



BASEBALL
CANADA



LONG-TERM PARTICIPANT DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

VERSION 3.0



BASEBALL IN CANADA IS

200,000 athletes enjoying the game

30,000 coaches creating a positive experience on and off the field of play

13,000 officials/umpires ensuring the integrity of the rules of baseball

10 PTSDs developing and leading baseball in Canada

1000 local associations and clubs making baseball accessible across Canada

278 tournaments offering meaningful competitive experiences

13 national and international competitions



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Chapter 1: New Perspectives

In 2007, Baseball Canada began a consultation process to develop its first version of the Long Term Athlete Development Framework. Following a national process undertaken by the Government of Canada, through Sport Canada, each National Federation had to adapt the generic version developed by Sport for Life.

With the contribution of a committee formed specifically for this task, Baseball Canada then began its reflection by identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the development programs in place at that time. This reflection led, among other things, to the creation of the Rally Cap program, which has become the flagship initiation program in many communities in Canada and which other nations and organizations use with pride. Other initiatives such as the My First Pitch and Grand Slam programs were also created. Many changes have also been made to the national competition formats resulting in more meaningful games.

These initiatives are now being used by several other national federations. Finally, several changes to the coaching education program have been implemented to better align coaching skills with the needs of young athletes at all stages of development.

As sport science is constantly evolving and following the release of version 3.0 of the Sport for Life Long Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity Framework, Baseball Canada is investing in this same evolution by presenting a modified and more practical version of this Framework that will guide the organization's initiatives for the coming years.

About this guide

This comprehensive guide is not designed to be read like a 52 page book. It is designed to be consulted in sections, per chapter, according to each and everyone's area of interest. It is also designed so each chapter can be separated from the guide and distributed in separately from the entire document.



The 3.0 LTD Framework

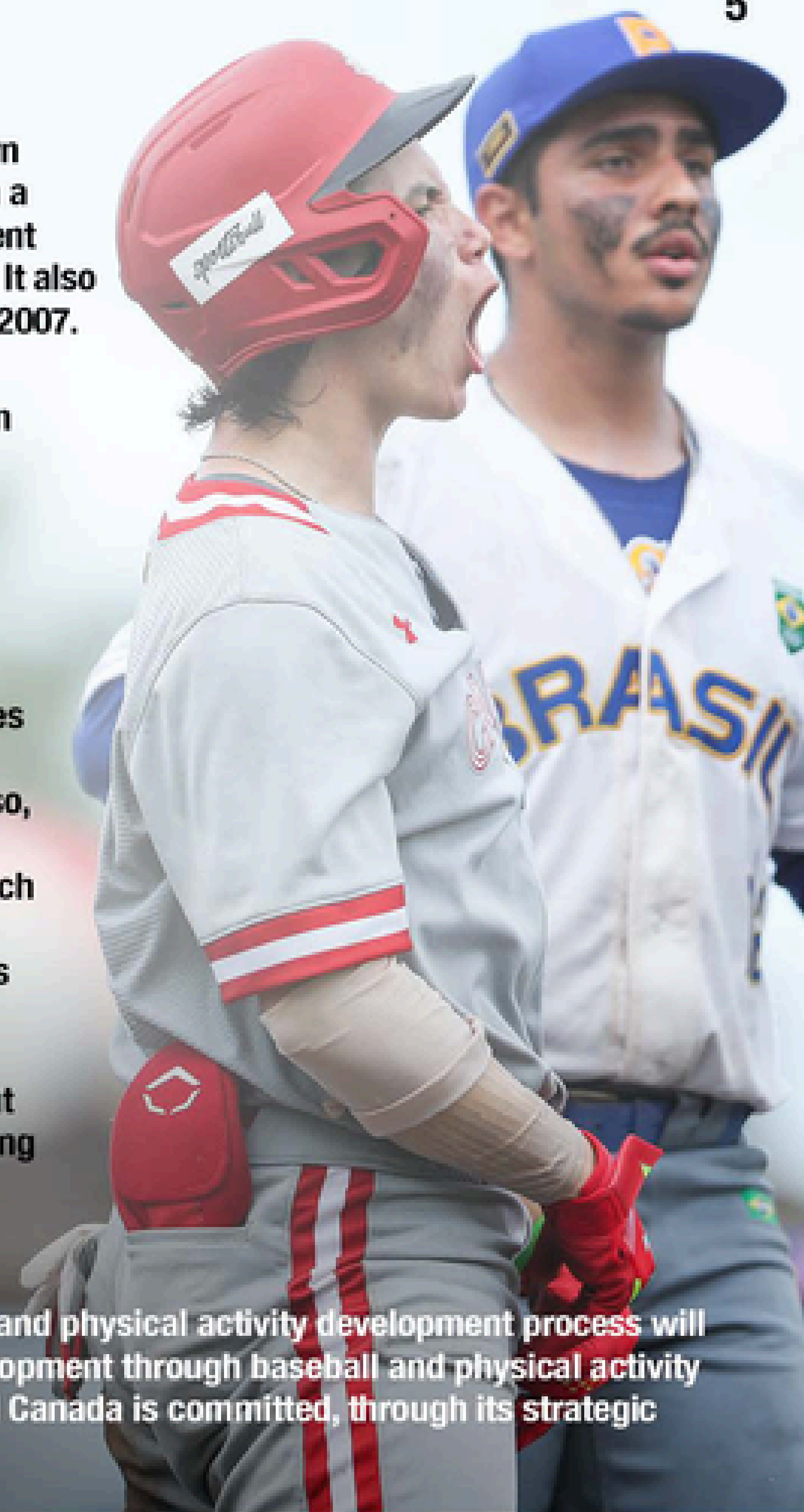
The Long-term athlete development model initially drew on the positive and proven aspects of Eastern European models of athlete development. It then continued to evolve and integrate information from a variety of sources, including preliminary work in British Columbia and the United Kingdom, more recent work on over 60 sports in Canada, and a myriad of information from national sport governing bodies. It also drew from Baseball Canada's first Long Term Athlete Development model designed and published in 2007.

The 3.0 Framework also draws on the work of academic researchers and international publications in sport science. These sport sciences include pediatric exercise science, exercise physiology, sport psychology, psychomotor learning, sport sociology, neuroscience and nutrition. They allowed us to better understand the role of growth, development and maturation in human development. The literature review on organizational development has also been very helpful in aligning the sport system.

The art of coaching and program development play an important role in our framework. Since coaches have to make many coaching decisions on a daily basis, and scientific research does not cover everything, some information has been extrapolated from the available scientific literature. In doing so, we are aware of the potential for error but recognize that to be a world leader, we must push the envelope. Observational conclusions can only be drawn from the analysis of published literature, which takes years to accumulate. Therefore, the athlete development Framework cannot be both an evidence-based Framework and a cutting-edge Framework. We are using evidence based but there is so much more we can do because we continuously innovate.

The Framework recognizes that children's cognitive, emotional, moral, and psychosocial development are factors in the maturation process and are important contributors to progress in sport, from learning to play to achieving world-class performances.

Ultimately, a high-quality, well-designed, inclusive, and properly implemented sport and physical activity development process will foster sport excellence and keep the population active and healthy. Long-term development through baseball and physical activity is a unique, world-class Framework. The time is NOW to fully implement it. Baseball Canada is committed, through its strategic planning, to keeping this Framework alive and evolving over time.



New and Improved Features in This New Edition

Baseball Canada is focused on improving the quality of baseball nationally. That is why we continue to refine our Framework. The goal of the Framework is to promote world-class athletic excellence and a lifelong commitment to health-enhancing physical activity. This new edition brings a wealth of updates and improvements.

From sport and physical activity to quality sport and physical activity: Not all baseball and physical activity experiences are positive. This guide helps leaders contribute to improving the quality of baseball and physical activity. We want "good programs" to be delivered by "good people" in "good places". Quality programs must be developmentally appropriate, which means that they must be designed according to the physical, cognitive, emotional and moral developmental stages of the participants. Quality baseball and physical activity ensures that safe sport is an essential element for everyone involved. Associations are then invited to invest and embrace change to make the baseball experience as positive as possible.

Pre-participation, often overlooked, at the heart of the Framework: A quality program will only hold up if participants show up. You can have the best program in the world, but if no participants show up, it is worthless. This new version will look at the importance of knowing the public's perceptions of baseball and then look at how the mechanism of interest in baseball manifests itself. It will be up to the local associations to implement this with the support of the provincial associations and Baseball Canada.

The 10 key factors have evolved into 7 guiding principles: Initially we outlined ten key factors that are essential to athlete development. Today, use the term 'principles' to outline the 7 guiding elements that actively steer the design, delivery and ongoing evaluation of baseball programs.

More attention given to adolescent participants: Adolescence is a time when some young people turn away from baseball and sport in general and become less active. Others, on the other hand, become high-performance athletes. In this guide, we provide more information on the needs of adolescent athletes.

Our diagram has evolved:

The very first Framework represented nine different stages of development, while this one presents seven. While it is critical to develop physical literacy in the first three stages, it is not limited to this period; it can and should be developed throughout life.



Chapter 2: Implementing a Better System

In order for all Canadians to benefit from long-term development through baseball and physical activity, we need to remove barriers to participation and performance and help make the system more effective. Here are some of the gaps in the current Canadian baseball system and their consequences.

Shortcomings in the current Canadian baseball system

1) Accessibility & Inclusion Challenges

- a) Not all facilities (fields) and programs are accessible, known, or ready to accommodate low-income or special-needs participants.
- b) The developmental needs of athletes with a disability are not well understood and promoted despite a growing Challenger program.
- c) Youth dropout rates are high, especially for girls.
- d) Current safe sport policies, procedures, and practices are unevenly applied across the country. While some provinces are at the forefront, others are slow to get on board.

2) Coaching, Training & Athlete Development Gaps

- a) The preparation of athletes is focused on the short-term win and not the long-term development process.
- b) Adult training and competition programs are imposed on developing athletes, and gender differences in training and competition needs are misunderstood.
- c) Accelerated adaptation periods in training are largely overlooked by coaches.
- d) Fundamental motor skills and basic baseball skills are not being taught properly, even with the presence of the Rally Cap program.
- e) Coaches who work with developing athletes are often volunteers without adequate and sufficient training and certification.
- f) Parents and educators are not educated in the principles of long-term development and lack the information to help them make the best choice for their children.

3) Structural & Competitive System Barriers

- a) The competitive system hinders athlete development. There is a consistent rate of non-significant competition, especially at the provincial and regional levels.
- b) Talent identification systems are poorly developed, and early success, often in young developing athletes, is confused with long-term potential.
- c) There is little cohesion between school baseball programs, community recreation programs, and competitive programs.
- d) Few links exist between national high-performance programs and provincial and other elite programs.
- e) Service delivery is too often geared toward early overspecialization and encourages commercial interests to attract and retain participants.

4) Governance & Innovation Deficiencies

- a) Sport science is currently not being used for review and innovation.
- b) Positive, character-building values are not intentionally integrated into the sport experience.



What are the consequences of these gaps in the current Canadian baseball system?

1) Barriers to Access, Inclusion & Safety in Baseball

(Consequences of inadequate facilities, gender barriers, safety concerns, and exclusion of athletes with disabilities or low-income backgrounds.)

- a) Individuals with potential talent are being excluded from baseball.
- b) Inappropriate programs prevent women from reaching their full potential.
- c) Decreased youth participation in baseball and physical activity, especially among girls.
- d) Without adequate sport safety measures, athletes may be exposed to hazardous conditions with adverse consequences for their overall well-being.
- e) Individual sport leaders are not held accountable for their unethical, irresponsible, or illegal actions.

2) Shortcomings in Coaching, Training & Player Development

(Consequences of poor coaching standards, lack of long-term athlete development, and failure to implement evidence-based training methods.)

- a) Deficient movement skills, incomplete skill development, inadequate fitness, and life skills (e.g., citizenship, leadership, hygiene, etc.) are not taught.
- b) Athlete development results in excessive competitive participation and under-training.
- c) Under-training leads to poorly used and unrefined motor skills.
- d) Bad habits develop due to excessive participation in victory-oriented competitions.
- e) Children do not enjoy programs designed for adults.
- f) Athletes fail to reach their genetic potential or optimal performance levels.

3) Structural Gaps in Competition & Talent Development

(Consequences of poor competition structures, talent identification failures, and lack of coordination between development programs.)

- a) A high-performance system is not connected to provincial and regional players.
- b) Lack of alignment with other programs, sport education programs, and provincial teams results in over-scheduled athletes.
- c) Over-specialization leads to burnout, injury, and limited development.
- d) Provincial and national team coaches must implement programs to address athlete development gaps, causing significant developmental time to be lost.

4) Governance Failures & Lack of Innovation in Baseball

(Consequences of governance failures, lack of accountability, and failure to use scientific research to guide improvements.)

- a) Optimal performance is rarely achieved at international competitions.
- b) Negative behaviors occur, and in some cases, injuries happen.
- c) Baseball too rarely relies on scientific research with evidence to justify change.



Chapter 3: Guiding principles of Long-Term Development

In order to help all Canadians reach their potential in baseball and develop it to its fullest, we must apply a rational and progressive long-term development framework.

The term "Long-Term Development" underscores Baseball Canada's mission to **ENABLE** optimal conditions for success at all levels by fostering sustainable, lifelong engagement rather than a short-term mentality, such as peaking by Friday!.

By referring to these guiding principles, Baseball Canada emphasizes the pivotal role of each factor in shaping the journey of each individual in through baseball, other sports sport and in their life long physical activities.

Principle 1: Collaboration and alignment:

Collaboration Strengthens the System! Long Term Development is most likely to succeed if it is fully integrated within a baseball association, which also includes governance, competition structures, rules, coaching education and officials' development.

For a high-quality experience, stakeholders work together to align and complement their programs to support player development.

Principle 2: Evidence-informed kaizen (continuous improvement):

This principle emphasizes small adjustments, incremental progress, continuous monitoring, data analysis, and innovation, all based on empirical evidence.

This means that all aspects of baseball and physical activity programming and practice are monitored, evaluated and continuously researched.



Principle 3: Optimal programs driven by developmentally appropriate activities:

Because each participant has a unique non-linear path in baseball, sport and physical activity, this principle highlights the need to customize training, competition, and recovery plans to individuals' unique physical, intellectual, social, cultural and moral development stages. In other words, each participant must receive what they need, when they need it, in a way that best supports their growth.

The training-to-competition ratio of each player is designed to develop skills and fitness while preventing injury and burnout. The quality and timing of competitions meets the needs of participants and allow them to test the skills according to their stage of development.

Principle 4: Physical literacy to multisport, leading to specialization:

This principle emphasizes multisport participation to develop the fundamental movement skills and foundational sport skills that build athleticism, motivation, confidence, and reduce burnout risk.

Baseball is one of the so-called common (standard) sports, those that require a typical period of specialization and whose peak performance is reached in the late 20s. Participation in a variety of activities and sports is essential for balanced development. Parents should not be forced to choose a single sport for their child too early.

Achieving excellence takes time. It is therefore essential that organizations guard against systems that push for immediate success. Systems, business Frameworks, processes and indicators (such as scoring and ranking) should not encourage sport leaders and coaches to focus on earlier and more intense sport specialization, let alone pressure them to play one sport year-round.

based on Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity is...



Principle 5: Quality sport and physical activity must be safe, welcoming, and inclusive:

Every child, youth, and adult deserves a high-quality experience every time they participate in baseball. Quality means having the right programs, in the right environment, led by the right people. A strong foundation ensures participants enjoy the sport while developing their skills in a structured and supportive setting.

Inclusion is a must! Removing physical, cultural, economic, and attitudinal barriers is key to making baseball truly accessible. It's not enough to allow participation—every individual must feel safe, welcome, and supported.

Programs should be designed to accommodate diverse needs, ensuring that exclusion becomes the exception rather than the norm.



Principle 6: Excellence takes time

To reach their full potential, athletes need properly planned, progressive, high-quality training over several years. There are no shortcuts to success and often athletes have spent as much as 8-12 years training and competing before they master their sport.

An approach that favors rapid development may "produce" young winners but it will hinder both long-term development and athletic success.

Principle 7: Active for Life

This approach also takes into account life stages. For example, late adolescence and early adulthood are pivotal times when the choices a person makes will positively or negatively influence their future life and health.

By taking a life-course approach, leaders are encouraged to think about how programs will affect the current & future lives of their participants



Chapter 4: First Experience in Baseball

Figure 2: Personal Sport Journey

Awareness and first experience in Baseball - Before athlete development planning begins.

Several scientific studies have shown that a participant's first experience with sport is a key factor in their perseverance and involvement in sport and physical activity for years to come. However, several elements are often forgotten at the community level before the children even get on the field for the first time. The following chart outlines the participants' journey in sport.



Getting kids, teens and adults involved in baseball will lead to a healthier, more active population and to sporting success in this country. The process of getting people to get involved, and stay involved, has two distinct prerequisites stages called: Awareness and First time Participation

Awareness

You have to be aware that an activity exists in order to participate in it or to promote it. Therefore, one must know:

- ☒ that it is offered;
- ☒ where it can be practiced.
- ☒ It is particularly important to improve access to sport and activity for underserved groups such as:
 - ☒ girls and women
 - ☒ People with disabilities
 - ☒ Aboriginal peoples
 - ☒ newcomers;
 - ☒ the LGBTQI2S community
 - ☒ Older adults;
 - ☒ people living in poverty or in isolated communities.



Public Perceptions:

Every sport has a public perception. These perceptions can be a barrier to the parent considering baseball. In order to get the parent and child to consider baseball, the following perceptions, often associated with baseball, need to be addressed using various strategies.

Negative Public Perceptions: 6 Barriers & 24 solutions

1. Barrier: Games last forever! Children's attention span is much shorter than that of adults. In addition, parents need a start and end time to organize their schedules accordingly.

Strategic solutions: Consider strategies to speed up the flow of games such as: time limits, time limit rule for transition between innings and pitches. As a general rule, the younger the children, the shorter the practice sessions and games should be.

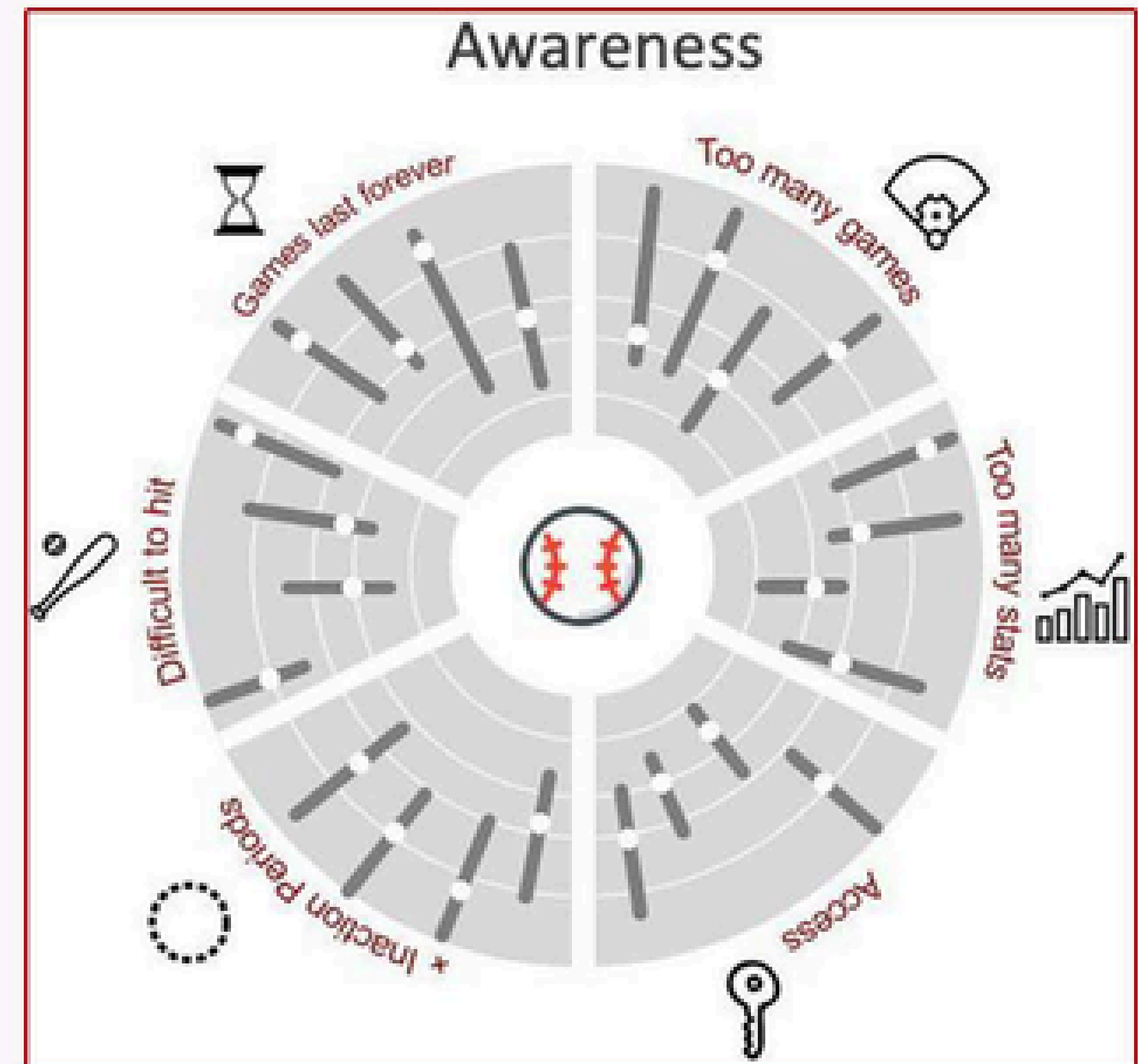
1. More touches: One of the key indicators for development is the number of times participants will touch or hit the ball. Any attempt to increase this rate will have a positive impact on the experience.

2. Length of games: As children get older, attention spans increase. Be sure to limit the activities according to the developmental stage.

3. Number of players per team: Many organizations are now opting for teams with fewer players. Adopting 6x6 programs for the younger players will help you meet the number of touches to the ball/stick during the session. There will be more at bats and more opportunities to learn.



Figure 3: 6 barriers from Negative Public Perception



					
Difficult to Hit	Too Many Stats	Too Many Games	Access	+ Inactive Periods	Games last forever
Ability to hit brings fun	MLB stats used in amateur ball	Practice to Game Ratio	Accessible for only certain types of people	Too much time standing around not moving	Painful to watch for parents

2. Barrier: Too many games! The professionals play 162 games in a season. With the short season we have in Canada, remember that today's families have other activities.

Strategic solutions: Since we encourage participation in other sports during the season, allow time for other types of sports activities for younger children.

4. Number of games vs. skill development: When making schedules, consider the following recommendations for the ratio of training to practice by stage of development.

Stage of Development	Train to Competition ratio
Active Start	80% Training et 20% Competition
FUNDamentals	
Learn to Train	70% Training and 30% Competition
Train to Train	60% Training and 40% Competition
Train to Compete	40% Training and 60% Competition
Train to Win	20% Training and 80% Competition
Active for Life	According to the level

5. Number of tournaments: As a general principle, as athletes mature, the number of tournaments can increase. Consider the following table for recommended number of tournaments by stage of development:

Stage of Development	# of tournaments
Active Start	None
FUNDamentals	None
Learn to Train	1-2
Train to Train	2-3
Train to Compete	3-4
Train to Win	N/A
Active for Life	According to the level

6. Modified game: Matches should be tailored to the stage of development. Consider the recommendations for this in the stage in which you are working.

7. Meaningful competition: Use competition for development. Meaningful competition leads to relatively close and unpredictable outcomes. Opponents are matched with others at a similar skill level and are challenged to do their best at that moment. They believe they have a chance to succeed and remain fully engaged throughout the competition. This approach will have a significant impact on the overall experience.



8. Life Skills: Baseball is directly related to the development of life skills. The following chart gives you a sample of these. Every baseball program should recognize these opportunities for development beyond technical and tactical skills.

Lesson of life	Examples in baseball
Coping with failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Withdrawal at bat → Making an error → Giving up a base on balls → Losing a game
Dealing with fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Fear of getting hit → Fear of being hit → Fear of making an error → Fear of melting under pressure
Coping with frustration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Being out after hitting the ball solidly → Making a good pitch and seeing the ball hit far → Teammate making an error
Dealing with humiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Getting thrown out at bat with the bases loaded → Getting caught on the wrong foot → Allowing the winning run on an error
Coping with loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Infielder with only one roller in the game → Outfielder with no ball in his direction all game → Long intervals between innings or at bats

Coping with lethargy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Sluggish at bats with a falling average → Defensive lethargy → Consecutive losses or high GPA → Not playing multiple games in a row
Adjusting to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Adjusting to opponent's strengths and weaknesses → Adjust to changing weather conditions → Adjusting to a new batter or pitcher
Controlling your emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Being overly excited → Defying the authority of the umpires → Being passive or indifferent → Allowing the game situation to affect their attitude → Anger at a bad umpire call



3. Barrier: Too many stats

Baseball is known as the Mecca of statistics. More often than not, many of these stats are also used in developing youth.

Strategic solutions:

9. Team Ranking: Team ranking is not a necessity. In many cases, it goes against many of the principles of athlete development and will place emphasis on the outcome instead of the process. That being said, it may be appropriate to put more effort into other elements of development.

10. Statistics vs. Development: Few statistics are meaningful for young athletes. Focus on statistics that are related to the learning objectives presented in the training camps.

11. Measuring effort: Rewarding effort with different statistics will make young athletes push themselves even harder

12. Measuring fun: There has been a lot of research on the importance of fun in sport. The following figure explains the different types of fun throughout the participant's journey.

BASEBALL CANADA FUN MAP



Figure 4: Baseball Canada Fun Map

4. Barrier: Access

Many potential participants, including their parents, feel that baseball is not accessible to everyone. Parents of female participants, those with physical or intellectual disabilities, and those from more difficult socio-economic backgrounds may not feel that it is possible for them to register and participate with others.

Strategic solutions:

13. Visual Promotion: Be sure to promote your events to include female athletes and to include people with disabilities. Many programs exist to serve less traditionally represented populations.

14. Languages: Depending on your region, assess where new Canadians are coming from and try to promote baseball in their native language.

15. Multiple entry points: Many participants may want to join later in their athletic development. Open a section for them to explore the sport later.

16. Multiple skill levels: Regardless of the level, make sure you have room to serve everyone's needs.



5. Barrier: Inactive periods: Many parents and children consider baseball boring because of its high rate of inactivity during games.

Strategic solutions: Be creative to keep kids active during games.

17. Number of players: More players per team means more players who will not play. Whenever possible, favor teams with fewer players to maximize participation and commitment

18. Avoid early specialization: Opt for the discovery of each position at a younger age. This will allow for a better appreciation of the game as a whole and will allow participants to make the right choices when the time comes.

19. Introduction to pitchers: Avoid using pitchers before the age of 10. The games will be more active, there will be more action and the emphasis will be more on fun and development.

20. Mental Skills: There are mental skills that can be incorporated at all stages of development. This will allow for a better appreciation of the times when action may be less present.

6. Barrier: Difficulty in hitting: The youngster who is not able to hit the ball will see his or her enjoyment of the game diminish significantly.

Strategic solutions: The ability to hit is directly related to fun. The development of this skill is essential for a positive baseball experience.

21. Celebrate success: Make sure you celebrate the contact instead of the result. Quality of hit does not always equate to success.

22. Overcome fear: Fun at bat is linked to confidence. The thought of being hit by the ball can cause a young hitter to not be able to enjoy the moment at bat.

23. Adjust for ability: Some young players will be able to hit the ball from a pitcher while others will need a parent pitcher or perhaps a tee.

24. Hitting in every session: Be sure to include hitting sessions in every practice session. This is non-negotiable.



24 Solutions to Barriers from Negative Public Perceptions

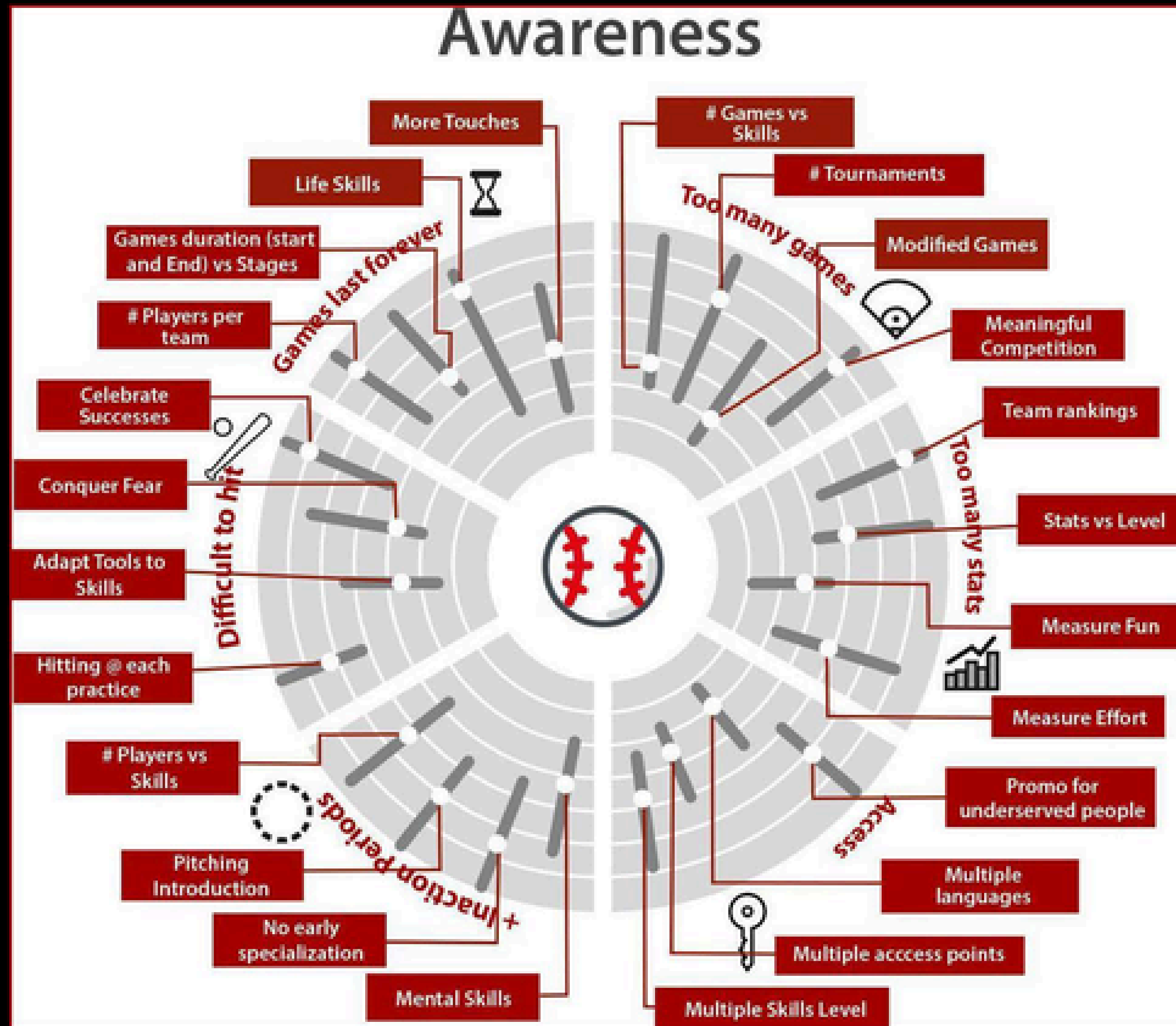


Figure 5: 24 strategies to counter Negative Public Perceptions



First time participation

Once a person is aware of baseball and wants to try it, their first experience is crucial. A positive first experience will likely encourage them to continue. Conversely, a negative experience will certainly not inspire them to try again.

Local baseball associations should carefully plan for the first experience of new participants to ensure:

- ☒ that there are no barriers to participation, especially for people with disabilities and visible and invisible minorities
- ☒ that new participants feel included and leave knowing that they will be welcomed the next time;
- ☒ Coaches receive adequate training to support this first experience;
- ☒ That new participants have the opportunity to get to know other participants;
- ☒ That it is easy for participants to get involved and stay involved
- ☒ That there are appropriate facilities and equipment;
- ☒ The program leader has the skills to adapt to the needs of the participants.

6 Positive Contact points with 24 strategies

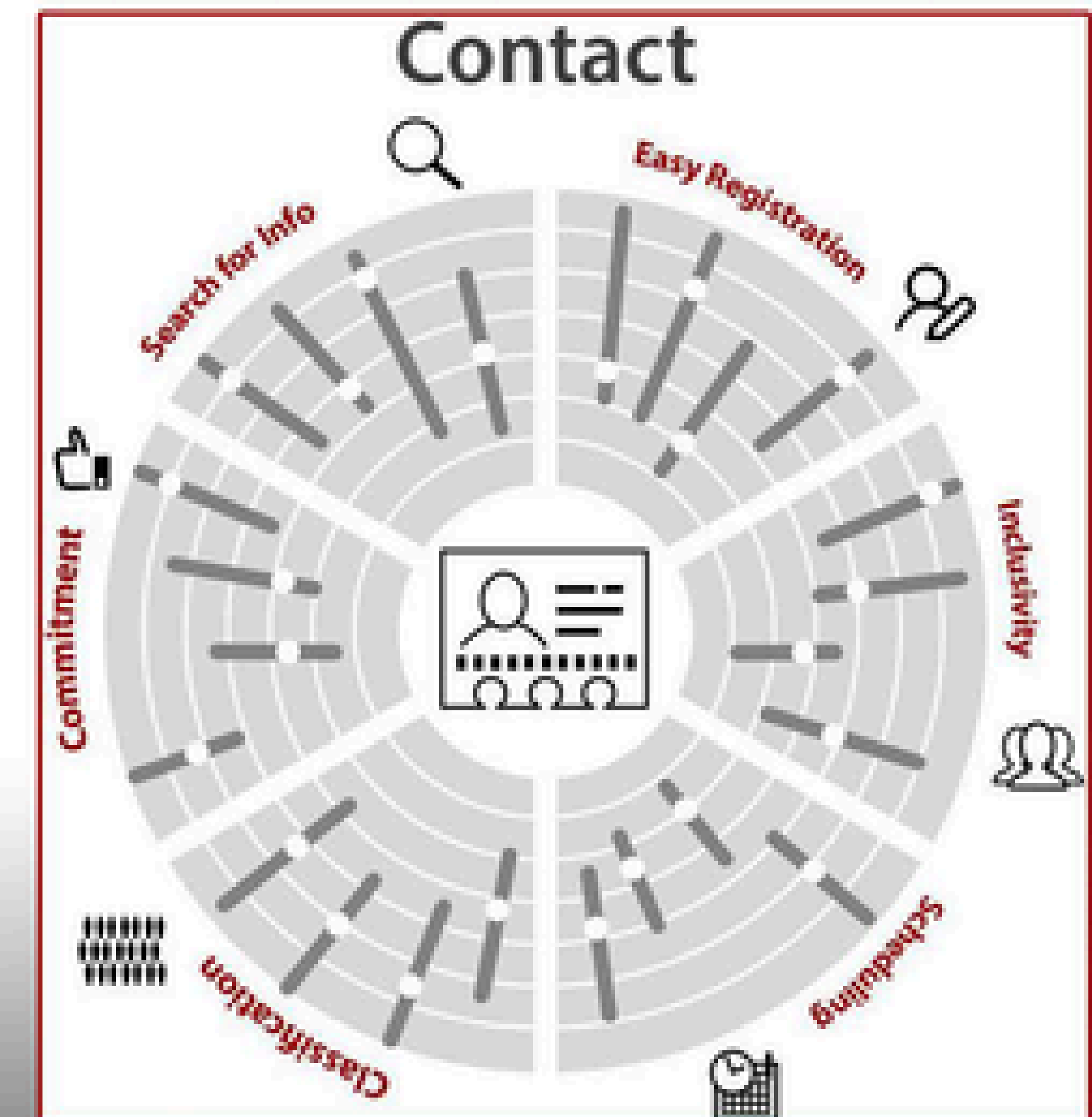


Figure 6: 6 positive contact points

1. Search for information

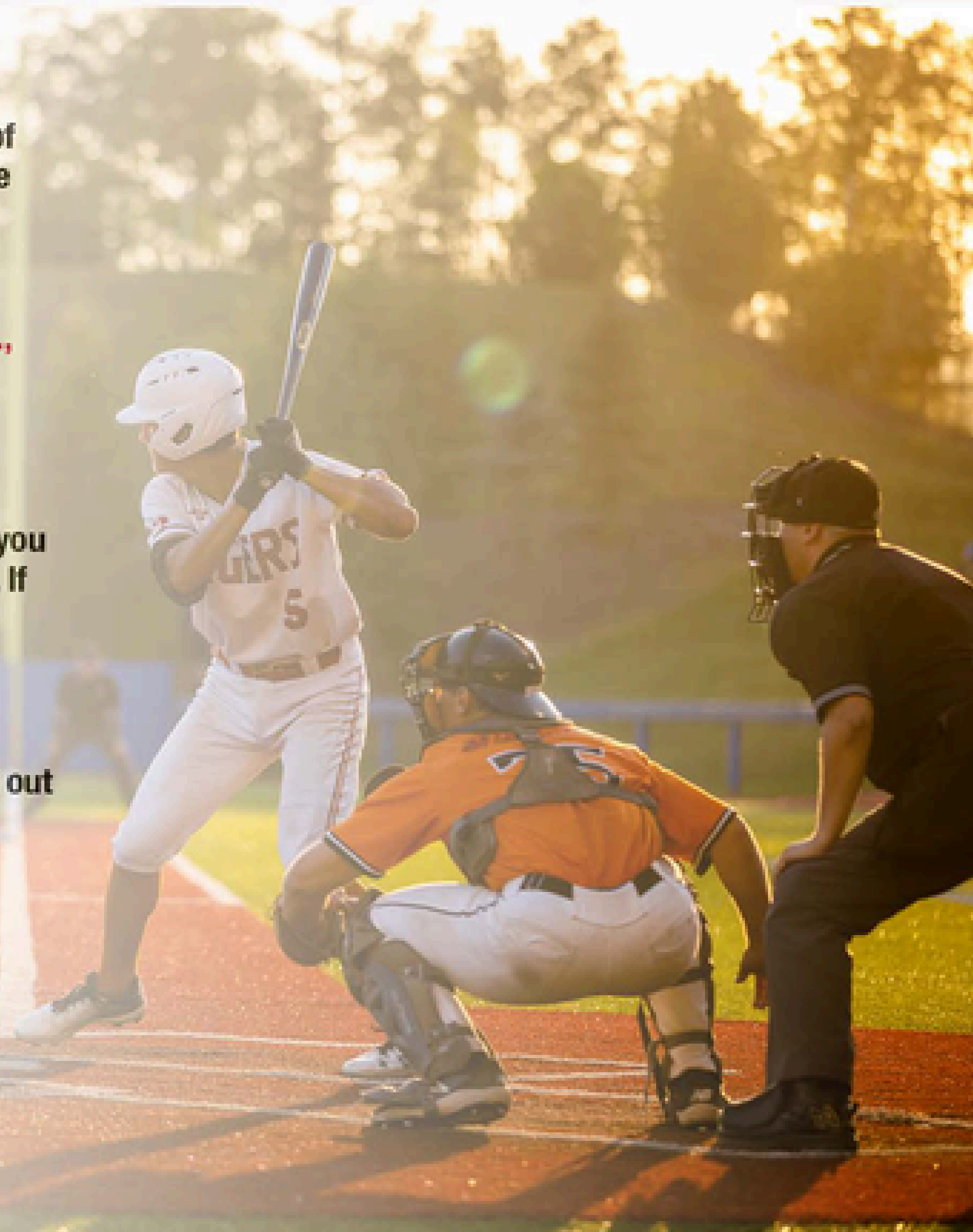
Once the first stage of perception is behind us, there comes the time when the parent decides that they want to register their child in baseball. In this regard, an association must ask itself the following questions:

1. Is my association easy to find on the web? Have you already entered your association's name in the search engine and seen the results? Are you at the top of the search results? If not, why is it so? Is it necessary to change the name to make the search more obvious to the customer? Could you use an SEO (Search Engine Optimization) strategy?

2. Have you checked the link information for your association on partner sites (e.g., national federation, provincial associations, Toronto Blue Jays)? Is your contact information up to date (email for information, contact list, general registration information, etc.)?

3. What is your presence on social media? Platforms such as Facebook will allow you to reach parents more than Instagram or Tik Tok which are mainly aimed at youth. If you want to reach parents, think strategically. Facebook also allows for targeted promotion to user profiles related to your clientele at a fairly minimal cost.

4. Local promotion: Can you make it even easier to access your services by using bulletin boards in municipal libraries, arenas, schools, street signs to get the word out about your summer services?



2. Easy registration

There are many ways to register for sports services. Is your organization up to speed? The following will increase the customer experience:

5. Online registration: Online registration is necessary to optimize parents' time. When it comes to registering their children, parents often want to do it now without having to go to a public place on a certain night to register. Opt for the easy way.

6. Online payment: As for registration, online payment is essential and is part of this strategy to facilitate the registration process for participants. Several suppliers can meet your needs in this sense for a small contribution that you can integrate into your registration fees.

7. Receipt: Make the experience even more positive by reassuring the parent-payer of the registration confirmation by automating a receipt issuance process as soon as the paid amount is completed. It's the little things that make the difference.

8. Welcome message: Be happy to have this member in your organization. Set up a system that not only confirms the registration but also welcomes them and provides the latest information on next steps and activities.



3. Inclusivity

In order to attract a wider range of participants to your association, consider the vocabulary used in your promotion. Is your visual and verbal language inclusive? Consider the following :

9. Since the mid-2000s, the percentage of female members in Canada has been growing. Do the elements of your promotional and enrollment campaign include a girl? The young female participant will feel more at home if the promotional campaign is not all male. If your organization still does not have a female component, ask your national or provincial federation for advice. Many tools are available to promote inclusion and ensure that the participant's experience is a positive one. You can also promote coaching and officiating positions for women.

10. Participants of Color: To encourage buy-in to baseball, your promotional campaign should include participants of color. As with female athletes, this inclusion will solidify the desire for them to be part of your organization and make them feel even more comfortable. Be sure to do the same for coaches and officials.

11. Athletes with a disability: The Challenger Program was established by Baseball Canada and its partners (including the Toronto Blue Jays) to provide services to participants with a physical or intellectual disability. This program offers a complete toolbox to implement it in your organization. You will be surprised at the excitement that their participation will have for all members.

12. Safe environment: Today's parents are looking for an environment where children can thrive in a context where the safety of the children is considered. Learn about the Coaching Association of Canada's Rule of Two, the criminal record check policy and other policies put in place by the provincial or national federation. Making ethical decisions training is also included for all coaches.



4. Preparation of schedules

Today's parents like clear and concise communication about the expectations of the summer season. Here are some topics to consider to ensure quality:

13. Fixed Days: Gone is the flex time system for youth participants. In order to encourage other activities, be sure to schedule your practice and game days. If you have one practice per week, make sure the day and time stays the same (e.g. Monday at 6:30 pm). The same goes for games. Nothing is worse than trying to schedule summer activities when the days and times are always different from one week to the next.

14. No surprises: At the parent meeting, try to over-communicate to avoid surprises. If you are planning an out-of-town tournament, mention it. You plan one tournament but offer four once the season starts, this is a recipe for a negative experience for parents. No surprises = successful season.

15. Season length: Baseball remains a summer sport. Take advantage of the sunny months to offer services to young participants. However, keep in mind that the length of the season must be related to the stage of development. See the summary chart and the stage-specific sheet for recommendations.

16. Other sports: While there is a trend towards multi- sports, take the time to check out other summer sports (mainly soccer) so that you are not offering activities for the same age group on similar days. Even better, contact the other sports to plan your schedule together. Optimization) strategy?

5. Classification

17. Open to all skill levels: Baseball should not be offered only to participants who demonstrate a higher skill level. Some participants are not interested in elite baseball and the social side will be a bigger part of their enjoyment. Many options available for many participant needs.

18. Specialization: Many studies show the benefits of diversification at a young age. You will find here the research and information that justifies such an approach. <https://playmoresports.activeforlife.com/> The same is true for specialization at one position. Players should be exposed to all positions during their development. It is the responsibility of programs to put rules in place to encourage this approach.

19. Class Division: The younger the participants, the less need there is for a structure that separates them by skill level. It is not recommended to do this before the age of 12. Place the emphasis on fun and development before considering performance and competition.



20. Multiple entry points: Allow your facility to welcome new participants at several points along the talent pathway. This approach will be even more appealing in promoting baseball to new Canadians. This approach, combined with the one where there is an openness to all levels, will promote inclusion.

6. Other commitments

21. Baseball and academics: Until the end of June, consider offering a lighter schedule, especially during exam time. This will allow participants to focus on the academic side. Consider reducing the workload, training schedule and competition schedule.

22. Summer vacation: Plan ahead! A larger roster of participants for the vacation season will allow for better organization. Allow younger participants to fill in as needed. Regardless of your location, it is not recommended to stop baseball activities as the summer months approach. Think about a different formula that would give many participants the chance to continue with their sport.

23. Number of tournaments: Check the technical sheet for your developmental stage to find out the recommendations for the number of tournaments per season. No surprises for the parents! Communicate your intentions at the beginning of the season so that you don't have to deal with disappointment or frustration. You can never communicate too much.

24. Number of weekends: Weekends often mean short visits to families. Be sure to let parents and participants know if there are any formal or optional activities that will be offered during the season so that families can get organized.

24 Strategies for Positive Contacts in Baseball

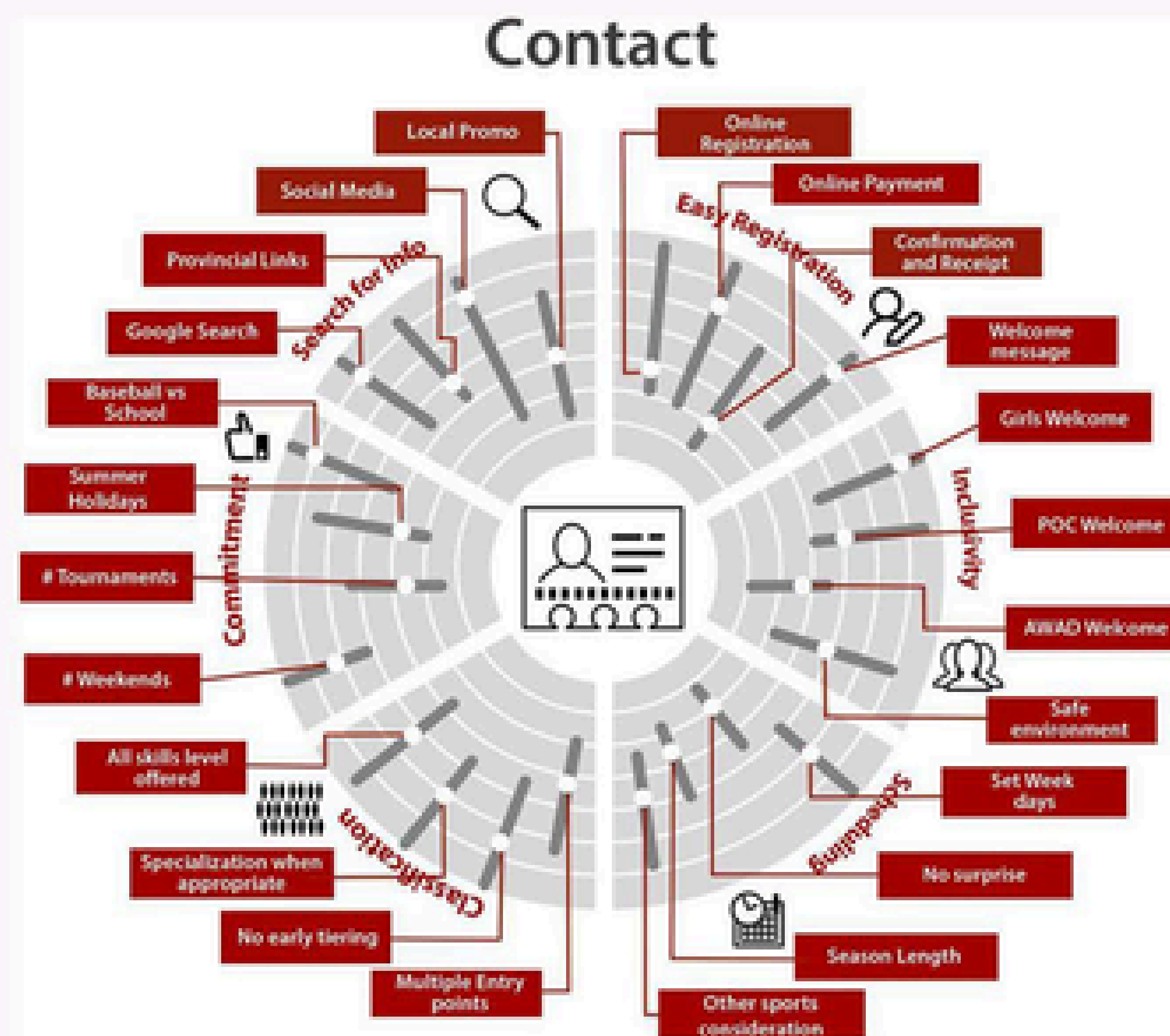


Figure 7: 24 strategies for positive contact points

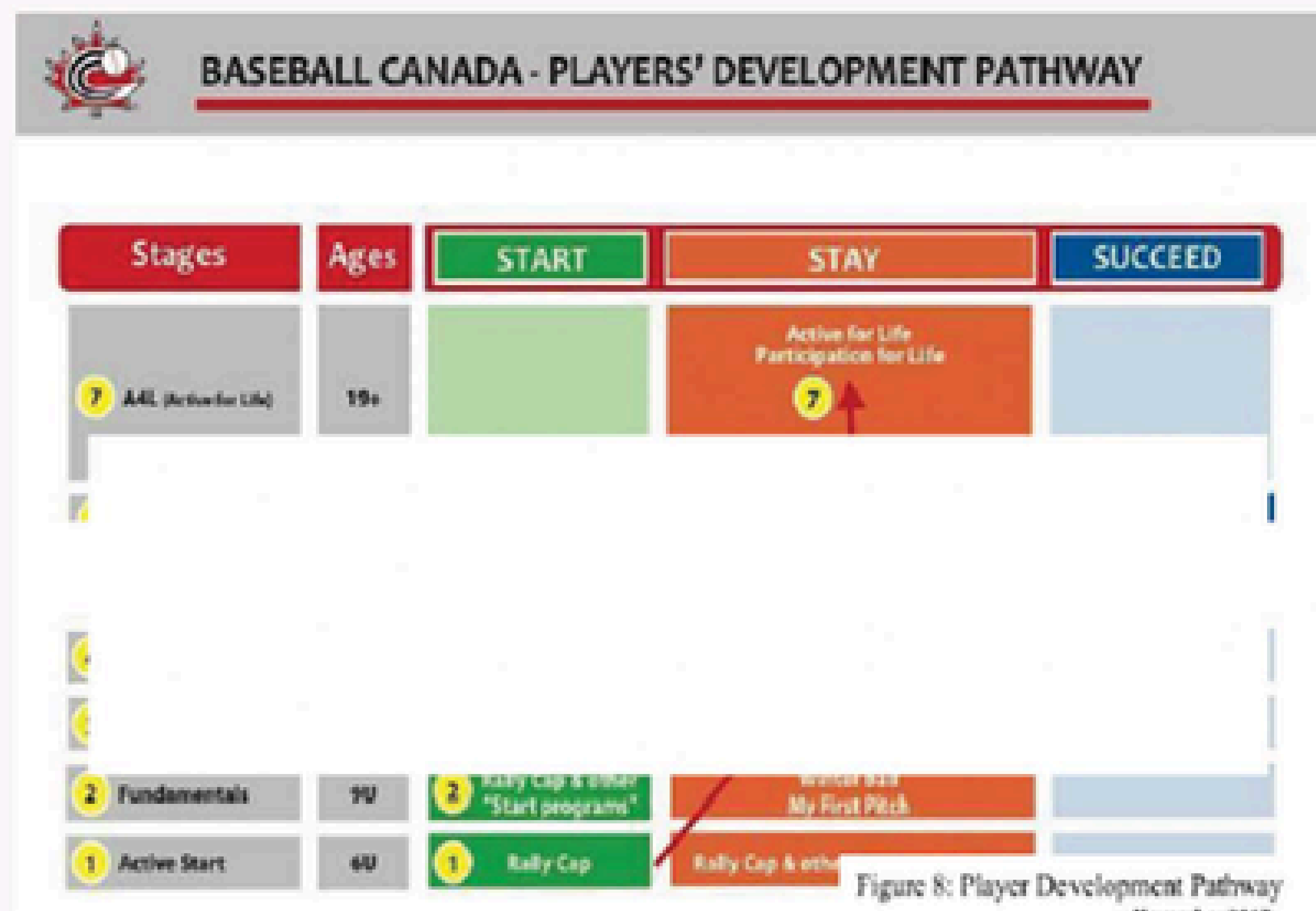


Chapter 5: The 7 stages of development

As previously presented in the document, the athlete pathway now has 7 stages instead of 9. This reorientation better identifies the needs of participants in the three broad categories of START- STAY-SUCCEED (the three Ss). As shown in the following chart, the START column refers to the participant's first steps in baseball and includes the first two stages of development: Active Start and FUNDamentals.

The STAY column refers to programs that are designed to consolidate an individual's participation in baseball by providing a multitude of opportunities for development towards excellence as well as options for recreational and social participation. This section includes the 'Learn to Train', 'Train to Train', 'Train to Compete' and 'Active for Life/Competitive for Life' stages.

Finally the last column 'SUCCEED' refers to high performance including national teams and professional ranks. The 'Train to Win' stage is included here and athletes are then on a career pathway. The following pages will give you some details on the main characteristics of each of the stages which are numbered from 1 to 7.



Building a Solid Foundation - The first Three stages

Giving participants the best possible start in baseball and physical activity.

- 1. Active Start is about introducing fundamental motor skills and integrating physical activity into daily life.**
- 2. FUNdamentals is about developing fundamental motor skills and having fun being physically active.**
- 3. Learn to Train is about learning a wide range of sport skills.**



Stage 1: Active Start (Children 6 years and under)

General Recommendations

This is the beginning of learning physical literacy, physical activity and motor skill development. It's about making physical activity FUN and integrating it into the child's daily life. The focus is on developing locomotion, object manipulation and balance on the ground, in water, on ice and snow and in the air through various movements.

Multi sport recommendations

An active movement environment combined with well-structured swimming and gymnastics programs is encouraged. Organize outdoor games on snow and ice.

This is a time to create challenges that allow for both successes and failures, which will help build confidence. It is the exploration of risks and limits in a safe environment, which also includes outdoor activities. Small challenges are created to expand children's comfort zone.

The recommendation that children should be active for 180 minutes per day over a 24-hour period is being met.

Baseball Recommendations

Activities should be fun and social.

This marks the beginning for some of the Rally Cap program which focuses on baseball skill development but also includes skill development that will be transferable to other sports and activities. This stage is designed to allow children to explore multiple sports throughout the year. In this regard, Baseball Canada recommends only a short service offering for this stage considering that the majority of development will be in more cross-curricular disciplines such as gymnastics and swimming and will be offered in other environments such as snow and ice.

The development of agility, balance and coordination are a priority for training. The ability to work collaboratively must also be emphasized. Practice and game groups should be kept to 6-8 per group to maximize repetition. No tactical rules (base stealing, bunting etc...) should be implemented. All participants should have the chance to bat every time. Experimenting with success is paramount. All participants should have equal playing time.

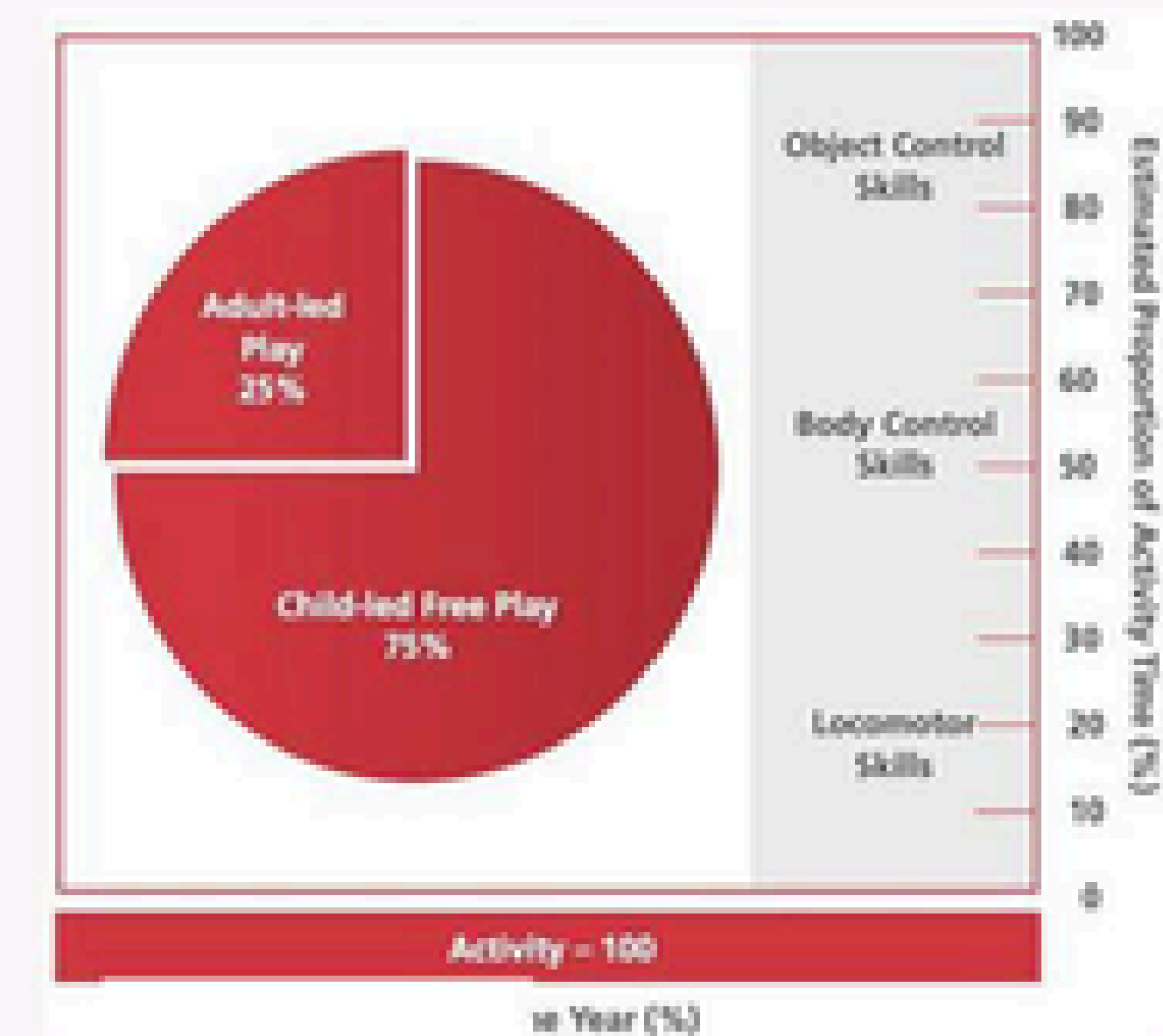


Figure 9 Active Start Activity Summary

General Recommendations

Approximately six to nine years of age for boys; six to eight years of age for girls.

Fundamental motor skills are developed with an emphasis on participation and fun on a daily basis.

Priority is given to activities that develop agility, balance, coordination and speed (ABC's) as the foundation of athlete development. These are the key elements that will encourage kids to move more.

Multi sport recommendations

Participation in activities that involve running, rolling, swimming, throwing and catching, as well as activities on snow and ice are encouraged.

Physical skills are enhanced through the use of training balls, stabilizing balls and body weight exercises.

This is a time to introduce simple rules and sportsmanship with an emphasis on sports ethics and respect for others.

No periodization at this stage, but ensure properly structured programs that integrates a lot of free play and fun throughout each session.

A wide range of activities should be provided and the child's choices should be respected.

Baseball Recommendations

Competitions at this stage should be informal and not based on results.

The development of agility, balance and coordination are a priority for training. The ability to work collaboratively must also be emphasized. Practice and game groups should be kept to 6-8 per group to maximize repetition. No tactical rules (base stealing, bunting etc...) should be implemented. All participants should have the chance to bat every time. Experimenting with success is paramount. All participants should have equal playing time.



The Rally Cap program fits between this stage and the previous one. This program meets all of the objectives of this stage and the previous one and provides an introduction to baseball that allows for complete growth while including the basics of physical literacy development.

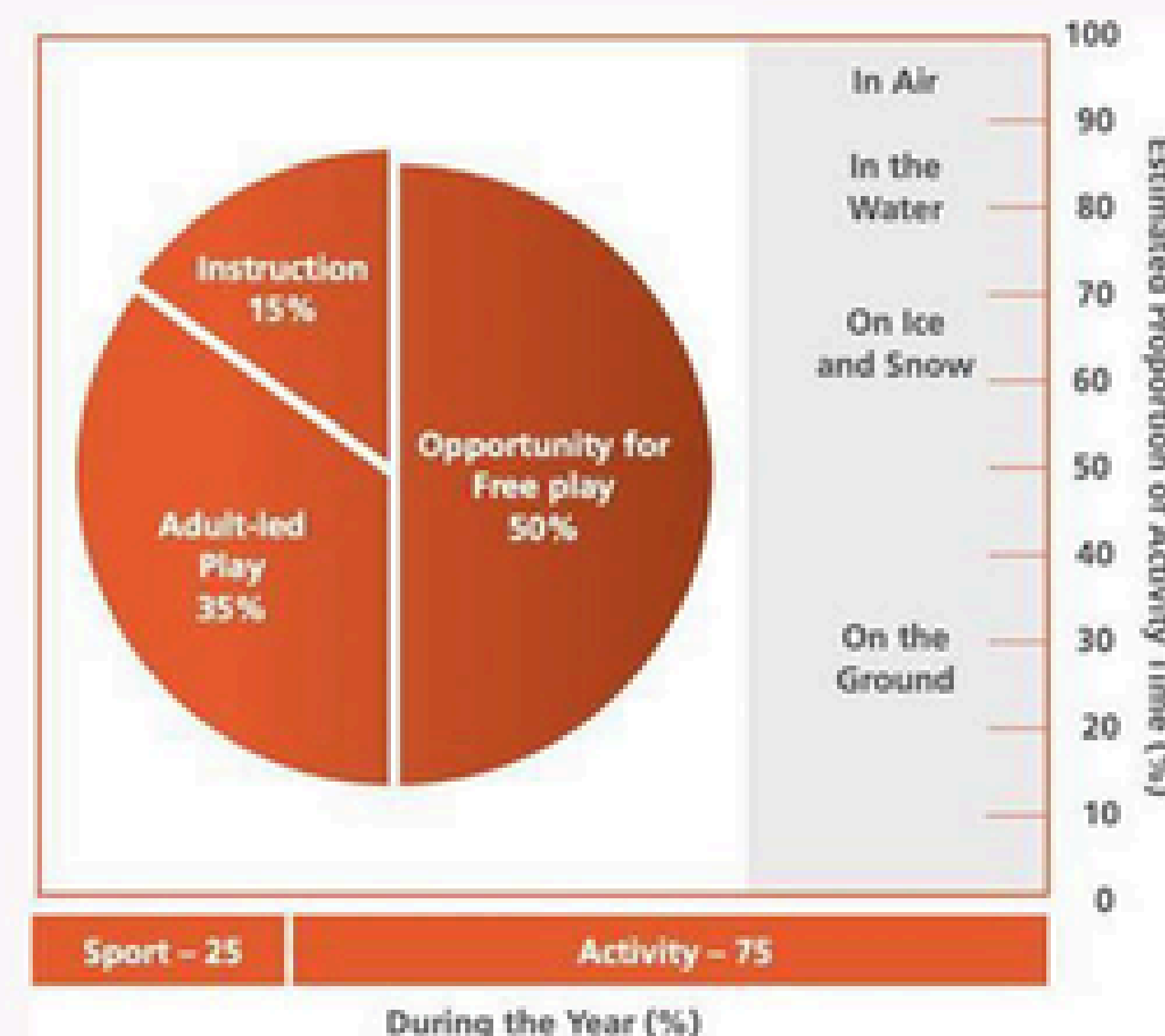


Figure 10 FUNdamentals Activity Summary

The Rally Cap program is based on the 5 imperatives (the 5 F's)

- 1. Fun:** We take fun seriously. We create a fun environment where children and adults are actively engaged in baseball together. With Rally Cap, fun is measured by the increase in the number of hits for participants. Strike out is not an option! Success + Smiles = FUN.
- 2. Focus:** Rally Cap will develop fundamental movement skills, baseball skills, ground rules and life skills in our participants. We believe in contributing to the achievement of physical literacy by providing participants with the opportunity to become more confident through solid content. We also believe in building the citizens of tomorrow.
- 3. Fluidity:** With Rally Cap, skill development being a priority, a proper system is implemented that uses stations while providing mini-game opportunities in a fluid and fun environment. A 70/30 skill/mini- game ratio is in place to maximize player development.
- 4. Follow-up:** As with most other sports activities, participant progression is paramount. With Rally Cap, a system is in place to inform the participant and parents of their progress throughout the program. We celebrate achievement!
- 5. For All:** We don't just accept difference, we celebrate, support and thrive on it, for the benefit of our participants and coaches. The program is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation regardless of race, color, ancestry, religion, gender, origin, sexual orientation, disability or gender identity. This principle is non-negotiable.

The Baseball5 Program and the My First Pitch program for older elementary students complement the Rally Cap program and further engage children in baseball.



Stage 3: Learn to Train (12U)

Begins around age nine for boys and eight for girls: marks the time just before the growth spurt begins.

General Recommendations

Physical literacy development is still ongoing.

Brain and body are at an appropriate time for skill development. Fundamental sport skills are developed in a variety of sports and physical activities (land, water, snow and ice) before progressing to the Training to Train stage. Ensure that the environment supports and promotes fun and friendship.

Multi sport recommendations

Avoid early specialization.

Consider individual variations in physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional and moral development.

Physical skills are increased through the use of training balls, stabilizing balls and body weight exercises, with an emphasis on improving flexibility and speed in the arms and legs.

Ancillary skills are introduced: warm-up and cool-down periods, nutrition, hydration and rest, including sleep and mental preparation to control anxiety.

Formal competition is introduced, but it should focus on sportsmanship and provide a chance to experiment with different positions.

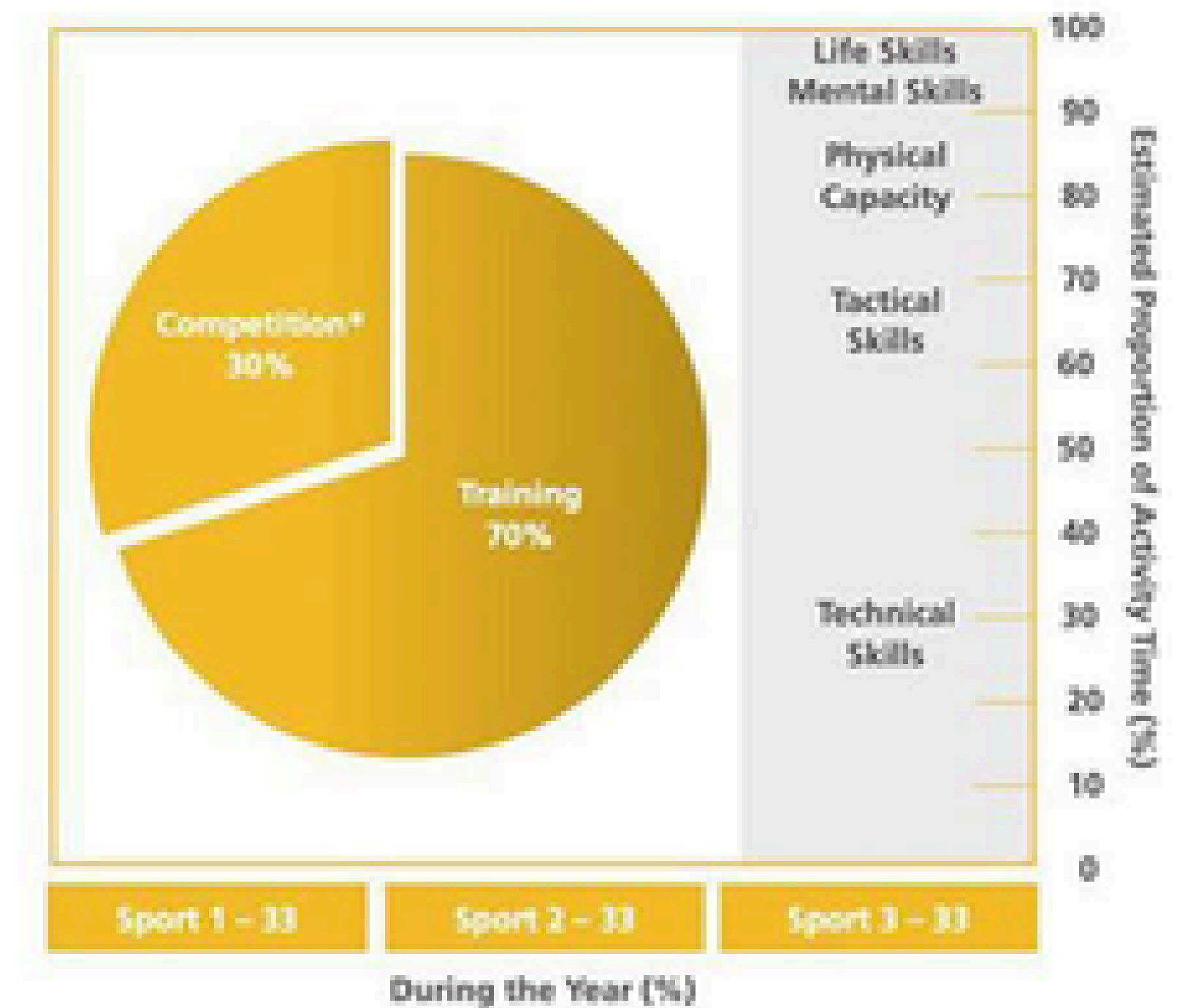


Figure 11 Train to Train activity Summary



Baseball Recommendations

Baseball specific training occurs three times a week and participation in other sports and activities also occurs at a frequency of three times a week.

This is a time for informal talent scouting with the opportunity to provide an enriched training environment.

This is the stage where many organizations will start using pitchers (around age 10) and a program like My First Pitch will serve this purpose.

This is the time when baseball related skills are being developed and specific attention should be paid to it. It is also the beginning of the presence of officials on the field who will support the development of the youngsters and act as educators.

For the more advanced players of this stage, some will be able to go from 6 to 9 players on the field in defense.

This will also be the beginning of more formal competitions, specifically in the last two years of this stage.



Building A Solid Foundation - Summary Sheet

Stage	Active Start	FUNDamentals	Learn to Train
Age Group	6U	9U	12U
Travel	Limited to Local Clubs	Limited to Region	Limited to neighbor region/province
Modified Rules	The use of modified rules has been adopted by Baseball Canada to optimize development, enjoyment, provide appropriate player challenge for athletes, and increase player's retention.		
Compete vs Skills	Athletes benefit greatly from opponents who have similar skills and abilities.		
Male & Female	It is appropriate for males and females to train together.	At a last resort, it is appropriate for males and females to train & compete together.	
Season Duration	12 weeks max		12-16 weeks max
New Participants	New participants need to be allowed entry into this stage		
Talent ID & Selection	Selection of athletes should be avoided.		
Role of Winning	Winning is a low priority.		Winning is a low priority. Learning to cope with the physical and mental challenges of competition is important for future development for late stage
Field Size	As per Baseball Canada rule book		
Event Format	Competition formats (types of format used, event lengths, etc.) needs to be adapted to improve development of athletes.		
Recognition & Award	Athletes should be recognized/rewarded by organizers for effort and participation.		Athletes should be recognized/rewarded by competition organizers for effort, participation & performance.
Specialization	Athletes should be encouraged to play many sports and participate in each sport equally. Furthermore, multi positions should be prioritized.		



The Adolescent in Baseball

The critical stage of development and commitment to becoming an athlete.

The next stage, Train to Train, which often begins in the early teens, is where the future of many athletes lies. This is the stage where some people will become athletes and progress towards High Performance; others will give up.

The Train to Train stage coincides with the transition from childhood to early adulthood. This is the stage in which many people decide to commit themselves to the pursuit of excellence and demonstrate the will to be an athlete, in every sense of the word. Others, on the other hand, will decide that they will no longer devote the time, energy and resources necessary to achieve excellence in their sport. Sometimes this choice is forced upon them. For example, as a result of injury, lack of opportunity or inability to progress.

Specific Issues in the Train to Train Stage

The Train to Train stage is critical to the development and commitment of athletes. This is because so many changes occur in young people's lives during adolescence that it is not surprising that many drop out of sport or physical activity.

A collaborative and consistent approach among coaches, organizations and network stakeholders is essential to support the ongoing development of athletes in the Train to Train stage. This is what will lead them to excellence, or encourage them to make the transfer to a lifelong activity. When these stakeholders understand the issues and are patient in their development, more youth will be retained in baseball and physical activity and progress to the Train to Compete stage.

TRAIN TO TRAIN ATHLETES...			
...feel that Sport is	...report that they	...lack balance	Other issues
Too focused on results	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 centred	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	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 – rep and club etc.	Not making sufficient progress

Figure 12 Special Issues to address at the T2T stage



Stage 4: Train to Train (14U)

This stage corresponds to the period of the growth spurt in adolescence. It occurs between the ages of 11 and 15 for girls and 12 and 16 for boys.

General Recommendations

This is a critical stage in the development of high performance athletes.

It is generally during this stage that participants :

- ☒ commit to a high performance pathway and begin their journey to high performance;
- ☒ commit to being Competitive for Life or Fit for Life in the sport of their choice;
- ☒ give up baseball.

For those who are moving toward excellence, this stage is marked by a remarkable refinement of skills in which the adolescent becomes more specialized in one position.

The onset of the growth spurt and the sudden rapid growth spurt are key indicators. Growth should be monitored. This is a stage marked by the development of whole body speed.

Multi sport recommendations

This is a stage of major fitness development: including aerobic capacity and strength.

This is the introduction of free weights with an emphasis on proper technique. It is important to cultivate lifelong skills.



Ensure that the environment supports and promotes fun and friendship.

Auxiliary skills are developed and the means to balance personal life and sport are provided.

More attention is paid to mental preparation.

Ethics in sport are developed, including respect for opponents and sportsmanship while promoting a commitment to doping-free sport. Training in a specific sport takes place six to nine times a week and includes other sports. This is the stage of participation in formal competitions with rankings.

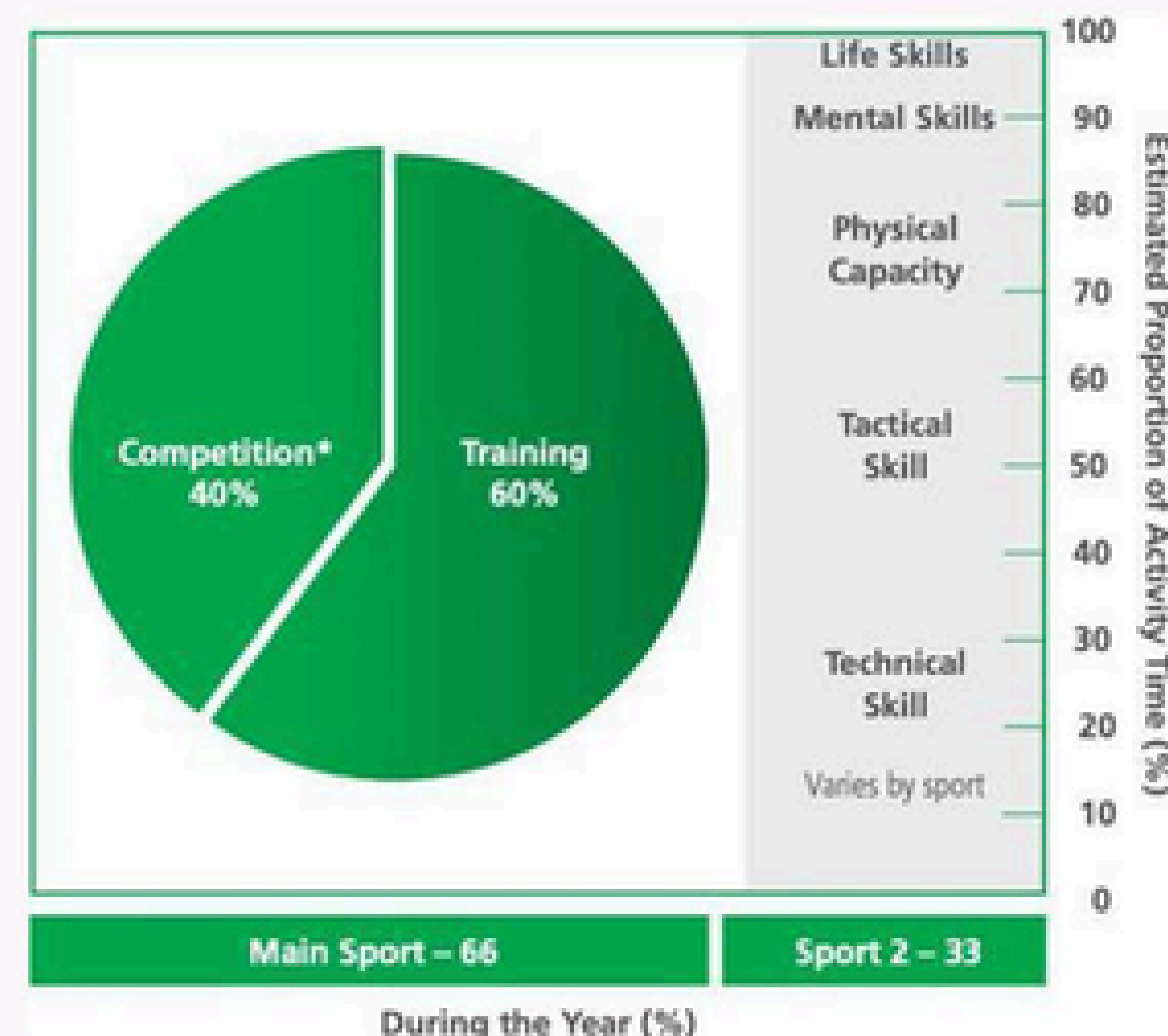


Figure 27 Train to Train Activity Summary

The 4 types of Adolescent Baseball Players

The 4 types of Adolescent Baseball Players

Recommendations for 12U, 14U, 16U & 18U Players

In the spirit of optimizing the adolescent years, the following tables indicate the various objectives for the developmental areas relevant to athlete development in baseball.

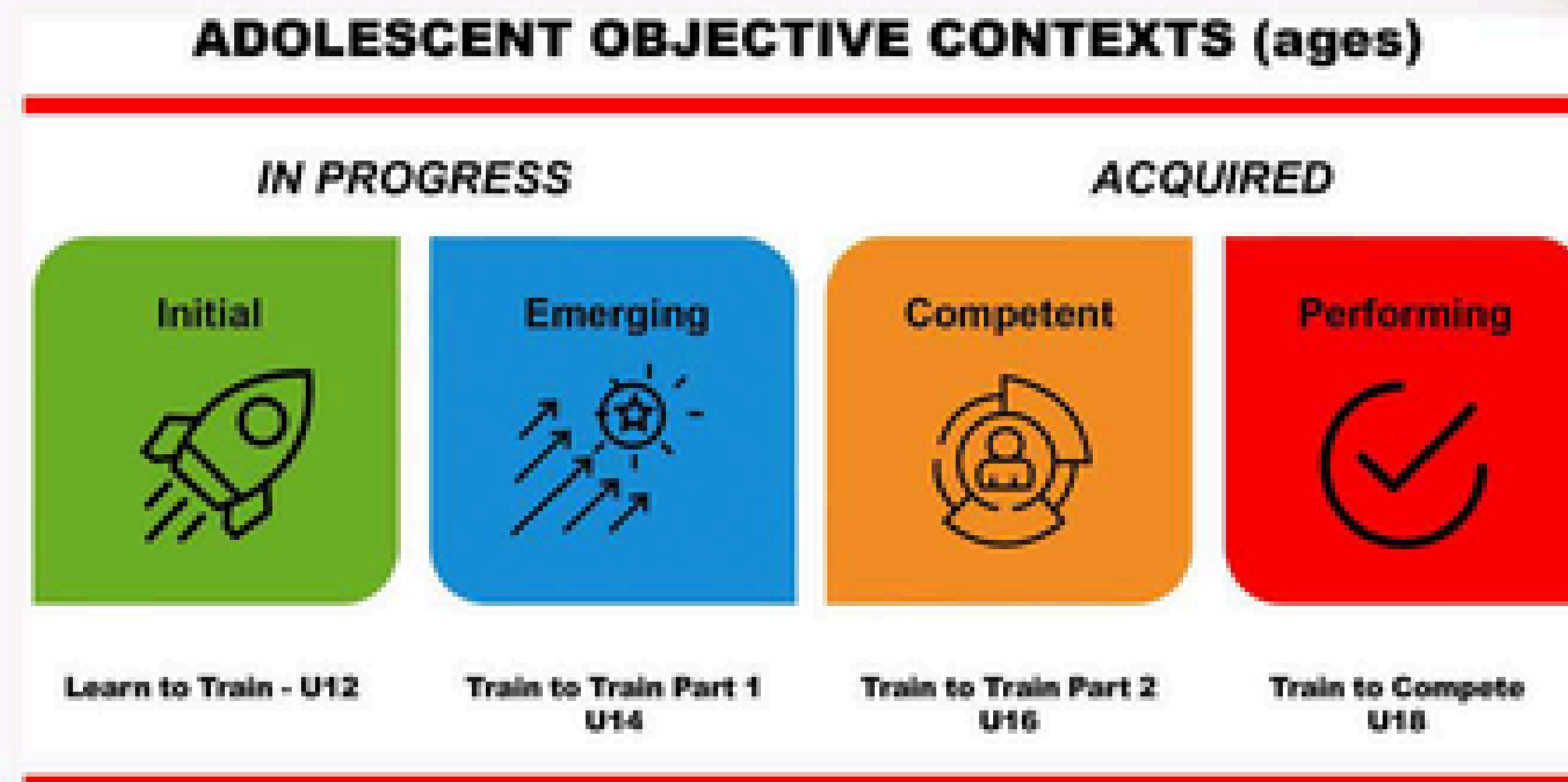


Figure 13: Adolescent objective Contexts (ages)



ADOLESCENT OBJECTIVE - INFIELD



Figure 14: Adolescent objective - Infield

ADOLESCENT OBJECTIVE - OUTFIELD

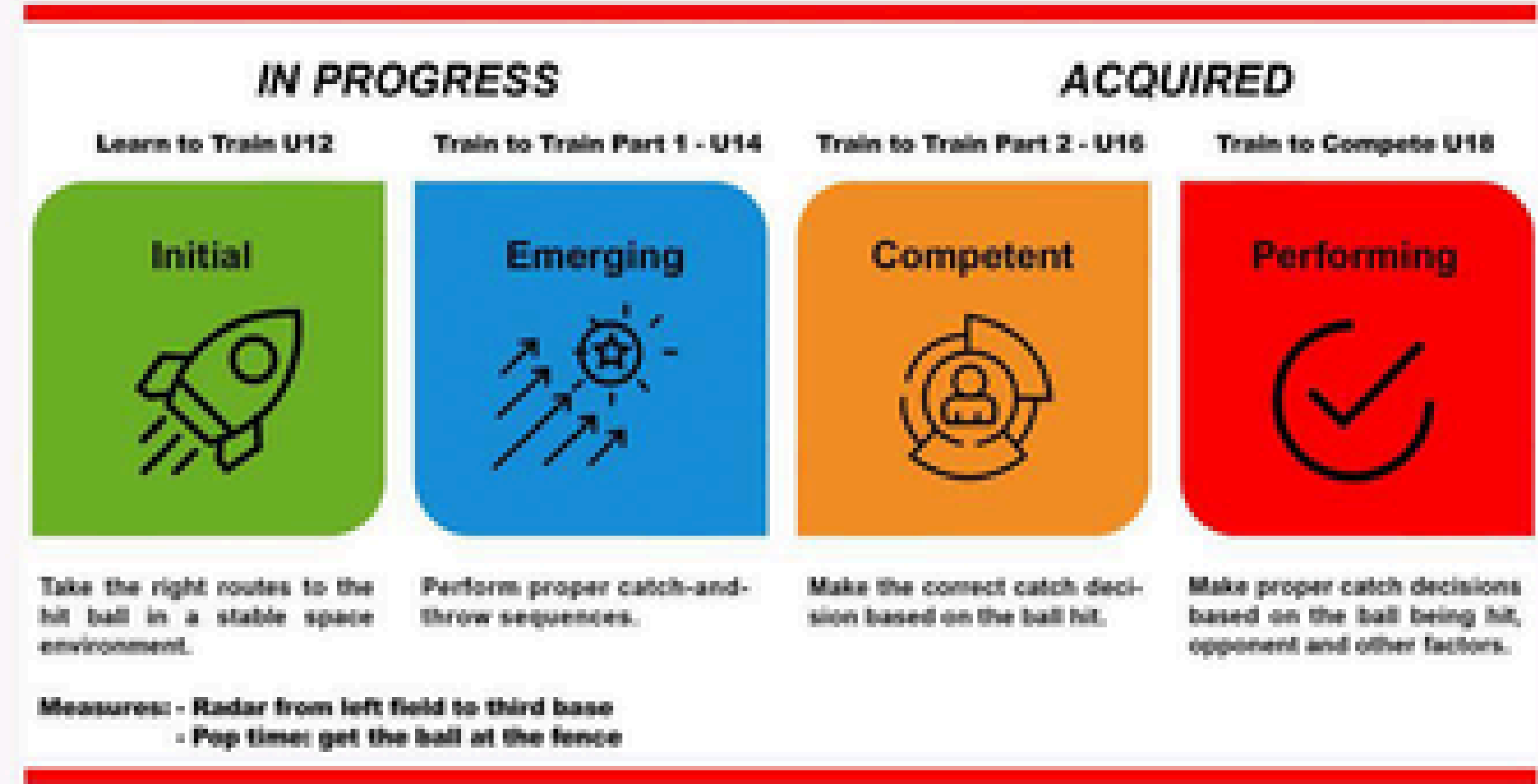


Figure 16: Adolescent objective – Outfield

ADOLESCENT OBJECTIVE - CATCHERS

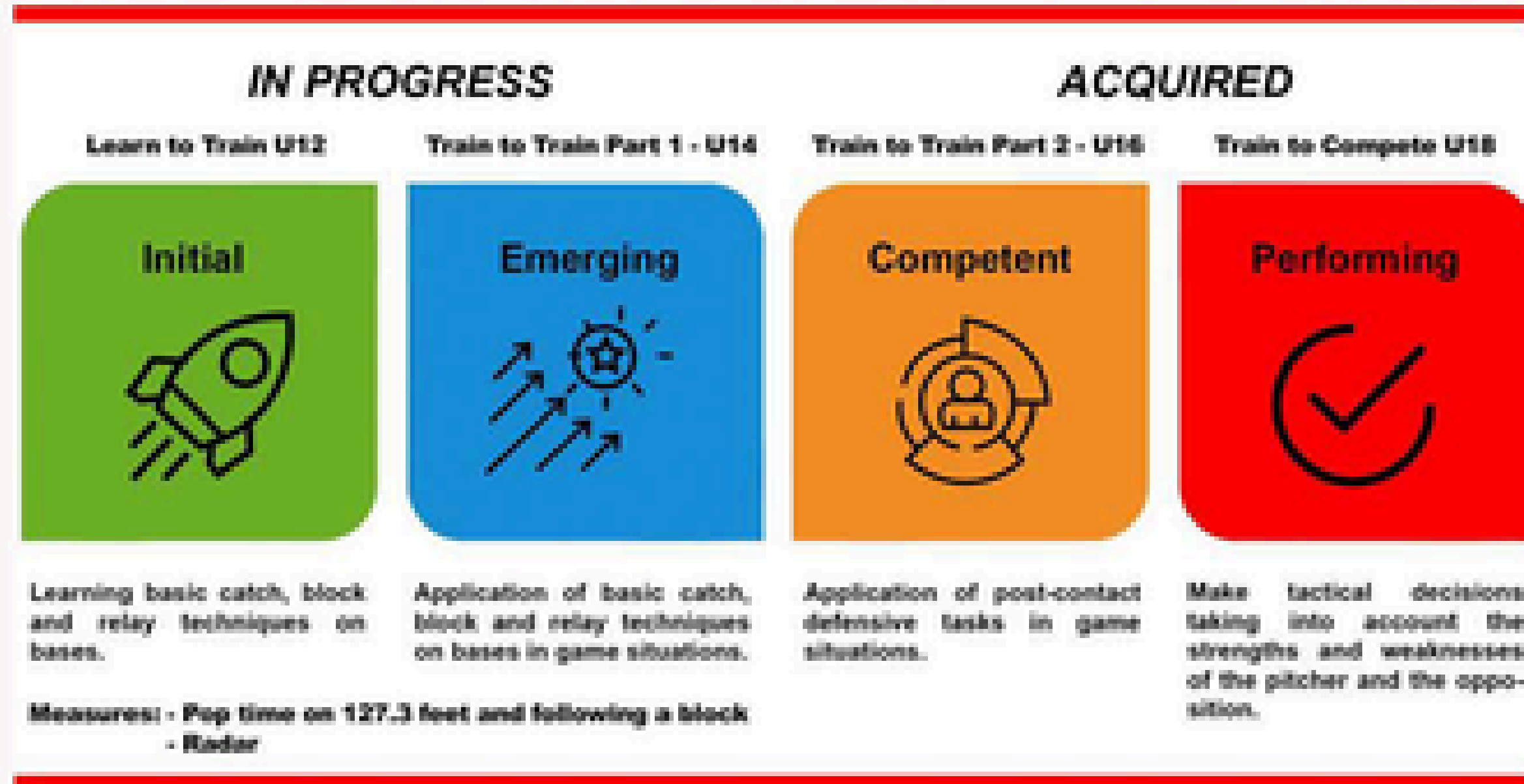


Figure 15: Adolescent objective - Catchers

ADOLESCENT OBJECTIVE - PITCHERS

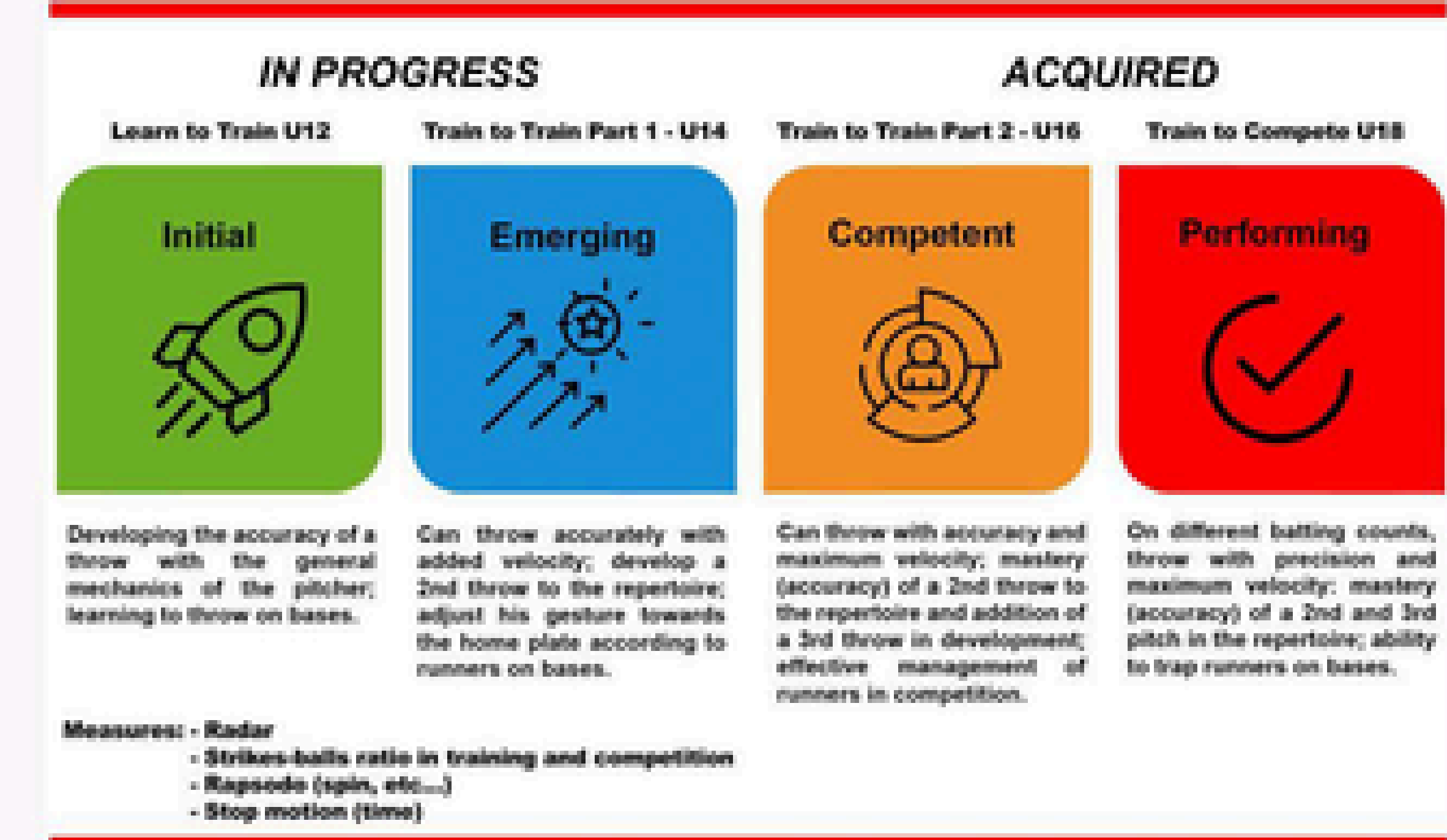


Figure 17 : Adolescent objective – Pitchers



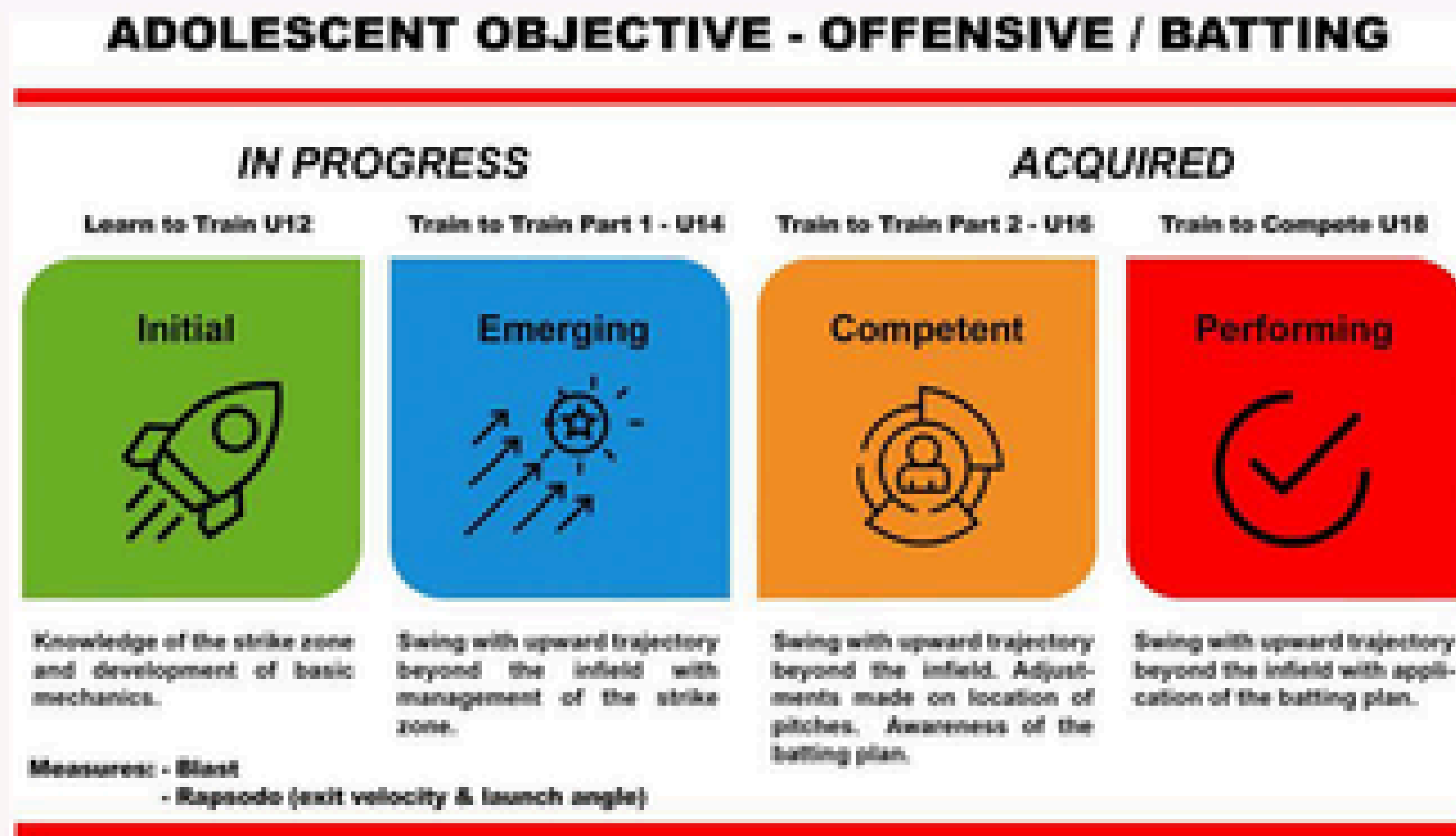


Figure 18 : Adolescent objective – Offensive / Batting

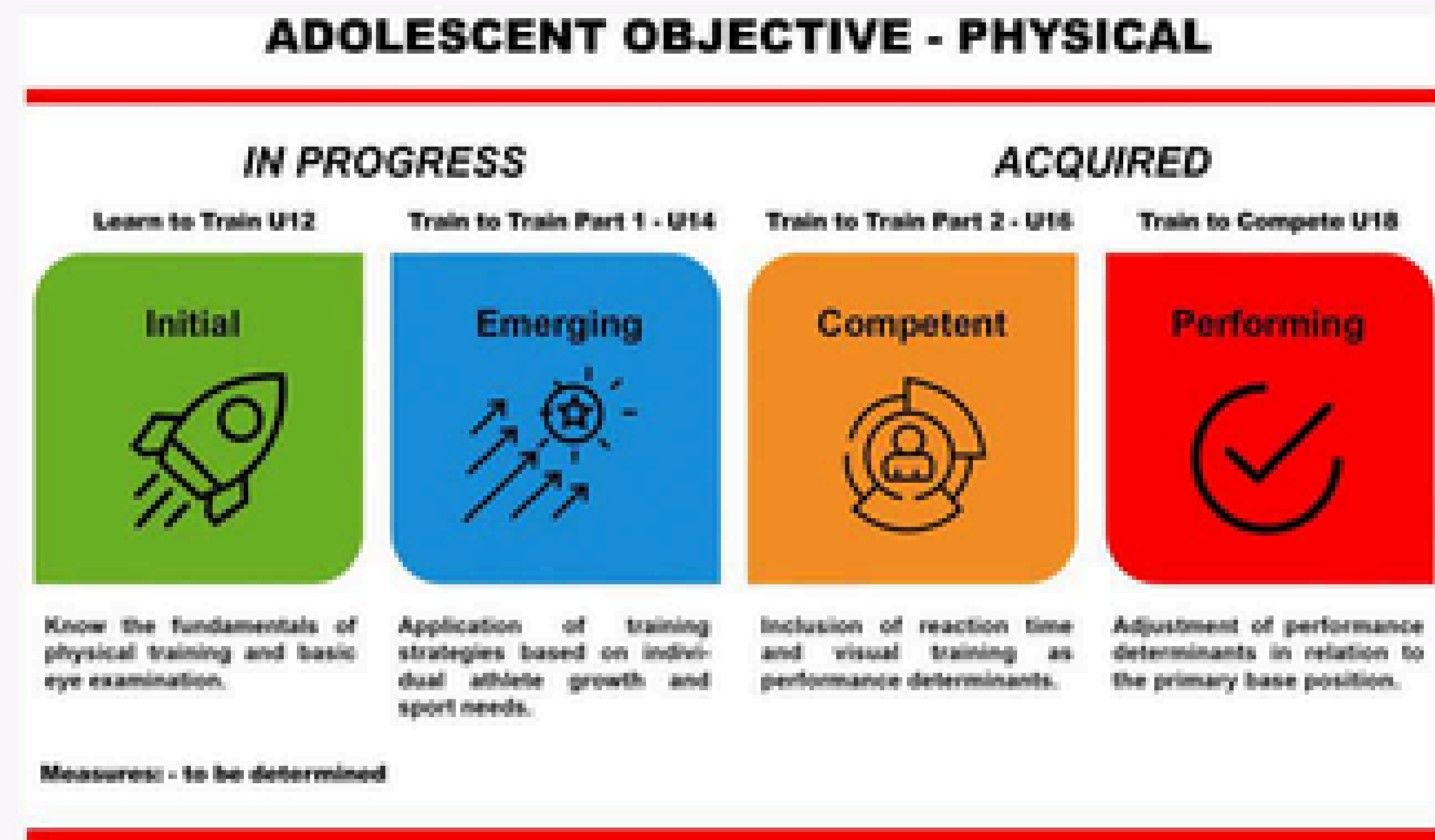


Figure 20 : Adolescent objective – Physical



Figure 19 : Adolescent objective – Offensive Course

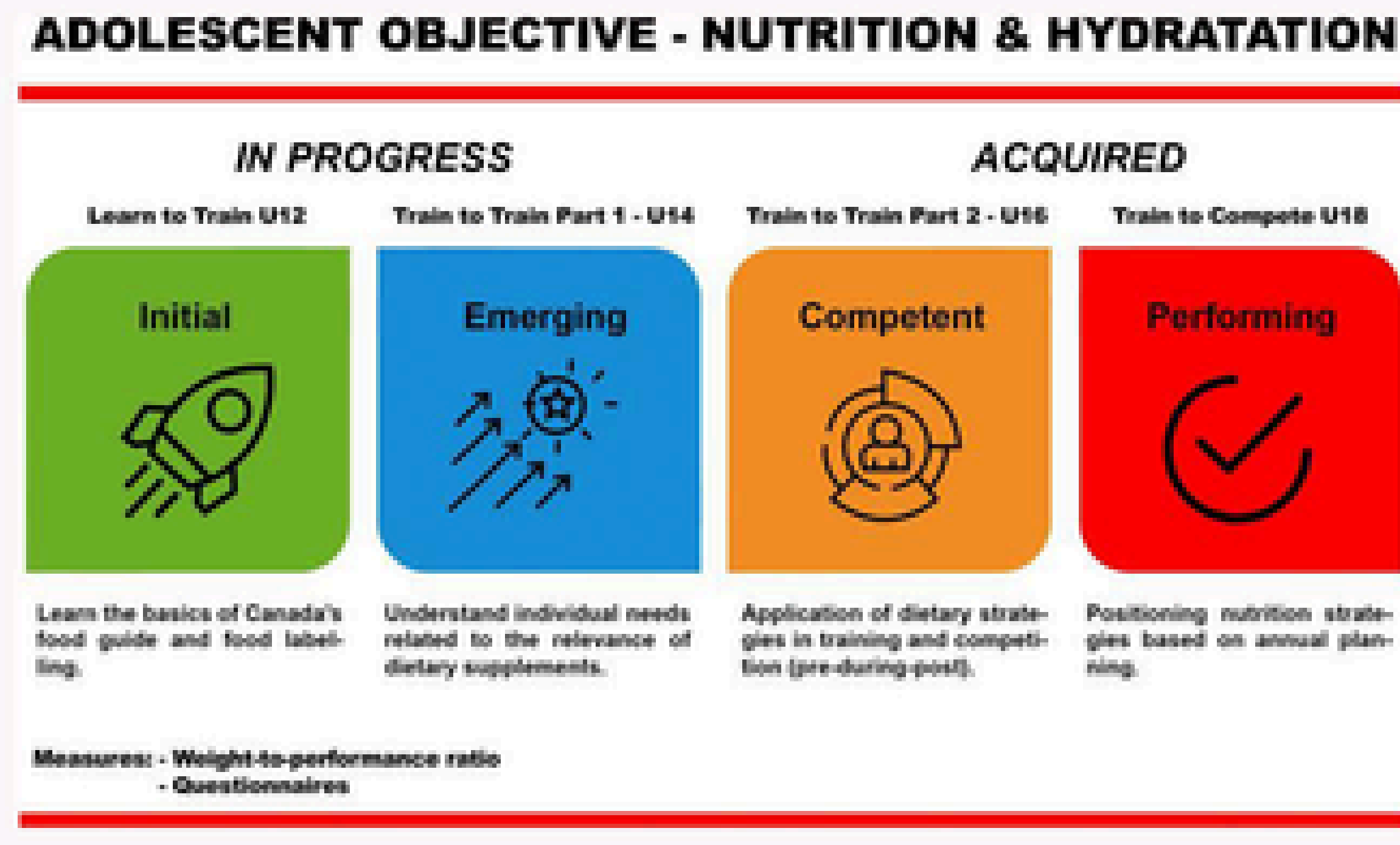


Figure 21 : Adolescent objective – Nutrition & Hydration



ADOLESCENT OBJECTIVE - SPORT HEALTH



Figure 22 : Adolescent objective – Sport Health

ADOLESCENT OBJECTIVE - MENTAL



Figure 24 : Adolescent objective – Mental

ADOLESCENT OBJECTIVE - THERAPY



Figure 23 : Adolescent objective – Therapy

ADOLESCENT OBJECTIVE - ACADEMIC

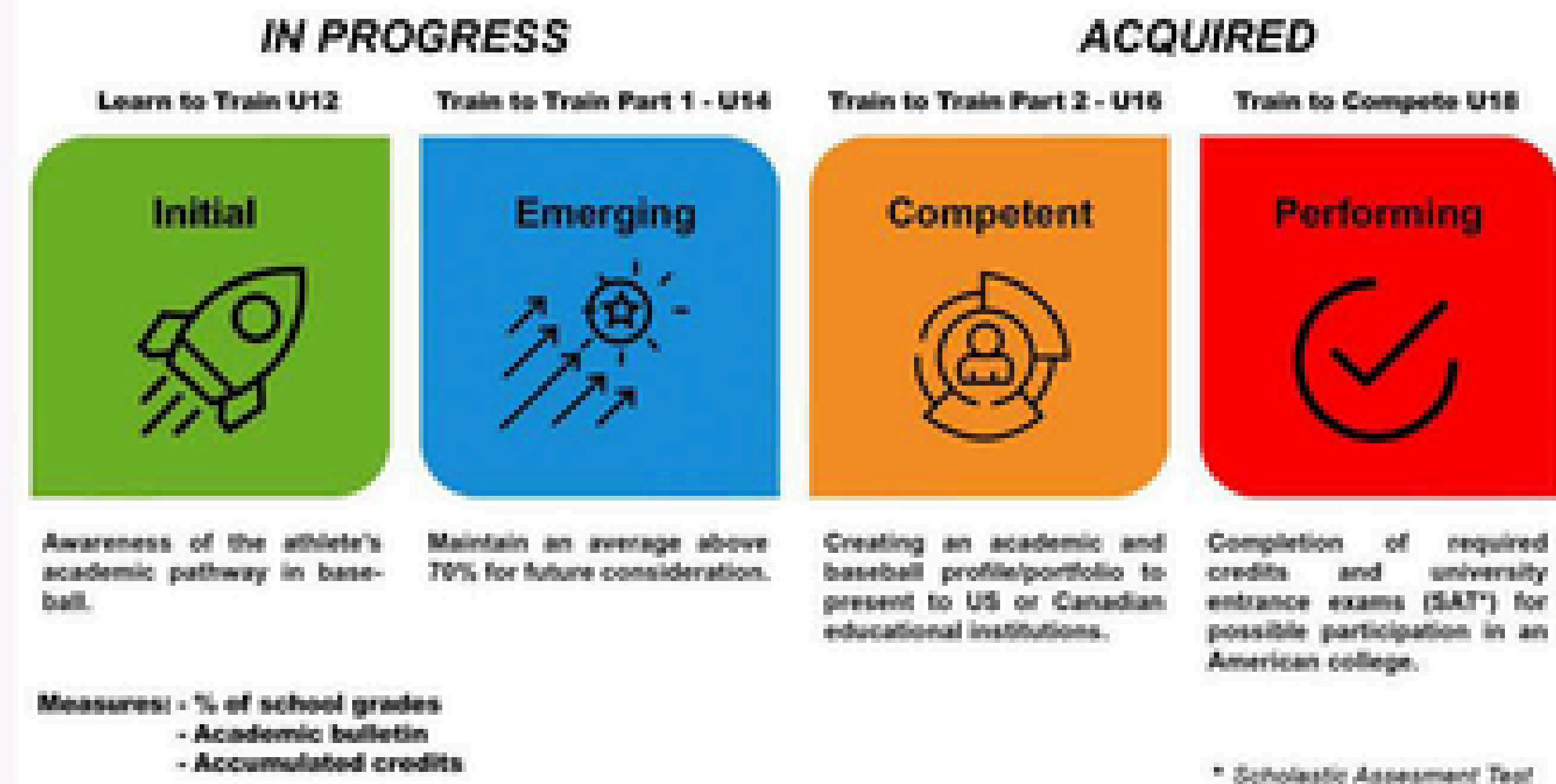


Figure 25 : Adolescent objective – Academic



ADOLESCENT OBJECTIVE - LIFE

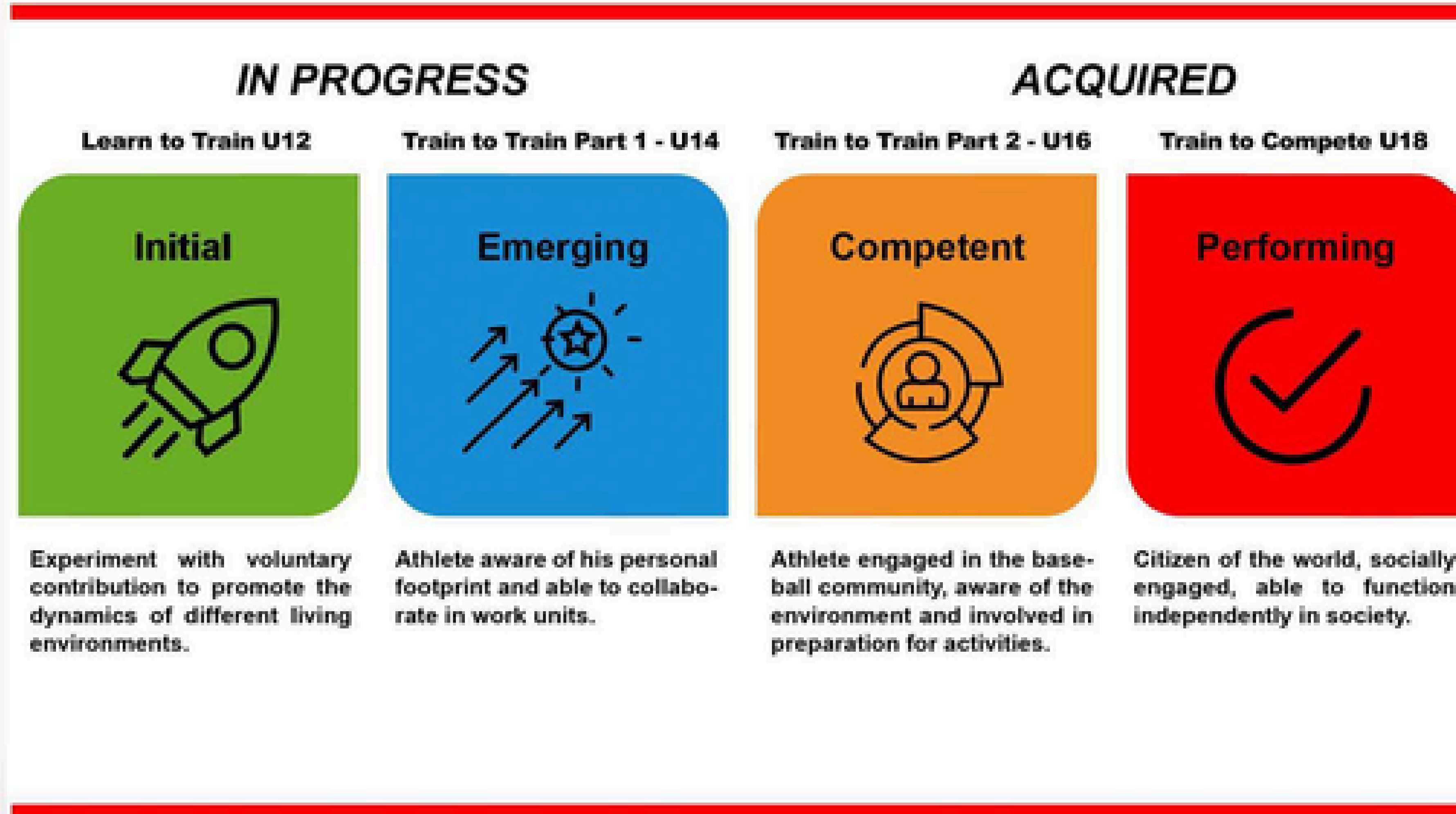


Figure 26: Adolescent objective – Life



The High-Performance Pathway

Wining on the world stage

The High Performance Pathway is designed to produce high performance athletes capable of winning at the highest levels of international competition, and of winning medals at major events such as world championships. This pathway also serves as a stepping stone to the world of professional baseball.

The steps in this pathway are:



The Path to High Performance

Stage 5: Train to compete

This stage is generally for athletes who are on national teams including emerging or next generation athletes and teams. For baseball, we are referring to the Junior Men's National Team and the Women's Development Programs. These are exceptional athletes who have a real chance to play for their national team or qualify to go to the world championships. This is the time when they specialize in baseball to be selected for international age group competitions.

Entry into this stage is dependent on progression in baseball, and continues beyond the end of the growth spurt in adolescence. These are the athletes who are competing at the provincial, junior national level or who are beginning to gain exposure to national competitions

They need specialized training in a specialized training environment.

This is the stage where one specializes in baseball, in a position, and during which physical training and technical-tactical preparation are designed to maximize development.

Tactical skills are tested and training is conducted under competitive conditions. Training is based on science and testing is used to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Work is done to optimize ancillary abilities and to balance baseball with work, school, family and social life.

Advanced mental preparation strategies are implemented, and practices are conducted under highly competitive conditions

Ethics in baseball are reinforced, including respect for opponents and sportsmanship while promoting a commitment to doping- free sport.

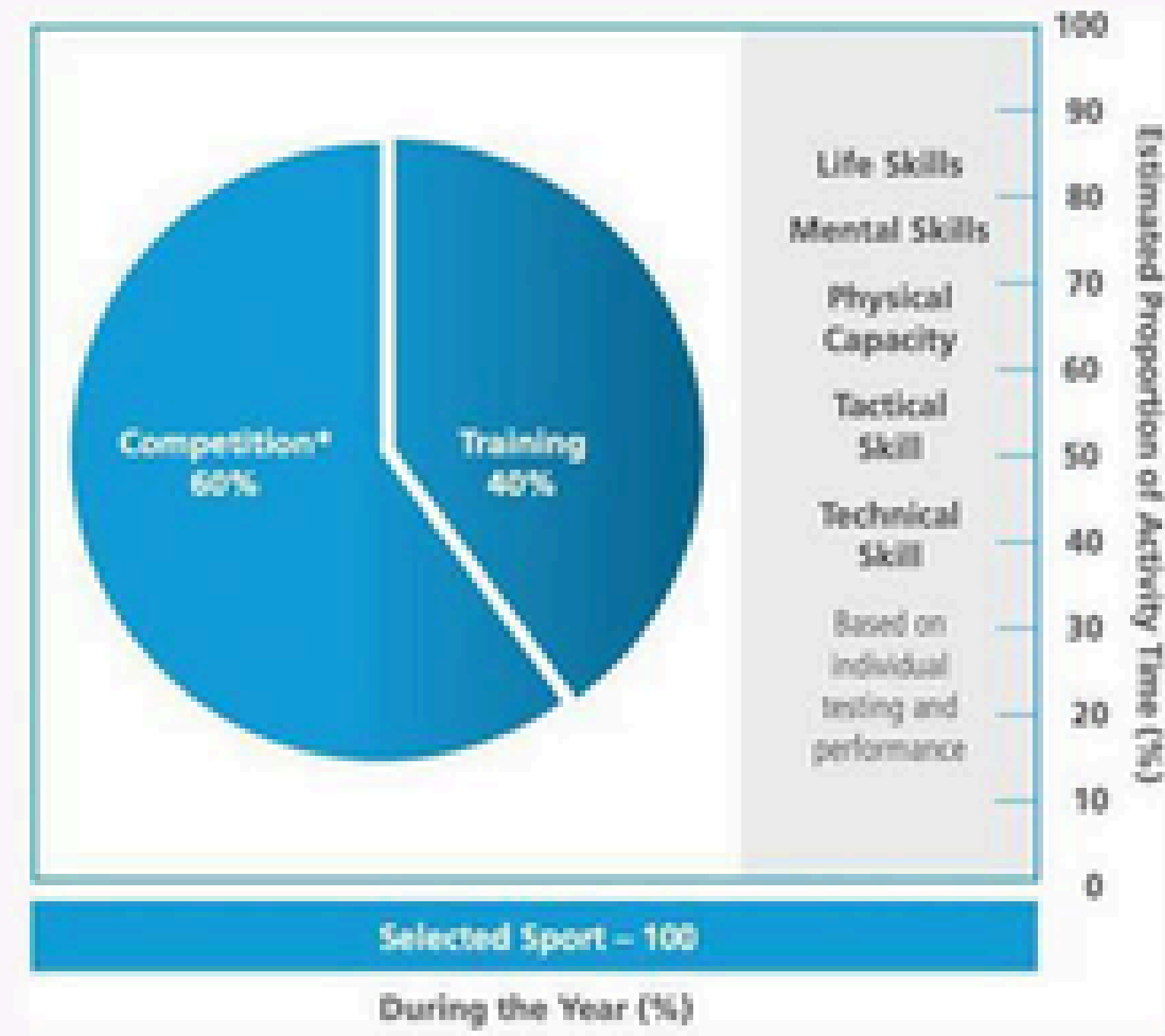


Figure 28 Train to Compete activity summary



Periodization is single, double or triple.

Training of baseball-specific technical and physical skills takes place nine to twelve times per week.

Stage 6: Train to Win

This stage is for athletes who have a very good chance of competing at the world championships or winning medals at both the female and male level. These are the athletes who are among the best of the best in baseball. Not all members of a national team fall into this category. This is also the stage for all participants in the professional ranks

Entry into this stage is dependent on progression in baseball and corresponds to the time when age allows for optimal athletic performance. In this stage, athletes compete at the highest levels of competition: Olympic, World Championships and Professional Leagues.

Emphasis is placed on podium worthy performances at high level international events or performances in the professional ranks.

The goal is to improve or maintain all physical abilities required for optimal performance. Training is based on science.

It is the pursuit of the development of technical-tactical and performance skills with the Frameworking of all aspects of performance during training and competition.

Frequent breaks are provided for prophylactic purposes for recovery and regeneration. We work on maximizing ancillary capacities and provide specialist support.

Periodization is single, double or triple and priority is given to the most important competitions.

Technical and tactical skills training and baseball-specific conditioning is conducted nine to fifteen times per week.

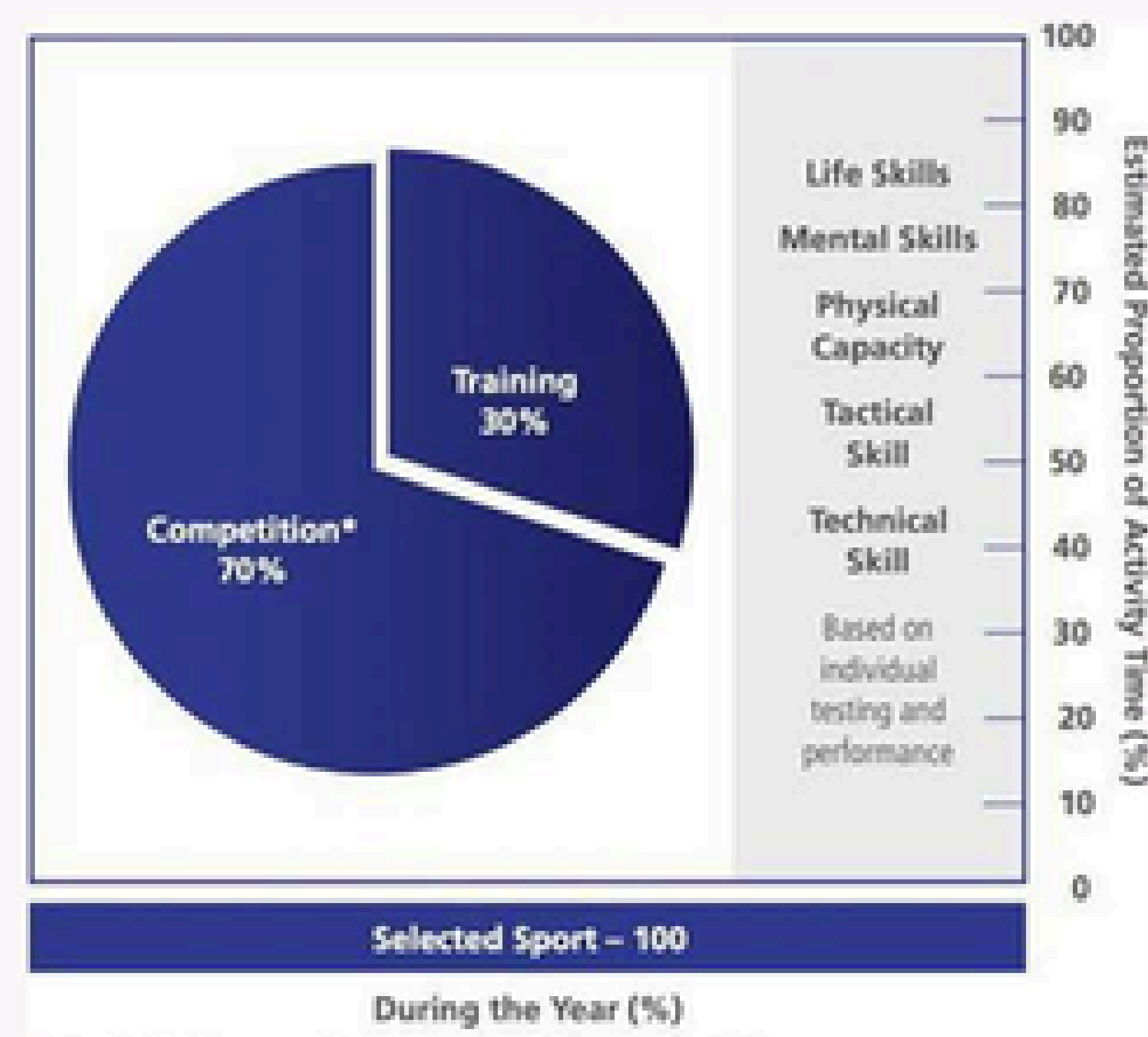


Figure 29 Train to Win Activity Summary



High Performance - Summary Sheet

Stage	Train to Train	Train to Compete	Train to Win
Age Group	14U	18U	SR
Travel	Regular travel should be limited to neighboring regions/provinces	Regular travel should occur country-wide & International	Regular travel should occur internationally
Modified Rules	Rules are in place to monitor pitching load	WBSC/MLB Rules	
Compete vs Skills	Athletes benefit greatly from opponents who have similar skills and abilities.	Athletes benefit greatly by competing with opponents who are more skilled than they are	
Male & Female	It is NOT appropriate for males and females to compete together		
Season Duration	16-20 weeks	20-40 weeks	40+ weeks
New Participants	New participants need to be allowed entry into this stage.		
Talent ID & Selection	Talented athletes should be identified for supplemental training and competitive opportunities		
Role of Winning	Winning is a moderate priority.	Winning is a priority.	Success in competition is the driving force for all athletic preparation decisions and "Winning" is of the highest priority.
Field Size	As per Baseball Canada Rule book	WBSC/MLB Rules	
Event Format	Design to maximize playing time	As per WBSC/MLB format	
Recognition & Award	Athletes should be recognized/rewarded by competition organizers for performance success.		
Specialization	Athletes should be encouraged to play in other sports, but baseball should be a priority	Athletes should focus almost exclusively on baseball.	



Being Active for life

Stage 7: Active for life

The Active for Life stage involves the majority of people who participate in baseball. After building a solid foundation in the first three stages of the Framework, they move on to baseball or the sports of their choice. They do so primarily for fun, satisfaction or health benefits. Some participate in organized competition; others do not.

Competitive for Life is the Active Life stage for those who decide to compete in organized baseball. They can compete at the U-14 or U-17 level in a local league, and even go on to compete in World Masters. This is also the stage where all junior and senior leagues in the country as they are no longer on the path to high performance.

Leaders in Sport and Physical Activity includes those who contribute in ways other than being an athlete or participant in baseball or an activity. This includes coaches, officials, administrators and those working in sport science and medicine.

A person is not, at any time or under any circumstances, restricted to any of these paths. Often a person in the Active Living stage will be involved in a variety of ways.

Physical literacy, increased activity and recreational sport, and being "Fit for Life" lead the way to a healthier Canada. The well-documented benefits of regular physical activity include long-term health, social networking, improved mental and physical well-being and better quality of life. Yet, despite evidence demonstrating the many benefits associated with regular exercise, particularly in middle-aged adults, only 15% of Canadian adults meet national physical activity recommendations (Colley et al., 2011). Furthermore, among the growing population of older adults, sport participation rates have declined in recent decades in Canada.



Conclusion

As sport science continues to evolve, our baseball practices must also keep pace. The quality of our players, programs and facilities will be the driving force in retaining our young players for years to come. Investments in research and innovation will become central to the development of sport and physical activity in Canada and our sport, baseball, must be part of this adventure.

The sharing of information between the various stakeholders involved in baseball will become part of the ongoing development of our sport. The curiosity to learn more about the best practices of other sports will become an essential quality to be at the forefront of sport development. Openness to the world and to new initiatives will position baseball in Canada as a leader.

This document is intended as a guide and we are aware of the evolution of sport science. What is current today can quickly become outdated if not followed up with rigor. This is why monitoring current research remains an important lever for the continued development of baseball in Canada.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the development of this document. Your expertise, passion and skills will give wings to many baseball development programs in Canada.

We are grateful for your dedication to this project.

