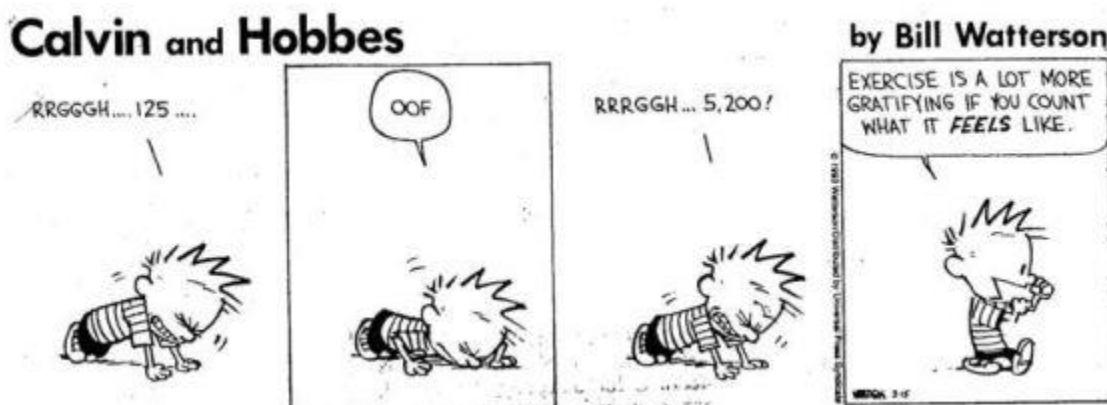


Training Young Athletes Under 12

By Susan Ellis



I am often asked by parents and young skaters what type of training they should be doing over the summer and during the season. The very first thing I'm going to do is recommend you read the following publications by Speed Skating Canada. They are helpful guides to long term athlete development which give a ton of insight into the stages of development of athletes. They are chock full of recommendations as to when, and how to train the various components an athlete needs to develop into a world class athlete.

[A Parent's Guide to Speed Skating](https://www.speedskating.ca/sites/speedskating.ca/files/parentguide_en_.pdf)

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Provides general information about the sport of speed skating including competitions, safety equipment required and the type of training that young participants should be doing.

[Find Your Edge](https://sportforlife.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SpeedSkatingLTAD.pdf)

(<https://sportforlife.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SpeedSkatingLTAD.pdf>) – Gives insight into the optimal windows of opportunity for trainability for the 5 S's of Training and Performance – Stamina, Strength, Speed, Skill, and Suppleness.

[2004 Draft Chart of Athlete Development model](http://www.ellismethod.net/uploads/1/2/6/4/126463255/ltadraftversion2.pdf)

(<http://www.ellismethod.net/uploads/1/2/6/4/126463255/ltadraftversion2.pdf>) – This is only a draft and not the finalized version, but it does give a good synopsis of the stages of development in chart form.

For very young athletes – in the first two stages of development – 6-12, I am a big fan of encouraging them to participate in other sports which help encourage the ABCs for overall athleticism – Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed as well as motor skills, including orientation in time and space; reaction time; adaptation to objects; dexterity; and frequency of movement. Sports such as gymnastics, martial arts, soccer, hockey, tennis, track and field, are great for developing the foundations kids need.

I am NOT a fan of structured intensive training programs aimed at just one sport. Parents who get caught up in this phenomenon are more than likely setting their kids up for a dramatic burn out by the time they are 13-14 years old. Ya, sure you never pushed Johnny to do it, but you put him in that situation in the first place! "But Johnny wanted to do it! He loved it!" Yep, and kids love ice cream too, and will eat it until they are blue in the face if you don't stop them. But do they do that as they get older?

This doesn't mean that kids can't or shouldn't do specific speed skating training either though. Part of the overall motor skill learning is learning how to do skills correctly in a variety of sports. So learning how to do skating imitations correctly is great, as long as it's done in moderation, done in a fun learning environment, and with correct technique in mind, not for TRAINING!

So should kids in the early 2 stages of development come to your club dryland sessions 1-2 times a week? Sure, as long as you don't expect them to do the same as the 14, 16, and 18 year olds, and you have another coach or parent there who can run them through their own age appropriate, fun program.

A great way to have kids develop skills is to set up obstacle courses where they have to run, jump, throw, kick, skip, change directions, balance, do short series body weight circuit exercises (sit ups, push ups, skating squats, etc.), play games and do relays. And yes, some of this can be done in skating position. Always keep in mind, the emphasis for the children is on fun and learning 😊!

Next month – Training for 12-15 year olds