

ONTARIO SOCCER ASSOCIATION

Grassroots Soccer - Provincial Curriculum

FOR COACHES OF ACTIVE START PLAYERS

ACTIVE START



L.T.P.D.
long term player development



VERSION 1



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Introduction

This LTPD resource has been created for Districts, Academies, Clubs and coaches to follow a provincial coaching curriculum that is physical literacy stage-specific for players from u4 to u12.

The information within this document will allow members to create programs and coaching sessions that are appropriate for the development stage of each player. By implementing the curriculum, along with good coaching methodology, players will benefit from and enjoy practice sessions more. All sessions will focus on player development in a low stress, supportive, positive, fun filled and safe environment. By coaches creating this environment the players will be excited to learn and be anxious to return.

In general terms a curriculum consists of everything that promotes technical, personal, social and physical development of the players. In addition to activity examples and sample session plans it includes approaches to teaching and learning. The curriculum helps to remove the 'guess work' in choosing developmentally appropriate content and enables coaches to work on their methodology and coaching style.

Coaching Philosophy

Coaches of players in the Physical Literacy stream will benefit from a sound, well thought out coaching philosophy. We would strongly recommend that coaches follow a "player centred" coaching philosophy. Player centred coaching allows the player to make decisions within the practice session and/or game. The coach has to be confident enough to empower his/her players to become assured decision-makers during their session. As soccer is a game based on making numerous decisions it's vitally important that the coach allows the young player to practice and develop the decisions that they make. Initially many young players decisions will be unsuccessful but only through support, time and patience, will our young players develop the skill to make better decisions.

"To apply the future game philosophy we need coaches who can develop environments in which players are encouraged to be creative and expressive without the fear of failure."

Sir Trevor Brooking
FA Director of Football Development

Physical Literacy Complimentary Sports

Sports can be classified as early or late specialization, and the seven stages of LTPD are based on this concept. Acrobatic and artistic sports such as figure skating, diving and gymnastics are early specialisation sports while other sports such as basketball and soccer are late specialization sports.

Because soccer is a late specialization sport, LTPD actively discourages early specialization (i.e. prior to the age of 10 years) since premature specialization contributes to imbalanced physical development, overuse injuries, early

burn out and inadequate development of movement and sport skills.

The first three stages of LTPD, Active Start, FUNdamentals and Learn to Train, encourages physical literacy for all players, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. The diagram below shows examples of sports and activities (not exhaustive) that are complimentary and will support physical literacy and soccer. Soccer volume can increase but participation in other sports is important to all round balanced athletic development.

THE CANADIAN PHYSICAL LITERACY FAB FIVE



Promoting full physical literacy by learning fundamental movement skills and fundamental sports skills on land, in the air, in water, on ice and on snow.

COMPLIMENTARY ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNING TO TRAIN



Each category has a unique and collective impact on all-around development and it is important that children ages 4-12 sample activities from all three.

Four Corner Development Model

The Four Corner LTPD model consists of technical, psychological, physical and social/emotional components. Each corner of the model reflects a wide aspect of a player's development that has to be considered. The gradual progressive development of players is fundamental to the enjoyment, technical competency and retention in the game. The Four Corner approach places the player at the center of the development process with soccer experiences that meet the four key needs of the player.

Although priorities will vary during the player's different ages and phases of maturity, the model provides a basic framework for coaches to work within. In addition to the four main components, there are a number of additional 'contributions' from a wide number of people, such as parents, teachers, schools and local clubs. The model is deliberately interlinked, which means that activity in any one corner will produce a reaction throughout all aspects of the model. For example, a practice technique may impact physical balance and co-ordination while producing

increased confidence and enhanced social standing within the group. The key message to coaches is not to consider any of the programme's aspects in isolation.

As the development pathway for each individual player is unique and diverse, the needs of each player will ebb and flow in all of the 4 corners. And, whilst the need for added support for some players will be minimal, others will require much more applied and specific support.

A player's performance in practice and matches can be influenced by the following factors, nearly all of which need to be considered when forming an opinion of a player's progress and true ability: date of birth, relative to the rest of the group; body types; adolescent growth spurt in all the four corners; physical maturity; psychological maturity; social maturity; previous experience; opposition; position suitability; instructions given to the player; and recent playing activity.



THE FOUR CORNER
DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The Four Corner development model is referenced throughout this resource using the colour codes found above in the diagram. Tactical information is shown using white.

TECHNICAL/TACTICAL:

Players improve by playing lots of soccer and being active in other complementary sports and activities. That said, without a skilled mix of guidance, challenge, appropriate questioning, demonstration and teaching, it's unlikely that players will reach their true potential.

TIPS FOR TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT;

- Use the coaching activity to challenge and develop players technically. Encourage players to try new skills.
- Appropriate challenges may be set for the whole group or for individuals within the group. For example in a passing practice some players may be challenged to play one-touch passes whenever they think it's appropriate.
- When appropriate, practice activity should replicate the demands of the game, encouraging players to think and make decisions just as they would in a game. Clever practice design should allow players to repeat and re-visit elements of the game without experiencing boredom.

PHYSICAL:

To become an effective soccer player there are basic physical movement skills that need to be developed. Agility, balance, coordination, and speed (ABC'S) are all essential qualities for players; between the ages of 4-12 young players have a "window of opportunity" to develop these attributes.

Addressing the state of physical literacy of children is one of the biggest challenges we currently face in society and coaches should help communicate the benefits of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle.

TIPS FOR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT;

- Children are not mini adults and shouldn't be subjected to running laps of the field and doing push ups.
- Through well-designed practice all coaching activities can include physical outcomes.
- A shooting practice may include a physical challenge which is realistic to the demands of the game. E.g. a defender and an attacker may have to turn and race onto a through ball before taking a shot at goal. In this way the players are working on turning, acceleration and deceleration as well as the technical elements of the exercise.
- Coaches working with young players should be aware of the key windows for physical development and which aspects of a players development can be improved and when.
- Appropriate movement skills such as tag games and activities which develop agility, balance and coordination should be encouraged through enjoyable games.
- Don't expect too much from young players too soon!

PSYCHOLOGICAL/MENTAL:

Creating learning environments that challenge players to be imaginative, creative and reflect on their performance—both during and after practice/game—is fundamental to the development of the future player. Coaches should adopt different coaching styles and methods to meet the individual needs of young players, understanding that there is more than one way for players to learn the game.

TIPS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT;

- Use different methods to communicate with different types of learners.
- **Visual (seeing):** tactics boards, posters, diagrams, cue and prompt cards as well as arrangements of cones on the pitch are some ways in which coaches can communicate with players visually.
- **Auditory (hearing):** As well as speaking with the players and asking questions, coaches can encourage players to discuss aspects of the game in pairs, small groups and also with the whole group. Through communication with others, players can help solve game-related problems and learn more about the game.
- **Kinaesthetic (doing):** physically 'walking through' positional arrangements and freeze-framing parts of the game can help paint pictures in the mind of the players and contribute to the understanding of the game.
- Help players learn the game and develop their decision-making skills by setting game-related problems for players to solve. For example "in this passing practice try and turn with no-touches whenever possible; try and work out when you will be able to do this and when you won't"

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL:

Playing soccer can help children learn many life skills: cooperation, teamwork, communication and friendship are some of the benefits of joining a team and playing the game. To allow these social skills to develop, players should be allowed a safe and supportive environment and given encouragement to learn the game.

TIPS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT;

- Coaches should strive to create a positive environment which is welcoming for players both during games and training. How you treat your players is crucial to ensuring this is positive and fulfilling for the young player.
- Players should be praised and recognised for effort and endeavour as well as ability. This will highlight the process of learning and striving to get better rather than just the final outcome.
- As coaches are in a significant position of influence with their players it is important to give consideration to the type of role-model you are. What are your values and beliefs and how is this demonstrated in your behaviour?

The relationship between the coach and the players is of a significant importance. The ability of a coach to establish a rapport with the players will accelerate the learning process. Coaches should be adaptable and flexible in their coaching methods, changing to the need of the individual player.

COACHING METHODS

When planning a coaching session the coach should consider the most appropriate coaching method for the group of players that they are working with and the outcome they wish to achieve.

The “coaching methods” table below outlines a range of approaches that can be used to meet players’ individual needs. The use of coaching methods will vary due to the ever-changing process of coaching. Some of the key factors coaches should consider when planning their coaching methods are;

- The group of players/individual player the coach is working with
- The intended outcome of the practice
- The technical content of the practice

Mastery of the different coaching methods and communication styles is the mark of a gifted coach and will be an essential requirement for a coach.

CONTINUUM					
Coaching Method	Command	Question & Answer	Observation & Feedback	Guided Discovery	Trial & Error
Player/coach interventions	Coach tells and shows required solution	Coach leads with a question to gain a response from players	Coach and players observe	Coach asks a question or issues a challenge	Players &/or coach decide on a challenge
Example	“I want you to pass the ball to Rahim”	“Can you tell me who you could pass to here?”	“Let’s watch and see what happens”	“Can you show me how you could get the ball to Anna?”	“Try it for yourself...”
Description	Coach determines the outcomes in practice	Coach poses question & players offer a verbal solution	Players & coach observe & discuss feedback	Coach prompts and player offers a demonstration of their personal solution	Players are encouraged to find solutions with minimal support

General Player Characteristics of Age Appropriate Development

Stage	Age	Characteristics
Active Start	U4	Players at this age have a very short attention span, they are very easily distracted. They all want to play with their ball, the toy. There is no sense of sharing toys, especially with strangers.
	U5	There is no ability yet for team play. As sharing is still an alien concept, passing the ball is not yet comfortable for them. They are only able to understand very simple rules.
FUNDamentals	U6	Able to understand very basic coaching info like stay in the area, attack in that direction etc. Learning through trial and error. Biggest challenge is learning to control the moving ball with their feet.
	U7	Players now understand that the game's purpose is to score more goals than their opponents. Still a lot of individual play.
	U8	Players' understanding that acting with the ball purposefully will lead to success is developing. Combining basic motor skills with ball control is now encouraged.
Learn to Train	U9	Now playing on a 7v7 field the understanding of team play, direction and opponent is developing. Optimum age to work on soccer specific techniques and skills
	U10	More and more understanding and feeling for teamwork. Understanding of playing without the ball (running off the ball) develops.
	U11	Perfect mental and physical ability for developing motor skills. Preference for specific positions becomes clearer. Developing an understanding of individual roles in relation to team.
	U12	Likes to compete and compare. Socially aware, critical of own performance and that of ???others. Ideal mental and physical condition in this age group. Imitates idols.

FOR MORE DETAILED PLAYER CHARACTERISTICS SEE EACH DEVELOPMENT STAGE'S INFORMATION PAGES



Active Start

U4 & U5

DEVELOPMENT STAGE	ACTIVE START	
PHYSICAL	U4	U5
Running Forward	1	1
Running Backward	1	1
Jumping	1	1
Skipping	1	1
Hopping	1	1
Bounding	2	2
Crawling	2	2
Turning	2	2
Falling/diving	3	2
Twisting	2	2
Rolling	3	3
Other sports	1	1

DEVELOPMENT STAGE	ACTIVE START	
TECHNICAL	U4	U5
Dribbling	1	1
Shooting	1	1
Running with the ball	1	1
Ball control	3	2
Passing	3	3
Receiving	3	2
Heading	4	4
Shielding the ball	4	4
Crossing	4	4
Finishing	4	4
1v1 Defending	4	4
1v1 Attacking	4	4

DEVELOPMENT STAGE	ACTIVE START	
SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL	U4	U5
Listening	2	2
Cooperation	3	3
Communication	1	1
Sharing	3	3
Problem-solving	3	3
Decision-making	3	2
Empathy	3	2
Patience	3	2
Respect/Discipline	2	2
Fair play/Honesty	3	2

DEVELOPMENT STAGE	ACTIVE START	
PSYCHOLOGICAL/ MENTAL	U4	U5
Motivation	1	1
Self Confidence	1	1
Competitiveness	4	4
Concentration	4	4
Commitment	4	4
Self-Control	3	3
Determination	3	3

PRIORITY KEY	1 = HIGH	2 = MID	3 = LOW	4 = NOT APPLICABLE
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ACTIVE START PRACTICE OBJECTIVES	
TECHNICAL	Introduce basic individual techniques
PHYSICAL	Develop agility, balance, coordination with/without the ball
TACTICAL	No tactical objectives at this stage
SOCIAL	Feel comfortable and confident with the ball and with others
PSYCHOLOGICAL	Create a safe, positive environment, with lots of praise

ACTIVE START PRACTICE CONTENT DISTRIBUTION			
TECHNICAL 40%	PHYSICAL 40%	TACTICAL 0%	SOCIAL 20%

It's important that the players are active and engaged if they are to learn new skills and have fun doing it.



ACTIVE START PRACTICE PRIORITIES

“Creating coaching environments which encourage young players to develop their technique and skill, creativity and game understanding is central to our age appropriate coaching philosophy,

*The Future Player
The FA*

Active Start Practice Activities

FRIENDS WITH THE BALL

TIME FRAME

6 - 8 minutes

EMPHASIS

- Listening
- Running with the ball
- Dribbling
- Changing direction
- FUN!

4 CORNER CONTENT

Technical

Dribbling, shooting

Tactical

Not applicable

Physical

Agility, balance, coordination, change of direction

Social

Listening, communication, celebrating

Psychological

Building Confidence, Feel Safe

DIAGRAM



INSTRUCTION

All players have a ball each and dribble the ball around inside an area. Players perform different moves on coaches call.

INDY 500

TIME FRAME

6 - 8 minutes

EMPHASIS

- Listening
- Running with the ball
- Dribbling
- Changing direction
- FUN!

4 CORNER CONTENT

Technical

Dribbling, shooting

Tactical

Not applicable

Physical

Agility, balance, coordination, change of direction

Social

Listening, communication, celebrating

Psychological

Building Confidence, Feel Safe

DIAGRAM



INSTRUCTION

Players "drive" their ball around the course. Coach can ask for a change of direction, speed, stopping, etc.

All the above activities and games are to be performed with the child's parent/grandparent participating alongside the Active Start player.

TOPPLE ME COCONUTS

TIME FRAME

6 - 8 minutes

EMPHASIS

- Passing
- Shooting
- Goal celebrations
- Teamwork
- Having Fun!

4 CORNER CONTENT

Technical

Dribbling, shooting, passing

Tactical

Not applicable

Physical

Agility, balance, coordination, change of direction

Social

Listening, communication, celebrating, participating with others

Psychological

Building Confidence, Feel Safe

DIAGRAM



INSTRUCTION

All players have a ball. Split players into 2 teams and have them line-up as shown. Place balls on top of cones like coconuts. Ask players to alternate making passes/shots to try and knock the ball off a cone. If a player is successful they can go and retrieve both balls and bring them back to their side.

PIRATE PETE

TIME FRAME

6 - 8 minutes

EMPHASIS

- Running
- Spatial Awareness
- Kicking (passing/shooting)
- Hitting a moving target
- Having Fun!

4 CORNER CONTENT

Technical

Dribbling, shooting, passing

Tactical

Not applicable

Physical

Agility, balance, coordination, change of direction

Social

Listening, communication, celebrating, participating with others

Psychological

Building Confidence, Feel Safe

DIAGRAM



INSTRUCTION

Divide the players into 2 teams. Put the teams in 2 different colors. One team has to run through the channel to get to the treasure. The other team kicks the ball to the player running through the channel trying to hit the other team with the ball below the knee. If players get struck by the ball they have to go back and try again. When players get to treasure (Ball) they bring a piece back to their ship.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

TIME FRAME

6 - 8 minutes

EMPHASIS

- Dribbling
- Change of direction
- Change of Speed
- FUN!

4 CORNER CONTENT

Technical

Dribbling, shooting

Tactical

Not applicable

Physical

Agility, balance, coordination, change of direction

Social

Listening, communication, celebrating, participating with others

Psychological

Building Confidence, Feel Safe

DIAGRAM



INSTRUCTION

All players have a ball each and dribble the ball around inside a area. Players perform different moves on coaches' call. Parents switch with child.

NUTS AND SQUIRRELS

TIME FRAME

6 - 8 minutes

EMPHASIS

- Direction
- Running with the ball
- Dribbling
- Turning
- Changing direction
- FUN!

4 CORNER CONTENT

Technical

Dribbling, shooting, passing

Tactical

Not applicable

Physical

Agility, balance, coordination, change of direction

Social

Listening, communication, celebrating, participating with others

Psychological

Building Confidence, Feel Safe

DIAGRAM



INSTRUCTION

Players take a ball (nut) and dribble it back to their tree and then next player (squirrel) goes and retrieves a nut. Which team collects the most?

FREEZE TAG

TIME FRAME

6 - 8 minutes

EMPHASIS

- Running
- Dribbling
- Running with the ball
- Changing direction
- Turning
- FUN!

4 CORNER CONTENT

Technical

Dribbling, shooting, passing

Tactical

Not applicable

Physical

Agility, balance, coordination, change of direction

Social

Listening, communication, celebrating, participating with others

Psychological

Building Confidence, Feel Safe

DIAGRAM



INSTRUCTION

Players travel around the grid with a ball. Parent tries to tag them. When a player is tagged he/she must stand still with legs shoulder width apart and pick up ball. Players are unfrozen when a teammate can dribble a ball through their legs.

All the above activities and games are to be performed with the child's parent/grandparent participating alongside the Active Start player.

RECOMMENDATIONS – ACTIVE START - 4 YEAR OLDS

- It must be FUN!
- Every child has a ball
- “One with one” at 4 years – let parent/grandparent/older sibling assist with the session. Little person/big person learn the game together
- Emphasis on fundamental movement skills, running, hopping, jumping, skipping, tumbling – “Developing Physical Literacy”
- Basic ball familiarization games, rolling, bouncing, kicking, catching.
- Be creative, tell them a story, and relate the story to a soccer activity.
- Shark Attack, Pirate Pete, Dora the Explorer, Race Car etc. Play games with themes.
- Do not worry about teaching the techniques. Learn by doing.
- Very basic 1v1 games (little vs big) with parents/older siblings involved.
- Players will respond to a high-energy environment.
- Change the session activity or game often.
- These players love praise and enthusiasm
- Not really soccer – but activity with a soccer ball

PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS – ACTIVE START - 5 YEAR OLDS

- As above, plus
- Parents present – but not on the field with players, unless the player needs it.
- Physical Literacy – more emphasis on the technique, of jumping/running/hopping – add competitions
- Players still learn by playing games using imagination – relate the games more to the techniques of soccer
- Change the session activity or game often.
- Introducing the game at 1 v 1 and 2 v 2
- No Goalkeepers yet

PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS – METHODOLOGY

- Keep information brief and positive.
- Show them what you want. Demonstrate the activities and games.
- Parents can assist with reinforcing your coaching information
- Keep the environment positive and happy.
- Lots of praise and celebrations – High Fives!
- Encourage and celebrate success.
- Be flexible, allow the players to deviate and be creative.
- Keep it safe.

Active Start Coaching Measures

When the young players are moving from the Active Start development stage and are ready to progress to the Fundamentals stage the coach should have exposed them to and taught them in the following Technical, Physical, Social and Psychological skills.

TECHNICAL		
Dribbling the ball	Right foot and Left foot	Let the players experience and experiment with a variety of surfaces
Shooting the ball	Right foot and Left Foot	Let the players experience and experiment with a variety of surfaces
Running with the ball	Right foot and Left Foot	Let the players experience and experiment with a variety of surfaces
Turning with the ball	Right foot or Left foot	Players are exposed to turning and changing direction with the ball
Receiving the ball	Right foot and Left Foot	Being able to stop a rolling ball on the ground

PHYSICAL		
Running Forward	Straight and with a change of direction	Players can run in a forward direction and make a change of direction, right and left while in control
Running Backward	Straight	Players can run backwards and stay in control of body
Jumping	Jump off the ground and safe landing	Both feet are off the ground and the player is able to land safely
Skipping	Right and Left foot	Expose the players to lead with right and left foot take off, in control of body
Hopping	Right and Left foot	Expose the players to lead with right and left foot take off, in control of body
Bounding	Right and Left	Introduction only
Crawling	Staying close to the ground	Move across the ground using both hands and feet to propel themselves
Turning	To the Right or left	Players are able to turn in directions, right and left.
Twisting	Moving upper body	Lower body is static and stable whilst upper body is moving.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL		
Listening	Listen Quietly	Players are able to listen to brief Information from coach and parents (Coach be brief)
Respect/Discipline	Others	Players are learning to respect other players' equipment and space. Can stay in playing area.
Communication	Verbal Communication	Players are able to verbally communicate with parents and the coach and have started to speak with other players

PSYCHOLOGICAL/MENTAL		
Motivation	Fun, rewarding activities	Players are anxious to participate and eager for the next activity and practice through enjoyment and success
Self Confidence	Safe and positive environment	Players are starting to feel confident in a crowd of unknown players and parents

Goalkeeping represents a specialized array of skill sets that include abilities in ball handling (i.e. using the hands to catch, punch or deflect the ball), diving, throwing receiving, kicking, passing, foot movement and agility.

At the younger ages introduce goalkeeping to all your players. Don't be in a rush to select a GK, there is lots of time for all players to play all over the field including in goal. To improve foot skills goalkeepers should join in with all players during practice.

GOALKEEPING - TECHNICAL/TACTICAL				
TECHNIQUE	ACTIVE START	FUNDAMENTALS	LEARN TO TRAIN	NOTES
	All players participate in the activities below.	All players should take a turn in goal using small-sided games with correct sized goals.	All players still take turns in goal. Some will show a preference for the position. Resist the temptation to limit GK to only a few players.	Be patient. All players take turns in goal.
Footwork	All players are Introduced to moving side to side to get in line with the ball.	Moving in different directions using different types of runs to get in line with the ball.	Footwork is developing. Agility and coordination are ways to improve GK ability. Introduce SAQ program.	Footwork is to be focus at all sessions.
Ball handling	All players are introduced to catching a ball at various heights (no high balls)	From ground, waist, chest and head high and above. With simple serves only.	Intro balls from different angles and trajectories while standing and diving. Intro deflecting, not punching. 2 fist punching is intro later in the stage, thrown serves only.	Be careful, balls can be served with hands in place of shooting towards GK's, be safe!
Throwing	All players are introduced to throwing a smaller ball with 2 hands, then 1 hand.	Introduce over arm and underarm throws. Short distances only.	Further develop the throws and introduce the javelin and side arm throw. Distances increase.	
Shot stopping	Introduction of "diving" from a kneeling position.	Intro correct basic diving technique. Intro diving at feet with no opposition.	Develop jump, roll and fall. Intro side dives and later forward, aerial, power and high.	Safety is paramount
Positioning		Introduction of correct body shape, stance, ready position.	Intro reading the space behind defenders and sweeper/keeper role is developed later in this stage.	
Distribution		Kicking/passing from the ground and from the air.	Increase distance with kicks/passes/throws, from short to mid to long.	
Observation		Encourage GK to push out when ball is at other end of the end of the field.	GK is now able to see the ball and the opponent who is in a dangerous position.	
Communication		Intro basic communication- "keeper", "away".	Start adding words based on situations around the penalty area, picked up during the run of play.	
Set pieces		Basic technique for goal kicks	Develop goal kicks. Introduce different tactical options.	
Decision-making			Intro based build up and counter attack and selection of technique.	

The Goalkeepers' Psychological/Mental/Social/Emotional and Physical development will follow alongside the other players in their stage of development. This information is shown in previous tables in this document.

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Canadian Soccer Association
Canadian Sport For Life
Belgian Football Association
The FA

Wellness to World Cup Volume 2
CS4L Documents

Developing Grassroots Football
Child Friendly Football Program
and the Future Game

Australia Football Federation
Scottish Football Association
United States Soccer Association
US Youth Soccer

Optus Small Sided Football
Emerging Talent Program
US Soccer Curriculum
Youth Development Document

German Football Federation
Bryst Football Academy
European Club Association
New Zealand Football

Youth Development Program
Curriculum
Report on Youth Academies
Whole of Football Plan

OSA LTPD Resources

Recreation and Development matrices
A Guide to Festivals in Ontario
Game Organization Guide
Field Organization Guide
League Management Guide: Learning to Train
How Soccer in Ontario is Changing

**These resources along with others
are available on the OSA website**
www.soccer.on.ca

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