



NWA: Introductory Program for Junior Athletes

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SKILLS .. SKILLS .. SKILLS are the focus

Late maturers usually go further .. the responsibility of Development Coaches is to empower young athletes with SKILLS that can be refined and developed .. there is plenty of time train “harder” when skills are in place.

Every athlete’s developmental stage and environment (facilities) differs.
It is impossible to lay down a program that suits all

Every athlete is an experiment of one

Programs need to be adapted to athletes and their circumstances .. a role for the coach.

but
a starting point ??

All young athletes do not “care” about winning, **BUT**, all expect their endeavours to be noticed (recognized & valued)

In General: for a start

2-3 sessions per week—60 minutes per session—introduce no more than 2 drills per session (and constantly revise and recognize endeavour and progress)—flexibility is important, but should not occupy more than 10 minutes of the session—specific drills (drills directly related to the competitive intentions of the athlete(s) should also be added).

(Stretching can be incorporated into event specific drills, and in recoveries between runs/sets.)

Coaches should carefully note: “**Standard Strategies**” (p.2)

Main Sets .. completed after w/u;
followed by warm down

Weeks 1-3
2-3 sessions

ST = stretches
D = Drills

Separate sheets
on **warm-up** and
warm down.

Main Sets ... focus on **excellent** form at **all** times

- 3 x 4 x 30m .. rolling 10-15m start, then 30m max. (100%); walk back (w/b) recovery between runs; 5-8 mins. Active Recovery (AR=walk-ST-D) between sets.
Whatever speed (aim for 95-100%) is achieved after the 10-15m roll in maintain.
- 2 (70 @ 80% - 60 @ 90% - 50 @ 100% .. w/b); 10 mins. AR (active recovery) between sets.
- 2 (70m @ 90% - 110m @ 80% - 150m @ 70% .. w/b); 10 mins. AR + 10 mins. D between sets.

Weeks 4-6
2-3-4 sessions

Main Sets ... focus on **excellent** form at **all** times

- 3 x 4 x 30m .. rolling 10-15m start, then 30m max. (100%); walk back (w/b) recovery between runs; 5-8 mins. active recovery (walk-ST-D) between sets.
- 400 *The Hard Way*: groups of 3-5: 8 x 50m runs each: Runners 1,2,3 ▶ 50m ◀ Runners 4,5
(separate sheet .. variations at coach discretion)
- 2 (70m @ 90% - 110m @ 80% - 150m @ 70% .. w/b); 10 mins. AR + 10 mins. D between sets.
- Starts: 2 x Standing Start to 20-30m (sneakers).
2 x 3 pt. start to 20m (spikes).
2 x Block Start – verbal or clap start to 20m (spikes).
4 x Block Start – Gun: to 20m and 25m (spikes).
2 x 120m @ 80% ... relaxation at speed.

Specific Drills

A-Walk
A-Skip
Ankling
Butt Kicks
(R-L-Alternating)
Seated Arm Drill
Fast Claw
Fast Leg
Combinations
Running-the-Boards
Run-Run-FL
etc.

It is not a question of who knows the most drills,
but
doing known drills
CORRECTLY.

Specific Skills

Starts
Standing
Falling
Rolling
3 Point
Block

- PREPARE** - be sure to explain what’s in it for the athlete .. *Why are we doing this?*
Have your answer ready

If it’s measurable .. measure it (and, keep a record).

Keep your program varied .. athletes should, *expect the unexpected.*
Reward endeavour (**tags** are part of **your preparation**).
Empower the athletes with new skills .. persist patiently !!

The coach with the fastest runner is not necessarily “the best” coach .. they may be the luckiest coach.
However, persistence by the coach and consistency of expectation will reap its reward.

If seeking to run your fastest and enhance your speed, recoveries between runs **MUST** be complete.

Standard Strategies

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A few ideas / strategies that should be considered in the presentation of your coaching session(s).

You will have your own “*coaching philosophy*”; you may make personal modifications; but, keep in mind:
everything you do,
everything you say,
will be dinner table conversation in each athlete’s home over the next few days.

Your perception of your performance as a coach or teacher is sometimes the least important consideration.

In each session

- **Speak / demonstrate clearly and confidently.** Athletes are seeking and appreciate leadership.
- Keep your approach **simple** and **consistent**. (Don’t complicate things; simplicity facilitates success; demand attention, (*Looking and Listening*), and do not proceed without it; praise endeavour; show confidence in the ability of athletes to achieve the standards you set.)
- **Review Skills** from the previous session; 10-20% of time allocated should be associated with this purpose. Do **not** prioritise “skill extension” ahead of “skill acquisition”.
- **Continually** and **consistently** reinforce expectations: equipment, punctuality; **do not compromise** standards.
- **Be prepared** .. *Why are we doing this?* Relate activities (drills) to the outcomes you are seeking to achieve.
- **Always** outline (in advance) to the athletes “*what’s in it (the session / the drill) for them*”; use incentives and rewards, e.g. cards, certificates, praise at some stage to **every** athlete, but, be sure to **expect the best they can offer** (*no more ... no less ... no excuses*).
- Positive, corrective feedback should prevail. Athletes should walk away from **every** session confident they have enhanced their knowledge and/or skills.
- **Be in control at all times**; e.g. allowing athletes to make decisions is just another way of you being in control. Keep the session moving .. a **minimum** of talk (demonstrate, explain .. but on a needs basis). Remember, you do not need 4 years of tertiary training to let kids do what they like ... parents are watching; be accountable (a term often used but less understood).
- Don’t be distracted.
- Have a **theme** for each session: e.g. **100% Right is 100% Right .. 99% Right is 100% Wrong;**
Good is not enough, where better is possible; **Be Your Best: No More; No less; No Excuses;**
You can never be better than you best; **It takes more courage to try than to win;** **It’s not how fast, it’s how well.**
- **Use care and common sense**, but, don’t be afraid to challenge the athletes. Young people love to acquire new skills and have those skills recognised; they enjoy being able to do things others cannot do.
- **Do something positive and personal for every athlete, every session**; e.g. praise; technique evaluation; special attention; a comment / a joke; personal comments to the athlete in view of the parent; have the athlete demonstrate to the group, lead a drill, or answer (correctly) a question(s).



There are many other issues and strategies; **every athlete is an experiment of one**; you will constantly add to your strategies ... it’s called, **experience** (you can’t buy it, only acquire it).

But, keep in mind that **teaching is fundamentally a simple process**:

YOU take a group of students / athletes into a classroom / on to a track;

show them, explain to them how to do something;

organise skill acquisition opportunities, providing appropriate feedback;

then, let them have a series of attempts; see how they perform;

reinforce, refine, replicate **the learning process never ends !**

**An Eyeful
is better
than
a Mouthful**

**Knowledge (only) accumulates
quickly in an open mind**

Tip # 4: Always Warm-Up & Cool-Down

When muscles are cold they are stiff and difficult to move. To perform well you need to be *warmed up* before training or competition, and *cooled down* afterwards.

Build your own routines and learn **event-specific warm-up exercises**.

Try to be systematic ... develop and stick to your own system.

Before Activity

- Perform a general body warm-up.
- Stretch.
- Incorporate active-dynamic movements where appropriate.
- Practice event-specific movements.

After Activity

- Keep your muscles active for 10-15 minutes using similar, but a less intensive version of your warm-up.
- Stretch, using a similar sequence of exercises to that used in the warm-up.

General Stretching Guidelines (for the advanced junior athlete)

- Warm-up prior to stretching; a minimum of 5 minutes light aerobic activity.
- Allow a minimum of 15 minutes for stretching. A more thorough stretching session may require 30-60 minutes.
- Stretch before and after training.
- Focus and concentrate on the muscle to be stretched with each stretch.
- Use static stretching first, i.e. move slowly into the stretch to avoid engaging the stretch reflex. Ballistic or dynamic stretching (done with progression and caution) may be used towards the end of the stretching session to prepare you for the specific demands of training or competition.
- Perform each stretch with the correct body position. Remember, changing the position of your body may change the effectiveness of the stretch.
- Breathe in a relaxed and free manner. Try exhaling slowly as you move further into the stretched position.
- Hold each static stretch for a minimum of 15 seconds.
Greater results may be achieved, however, when the stretched position is held for longer, i.e. 30 seconds - 2 mins.
- Repeat each stretch a minimum of 3 times.
- At no time should pain accompany any of the stretches.

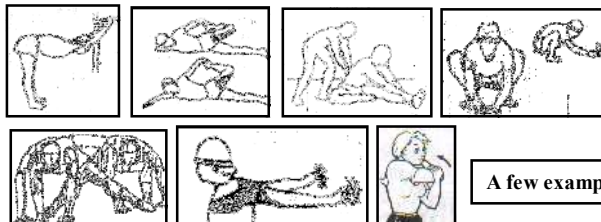
Stretching routines are highly individual.

Athletes should ensure they have an appropriate and thorough warm-up and cool-down strategy; one that they implement with meticulous care and consistency.

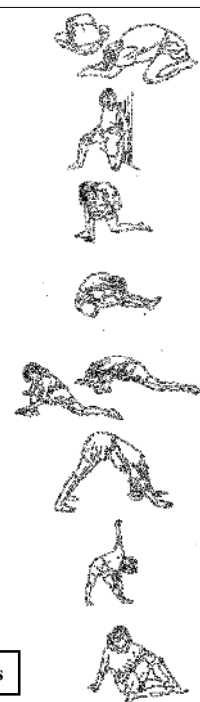
2-4 General / Event Specific Stretches per Session (develop skills, but vary your routine). Offer something new ... young athletes love to learn and apply skills unfamiliar to their "mates".

Stretching may be Dynamic or Static
Generic, or Specific

Every athlete is an experiment of one



A few examples



Stretching IS Important

BUT

Don't smother the enthusiasm of a junior athlete by over-emphasis on stretching

Train Smart

Get their attention with variety

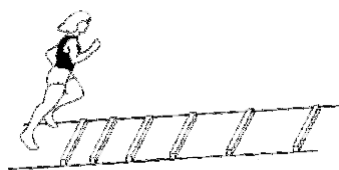
Keep the fun and unexpected element in training



Build your own routines and learn event-specific warm-up exercises

Separate sheets available
More detail
More examples

ACCELERATION LADDER



Acceleration ... The Stick Drill

Note! The Acceleration Ladder is quite different from the Quickstep Ladder Speed and Co-ordination drills.

Stride Length increases at a (relatively) regular rate over the first 6-10 strides.

The “**Stick Drill**” attempts to establish an acceleration rhythm with consistent stride length increases, and, progressive reduction in “ground time”.

- The **aims** are:
1. rapid leg speed,
 2. minimal ground contact time, and
 3. regular stride length progression.



Placement of the Sticks: 50 cm. / 15 cm. (6-8 sticks); or, 40 cm. / 10 cm. (6-8 sticks).

Start >>>>> 50cm. >>>>>>> 1.15m. >>>>>>>>> 1.95m. >>>>>>>>>>> 2.90m.
(50cm.) (65cm.) (80cm.) (95cm.)

Sticks: e.g. strips of rubber; wooden slats; half sections of poly pipe; masking tape; painted lines; ...

With experience (practice) efficiency improves. Spacing may be adjusted according to athlete leg length, and the performance level of the athlete. A good starting point for juniors is: 40/10.

- Procedure:**
1. Normal standing start position; ball of lead foot just beyond (on) the first stick (chalk mark).
 2. **First Step:** project hips past first stick; rear foot / knee brought through a normal range of sprint motion. (**Cue:** “Knee Punch”)
 3. **Accelerate:** retain instep contact (slight) with each stick; extend the run off the final stick to 15 metres. Record the times of your efforts.

4. **Session:** Full Competition Warm-Up; include extra drills; also, task familiarisation (demonstration).
 2-3 x 30m accelerations off a 3pt. start;
 2-3 stick runs for task awareness;
5-6 stick runs for speed: timed efforts (15m);
 10-15 minutes Hurdle/Sprint Drills. Warm Down.

Full Recoveries

5. **Variations:** Speed Belt: towing (light assistance) over the sticks (chalk marks).
 Competitions: block starts v. stick drill to 20-25m.

The stick drill will feel **very** strange at first ... ensure the athlete perseveres, as with all drills, efficiency comes with practice. (Resist (initially) the temptation to increase the spacing between sticks.) One session per week can yield significant improvements in performance !

Date	MY efforts to 15 metres					Av. of Best Four

50 / 15:	ST	(.50)	.50	(.65)	1.15	(.80)	1.95	(.95)	2.90	(1.10)	4.00	(1.25)	5.25
40 / 10:	ST	(.40)	.40	(.50)	.90	(.60)	1.50	(.70)	2.20	(.80)	3.00	(.90)	3.90

STARTS: a starting point

There is
a **very** wide range
of
drill / technique
tags
available
to
recognize
and
support
athlete
endeavour

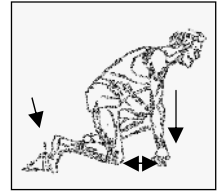
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PROGRAMS
PRESENTATIONS
Example
below

There is little the coach can do to assist an athlete after the race / game has commenced;
However, there is much you can do to assist and prepare the athlete before the start.

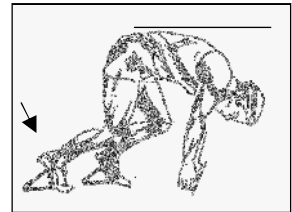
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Consistent Cues are VITAL .. repeat over and over again in practice sessions

“On Your Marks” Back foot **firmly** against the back block (wall);
Front foot level (approx.) with the back knee;
(Distance from front foot to line, approx. elbow to fingertips + hand width.)
Fingers bridged, just behind the line;
Leave enough space to **explode** through;
Head in natural alignment with the body;
Eyes focused down, just in front of the line.



“Set” Raise hips above shoulders;
Load yourself into the blocks maintaining **firm back foot contact**;
Front knee angle 90° in set position
Maintain eye focus downwards;
Focus on reacting to the “gun” with a powerful co-ordinated arm drive.



“GUN!” Explode: led by a powerful arm drive;
Back foot will react first (do **not** emphasise as a coaching point, but note the importance of the back foot being firmly on the back block);
Head down for the first 6-8 strides to help maximise acceleration.



Practice is when you are allowed to make mistakes .. experiment ...
Rate your starts (5-4-3-2-1)
You and the coach can see, but **only you can feel**.
Trying different things & doing your best = perfect practice

ONLY Plenty of PERFECT PRACTICE
Produces PERFECT PERFORMANCES

North West Athletics

Butt Kicks

- Right
- Left
- Alternating

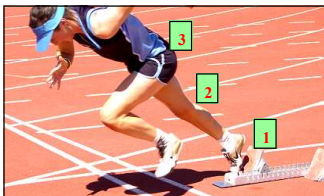
Fast “snaps”; slow forward progress

Reminders

Tall - Toes dorsiflexed - active arms - snap heel to buttocks

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Triple Extension



Running Faster

Force Application into the ground, **beneath the centre of mass** is **essential**

At the Start:

1. **Drive** the lead arm.
2. Drive out at 45°.
3. “Big” first step.
4. **Triple extension before** (lead) foot contact.
5. **Drive** arms/hands down and back.
6. Push ground back and away.
7. Low heel recovery for first 6-8 strides.
8. Let the upper body unfold naturally.
9. Max. speed with min. effort.

P⁶

ONLY

Plenty of Perfect Practice Produces Professional Performance

Based on: www.athletesacceleration.com

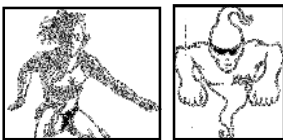
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Starts

- ▶ Standing
- ▶ Falling
- ▶ Hop
- ▶ 3-Point >>>>
- ▶ Bow-Touch-Go
- ▶ Reaction
- ▶ 4-Point

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It's not how fast .. It's **how well** .. very few will win .. **ALL** can enhance and retain skills



Pairs Beep Test

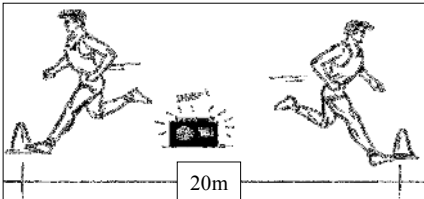
Involvement and achievement

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Pairs Beep Test

L5

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Pairs Beep Test

L17

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Pairs Beep Test

L6

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**Multistage Fitness Test:
Shuttle Run ("Beep" Test)**

Check the speed of the CD/cassette cadence using the one minute calibration period, and adjust the running distance. (Separate manual)

Athletes are instructed to continue until they can no longer keep up with the progressively increasing pace as determined by the "beep" signal.

*At every "beep", the athlete's foot **must** be on or over the line.*

The test is complete when the athlete can not maintain the running speed for two successive "beeps".

***Note!** After the first miss, the athlete is cautioned and told they must make the line by the next "beep".*

*If the athlete's foot is then not on or over the line by the next "beep", the test (for that athlete) is terminated, and the score given is the last level and shuttle **attained**.*

Tags are awarded at the last Level.

Pairs Beep Test

L18

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Pairs Beep Test

L7

Photo is at Pallikoodam School Kottayam Kerala South India (Aug. 2005)

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Pairs Beep Test

Max. Out
I/we reached
Level 22 (21-16)

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The Beep Test (Solo) has a scary aspect .. young people often do not want to push (solo) to exhaustion in a very visible display of their fitness level. (Each Level is 1 minute .. Level 6 has 10 shuttles; Level 21 has 16 shuttles; a shuttle = a 20m run)

In the **Pairs Beep Test**, athletes (U19) average their age, setting that standard as the minimum level they will aim to achieve. Runners take it in turns to complete 2 x 20m: e.g. Runner A completes Level 5.1 and 5.2 .. rests; meanwhile, Runner B completes Level 5.3 and 5.4, ... and so on.

If one partner has to stop, the other merely continues, resting during the period when their partner would have run (until such time as they can no longer reach the line by the "beep").

Reaching Level 22 = Max. Out
The CD goes to 21-16

Partners can differ from test-to-test since each pair gains a Pair Score, and also, an Individual Score.

The **Pairs Beep Test** should **not** be used too often (at least 3-4 weeks between attempts is recommended). It is a **motivation, testing, and fun strategy** ... it is **not** a training program. But, it can provide support and encouragement as individuals see their Pair and Individual scores improving. (Distances less than 20m can be used .. be not afraid to adapt the distance to the preparedness of your group; as time passes you can adjust the distance the challenge; youngsters can run with their friends .. team of 2, team of 3 .. establish personal and team goals .. then, **encourage progression**. The variations are only limited by imagination.

Simple awards can be made to participants as they reach a Level, and/or, special awards to groups who exceed their age-average aims. It can be a **real team effort**, with participants striving hard to support their partner.

Keep it Simple: e.g. a Netball Court measures 30.5m in length; 2 x 1/3 cross court lines = 20.34m ... for the Pairs Beep Test, that's close enough .. we are not conducting an Olympic competition; we are not seeking to compare our results with other groups .. it's a personal and pair challenge. We are trying to involve young people, encourage them to work together, to try hard, to improve, to recognise their endeavour, and, have them realise their efforts are valued. Pairs Beep Tests offer a simple-to-apply, easy-to-appreciate, challenge.

Pairs Beep Test

Today
I
did
my best

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Pairs Beep Test

+3

Age Average + 3 Levels

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Pairs Beep Test

+5

Age Average + 5 Levels

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