

What is development and why is it important to understand in relation to sport?

As a parent it can be useful to distinguish two key terms when considering how your child will grow and develop. These terms are:

- **Maturation:** Aspects of development that are primarily under genetic control, which are relatively uninfluenced by the environment.
- **Development:** The process of change in functioning that occurs as a consequence of *maturation* and *experience*.

Development occurs across different areas:

- **Physical and motor skills:** Growth and changes of the body such as the ability to use muscles; gross motor skills are movements related to large muscles, while fine motor skills are movements involving small muscle groups.
- **Cognitive:** Ability to learn, think, and solve problems
- **Psycho-social:** Ability to interact with others, including helping themselves and self-control.

Development is a process that occurs throughout a lifespan and will vary between children, consequently it can be useful to distinguish between:

- **Chronological age:** Age of your child based on year of birth
- **Developmental age:** Your child's age based on a combination of maturation and experience

Why is this important in relation to sport?

Your child's current level of development, in the different areas, will impact on their physical ability, their understanding of coach instructions, and their interactions with teammates among others. As a parent, it is important to avoid comparing your child's sporting ability to other children who may be at a different developmental age. It is also important to seek our sporting opportunities that are delivered in a developmentally appropriate way for your child.