

AN INTRODUCTION TO ON TRACK

A new program—why?

The reasoning behind the On Track program is simple, we now teach children the skills of athletics before we ask them to perform these skills in a competitive environment. On Track is a coaching program. It is based on a massive amount of research that has been done on how children learn sporting skills, what children want out of their early sporting experiences and the learning capacities of children at different ages.

In their early sporting experiences it was found that children want:

- Active participation
- To learn & improve
- To have fun
- To experience excitement

How do children learn sporting skills?

Children learn sporting skills in a sequential manner, early learning is based on simple fundamental motor skills like hop, run and leap. As children learn and master these skills they are expanded and combined into more complex skills. Skills like hop, run and leap combine into skills like triple jump. Just like learning to write starts with simple letters and expands to writing books, sport skills start simple and graduate into the more complex skills we see at the Olympics.

What are the learning capacities of children in sport?

On Track is designed so that the skills being taught at each level are aligned with learning capacities of children at that particular age. Child development experts were consulted in this process.

How Does It Work?

On Track has 5 Levels. Under 6 children start at Level 1 and each year graduate one level. Each level is progressively more complex. It is up to the individual Centre as to how many Levels are taught. We recommend that children complete 3 Levels, from Under 6 to Under 8.

Each level is made up of a number of skills. At Level 1 some of the skills include hop, run, leap and projection. These are called fundamental motor skills and are the building blocks for all Olympic style athletics skills. The skills of higher levels become more and more event specific.

Each individual skill is further broken down into components. For example the skill of 'run' has 5 components. One component is 'arms bend at 90 deg and move in opposition to legs'. The children are taught these components and through mastering the components they master the skill. This means that the children don't have to try and take in the complex movements of a complete athletic skill like high jumping in one go. It also means that parents don't have to worry about trying to teach a complete complex 'Olympic' style skill.

Breaking the skills into components makes it simple to learn and simple to teach. Each activity has been designed so that it allows children to practice the components they are being taught. On Track leaders follow a pre-set session plan that explains what to teach and how to conduct the activities.

Little Athletics is run by volunteers. A vast majority of those volunteers don't have an athletics coaching background. On Track has been designed with this in mind. Anybody with an interest and enthusiasm for their child's physical development can be an On Track leader and teach the children the skills of athletics.

Benefits of On Track

The benefits of your child participating in On Track are:

No waiting around. With On Track the kids are on the go the whole time, there is no excessive waiting in lines or queue's.

More chances to practice.

A child does not have any chance to improve their skills unless they have plenty of opportunities to practice. For example if they only have three turns at long jump each week, they are not going to improve those skills. If they have 63 turns at 'leaping' and 'horizontal jump' then they do improve those skills.

All children have the opportunity to excel. The focus is on the skill development of each individual. There are no winners and losers, all children come out ahead.

It's fun.

All of the activities are designed so that the kids are having fun all the time. Research has shown that the best conditions for children to learn skills is when they are stimulated through enjoyment.

It's easy. There are no complicated rules to follow, nobody gets disqualified and it's easy for parents to lend a helping hand.

It satisfies the specific needs and wants of children between 5-7 years and is designed for **them**.

It's time friendly. All the action only takes 90 min.