



ATHLETICS NEW ZEALAND
A GUIDE FOR
PARENTS



AS A PARENT – Things to consider:

- What are the coach's plans for your child?
- Does the coach understand long term athletic development?
- What athletes has the coach coached?
- Are those athletes still running?
- Is the training suitable to your child's age and ability?
- What commitments does the coach expect from the athlete?
- Ensure your child doesn't specialise too early
- Ensure your child gets adequate rest and recovery
- Ensure your child informs the coach if he/she has done strenuous activity during the day e.g. other sports training and competition, cross country training at school, beep test etc

Is your child enjoying themselves?



Long Term Athlete Development:

The parents of the other kids in Chelsea's junior athletics club want me to enrol her in a jump's specific training programme. She's a pretty good jumper and I think she is going to be relatively tall. They say it will help her chances of winning nationals in 8 years.

What are you going to do?

I don't know what do you think? You're a coach.

Conversations like this probably take place around the track; and as a parent you want what is best for your child. So what IS best for your child? What's best is simple: Children learning skills and taking part in activities that match their stage of development. This is called Long-Term Athlete Development.

What does this mean for you as a parent?

Doing what is best for your child is what Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) is all about. Athletics New Zealand is working hard to develop Long-Term Athlete Development programmes for your child and clubs. Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) research tells us that early specialisation (specialising in one event or area), and early intense training doesn't help children develop to be the best they could possibly be. The evidence is that too much early specialisation actually prevents children from developing to their full potential.

- Young athletes are not miniature adults
- It requires 8 -12 years of extensive practice to excel at anything
- Pushing athlete development too quickly and rushing competition can result in:
 - Injury;
 - Burn-out;
 - Development of bad habits because of the over- emphasis on winning;
 - Shortcomings in the athlete's physical, technical, tactical and mental abilities;
 - Not reaching their optimal performance level;
- Athletics is a 'late specialisation sport' where event specialisation is not advocated before age 15-16.

Specialisation before the age of 13 is not recommended for late specialisation sports such as athletics as this has been shown to contribute to one dimensional preparation, injuries, physical and mental burnout and early retirement (Harsanyi, 1985).

Windows of Developmental Opportunity in the Young Athlete - Girls

BIO AGE	STAGES	SKILL	SPEED	STRENGTH	AEROBIC	
6	Kid's Athletics	Skill Window	Speed Window 1			
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12	Multi Events	Skill Window	Speed Window 2	Strength Window 1	Aerobic Window	
13				Strength Window 2		
14	Event Group Development		Skill Window	Speed Window 2	Strength Window 2	Aerobic Window
15						
16						
17	Specialisation				Aerobic Window	
18	Performance					
19						
20						
21	Performance					



Windows of Developmental Opportunity in the Young Athlete - Boys

BIO AGE	STAGES	SKILL	SPEED	STRENGTH	AEROBIC	
6	Kid's Athletics	Skill Window	Speed Window 1			
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12	Multi Events	Skill Window	Speed Window 2	Strength Window	Aerobic Window	
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14	Event Group Development		Skill Window	Speed Window 2	Strength Window	Aerobic Window
15						
16						
17	Specialisation				Aerobic Window	
18	Performance					
19						
20						
21	Performance					



'Windows of opportunity' for the development of skill and speed: During this time there should be an on-going emphasis on skill development through participation in a range of sports/activities. Towards the end of the stage there should be progressively more attention on the athletics specific basic skills of all event groups using modified equipment.

It does not mean that if a child misses this skill window they will never reach their potential. What it does mean is that experienced and effective coaches make use of this knowledge so that athletes do activities which encourage the development of the components of fitness for that 'window of opportunity' at the correct time. There is never a better opportunity to develop basic physical literacy than during the skill window.

The 'strength window' is related to the hormonal changes that occur at puberty.

Athletics New Zealand's Long-term Athlete Development Pathway:

Age	Stage	Development	What parents can do at these stages
3-8	GSG	Get Set Go is an exciting initiative to help our Kiwi Kids develop the skills they need so that they can choose and enjoy being more active through play and sport. Get Set Go is designed for young children between ages 3 – 8, and helps them to master the skills that will make participation in games, sport and recreation activities more enjoyable and successful.	Promote key values: fun, inclusion. Be sensitive to your child's preferences for activities. Encourage unstructured play. Check that your child's activities address the ABC's- agility, balance, coordination. Encourage physical activity every day for at least 30min.
7-12	RJT/Kids Athletics	Run Jump Throw is based on the philosophy that the development of skills, in a fun environment, is the key to participation. Athletics Skills and other physical activities should be modified to suit the physical, intellectual and emotional development of athletes.	Ask coaches and clubs about their training programmes and if they follow long-term athlete development. Training should occupy 70% of the time your child is participating and 30% of the time is formal competition. Promote key values: fun, inclusion, fairness.

10+	Multi Events	The Multi Events stage of an athlete's career is the most important. This stage offers the greatest benefit to an athlete over the length of their career. During this stage an athlete should be establishing their technical model using age appropriate training programmes. Children are ready to begin training according to more formalised methods; however the emphasis should still be on developing general athletics skills across a number of events than specialising in one event.	Parents should be cautious that their children are not pushed to over train or over compete as injury and burnout can result. Coaches should individualise training at this stage based on maturation. WARNING: this is the stage when many young athletes quit due to burnout or excessive pressure from coaches and parents. Encourage your child to train and compete in a wide range of events- running, jumping and throws as children mature at different rates so your child may still have undiscovered capacities in other events. The role of a parent is to seek the best training situation for their child and to support the training guidelines as prescribed by the coach who are aligned to long-term athlete development principles.
19+	Performance	Open age Excellence in one sport. Athletes who are able to translate their training and technical skills into achieving at a world-class level. Focus of this stage is on optimisation of performance. Athletes need to be integrated into the decision-making process. Need for specialised support to deal with stresses associated with elite competition	Encourage your child to give back to the sport and act as a positive role model.
	Participation	There are literally hundreds of separate entities and organisations in New Zealand delivering the athletics product. Private promoters and commercial organisations also deliver a significant amount of athletics participation opportunities. Athletics New Zealand will partner with any competent event organiser to provide a better service to members.	You might encourage your child to enter this stage at any age, especially if you sense an aversion to competition. To help your child make the transition to non-competitive involvement, you should provide a positive example by practising yourself. The active parent is the best role model!

Why your child is involved in athletics:

- To have fun;
- To do something they are good at;
- To improve skills and learn new skills;
- For thrills and excitement;
- To be with friends or make new friends;
- To get exercise and become fit;
- To win, and
- For moral development

Take time to explore your child's interests and preferences. And keep these motives in mind when discussing your child's involvement in Athletics.



The real reason why our kids quit sport

Athletes say they wished they could have told their parents - chill out with the post-meet critiques!

It might seem obvious, but don't lecture your children on their mistakes on the way home from an Athletics meet or training. As Steve Henson wisely points out, "... The young athlete doesn't want to hear it immediately after they have finished competing."

A long-time coach and administrator told Henson that after interviewing hundreds of athletes, their "worst memory from being involved in youth and high school sports" was "overwhelmingly" the car ride home with parents who gave them criticism and advice on their performance.

"Those same athletes were asked what their parents said that made them feel great, that amplified their joy during and after a competition," Henson writes. "Their overwhelming response: 'I love to watch you.'"

"In the moments after a game, win or lose, kids desire distance," he said. "They make a rapid transition from athlete back to child. And they'd prefer if parents transitioned from spectator - or in many instances from coach - back to Mum and Dad. ASAP."

Saying that nearly 75 percent of youth athletes stop participating in sports by the start of their teenage years, Henson observed, "Mum or Dad, so loving and rational at home, can transform into an ogre at a track. A lot of kids internally reach the conclusion that if they quit the sport, maybe they'll get their Dad or Mum back."

Just remember - your kids already have a coach. Your only job is to be their biggest fan and cheerleader!



A parent's code of conduct:

- I will remember that my child participates for their enjoyment, not mine.
- I will teach my child that doing one's best is more important than winning, so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of an event.
- I will never ridicule or yell at my child for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- I will provide positive comments that motivate and encourage continued effort.
- I will make my child feel like a winner every time by offering praise for competing fairly and trying hard.
- I will remember that children learn best by example.
- I will show respect for my child's competition, because without them there would be no competition.
- I will respect the officials' decisions or judgement and will encourage participants to do the same.
- I will respect the volunteer coaches, who give their time to provide opportunities for my child, and show appreciation for their efforts.
- I will not use bad language, nor will I harass or abuse, verbally or physically, athletes, coaches, officials or other spectators.
- I will remember that child athletes are not miniature professionals and cannot be judged by professional standards.



Parent's Getting Involved:

The most rewarding position you will ever have!

Now, are you wondering what kind of role you can play in your child's athletic progress? Not every parent wants to be a volunteer coach and that is understandable, there are many offer opportunities and ways you can be involved:

- Coaching
- Officiating
- Administrator
- President/Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Junior/Senior Club Captain
- Marketing and Promotions Coordinator
- Health and Safety officer
- Volunteer Coordinator

YOU are the key to helping this sport stay alive ... If you are interested in volunteer opportunities contact your club or regional coordinator.



Athletics Regional Coaching Coordinators

Southland	Lance Smith / lance.debbie@xtra.co.nz
Otago	Annelies Inghelbrecht / athletics@sportotago.co.nz
Canterbury	Anita Sutherland / coachforce@athleticscanterbury.org.nz
Tasman	Alison McQuillan / ali.mcq.sports@gmail.com
Wellington	Jo Murray / jo.athleticswellington@xtra.co.nz
Manawatu Wanganui	
Taranaki	Manuel Luque / manuel@athleticstaranaki.org.nz
Hawkes Bay Gisborne	Paul Webb / athleticscoach@xtra.co.nz
Bay of Plenty	Barrie Jennings / barriejennings@xtra.co.nz
Waikato	Alan McDonald / alanm@sportwaikato.org.nz
Auckland	Anthony Curry / anthony@athleticsauckland.co.nz
Northland	Sport Northland / janinem@sportnorth.co.nz

A word from the Community

My parents played an important role in my success as an athlete by providing a financially and emotionally stable environment, which is extremely necessary to excel as a high performance athlete.

As a parent of kids in athletics, it is a constant challenge to help them manage the natural emotions of joy and disappointment so often associated with winning and losing, and to keep the focus on whether they are enjoying themselves and otherwise benefiting from their involvement in Athletics.

My parents have always been there for me, ready to talk, give suggestions, but most importantly just love me no matter what. Lately people have been saying, "You must be so proud of your daughter." They reply, "Of course we are and we would be proud no matter what she chooses to do."

Parents in sport are very important. There is no substitute for great parents – mine were the best, supporting me throughout my career. Sport is a great vehicle for personal development and kids deserve our best!





Pathways

Participation

There are literally hundreds of separate entities and organisations in New Zealand delivering the athletics product. Private promoters and commercial organisations also deliver a significant amount of athletics participation opportunities.

Athletics New Zealand will partner with any competent event organiser to provide a better service to our members.

Multi Events 10 years +

The Multi Events stage of an athlete's career is the most important. This stage offers the greatest benefit to an athlete over the length of their career. During this stage an athlete should be establishing their technical model using age appropriate training programmes.

Children are ready to begin training according to more formalised methods; however the emphasis should still be on developing general athletics skills across a number of events than specialising in one event.

Specialising too early can be detrimental to later stages of development and increases the likelihood of injury or burnout.

Performance 19 years +

The Performance coaching pathway is for coaches of Olympic and senior world championship competition athletes.

Introduction to performance coaching is targeted towards coaches that aspire to become Olympic/senior world championship coaches. Modules are individualized to meet the needs of identified athletes with the ANZ Performance programme. Entry into the Performance coaching pathway is by invite only.



A coach needs to be able to identify the athlete's needs and deliver a programme suitable to these needs.

Athletics New Zealand aligns with the IAAF's Multi Events Athlete pathway for this group of participants.



Run Jump Throw 5 - 10 years

Run Jump Throw is the foundation programme of the Athletics New Zealand Coaching Programme. Run Jump Throw is based on the philosophy that the development of skills, in a fun environment, is the key to participation.

Athletics Skills and other physical activities should be modified to suit the physical, intellectual and emotional development of athletes.



Emphasis is on the development of fundamental athletics movement patterns, and is the foundation to correct movement techniques in other sports.

Run Jump Throw offers a chance to explore a traditional physical activity setting with a clear focus on quality experiences for all athletes.

Get Set Go 3 - 8 years

Get Set Go is a new and exciting initiative to help our Kiwi Kids develop the skills they need so that they can choose and enjoy being more active through play and sport. Get Set Go is designed for young children between ages 3 - 8, and helps them to master the skills that will make participation in games, sport and recreation activities more enjoyable and successful.

These include:

- The physical movement skills,
- The knowledge & cognitive skills, along with;
- The emotional & social skills they need.



Get Set Go offers teacher & coach professional development; delivery to children by qualified Coaches; and resources for parents and whanau. Get Set Go encourages the development of these skills through play, games and fun activities; supported by quality resources around assessment, teaching and learning.



www.athletics.org.nz