more about the world of triathlon and child development, it is a perfect time to look at why people participate in sport and how you as a parent-guardian can support your child's sport experience. The #1 reason children and youth participate in sport is "to have fun". But, fun means different things to different people. In a study of thousands of youth sport participants, researchers found four primary definitions of fun, the four S's of why people participate in sport. They are....

<b>Social (Affiliation)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet new friends</li> <li>• Be active with like-minded people</li> <li>• Enjoy positive, friendly relationships</li> <li>• Honour (of self, community, family, country, etc.)</li> </ul>	<b>Sensation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoy the sights, sounds, and physical sensations (e.g. feel of the water or wind; the feel of effort, exhilaration, working hard)</li> <li>• Atmosphere and aura of being in sport</li> </ul>
<b>Success (Achievement)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve performance</li> <li>• Master new skills, levels, or abilities</li> <li>• Strive for excellence</li> <li>• Achieve goals</li> </ul>	<b>Self-Direction (Control)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire for autonomy (personal control)</li> <li>• Freedom to learn</li> <li>• Feel in charge</li> <li>• Have a sense of control</li> </ul>



Now consider these four human needs:



**"When these needs are met, your child will have the base, confidence, and perspective to pursue excellence, be a "team" person, and enjoy life and all that it has to offer".**

(Botterill & Patrick)

Sport should offer a positive avenue for addressing these four areas. Check in with your athlete often to make sure this is happening. You can also foster their awareness of these areas as a parent using some of the strategies below.

## Acceptance

Teach your athlete the difference between doing and being. If their self-acceptance is built on "cycling fast" then what happens if they cycle slow one day? If their self acceptance is built on "being a supportive teammate even though I felt a bit sad about my performance" then what happens?

## Enjoyment

Ask your athlete what they enjoy about triathlon (and sport). Ask them to identify parts of practice they like. Focus on the positive.

## Success

Success is more than winning. Success is reaching goals. Help your athlete set goals and stepping stones to reach them. Celebrate the achievement of small steps. Communicate with your child's coach about technical improvements and positive behaviours in practice. Recognize success in these areas too.

## Choice

Self-direction is a powerful life skill. Let your child explore and make some mistakes. Always support them, but gradually let them make their own choices about why they are in sport and how they approach goals, commitment, and focus.



# Communicating the Positive



All parent-guardians want their children to enjoy sport. It is important to be aware of communication methods that help you support your athlete(s) and avoid putting undue pressure on them. Expecting athletes to improve all the time, focusing on results instead of technique at young ages, and comparing with others are *potentially harmful* to a child's long term emotional health in sport. Here are some helpful hints for helping make your athlete's experience one that will last a lifetime.

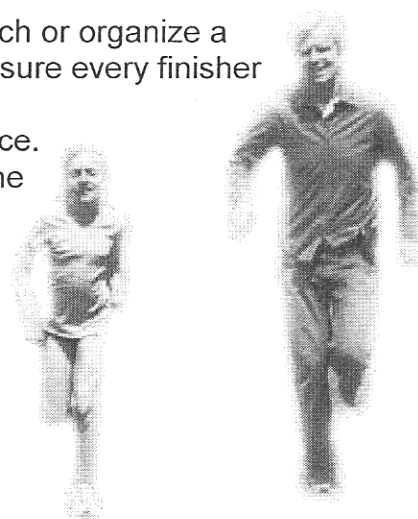
## “Celebrate What You Want to See More Of”. T.Peters



- ☐ Focus on positive aspects of your child's development. Keep a chart of the “good stuff” they enjoyed each practice or the highlights of each day (positive charting).
- ☐ Notice the positive AND TELL athletes what you notice.
- ☐ Ask athletes what areas of training they find the most enjoyable.
- ☐ Ask athletes what they think they are doing well.
- ☐ Tell them what they did right - not what they did wrong.

## Be a Role Model

- ☐ Try a tri too! If you are already involved in the sport, offer to help coach or organize a small multisport event at the local school or community centre. Make sure every finisher is a winner.
- ☐ Cheer for your athlete's competitors, teammates, and others in the race. Do not discriminate. Everyone puts forth a huge effort to make it to the line. Recognize their courage.
- ☐ Give your athlete some responsibility. Avoid coaching them during practices and races. Let them have time to make mistakes without criticism or suggestion. Empower them to discover their own “best way”. Step back and smile often.



## Communicate Conscientiously

Carefully consider the comments you make and the questions you ask.

Comments to Avoid <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comments to Try <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Did you win? What place did you come in?	How did you feel? Where did you feel the strongest? What did you do well?
You looked worse than last time. You could have gone faster than that.	Did you try some new techniques you are learning in practice? What worked and what didn't work so well?
How come you didn't beat Jane?	What were the highlights of your race or practice? What part of it was the most fun? Why?
You looked terrible. What happened? Did you forget all the training you have done? You're a better athlete than that.	You sure made a great effort to finish the event. How did it feel? I'm so happy that you made it to the line! You are a special person. I love you.

# Fueling the Body

You cannot train the mind and body unless they have energy to function! Good nutrition is vital to health in general, and is particularly important for young athletes who are growing, training, and attending school. Below are several tips and tricks for feeding active youth. Seek out experts in your community for more information.

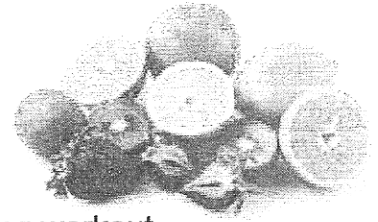
## Water

Drink up... at school, at home, during sports. Did you know that almost 75% of the body (and 90% of the brain) is water? Water plays many roles in the body.

- ☐ Helps transport nutrients to cells; increases the ability of blood to carry oxygen
- ☐ Improves health and resistance to infections; stabilizes body temperature.
- ☐ Protects the body against EMF's (electromagnetic fields) given off by computers, TV's and many electronic devices.

## How do you know you are drinking enough?

Your urine should be light or clear (not dark yellow).

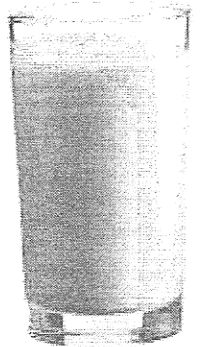


## Before, During, and After Practice

- ☐ Eat a small, healthy snack 45 to 60 minutes before practice.
- ☐ If practices are longer than 60 min. have a small, easy-to-digest snack during workout.
- ☐ Eat a healthy snack with 3 food groups within 30 min. of finishing a practice. E.g. an apple with crackers and cheese **or** chocolate milk and 1/2 a peanut butter and banana sandwich.
- ☐ Consume a balanced, healthy meal within 2 hours of practice.

## General Nutrition Tips

- ☐ Drink water and milk instead of pop and juice. Milk has many nutrients and protein. Pop has NO nutrients and is high in sugar. Juice is very concentrated (e.g. would you eat 5 apples in one sitting? How many apples make 1 cup of juice?)
- ☐ Eat more fresh foods and less processed foods. Buy more from the outer edges of the store (fresh produce, deli, etc.) than the middle aisles (processed foods).
- ☐ Go green and yellow and orange and red. The bright fruits and vegetables are very high in nutrients. Nutrients are VITAL for recovery from training and cognitive processing (i.e. school performance)
- ☐ Add pasta to your vegetables, not vegetables to your pasta!



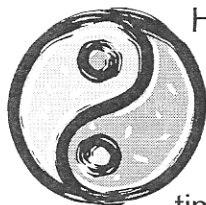
## Food Links

Stress the positive effects of "good food" on academic achievement, emotional stability, (perception of) physical appearance, sport performance, and general "well-being". Create posters of what effects good nutrition has on academics, thinking, sport, and life.



# Balancing Life

Sport is a wonderful vehicle for health, enjoyment, friendships, and self-esteem among others.



However, It is not in the training we improve, but in our recovery periods. Life is becoming more difficult to balance with the increasing demands on children and youth in our busy world. Triathlon involves three lifetime fitness sports and teaches personal-social responsibility, inclusion, and other values. It may also demand a lot of time, particularly if athletes enjoy the sport and want to pursue it more seriously. Managing time and energy become paramount. Here are a few energy-management tips and tricks for parent-guardians and all youth regardless of what sport, instrument, or other pursuit you "play".

## Take 10

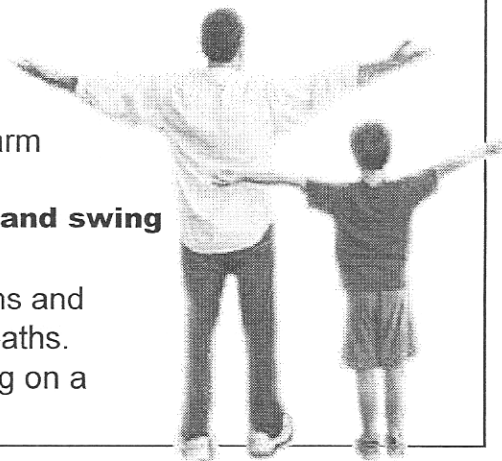


Or even 5 minutes to breathe. Stop, sit or lie down, close your eyes, and focus on breathing. Slowly massage your temples (two indentations on the side of your forehead) and then the two spots above each eyebrow on your forehead for about 30 seconds to 1 minute each. Gradually let your mind shift to positive events of the day. Smile, even if it feels forced. Repeat. This is a wonderful exercise to teach children and youth for relaxation, stress management, and finding their own space inside themselves when life seems too busy.

## Energize

When you are stressed, tired, or stagnant (in one place too long), the energy in your body needs a lift. Here are few very simple exercises to try yourself and teach young athletes to perform if they are lethargic, weary, or feeling tired.

- ☐ **March on the spot** for 30 to 60 seconds, touching your right hand to your left knee and left hand to your right knee
- ☐ **Draw a large figure eight (infinity sign) in the air** with one arm then the other. Watch your hand with your eyes as you draw.
- ☐ **Reach for the sky for 3 slow breaths. Twist at the waist, and swing your arms around your body** 5-6 times. Repeat 3 to 4 times.
- ☐ **Sit cross legged while giving yourself a hug** (cross your arms and reach around to your back). Close your eyes and take 8 slow breaths.
- ☐ **Massage your ears** for 30 seconds while smiling and/or focusing on a positive thought.



## Rest + Regeneration = Improvement

It is during periods of rest and regeneration that our bodies and minds have time to build back stronger than before. Without sufficient rest athletes are in danger of burning out, hitting a ceiling in their training, and becoming emotionally drained. If your athlete exhibits the following signs, consider scheduling in some extra "down time" for them to re-energize.

- ☐ extreme fatigue that lasts longer than a few days
- ☐ negative attitude toward sport and life, easily frustrated, losing patience
- ☐ change in appetite, aches and pains, headaches
- ☐ irritable and / or emotional (complaining a lot, crying)

**Encourage your athlete to keep a log book of their training so they have a record of positive achievements, improvements, set-backs, and energy levels.**



# FAQ: Triathlon Parents

As we finish our journey through youth sport and triathlon we review questions that are frequently asked by parent-guardians of Kids of Steel® (KOS) and youth athletes. If you have specific questions about events in your province, contact your Provincial Governing Body (PGB). See the bottom of this page for specific web directions.

**Q: My 11-year old has been placing high in KOS races and finds the distances too short. He wants to try longer races. Can he race up an age division for more challenge?**

**A:** No. There is no racing up permitted in KOS races. The distances were designed to optimize the development of speed, skill, and technique at each stage of development. For more challenge, try the following suggestions:

- Set goals for races that do not involve their placement in a race. E.g. Goal times for each sport, transition speeds, testing different racing strategies, testing a new technique in competition, and so on.
- Race in individual sport competitions (e.g. swim meets, cycle racing, and track meets),
- Try a different type of multisport event such as duathlon, off-road triathlon, winter tri, or aquathlon.
- Plan a trip around a triathlon in a different province or a larger race you have not attended before.
- Attend a triathlon camp or clinic put on for intermediate or experienced KOS athletes to learn new skills.

**Q: I think my athlete has a lot of potential in triathlon. She is 13 years old and loves cycling and running but not swimming. I heard that swimming is very important to become a top level triathlete. How much should I push her?**

**A:** Despite all good intentions by parents and coaches, there is substantial evidence that “pushing” is not recommended. If the athlete enjoys triathlon they will keep doing all three activities, even if they prefer one or two more than the others. Developing swim technique and feel for the water are important to develop early. More dedicated training can follow once they have finished growing (usually for girls between 15 and 17 years). If your athlete wants to stay in the sport because they enjoy it - and they must make that decision - then encourage them to swim enough to see improvements and maintain feel for the water. Usually 3 times a week is a minimum. Frequency is more important than volume. In other words, swimming 5 times a week for 45 minutes would likely be more beneficial for a developing athlete than swimming 2 to 3 times for 75 minutes. Encourage her to find ways to make it more enjoyable. E.g. combine a swim with a run. Educate her about the sport. Look up the history of top athletes who may have faced the same dilemma and use them as examples. Look up a certified triathlon coach in your area and explore KOS groups to train with.

**Q: My child is very small for their age. He is intimidated racing against people almost 2 years older than he is. Why is there a 2-year age span in Kids of Steel®? He loves triathlon and wants to participate but not with “bigger guys”.**

**A:** KOS is designed around inclusion and the philosophy of “every finisher is a winner”. The sport strives to include ‘the big, the small, the short, and the tall’ all together. Races are not required to schedule all athletes in a two-year age division at one time. Talk to race directors about splitting heats by single age groups. Your son may also race in a younger age division (just not in an older division) with permission from the Race Director (RD). He will not place if they offer prizes for top performance, but that is not the goal of KOS. The goal is to include everyone.

**Q: My children just did their first triathlon and they loved it! How do I find out more about races and where they are offered?**

**A:** Races are sanctioned and posted by each Provincial Governing Body (PGB). For a list of PGBs go to [www.triathloncanada.org](http://www.triathloncanada.org). Click on Contacts then Provincial Federations.

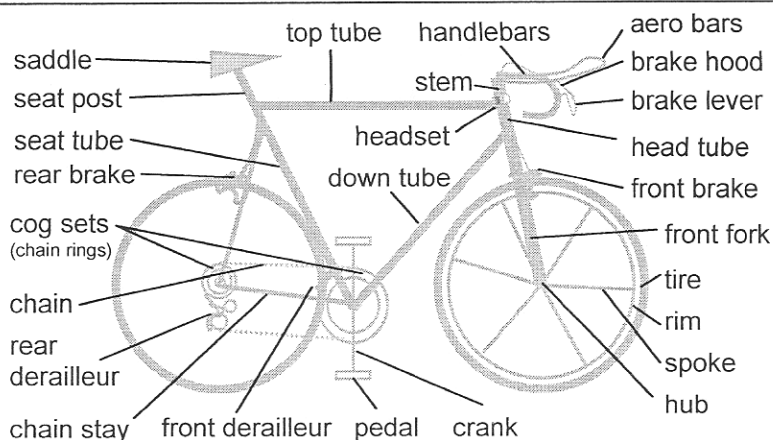


# APPENDIX 1: Bike Safety

## Bike Check

Before every ride, make sure your bike is in working order. Always check:

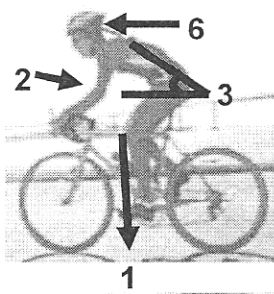
- ☐ **brakes** (work quickly)
- ☐ **stem and handlebars** (no twisting)
- ☐ **seat** (no twisting or loosening)
- ☐ **wheels** (spin freely) and tires (pumped up)
- ☐ **chain** (oiled and does not grind)
- ☐ **pedals** (spin but do not wobble)
- ☐ **gears** (change smoothly)



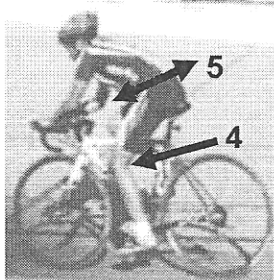
## Bike fit

Proper bike fit is extremely important for athletes of all experience levels. A properly fit bike will prevent injuries, make the bike easier to handle, allow the athlete to progress more quickly in skill learning, and increase their comfort while riding. The guidelines in the box below are general and apply more to older youth. Younger athletes should get the bike store to assist them with set-up. Important safety notes for parents of younger athletes include:

- ☐ Knees should stay below the hips and behind the toe when cycling
- ☐ Some athletes like to be able to touch the ground with both feet while sitting on the seat (safety) but this position may place the seat lower than suggested and stress the knees while riding. In this case you may need to experiment with different bike styles to find one that has the best compromise - seat height and knee position when pedaling.
- ☐ For larger wheels on small frames, make sure the pedal will not hit the front wheel as it turns from side to side.



1. When the front pedal is parallel to the ground (horizontal), a plum bob from the knee should fall in line with the pedal and ball of the foot.
2. Arms should be comfortable, with a slight bend.
3. When their hands are on the brake hoods, an athlete's back angle should be approximately 35 degrees from the ground. (When their hands are on the top of the handlebars next to the stem, the back angle increases to about 45 degrees).
4. When the pedals are vertical (12 o'clock and 6 o'clock), the lower leg should have a slight bend of 10-20 degrees.
5. The athletes' hips should not rock when cycling. (Watch them from behind). If the hips rock, the seat is too high.
6. Their head should be as neutral as possible (avoid hyperextension or bending the neck backwards)



## Helmets

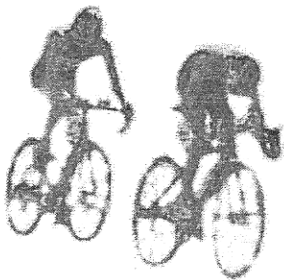


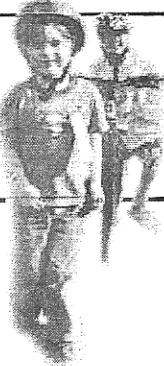


Helmets are mandatory when training and racing in triathlon. Helmets protect the brain in case of an accident or fall. You can tell if a helmet fits properly if it follows the criteria below:

- Snug on head—does not slide sideways or tip back and forth. No loose straps.
- Only two fingers fit (vertically) between chin strap and chin. Straps make triangle under ear.

# APPENDIX 2: LTAD Model

The following is a synopsis of the Triathlon Canada LTAD model. For more detailed information about the philosophy behind the model and information regarding each stage, go to: [www.triathloncanada.com](http://www.triathloncanada.com); click on **High Performance**, then on **Development Model** for a PDF of the LTAD booklet.

Participation Stream		Competitive Stream	Sample Activities	Age Ranges	Relative Growth
<b>Active for Life Adults</b> (Post-PHV years)  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AWAD athletes</li> <li>Novice adults</li> <li>Intermediate to National level age-groupers</li> <li>Short and long distance age-groupers</li> </ul>	    	<b>Maintenance</b>  Maturity as a high performance athlete.  Producing consistent, international performances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work with a high performance coach and sport scientists</li> <li>athletes provide feedback on composition and direction of training</li> <li>major international competition</li> </ul>	18+ yrs	Post PHV
		<b>Investment</b>  Commitment to compete at international levels. Move from Sprint to Olympic distance races.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>talent prediction</li> <li>International competition</li> <li>pursuing educational options</li> <li>periodized training</li> <li>integrated personal development</li> </ul>		
		<b>Specializing</b>  Begin training triathlon as primary sport. Junior national and National Junior Series become goal events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aerobic capacity development</li> <li>longer, structured speed sets and intervals</li> <li>talent selection</li> <li>sport-specific training 6 to 9 times a week</li> </ul>	14 to 19 yrs	PHV+2 PHV+1 year
<b>Active for Life KOS and Youth</b> (Before and during PHV)  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KOS event participation</li> <li>School and KOS programs</li> <li>KOS and Youth Development clubs (skill based)</li> </ul>		<b>Sampling</b>  Participation in a variety of sports. Tri involvement includes KOS events and seasonal clinics or camps. Social development and learning emphasized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>overall skill development</li> <li>mental training introduced</li> <li>sport-specific training 2 to 3 times a week; other sports 3 times a week</li> <li>competitive swimming</li> <li>cycling for transportation, fitness, and skill</li> </ul>	9 to 15+ yrs	PHV
 <b>Fundamentals</b>  Development of physical literacy and fundamental sport skills through a variety of activities.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>structured, non-sport specific play</li> <li>learn-to-play programs</li> <li>speed through games</li> <li>values &amp; rules of sport</li> </ul>	5 to 10 yrs	Pre PHV
<b>Active Start</b>  Introduction to movement abilities and physical literacy. First experiences in structured and unstructured play-sport activities.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exploring movement</li> <li>tag, throw and catch a ball, Frisbee, skipping, playground</li> <li>pick-up games of modified street hockey, soccer, etc.</li> </ul>	0-6 yrs	

# References and Resources

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The publications below are excellent resources for parents to learn more about children in sport.

**Child's Play.** by Silken Laumann. Random House, Canada (2006).

**Growth, Maturation, and Physical Activity: 2nd Ed.** By R.Malina, C.Bouchard, O. Bar-Or. Human Kinetics (2004)

**Lifelong Motor Development.** By Carl Gabbard. William C. Brown Publishers (1992).

**Straight Talk About Children in Sport.** by Janet LeBlank. Mosaic Publishing (1997).

**1,400 Things to be Happy About.** by Ann Kipfer. Workman Publishing (1994).

**Competition Introduction: Planning a Practice module.** Coaching Association of Canada (2004).

**From Childhood to Champion Athlete.** By Tudor Bompa. Veritas Publishing (1995).

**Smart Moves: Why Learning is not all in Your Head.** by Carla Hannaford. Great Ocean Publishers (1995).

**Feeling Great.** By Terry Orlick. Creative Bound Inc (1996).

**Developing Physical Literacy.** By Sport Canada, Canadian Sport Centers (2008). See [www.ltad.ca](http://www.ltad.ca).

**Mental Skills for Young Athletes.** by John Hogg. Sport Excel Publishing (1997).

**A Guide for Sport Parents.** By Cal Botterill & Tom Patrick. Sport Manitoba.

**Learning with the Body in Mind.** By Eric Jensen. Brain Store (2000).

**Children's Exercise Physiology: 2nd Ed.** By T.E. Rowland. Human Kinetics (2005).

Below is a list of wonderful children's stories that offer insightful messages about sport and life. Don't be fooled... they are just as applicable to adults!

**Is There Really a Human Race?** by Jamie Lee Curtis and Laura Cornell. Joanna Cotler (2006)

**The Three Questions.** By Jon Muth. Scholastic Press (2002).

**Unstoppable Me!** By Dr. Wayne Dyer and Kristina Tracy, III: Stacy Budnick. Hay House (2006)

**Only a Cow.** By Arlene Hamilton and Dean Griffiths. Fitzhenry & Whiteside (2006).

**You're a Good Sport, Miss Malarkey.** By Judy Finchler and Kevin O' Malley. Walker (2002).

**I Knew You Could! A Book for All the Stops in Your Life.** By Craig Dorfman and Christina Ong. Platt & Munk (2003).

**Omar on Ice.** By Maryann Kovlaski. Fitzhenry & Whiteside (1999)

**Giraffe's Can't Dance.** By Giles Andreae and Guy Parker-Rees. Purple Enterprises (1999).

**Sink or Swim.** By Valerie Coulman and Roge. Lobster Press (2003).

**Swimmy.** By Leo Lionni. Alfred A. Knopf (1963).

**Albert's Old Shoes.** By Stephen and Mary Jane Muir. Stoddart Kids (1987)

**A Frog Thing.** By Eric Drachman & James Muscarello. Kidwick Books (1995)

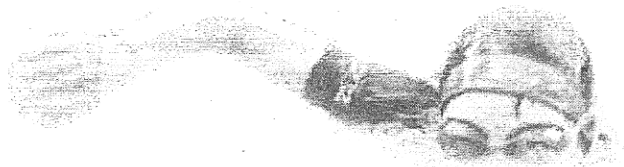
**Filbert Flies.** By Karl Ruhmann and Rolf Siegenthaler. North-South Books (2003)

**Eggbert the Slightly Cracked Egg.** By Tom Ross & Rex Barron. 1994

**The Important Book.** By Margaret Wise Brown & Leonard Wiesgard. Harper Collins (1949)

**Go Fly a Bike. By Bill Haduch.** Children's Books, 2004





**Respect your competitor.**

**Respect yourself.**

**Respect your sport.**

*Quotation by Jeff Adams & Marc Quessy  
Canadian National Wheelchair Athletes*

