



FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

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STAGES RESOURCE

STAGE SUMMARIES

Helping each athlete grow one step at a time is a key aspect of the Football Development Model (FDM). The following Football Development Model stages are based on the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee's American Development Model standards. This resource covers four stages of the Football Development Model with their associated age ranges. Additionally, each stage was developed by medical, physiological and football experts and stakeholders through the Football Development Model Council.

You can learn more about the stages or who serves on the council at usafootball.com/fdm.

5+ PLAY AND DEVELOP

Young athletes need the opportunity to develop basic movement skills such as running, jumping, kicking, throwing and catching in a fun setting built around informal play, exploration and positive reinforcement. No scores. No competition. Focus on activity and exposure. USA Football's First Down Program is a great way to introduce the game.

8+ DEVELOP AND ACHIEVE

Athletes begin to learn their movement ABCs – agility, balance, coordination and speed – while being introduced to the sport's fundamentals through fun practices and games. Skill building, participation and confidence are more important than a final score.

10+ ACHIEVE AND ADVANCE

Athletes begin to understand sport-specific skills and learn to compete against others in a fun, challenging environment. Players at this stage can work within a team concept and learn from their mistakes.

12+ ADVANCE AND COMPETE

Technical skill development and the dawning of tactical awareness mark athletes at this stage. Players test themselves with more complex strategies and movements within competitive games. With pre-adolescence also comes the development of strength and speed more than in previous stages.





5+ PLAY AND DEVELOP

Use the information below to guide your implementation of the 5+ PLAY AND DEVELOP stage of the Football Development Model (FDM).

KEYS FOR SUCCESS AT THIS STAGE:

EMPHASIS – WHAT ARE WE FOCUSING ON?

Introducing concepts related to physical and health literacy. Developing fundamental movement skills. Providing a positive first experience with the game.

GOALS – WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

To develop basic movement skills – the ability to move fluidly while maintaining balance and with body awareness, using athletically-based locomotor movements. Providing activities that begin to lay a foundation for overall athleticism.

PLAYER-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT – WHAT SHOULD IT LOOK LIKE?

Fun, active, relaxed, inclusive and positive engagement with frequent changes of activity. Games that build basic movement skills in the context of football. Lots of praise and positive reinforcement from coaches and parents.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

PHYSICAL – WE ARE TEACHING ATHLETES CONCEPTS SUCH AS:

- Maintaining balance while running, skipping and hopping
- Maintaining body control when changing direction and speed
- Hand-eye coordination

TECHNICAL (SKILLS) – WE ARE TEACHING ATHLETES HOW TO:

- Catch a football with two hands
- Throw while stepping forward with the opposite foot
- Run with a ball while maintaining body and ball control

TACTICAL (STRATEGY) – WE ARE TEACHING CONCEPTS SUCH AS:

- Experimentation with body and football
- Stopping, starting and changing pace
- Avoiding obstacles while carrying a football



EMOTIONAL – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Are learning to try new challenges and to give effort
- Are learning to follow simple instructions
- Are learning to follow rules

SOCIAL – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Are learning to take turns and to share
- Like to be with friends and are learning to work with others
- Need a balance and variety of new and familiar activities

COGNITIVE – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Have slower processing speeds than adults, so we need to emphasize repetition, identify cue words and be clear and concise
- Have very short attention spans, so we need to plan activities with frequent changes
- Are just starting to understand cause-and-effect relationships

PRACTICE**FOCUS OF PRACTICES**

To develop physical literacy and athleticism in the context of football. This is achieved through games, exercise and engaging play.

MULTI-SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Physical activity is encouraged daily. Football can be one of those activities. Gymnastics and movement education through other sports, activities and free play are also highly recommended.

FOCUS OF GAMES

Having fun, learning to follow simple rules and gaining familiarity with football concepts.

8+ DEVELOP AND ACHIEVE

Use the information below to guide your implementation of the 8+ DEVELOP AND ACHIEVE stage of the Football Development Model (FDM).

KEYS FOR SUCCESS AT THIS STAGE:

EMPHASIS – WHAT ARE WE FOCUSING ON?

Developing fundamental athletic skills while making the game fun and engaging. Structuring games, practices and activities that are inclusive and allow athletes to experience success.

GOALS – WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

To develop essential movement skills that create a foundation for success. To provide a positive experience that will lead toward sport enjoyment and a desire to continue playing.

PLAYER-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT – WHAT SHOULD IT LOOK LIKE?

Fun, active, relaxed, inclusive and positive engagement with an emphasis on learning new skills through familiar activities and meaningful repetitions. Games and drills that are enjoyable and engaging while reinforcing new skills. Focus on effort and trying your best. Activities are designed for success. Playing multiple positions is mandatory.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

PHYSICAL – WE ARE TEACHING ATHLETES CONCEPTS SUCH AS:

- Combining movement concepts (gallop-skip-leap-hop)
- Maintaining balance while bending, stretching and turning
- Moving in space (chasing and fleeing)

TECHNICAL (SKILLS) – WE ARE TEACHING ATHLETES HOW TO:

- Catch the ball with the hands away from the body
- Throw to a moving target
- Exchange the ball effectively

TACTICAL (STRATEGY) – WE ARE TEACHING CONCEPTS SUCH AS:

- Running an assigned passing route
- Proper alignment
- Applying drills to game applications



EMOTIONAL – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Are learning emotional self-awareness
- Are learning coping skills for success and failure
- Respond very well to positive reinforcement

SOCIAL – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Are learning to cooperate with and help others
- Are learning to consider other people's feelings
- Care deeply about friendship and belonging

COGNITIVE – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Are much better at following instructions
- Can understand basic rules and the concept of fair play
- Have difficulty with abstract concepts (i.e., complex offenses, defenses, plays, etc.)

PRACTICE**FOCUS OF PRACTICES**

To continue to have fun and develop physical literacy and general athleticism while introducing fundamental sport and football skills. Games, activities and drills that introduce techniques and contacts of game play necessary for continued success in the sport.

MULTI-SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Along with football-specific play, encourage other sport activities that develop foundational movement and general athletic skills. Free play is still encouraged.

FOCUS OF GAMES

Having fun while introducing basic football strategy, skill application, sportsmanship and teamwork. Build a foundation of athleticism through the context of football. Learn transferable skills.

10+ ACHIEVE AND ADVANCE

Use the information below to guide your implementation of the 10+ ACHIEVE AND ADVANCE stage of the Football Development Model (FDM).

KEYS FOR SUCCESS AT THIS STAGE:

EMPHASIS – WHAT ARE WE FOCUSING ON?

Continued development of skill sets with an increased effort to apply those skills in a competitive structure. Advancing movement skills. Continuing to reinforce mastery of foundational movement skills as more sport-specific skills are introduced.

GOALS – WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

To provide a positive and engaging experience with the sport. Continued development of basic and integrated football skills. Ability to utilize acquired skills in competitive situations. Preparing players for contact aspects of sport and how to safely engage their bodies.

PLAYER-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT – WHAT SHOULD IT LOOK LIKE?

Enjoyable, active and inclusive. Positive atmosphere with progressive development of existing and new skills. Focus on trying your best with an emphasis on growth. Playing multiple positions should be mandatory.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

PHYSICAL – WE ARE TEACHING ATHLETES CONCEPTS SUCH AS:

- Demonstrating deceleration mechanics
- Maintaining body control when changing direction and speed
- Applying sensory skills accurately and efficiently

TECHNICAL (SKILLS) – WE ARE TEACHING ATHLETES HOW TO:

- Control posture
- Lead a moving target with a throw
- Vary running speed to adjust to a thrown ball

TACTICAL (STRATEGY) – WE ARE TEACHING CONCEPTS SUCH AS:

- Reading blocks
- Gap assignments
- Formation recognition and situational awareness



EMOTIONAL – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Are becoming more independent and self-reliant
- Can start setting goals
- Remain focused on individual successes

SOCIAL – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Are gaining the ability to understand another's point of view
- Are concerned about being liked and accepted
- Struggle with impulse control and may act out of frustration

COGNITIVE – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Are curious and easily distracted by their curiosity
- Have improved decision-making ability
- Are still learning to deal effectively with winning and losing

PRACTICE**FOCUS OF PRACTICES**

The development of physical literacy and athleticism is the primary focus, with increasing emphasis on fundamental skill instruction. Team concepts, competition and tactical strategies begin to expand.

MULTI-SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Encourage participation in other physical activity – whether organized or free play – during off days, leaving time for rest and recovery. Ensure a time period in the year when there are several weeks of rest from all organized sport.

FOCUS OF GAMES

Having an experience focused on fun, learning and positive engagement. Embracing opportunities to apply advancing skills in a competitive yet controlled setting. Implementing basic football strategy, sportsmanship and teamwork.

12+ ADVANCE AND COMPETE

Use the information below to guide your implementation of the 12+ ADVANCE AND COMPETE stage of the Football Development Model (FDM).

KEYS FOR SUCCESS AT THIS STAGE:

EMPHASIS – WHAT ARE WE FOCUSING ON?

Incorporating and refining advanced movement skills. Continue to reinforce mastery of fundamental movement skills as more tactical and position-specific skills are introduced.

GOALS – WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

To provide a positive and engaging experience with the sport. Continued development of basic and integrated football skills with a more position-specific focus. Ability to apply skills in competitive situations with an increasing understanding of tactics.

PLAYER-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT – WHAT SHOULD IT LOOK LIKE?

Enjoyable, active and inclusive. Positive yet challenging setting with continued skill growth and development. Individuals now understand their roles in team success and grow to improve the group. Position sampling is still encouraged.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

PHYSICAL – WE ARE TEACHING CONCEPTS SUCH AS:

- Increasing fluidity and efficiency of movement
- Applying sensory skills accurately and efficiently
- Improving reaction time and the ability to anticipate

TECHNICAL (SKILL) – WE ARE TEACHING CONCEPTS SUCH AS:

- Throwing with varying degrees of trajectory
- Tracking the ball in phase
- Using feet, arms and hands to gain leverage and/or position

TACTICAL (STRATEGY) – WE ARE TEACHING CONCEPTS SUCH AS:

- Using spatial awareness to read and react
- Anticipate and react based on opponents' movement
- Game strategy



EMOTIONAL – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Are more physically mature than emotionally mature
- Have a better understanding of cause-and-effect relationships
- Ride an emotional roller-coaster (especially with confidence)

SOCIAL – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Utilize more non-verbal behaviors
- May struggle to effectively overcome failure
- Are highly self-conscious

COGNITIVE – AT THIS STAGE, ATHLETES:

- Start to question things and don't take everything at face value
- Have improved memorization skills
- Begin to understand more complex plays and strategies

PRACTICE**FOCUS OF PRACTICES**

Primary emphasis is developing athleticism and foundational movement skills while including more position-specific skill instruction, increasing knowledge of tactical strategy and team concepts. Drills and activities that refine and reinforce skill application.

MULTI-SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Encourage participation in other physical activity – whether organized or free play – during off days, leaving time for rest and recovery as well. Ensure a time period in the year when there are several weeks of rest from organized sports.

FOCUS OF GAMES

Having fun and providing positive experiences that create a love and passion for the game. Providing opportunities to apply and cultivate a growing skill set. Building confidence in individual abilities while gaining an appreciation for roles and responsibilities required for team success.





THANK YOU ESPN

USA Football sincerely appreciates
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Football Development Model