

SPORTS - FOR OUR CHILDREN



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WE WANT TO DO BETTER – WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

Sports are the most popular leisure activity of Icelandic children. At age 12, just over eight out of ten children play sports with a sports club. There are many different sports available, and all children should be able to find something suitable.

The National Olympic and Sports Association of Iceland adopted a policy on sports for children and young adults back in 1996. Since then, there have been significant changes in the sports environment for children. In the intervening years, special federations have adapted and simplified competition arrangements for children's sports, reduced the number of players in teams, making goals smaller, and significantly reduced the importance of final results by officially announcing fewer results in the youngest age groups. Alongside these changes, participation has increased significantly, there is greater diversity and children start playing sports with sports clubs earlier than they used to. Parents play a greater role in children's sports, and sporting activities as we know them today would be virtually impossible without their involvement. Coaches receive greater training, and sports facilities have improved significantly.

At our 2015 Sports Congress, our revised policy on sports for children and young adults was approved. This policy has undergone various changes and places great importance on sport being for everybody. Sport should be fun, and the game should play a major role. We have defined the Ten Commandments of Sport in support of our policy for children and young adults.



Ten Commandments of Sport

1. Sports for all children
2. Sports make people powerful
3. Respect for the opinions of children and young adults
4. Wide range of sporting activities
5. Training to match age and maturity
6. Competitive sports that take account of age and maturity
7. Appropriate sport facilities
8. Professionally trained coaches
9. The support of parents is important
10. Respect the work of referees and other staff

1. SPORTS FOR ALL CHILDREN

Offering diverse opportunities for exercise where fun and enjoyment are paramount

All children should have the opportunity to play sports and experience the fun and pleasure it brings. The environment should be positive and motivating, and children should feel comfortable and welcome. Efforts should be made to ensure that all children have equal access to sporting activities, bearing in mind transport and cost.



2. SPORTS MAKE PEOPLE POWERFUL

Sports associations are to strive to offer good sporting activities for children and young adults

Children's participation in sports is about much more than just playing their chosen sport. Children become acquainted with the traditions and culture of their sports club and the rules – both written and unwritten – of their chosen sport. Sport teaches children to respect themselves and others, the club and the sporting facilities. They also learn to take on challenges, push themselves and deal with victory and defeat.

Children experience their environment and react to circumstances in different ways. They are more likely to improve their skills and mature if they feel happy, safe and valued on merit.



3. RESPECT THE OPINIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

We must be considerate of children and young adults, listen to them and respect their views

It is important for children and young adults to have their voices heard and to be given the chance to influence the decisions taken in issues important to them.

Young adults should be offered various possible training paths, so that those who wish to train less may do so, without it being a case of 'all or nothing'. It is also important to make sure that young adults know that there are different ways of being active in a sports club, e.g. as a referee, coach or committee member. This makes it more likely for them to stay in sporting activities for longer. It is also necessary to intersperse sporting activity with other types of social events and to meet club members in other contexts. This strengthens the bond between those playing sports and their coaches.

How do we reduce the number of young adults dropping out of sports?
Do young people have a voice in your club?



Basic movements:

walking, running, jumping, crawling on stomach, crawling, rolling, holding, hanging, swinging, grabbing, climbing, spinning, pushing, kicking, catching and hitting. It is important for children to have the opportunity to repeatedly practise these movements until they become second nature. For children to further develop these basic movements, they must have the opportunity to practise them in various different circumstances. For instance, the challenge and experience of running will differ depending on whether one runs inside or outside on gravel, in grass, in snow, on an uneven surface or on ice. One can run fast or slow, start and stop, continue running, run backwards or sideways. One can also run uphill, downhill, straight ahead or on a curve, to name but a few examples.

Other factors affecting movement are time, space, force and continuity/flow.

4. WIDE RANGE OF SPORTING ACTIVITIES

Clubs are to strive to offer good sporting activities for children and young adults

It is important for sports clubs to understand when a child wishes to practice more than one sport or engages in some other kind of leisure activity. Sports clubs and divisions should encourage children and young adults to practise more than one sport and work together to enable them to do so. To provide diversity in sporting activities, sports clubs and divisions should work together rather than compete for children's time and participation.

The availability of sports for children and young adults varies according to sports clubs and place of residence. In some places, children can choose from a wide range of sports at their club, while availability is lower elsewhere. If a child continually feels that they do not fit in, e.g. owing to their ability or physical size, they are more likely to quit and consequently miss out on the social benefits of being an active participant in a sports club.

Children's strengths and interests lie in various areas and sports. One child may be happy working in a group and playing group sports, while another may prefer individual sports. It is, therefore, important for children to have the opportunity to try out more than one sport. If they quit due to a lack of interest, it is important to offer them the chance to try something else.



5. TRAINING TO MATCH AGE AND MATURITY

Ensuring sports training takes account of children's interests, maturity and ability and is playful and fun

Training should match the child's age and maturity. A child's physical age may be quite different to their actual age – the difference in physical age of two children of the same actual age can be as much as four years. For young children, the play aspect, a diverse choice of training and social aspects should loom large. As children get older, the mental and physical aspects can be made more demanding.

Children and young adults need to be given tasks appropriate to their level. If the tasks are too difficult, they quickly lose confidence in their own ability. If they are too easy, they lose interest and get bored.

Does your sports club meet children's needs according to their stage of maturity?



In order for children to have a positive experience:

1. All children need to feel welcome in sports.
2. Children must have the opportunity to meet each other and make friends.
3. Activities must be well organised to avoid, e.g. waiting and queues.
4. All children must be given tasks appropriate to their level, regardless of age, gender, size, maturity, race or disability.

What should coaches do?

1. Organise activities in advance.
2. Make activities varied and fun.
3. Remember that children should train as children and not as small adults.
4. Get to know the children well and make sure that they all participate actively.
5. Give active feedback – praise and encourage rather than criticise and tell off.

6. COMPETITIVE SPORTS SHOULD TAKE ACCOUNT OF AGE AND MATURITY

Ensuring competition takes account of children's age, ability and maturity and is kept at a moderate level

For children who are developing mentally and physically, training should be the major aspect and competition a minor extra. The focus should be on competing with oneself and/or team competition and general participation. Children should compete with their peers, and everybody should have the chance to compete, regardless of ability. For older children, there may be greater focus on individual competition. For young adults, competition could become an objective to aim for. Travelling for competitions should be kept to a moderate level for children. Competing abroad should be for children aged 13 and older.

Competing in many different categories should be avoided. If a child or young adult competes in more than one category, then training time is reduced. Progress should be made during training – coaches have a great deal of responsibility in this regard, and the interests of the child should be a priority.

Success is not measured solely on the basis of sporting ability, but also on the number of participants, the progress made and how pleased participants are.



7. APPROPRIATE SPORT FACILITIES

Providing children with appropriate apparatus and equipment both indoors and outdoors

Children should play sports on their own terms. Are all balls and goals of the right size? Can baskets be lowered? Has the pitch been adjusted to the age of the child? Are distances for training and for competing appropriate for children? Have all safety precautions been taken?

Children need to feel welcome in sports club sporting and social facilities. They should be able to be loud and lively.



United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article no. 1 Concept of child

A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Article no. 2 Equality — ban on discrimination

All children shall enjoy the rights set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, irrespective of the child's or his or her parents' race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinions, ethnic origin, disability, social status or other status.

Article no. 3 What is best for the child

All official decisions and actions concerning children shall be based on the best interests of the child. Laws and regulations should be enacted to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being. Convention signatories shall ensure that the institutions and services responsible for the care of children shall conform to the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

8. PROFESSIONALLY TRAINED COACHES

Recruiting professionally trained coaches, where possible, or ensuring that coaches keep up with training education

Coaches are key figures in the sports education of children and role models in both word and deed. Coaches lead activities, organise training and accompany participants to competitions. Coaches should endeavour to create a positive and edifying environment where participants feel comfortable and are not afraid to make mistakes. They should give positive or negative feedback as soon as possible after the event, when feedback is at its most effective. They should also focus on the social aspect and encourage children to spend time together outside of training sessions – this brings the group closer together and promotes a positive experience. As well as knowledge of their sport, coaches also need to be versed in training, pedagogy and psychology, to name but a few examples. It is therefore important for sports clubs to focus on recruiting well-trained and experienced coaches for all age groups, looking after their coaches and offering them opportunities to attend courses.

Are all coaches in your sports club professionally trained?



9. THE SUPPORT OF PARENTS IS IMPORTANT

Encouraging parents to get involved in their children's sporting activities

In recent years, the support and involvement of parents in sporting activities for children has increased greatly. Parents perform many different tasks at sports clubs – heading competition trips, seeing to social events and managing fundraising, to name but a few. The participation and support of parents is important for coaches – it is, however, important to respect the professional expertise of the coach and allow them to train. Active participation and support of parents increases the likelihood of children pursuing sports.



10. RESPECT THE WORK OF REFEREES AND OTHER STAFF

Working to ensure positive communication with referees and other staff

Everybody should be working to ensure positive communication with referees, other staff and club members. Sports competitions cannot happen without referees and other staff. The job of a referee is to ensure that everything goes according to the rules. It should be borne in mind that, while referees always try to do their best, they can make mistakes just like anybody else. Children should be taught to respect the work of referees as, without them, there is no competition. It is important for parents, relatives and coaches to be positive and respect the work of referees and other staff.



Age	Objective	Methods
≤ 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive experience • Focus on play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse choice of activities
6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive experience • Stimulate creativity • Acquire a variety of movement experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse choice of activities • Focus on play and fun • Equal opportunities for all • Encouragement to try out various sports
9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire a variety of movement experiences • Focus on training technical skills • Enjoyable training • Emphasis on tact and sportsmanlike behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse choice of activities • Focus on play and fun • Equal opportunities for all • Respecting the club name and colours • Respecting competitors, referees and coaches • Encouragement to try out different sports
11–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied and fun activities • Focus on training technical skills • Developing physical prowess through play and playful activities • Emphasis on tact and sportsmanlike behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse choice of activities • Fun activities • Equal opportunities for all • Respecting the club name and colours • Respecting competitors, referees and coaches • Encouragement to try out different sports
13–14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing physical prowess through play and playful activities • Maintaining and improving technical skills • Creating a positive and edifying environment • Keeping as many people as possible active in club activities • Emphasis on tact and sportsmanlike behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse choice of activities • Further work on technical skills • Targeted work with positive communication and promoting greater self-confidence • Education on healthy lifestyles • Opportunities for all to train and/or compete according to maturity, ability and interest
15–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing physical prowess • Maintaining and improving technical skills • Creating socially positive situations and environment • Introducing competitive and high-achievement sports • Introducing further possibilities for those wishing to practise sports for fitness and social reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse choice of activities • Greater proportion of training based on stamina, strength speed and team exercises • Greater focus on specialised technique and promoting greater self-confidence • Education on healthy lifestyles according to maturity, ability and interest • Clubs create opportunities to play either competitive sports or sports for fitness purposes
17–18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing physical prowess • Maintaining and improving technical skills • Creating socially positive situations and environment • Introducing success mentality • Providing possibility of playing sports for fitness and/or social purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse choice of activities • Greater proportion of training based on stamina, strength speed and team exercises • Greater focus on specialised technique • Prevention education against drug use • Targeted work with positive communication and promoting greater self-confidence • Education on healthy lifestyles • Opportunities for all to train and/or compete according to maturity, ability and interest • Clubs create opportunities to play either competitive sports or sports for fitness purposes

	Measure of success	Competition, prizes and recognition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition not an objective • Equal recognition for all
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As many continuing to play sports as possible • Happy participants • Improved co-ordination/movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition not an objective • Emphasis on competitions in the local area • Opportunities for all, regardless of ability • Play and fun • Results not important • Equal recognition for all
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As many continuing to play sports as possible • Happy participants • Improved co-ordination/movement • Technical criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition not an objective • Emphasis on competitions in the local area • Focus on team competition • Opportunities for all, regardless of ability • Results not important • Equal recognition for all
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As many continuing to play sports as possible • Happy participants • Technical criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for all, according to ability • Team works towards prizes, focus on the team • Individuals work towards prizes • Possible to designate Icelandic champion, individual or team
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As many continuing to play sports as possible • Happy participants • Technical criteria • Improved physical prowess 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team works towards prizes • Individuals work towards prizes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As many continuing to play sports as possible • Happy participants • Technical criteria • Improved physical prowess • Targeted work with positive communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team works towards prizes • Individuals work towards prizes • Success in competition • Opportunities for all to train and/or compete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As many continuing to play sports as possible • Happy participants • Technical criteria • Improved physical prowess • Success in competitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team works towards prizes • Individuals work towards prizes

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National Olympic and Sports

