

SAFSA LTPD – ATHLETES WITH A DISABILITY

Athletes with a disability are to be integrated into all SAFSA LTPD stages of development as appropriate, as well as having tailor-made opportunities. There is no specific age bracket as athletes may enter skating at any age. Skating programs and coaching requirements must reflect this reality. Athletes with a disability pass through the same stages as able-bodied athletes, although the ages and rate of progression may differ.

Philosophy

LTPD for athletes with a disability is focused on providing opportunity for social, mental, and physical development through the sport of skating. Participants should be introduced to the concept of physical literacy and experience gains in health, wellness, and functionality. As in all stages of development age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, body type, physical and intellectual abilities, accessibility and geography should not be factors in the provision of opportunities to this potentially large group of athletes.

General Objectives

- ✓ To encourage integration and life long participation in skating at all levels, as part of a healthy lifestyle activity choice;
 - To foster partnerships between SAFSA and other athletes with a disability groups. These groups include athletes with an intellectual disability through Special Olympics SA, athletes who are deaf or have a hearing impairment and athletes with a physical disability through Paralympics.

Windows of Trainability (5 S's)

Very little is known about periods of optimum trainability for individuals with a disability. In the absence of information to the contrary, it is suggested that the windows of trainability (5 S's) are always trainable and require specific individual physiological testing, a thorough review of health issues, constant and consistent tracking.

NO ONE IS
EXCLUDED



Guiding Principles

In order to allow athletes to develop and acquire the skills outlined, programs and coaching for athletes with a disability must:

- ✓ Provide a fun, safe, environment that will enhance learning and mastering of skating skills
- ✓ Provide appropriate guidelines for the 5 S's for all athletes with a disability;
- ✓ Recognize the abilities and limitations of all athletes with a disability and set realistic, safe and competitively fair progression within a test/ competition system
- ✓ Provide sound technical, biomechanical and adaptation information to promote safe skill development
- ✓ Promote the concept that participation and progressive learning equals success;
- ✓ Promote that all athletes with a disability are equally valued members of Skate Canada
- ✓ Encourage all coaches to work with athletes with a disability
- ✓ Integrate effectively with existing programs and be cost effective, utilize ice well, and work toward program growth and development.

Mission of the Coach

The primary mission of the coach is to facilitate lifelong participation in the sport for the pleasure and wellness derived through personal achievement, development, and success.

Coaches must have the tools to recognize deficiencies and develop a plan of action to enhance the cognitive and physical development of the participant, thus making the learning process easier and productive.

Coaching Education and Certification

Coaches teaching athletes with a disability must be educated and certified to coach at the level at which the athlete is participating. In addition, specific disability training is necessary; the first stages are best done within the sport organization specific to the athlete's disability (e.g. SO, Paralympics, Deaf Sport, etc.) This gives figure skating coaches a better understanding of policies, procedures, philosophies and athlete care needs. It also provides an opportunity to learn from other coaches of athletes with disabilities.

SAFSA Instruction - Intermediate/Competition
Provincial Coach



All Ages

Technical

- Development of skills will be highly individualized and guided by a qualified SAPSU coach
- Generally, a combination of Learn to Skate and Learn to Train programs in conjunction with tailor-made programs for athletes with a disability should provide opportunity for technical development.

Artistic

- Development of skills will be highly individualized and guided by a qualified SAPSU coach
- Free skate programs give the opportunity for artistic growth through musicality, creativity, interpretation and performance.
- No additional testing system or competitive category for athletes with a disability is recommended
- Athletes with a disability who can and wish to further their artistic development may transfer to a parallel SAFSA discipline.

GENERAL SKILLS

General skills are developed through involvement in the sport and lean toward the overall development of the individual.

All Ages

Physiological

- Continued development/introduction of the 5 S's. The nature and extent of the training of fundamental motor and movement skills will depend on the participant's needs and abilities. However, risk/safety management are of utmost importance for all participants.
- Suppleness may be the most important area for the athletes with a disability group and should be trained daily
- Skill development and acquisition covers basic skills to those required at the high performance level. Progression must be based on individual needs, understanding, safety and abilities
- Knowledge of healthy nutritional strategies including considerations for caloric intake, portion size, low alcohol, salt, fat intake, heart healthy choices, lower cholesterol levels, regulate blood sugars, hydration, recovery nutrition, disordered eating, etc.

Psychological/ Social

- Social, emotional, and cognitive development is vast in this group. However, all athletes with a disability should strive towards the same fundamental skill developments as athletes in Learn to Skate, Learn to Train, and Active for Life.

On-Ice Training

Session length:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 45 to 60 minutes
Days per week:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One to six days per week• One to 10 hours per week depending on level/goals
Weeks per year:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25 to 40 weeks per year

Off-Ice Training

Athletes with a disability should be encouraged to participate in off-ice training 52 weeks per year. This will give them a fitness plan for life which will not only keep them healthy and fit but will enhance all of their sport activities. Generally, three to five hours per week of various activities which enhance stamina, strength, speed, and suppleness is adequate. The specific types of activities will vary dependent upon socio-cultural context, participant interest, instructor availability, etc. Some examples of potential activities include resistance training, yoga, tai chi, core conditioning, walking, running, swimming, dance and movement classes, etc. Proper warm-up and cool-down techniques should be established, enforced, and practiced. This should involve heart rate elevation, muscle stretching, heart rate recovery, etc. for all on and off-ice activities.

General Notes on Training Athletes with a Disability

In general, SO Level 1 and 2 athletes should be under instruction at all times. Group classes should be small; a one-to-one coach /athlete ratio should be used as much as possible. Many athletes at this level may only have the opportunity to skate one day per week and should be encouraged to participate in other relevant off-ice activities like rhythmic gymnastics, soccer, swimming, running, movement and flexibility classes, etc.

Level 3 athletes and higher will achieve optimum development with a one-to-one practice/private lesson ratio in addition to group classes.

It is important to give the athlete time to discover independent practice but not to leave too much time alone because in most cases bad habits form quickly without continuous technical reminders.

Athletes who are selected to provincial and national teams are required to do a minimum of three, one-hour training sessions per week total (on and/or off-ice) and up to a maximum of six sessions per week.

A yearly plan should be designed to incorporate the peak training periods, competitions, testing, on and off-ice training loads, nutrition, recovery, mental skills training and active rest periods, specific to the goals/needs of the individual athlete.

Competition

Given the multiple levels included within this particular stage of development, there are different performance and competition criteria which reflect the stages of development outlined earlier. For those athletes at the equivalent of Learn to Skate and Learn to Train, the focus of competition and testing should remain on presentation of skills. As skaters advance, choreographed programs can be introduced appropriate to the individual and level of competition. The content and evaluation of these programs will be dictated by the rules of the specific tests and competitions in which the athlete is participating. In terms of evaluation, the same evaluation process should be in place as in other stages but with additional training specific to the assessment and judging of athletes with special needs (i.e. coach and evaluator/judge).