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# CANADIAN SPORT FOR LIFE

## Training to Compete

The participant ages that define the Training to Compete stage are based on the end of the growth spurt to physical maturity, which are generally ages 15 to 21+ for females and 16 to 23+ for males. All the objectives of the previous Training to Train stage must be achieved before the objectives of Training to Compete can begin.

This stage's objectives are to optimize the "engine" and to learn to compete. Athletes are physically, cognitively and emotionally ready to optimize their fitness preparation, and sport-specific and position-specific skills.

While there is a wide variation in the maturity of athletes between the ages of 10 to 16, they are eventually eliminated as athletes mature through the Training to Compete stage. However, late maturing athletes may be less ready for the physical training demands of this stage, despite having well developed technical sport skills.

To meet this stage's objectives, year-round, high intensity, individual event and position-specific training must be undertaken. Coaches will be challenged to tailor individual fitness programs, recovery programs, psychological preparation, and technical development. The contributions of support experts in sport science, sport medicine and nutrition become increasingly important.

Athletes in this stage should be proficient at performing basic and sport specific skills. Their continued development requires performance of these skills under a variety of competitive conditions during training. Coaches should emphasize individual preparation that addresses each athlete's individual strengths and weaknesses.

A significant aspect of training for higher levels of competition demands special emphasis on optimum preparation by 'modelling' higher-level competitions. This training simulates the physical and mental challenges that will be faced in actual league, tournament or championship situations.

Training and competition schedules should be designed utilizing single, double, and triple periodization as the optimal framework of preparation. This will limit the athlete to (serious) participation in one sport. It is still possible to enjoy other recreational sport activities that provide relaxation, particularly the psychological break from intense training and competition.

The training-to-competition ratio will change to 40:60. Forty percent of available time should be devoted to the development of technical and tactical skills, and improving fitness, with the other 60 per cent focused on competition and competition-specific training.

The upper age range of this stage (21 to 23 years) depends on both the individual athlete and the sport. Progress to the next stage, Training to Win, is based on the athlete's ability to optimize and integrate all aspects of their physical, mental and emotional skills. It requires the discipline of regular, planned training and competition with the mental and emotional maturity to set and pursue goals (both within and outside sport). Athletes may be ready as young as 18 or 19 years old or as late as their mid-20s. Other factors such as educational and career goals could also influence the decision to move to the next stage.

Previous articles in this series can be found at [edmontonsport.com](http://edmontonsport.com), while a more detailed explanation is on the Canadian Sport for Life website: [www.canadiansportforlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca)