

Athlete development – characteristics and needs (SPARC Coach Development Framework 2006)

## Middle Childhood 6-8 years

Physical	Social	Emotional	Cognitive – thought processes	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are developing and mastering fundamental gross motor skills</li> <li>2. Are beginning to develop motor coordination</li> <li>3. Have slow, steady musculoskeletal growth</li> <li>4. Mainly use large muscles – have better control of large than small muscles</li> <li>5. Have high energy levels but tire easily and recover quickly</li> <li>6. Girls and boys have similar abilities</li> <li>7. Learn best if physically active</li> <li>8. Have low anaerobic and aerobic capacity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are dependent on adults, especially parents for support</li> <li>2. Self and family orientated but begin to experience empathy for others and start to become independent</li> <li>3. Are learning how to be friends and may have several 'best friends' at a time</li> <li>4. Opinions of peers are becoming more important. Often care more about being successful in front of peers than parents</li> <li>5. Boys and girls enjoy playing together</li> <li>6. Diversity is embraced, with positive acceptance of others</li> <li>7. Cooperation is being learned</li> <li>8. Motives to participate are to be with friends and have fun.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. See fairness as 'the golden rule'</li> <li>2. Need and seek parental or coach approval</li> <li>3. Like external rewards and positive reinforcement – success is important</li> <li>4. Are sensitive to criticism and become frustrated quickly</li> <li>5. Like to play games with simple rules</li> <li>6. Need adult help in learning to cope with failures and problems</li> <li>7. Are easily distracted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have increased understanding of words, but learn best by doing/exploring</li> <li>2. Are more interested in the process than the outcome. Will continue working on a project rather than completing it</li> <li>3. Concept of competition is difficult to understand</li> <li>4. Have a limited and inconsistent attention span – interests are short and changing</li> <li>5. Start to take into account ideas and emotions of others</li> <li>6. Are easily motivated – like trying something new.</li> <li>7. Are naturally curious and imaginative. Ask lots of 'why' questions</li> <li>8. Handle one mental operation at a time</li> <li>9. Start to distinguish between reality and fantasy</li> <li>10. Respond to external feedback or praise</li> <li>11. Lack spatial awareness and understanding of time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The opportunity to experience a variety of sporting situations and a wide variety of activities within a session</li> <li>2. Rotation of roles – no specialisation in positions</li> <li>3. Frequent rest periods</li> <li>4. Skill learning immersed in play</li> <li>5. Activities designed for both boys and girls to play together</li> <li>6. Modification of rules, field sizes and equipment</li> <li>7. A safe environment</li> <li>8. 'On task' involvement of everyone</li> <li>9. No fitness testing</li> <li>10. Activities that are progressive in intensity without the necessity of a warm-up</li> <li>11. Emphasis on success and cooperative games where everyone can win</li> <li>12. A coach who understands the athletes' characteristics and the relevance and implications of what that means to individual needs</li> <li>13. Focus on general skills (and fitness) development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. agility, balance, coordination, speed</li> <li>. running, jumping and throwing</li> <li>. kinaesthetics, gliding, buoyancy, striking</li> <li>. catching, kicking, striking</li> </ul> </li> <li>14. Positive support, a caring coaching approach, praise, affection and attention, to build confidence</li> <li>15. Activities that are demonstrated with simple, limited verbal instructions</li> <li>16. Reinforcement of values through 'coachable moments'</li> <li>17. Exploration of winning/losing concepts</li> <li>18. An environment where everyone can experience success</li> <li>19. Parents who reinforce the coach</li> <li>20. Opportunity to explore, question and foster natural curiosity and imagination</li> <li>21. The opportunity for play, fun, participation and interaction with others.</li> </ul>

## Late Childhood 9-12 years

<b>Physical</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Emotional</b>	<b>Cognitive – thought processes</b>	<b>Needs</b>
<p>1. Growth is slow until puberty</p> <p>2. Many females and some males reach puberty and experience growth spurts</p> <p>3. In puberty, skeletal system grows faster than muscular system, thus increasing injury risk</p> <p>4. Lack coordination whilst going through puberty</p> <p>5. Have steady increases in motor skills, strength, balance and coordination – fine motor skills are developing</p> <p>6. Hand-eye coordination is relatively mature</p> <p>7. Are maturing at differing rates (individual, gender and ethnicity).</p>	<p>1. Are becoming more independent</p> <p>2. Begin to identify with peers, although they still need and want guidance and support from parents and coaches</p> <p>3. Like an environment with consistent standards and fair consequences</p> <p>4. Enjoy organised group activities</p> <p>5. Like sense of belonging to group, team and club and enjoy working in cooperative activities</p> <p>6. Begin to sense differences</p> <p>7. Start to identify/prefer being with same-sex groups</p> <p>8. Enjoy taking responsibility and assuming simple leadership roles</p> <p>9. Girls are more socially mature than boys.</p>	<p>1. Accept parent/family beliefs but are beginning to question parental authority</p> <p>2. Admire and imitate older people (role models) – look for the similarities between self and friends</p> <p>3. Success should be emphasised and failures minimised</p> <p>4. Like challenge, but dislike public failure</p> <p>5. Find comparisons with the success of others difficult and this erodes self-confidence</p> <p>6. Need to feel accepted and worthwhile (self-worth)</p> <p>7. Are easily motivated to be involved and prepared to take risks</p> <p>8. With puberty, changes in hormones and thinking patterns contribute to mood swings</p> <p>9. Early maturing can be stressful – rapid physical change can be embarrassing.</p>	<p>1. Are capable of developing leadership skills</p> <p>2. Vary greatly in academic abilities, interests and reasoning skills</p> <p>3. Begin to think logically and symbolically; new ideas are best understood when related to previous experiences</p> <p>4. Have increased attention span, but have many interests which change rapidly</p> <p>5. Are learning to absorb new ideas, but tend to judge in terms of right/wrong or black/white</p> <p>6. Often reject solutions offered by adults in favour of finding their own solutions</p> <p>7. Like to share thoughts and reactions</p> <p>8. Are developing individual identity – intrinsic motivation is important (doing it for themselves)</p> <p>9. Understand multiple levels of meaning and have a rapidly increasing vocabulary</p> <p>10. Use reasoning skills to solve problems, negotiate and compromise with peers</p> <p>11. Can differentiate between ability and effort (if I work hard, I will improve)</p> <p>12. Have clearer understanding of the concept of competition (social comparison).</p>	<p>1. Variety of sports, events and positions</p> <p>2. Skill development that becomes more sport-specific</p> <p>3. A continued degree of modified sports, but gradual introduction of adult structured games/events</p> <p>4. A high level of activity (lots of time on task) with rotations of roles and equal involvement</p> <p>5. Consistent, organised sessions – transition from deliberate play to increasingly deliberate practice.</p> <p>6. Decision making</p> <p>7. Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU).</p> <p>8. Introduction to the notion of competition, with emphasis on improvement to win.</p> <p>9. Provision of a safe emotional, physical, cultural and social environment</p> <p>10. Proactive promotion of fair play and moral decision making</p> <p>11. Use of role models as a teaching tool</p> <p>12. Lots of positive reinforcement, variety, enjoyment</p> <p>13. Learning through mistakes and creation of challenges</p> <p>14. Encouragement to take risks in games</p> <p>15. Positive input from parents</p> <p>16. Cooperative activities that reinforce the enjoyment of playing with friends</p> <p>17. An empathetic environment (understand and listen to individual athletes' needs)</p> <p>18. Leadership and responsibility opportunities (independence)</p> <p>19. Identification with current childhood trends</p> <p>20. Understanding of hormonal mood swings (e.g. do not embarrass).</p>

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# Early teenage years 13-16 years

Physical	Social	Emotional	Cognitive – thought processes	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Growth spurts occur and are likely to cause clumsiness</li> <li>2. Complex motor skills become more refined</li> <li>3. Hormones affect body composition</li> <li>4. Are capable of handling appropriate physical training/workload (otherwise susceptible to injury risk)</li> <li>5. Are capable of developing energy systems (e.g anaerobic, aerobic)</li> <li>6. Have maturity differences within and between genders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are searching for personal (including athlete) identity – acceptance v isolation</li> <li>2. Friendships (both same and opposite gender) formed are often sincere and long-lasting</li> <li>3. Peer groups are very important</li> <li>4. Move away from family reliance</li> <li>5. May begin sexual relationships</li> <li>6. Increased costs, wider range of opportunities and time constraints can be barriers to sporting involvement</li> <li>7. Emphasis is on balancing career goals and roles in life – are starting to forward plan</li> <li>8. Role models are influential</li> <li>9. Are learning to cooperate with each other</li> <li>10. Have increasing awareness, and possible use of drugs and alcohol.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have increased awareness of body image (notice differences) e.g disability, weight changes</li> <li>2. Are seeking to understand and accept sexuality</li> <li>3. Seek emotional autonomy from parents</li> <li>4. Hormones cause mood swings</li> <li>5. Want responsibility and to be treated as an adult</li> <li>6. Internally desire success but are influenced by external pressures to conform (cool to be average)</li> <li>7. Are vulnerable to negative criticism but respond to constructive feedback</li> <li>8. Teens who develop differently physically from their peers may become uneasy about physical changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Like to find their own solutions. Value presenting their own ideas</li> <li>2. Have longer concentration span – are ready for more in-depth learning</li> <li>3. Are capable of complex problem solving</li> <li>4. Develop their own language. Use teen slang</li> <li>5. Have sense of invincibility</li> <li>6. Begin to value setting goals based on feelings of personal needs and priorities</li> <li>7. Tend to be self-focused</li> <li>8. May lack understanding of their abilities and talents</li> <li>9. Being to demonstrate moral thinking and appreciate values</li> <li>10. Are capable of informed decision making and appreciate leadership roles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opportunity for sport-specific skill development</li> <li>2. Training programmes that recognise their physiological stage of development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. physical fitness/strength</li> <li>. skill development</li> <li>. injury prevention/burnout</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Coaches who plan with goal setting based on needs</li> <li>4. Simple tactics</li> <li>5. Mental and physical challenges</li> <li>6. Structure and firm but fair discipline</li> <li>7. Empathy – understanding the player as a person as well as an athlete</li> <li>8. Setting realistic expectations of success</li> <li>9. Learning to make decisions and learning from mistakes</li> <li>10. Inclusion in decision making</li> <li>11. Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU)</li> <li>12. Two-way interactions/effective communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. coach/athlete</li> <li>. coach/family</li> </ul> </li> <li>13. Encouragement</li> <li>14. Ownership and responsibility but consequences if they are irresponsible</li> <li>15. Understanding of why they are doing things</li> <li>16. A safe, secure, non-threatening environment</li> <li>17. Support for continued participation (costs, travel)</li> <li>18. Coaching that recognises their lifestyle</li> <li>19. Being taught to be self-reflective and to self-analyse</li> <li>20. Experiences within a variety of different sport-specific situations.</li> </ul>

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## Late teenage years 17-19 years

<b>Physical</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Emotional</b>	<b>Cognitive – thought processes</b>	<b>Needs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Most reach skeletal physical maturity</li> <li>2. Males continue to gain muscle strength and mass. Both sexes continue to develop bone mass</li> <li>3. Have better posture and coordination</li> <li>4. Can achieve advanced levels in complex skill and movements</li> <li>5. Are reaching physiological maturity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have strong, independent social needs and desires</li> <li>2. Status in peer group is important</li> <li>3. Want to belong to groups but be recognised as individuals within the team/groups</li> <li>4. Are likely to be sexually active</li> <li>5. Are in transition stage – change in home locations, sport involvement</li> <li>6. Can assume major responsibilities and leadership roles</li> <li>7. Are engaged in making lifestyle and career decisions</li> <li>8. Are socially aware of their own and others' needs</li> <li>9. Likely to be involved in alcohol use and risk taking adventures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self- identity becomes more stable</li> <li>2. Feel they have reached the stage of full maturity and expect to be treated as adults</li> <li>3. Have more stable emotional responses but feelings of inferiority and inadequacy are not uncommon</li> <li>4. Tend to assume more responsibilities with the associated stress</li> <li>5. Feel the pressure of other priorities e.g. work, study, church, flatting</li> <li>6. Are less preoccupied with body changes and body image (still an issue though).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are able to learn new skills/concepts and can relate to past experience</li> <li>2. Have higher level of abstract thinking</li> <li>3. Personal philosophy begins to emerge</li> <li>4. Make choices/solve problems/accept responsibility</li> <li>5. Self-evaluation, self- correction and motivation become strong tools</li> <li>6. Can determine their own plans, schedules and goals</li> <li>7. Are capable of complex analysis and associated decision making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sport/event position-specific training</li> <li>2. Specific strength training as appropriate</li> <li>3. Increased precision in prescription of programmes and performance assessment</li> <li>4. Practising strategic approaches within their sport: taking ownership and responsibility; decision making; Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU)</li> <li>5. Opportunities for individual challenge and to be intuitive in their approach</li> <li>6. Being understood: lifestyle situation/ school/university/work/employment/ Unemployment/family</li> <li>7. Having clear expectations</li> <li>8. Being stimulated, challenged and excited</li> <li>9. Positive role models</li> <li>10. Leadership and the opportunity to be a leader</li> <li>11. Encouragement and support to remain involved (especially if there is a shift in location)</li> <li>12. Consideration of both long and short-term development.</li> </ul>