Sport New Zealand’s
Physical Literacy Approach

Guidance for quality physical activity and sport experiences

sportnz.org.nz/physicalliteracy
Why is Sport NZ taking this approach?

Sport New Zealand’s (Sport NZ) vision is to enrich lives and inspire a nation through physical activity and sport.

We aim to be the world’s most successful sporting nation, through the development and support of a world leading community sport system. To be world-leading in community sport we will be participant-focused, system-led and performance-driven.

To bring this participant-focused philosophy to life we are taking a physical literacy approach.

The Sport NZ Physical Literacy Approach takes a holistic view of the participant that considers their physical; social and emotional; cognitive; and spiritual needs. By understanding that these dimensions influence the needs of every participant, within their specific environments, we can provide physical activity and sport experiences that inspire ongoing participation.

We want to ensure that our partners and providers, government agencies, and all who provide and support physical activity and sport opportunities, have a shared understanding of this holistic needs approach and consider how it can add value to the physical activity and sport opportunities they provide.

What is physical literacy?

Physical literacy is “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding required by participants that allows them to value and take responsibility for engaging in physical activity and sport for life”.

Sport NZ’s Physical Literacy Approach is relevant across all ages, recognising and responding to the needs of a participant as they change throughout life.

Babies, children, young people, adults and seniors can all be participating in physical activity and sport in a variety of ways and in a variety of places. Their needs will vary and this document provides a starting point for considering these needs.

1 Margaret Whitehead, 2013
Physical Literacy Approach

Vision: To value and choose being physically active for life.
Sport New Zealand’s **vision** for physical literacy.

Sport NZ’s vision for physical literacy is that our partners and providers, government agencies, and all who provide and support physical activity and sport opportunities, see the value of this approach and embed it into their way of working. Adoption of this approach will result in the provision and support of quality experiences, consistent throughout New Zealand, that lead to participation in physical activity and sport for life.

We believe that understanding and embracing a physical literacy approach will lead to more people being active throughout their lives, regardless of age, gender, ability, socio-economic group or culture.

**How will we bring this vision to life?**

We will engage with our partners and providers to discuss physical literacy and the implications of adopting this approach. We will also provide them with tools, training, resources, practical examples and access to support networks that will explore the application of the approach. We will lead consistency across the community sector through facilitating, sharing and investing in good practice that develops and enhances physical literacy.

We will also identify and develop partnerships and initiatives with agencies that utilise a similar holistic approach, such as Sir Mason Durie’s Te Whare Tapa Whā model, in their ways of working.
Travelling through life

This Guide is a starting point to identify what a participant’s physical activity and sporting needs may be as they travel through life. Our motivation and ability to be active changes as we move through life due to our environment and the commitments we have during different stages. By identifying these life stages and then addressing the personal dimensions of our physical; social and emotional; cognitive; and spiritual being we can get a good sense of what our needs might be. Understanding these needs gives us a sound base to provide quality opportunities that will develop and support the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding which determine our choices to engage in physical activity and sport.

Common needs for all life stages

While it is important to recognise and respond to the individuality of participants and their environment, this guide outlines what initial factors we might consider to incorporate a holistic approach to quality physical activity experiences and outcomes.

There are needs that are common across all life stages, for example: the chance to be playful, creative and have fun; physical opportunities that match our individual physical ability so we can develop and grow at our own pace; the physical environment is safe; the emotional environment is safe - where you are welcomed, respected, accepted and can be yourself; the support and love of our friends, family/whānau is always around us.
Identifying life stages

Babies and toddlers - early years

The changes that occur in our development during this life stage are truly extraordinary. This is a period of huge growth and development as we move from a new-born state of total dependence on our caregivers, through the exploratory toddler phase, towards beginning to become more independent.

The interaction of the environment and our genetic makeup shapes this process, and these early experiences form important pathways in our brain that future development builds upon. During these early years of life it is play, not scheduled instruction that contributes the most to our development.

Children – primary/intermediate

This life stage encompasses the middle and pre-teen years where we become more involved in a range of environments, experiencing primary and intermediate schools, club activities and many community opportunities. These environments and experiences will influence our ongoing choices to engage in physical activity and sport. Variety, enjoyment and skill development are crucial, along with a positive, supportive, empathetic, environment that enables us to learn and be challenged at our own, individual pace.

Young adults – secondary/tertiary/employed/unemployed

This life stage is an area of significant change as we transition from childhood to the self-determination and responsibility of adulthood. Our motivation, competence and confidence to participate in sporting activities may vary as we negotiate the many physical, emotional, behavioural and social changes of this period. Sport and physical activity can play an important role in supporting positive development in what can be a challenging stage.

Seeking new experiences, added responsibilities, taking risks and establishing our identity can impact our choices about sport and physical activity participation. It is important in this stage being able to access many and varied pathways from informal social physical activity through to opportunities providing more competitive performance based sport.

The family/whānau has a powerful influencing role within this stage so it is important to support families/whānau in providing enjoyable stimulating opportunities and positive experiences that will nurture children’s natural curiosity to be active and to make meaning of their world through movement.
**Adults – young families/older families/older adults**

This life stage crosses a wide span from young adults through to government retirement age. There are many variables throughout these years that affect our physical activity and sport choices. What goes on at home, at work, in the community and how we develop physically and mentally will drive our motivation to be active.

We might choose to compete at a high competitive level or at a social level. We might prefer to participate on our own or with a specific group or just with friends. Throughout this life stage our motivation to participate will shift, just as our lifestyle does. We are at an age now where our choices can be made independently.

**Seniors – young retirees/older retirees**

These golden years of life are when our physical and mental health are important in order to maintain every day movement and independent living. Our participation in physical activity and sport can provide the opportunity to socialise, have fun and be with family/whānau and friends.

It is a time where we might need assistance to choose appropriate participation opportunities. It can also be a busy time where our skills and experiences are requested and our knowledge can be passed on and shared with family/whānau/communities.
Needs and considerations throughout the life stages.

Initial factors
Babies and Toddlers – early years

Needs and considerations:

**PHYSICAL**
- time to play and explore movement every day
- movement that encourages creativity, imagination, exploration
- activities that build foundation skills around controlling their body, interacting with others and their environment through movement.

**SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL**
- cuddles, patience and lots of encouragement from kind, caring dependable people who support them to be active
- time alone and time to socialise
- role models around them that demonstrate active, healthy living.

**COGNITIVE**
- rich, sensory experiences from nature and everyday life environments
- simple, clear instructions with plenty of time to respond
- help and guidance to explore and make decisions.

**SPIRITUAL**
- love and support from their closest carers
- nurturing of their unique personality
- family cultural beliefs and values considered.
Children – primary/intermediate

Needs and considerations:

**PHYSICAL**
- varied and modified activities to match their ability and encourage maximum participation
- experiences that consider enjoyment and impact on long term involvement
- opportunity to develop skills and attributes that can be used in a range of sports and physical activities of their choosing.

**SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL**
- encouragement and positive reinforcement as they learn from knowledgeable, motivating, responsive people
- time to socialise with others as well as time to be independent
- opportunities that help them to become accepting of others and their physical, social and cultural differences.

**COGNITIVE**
- to be creative, imaginative and curious so they can explore and solve problems for themselves
- the opportunity to make up their own games, rules, and to learn about negotiation, teamwork and how to accept and learn from both winning and losing
- develop confidence, self-awareness and understand when they can take risks.

**SPIRITUAL**
- an environment that fosters them to question and form their own beliefs, attitudes and values
- support to enable them to participate in the spiritual and cultural customs of their whānau, family and community that are a part of sport and physical activity
- support to affirm their spiritual and cultural foundation and feel confident to express this if required.
### Young Adults – Secondary/tertiary/employed/unemployed

**Needs and considerations:**

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<tr>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• a wide range of physical activity and sport so they can choose what they like best</td>
<td>• opportunity to pursue competitive, intense sport and physical activity options if they want to.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL</th>
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<td>• encouragement and support from friends and family on the choices and decisions they make</td>
<td>• support people who are knowledgeable of their physical and emotional development</td>
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<td>• to socialise, be with friends and make new friends.</td>
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<th>COGNITIVE</th>
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<td>• to learn about playing fair, understanding rules and roles; creating strategies and game tactics and to develop skills to manage risk</td>
<td>• to choose for themselves why and how they participate</td>
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<td>• awareness of how sport and physical activity can be good for both physical and mental health</td>
<td>• to discover for themselves how to balance learning, physical activity, sport and social activities in their lives.</td>
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<td>• to question and form their own beliefs, attitudes and values in their lives and the confidence to express these</td>
<td>• support to participate in spiritual and cultural activities as they relate to sport and physical activity.</td>
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Adults – young families/older families/older adults

Needs and considerations:

**SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL**
- activities that include socialising with family/whānau, friends and workmates
- both competitive and informal activity.

**PHYSICAL**
- to pursue more intense and challenging elements of physical activity and sport as they want to
- to learn skills that align to new interests and social situations
- a wide variety of opportunities to suit changing physical ability.

**COGNITIVE**
- to know how to access the physical activity and sport opportunities they want and the chance to try new experiences such as volunteer involvement
- know how to manage risk, prevent and care for injury
- awareness of the benefits of activity for both physical and mental health.

**SPIRITUAL**
- a sense of self purpose and place in the world, to enable positive choices
- acknowledgement and respect of personal and cultural values.
Seniors – older retirees

Needs and considerations:

**SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL**
- support to access appropriate activities
- activities that provide the opportunity to socialise with friends and make new friends
- environments that are welcoming, supportive and where their knowledge and experience is respected and utilised
- affordable and easily accessible opportunities.

**SPIRITUAL**
- to be loved, respected and valued in their community
- acknowledgement and respect of personal and cultural values.

**COGNITIVE**
- the ability to make their own choices, including new choices such as volunteering.

**PHYSICAL**
- a level of fitness and health that maintains confidence to be active
- plenty of opportunities tailored to varying levels of ability.