

DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Little Athletics is a uniquely Australian activity which encourages participants to 'Be Your Best' by participating in modified athletics activities. The focus of Little Athletics is on 'Family, Fun and Fitness.'

Little Athletics aims to provide skills development and competition opportunities for children through athletics as a 'Foundation for all Sports.' ALA have drafted the following Development Policy in order to highlight the respective stages of development of Little Athletics, as the introduction to a lifelong participation in physical activity and a healthy lifestyle.

Little Athletics prides itself in its ability to introduce children to the fundamental skills of running, jumping and throwing that form the basis for other sports. While no one event or activity participated in at Little Athletics provides this foundation, collectively the events which comprise Little Athletics do. As such, the emphasis of participation in Little Athletics is on involvement in a wide range of events rather than specialisation at an early age.

The role of championship competition

Championships at all levels, from Centre through to National, serve a number of important functions for participants within Little Athletics. The core purpose of championship competition is not to promote elitism, nor is it to promote the pursuit of winning to the detriment of other values. Rather, Little Athletics views championship competition as providing the following benefits for all participants:

- **Representation** – providing athletes the opportunity to represent their community.
- **Socialisation** – providing athletes the opportunity to compete against and interact with other athletes from a wide range of geographical, social and ethnic origins.
- **Opportunity** – providing athletes optimal conditions to achieve their best performances.
- **Ambition** – providing athletes a goal to work towards throughout the Little Athletics season.

For more talented participants championship competition provides additional rewards for participants to aspire to: making a final, winning a medal, setting a state or Australian Best Performance or being selected for their state team.

Stages of Development

Little Athletics recognises that children are not simply small scale adults. As such, Little Athletics is divided into a number of stages, with the desired outcomes for each stage providing a suitable environment for the enjoyment and development of the participant. In combination, the stages provide a smooth progression to lifelong sporting activity, whether at a competitive or social level.

Stage	Age Groups	Focus	Skills	Explanation
1	Up to U6	Playing	Fundamental Motor Skills	<p>The majority of activities in this stage are based on game like activities that teach fundamental movements rather than focusing on competition and measurement of performance.</p> <p>Competitive athletics may slowly be introduced towards the end of this stage, with modified specifications and a focus on fun rather than on rules and performance.</p>
2	U7 – U8	Moving	Fundamental Athletics Skills	<p>Activities in this stage are focused on the further development of fundamental motor skills, but within the context of athletics event groups (running, jumping and throwing).</p> <p>Competition is conducted using modified rules and specifications, with a focus on the correct execution of fundamental movements and personal improvement rather than on the absolute level of performance.</p>
3	U9 – U12	Learning	Event Specific Skills	<p>Activities in this stage are focused on developing event specific skills through a ‘working model’ that highlights the fundamental aspects of each specific athletics event.</p> <p>Structured competition, using modified rules and specifications, is a core component of activities in this stage. The focus is on the correct execution of event specific skills and personal improvement while adhering to the rules of the event, rather than on the absolute level of performance.</p>
4	U13 – U15	Practicing	Technical Model	<p>Activities in this stage are focused on further development of event specific skills through a ‘technical model’ that highlights more advanced aspects of each specific athletics event. Greater specialisation to particular event group(s) may be introduced.</p> <p>More highly structured competition, using minimal modifications to rules but retaining modifications to specifications, is a core component of activities in this stage. The focus is on the correct execution of event specific skills and personal improvement while adhering to the core rules of adult level competition.</p>
5	U16 – U17	Training		