

Tiny Tots Handbook



Tiny Tots in Little Athletics

The Tiny Tots program for three and four year olds began in 1998. Initially it was brought to the LAQ Annual Conference because Centres recognised the need to provide opportunities for these younger children to be involved.

Teaching the basics of running, jumping and throwing through a fundamental movement skills program will give these young members the essential skills for developing all round athletic abilities.

Tiny Tots Age Group

Tiny Tots are children who have turned 3 years of age and who will be less than 5 years of age at 31 December in the calendar year.

Centres have the discretion to provide a Tiny Tots program, it is not a compulsory age group. Centres also have the option to only register Tiny Tots if he or she is a sibling of an **older** (Under 6 - Under 17) registered Little Athlete.

The parent or guardian of the Tiny Tots athlete must be present and available at the Centre while the child is participating.

The weekly Centre program for the Tiny Tots is required to be made up of suitable play training events, games and modified events relevant to the abilities of the Tiny Tots age group-

Times, places or measurements must not be recorded for the Tiny Tots age group.

The **maximum distance** that the Tiny Tots age group can run is **60m**.

Tiny Tots may be provided with an achievement book and weekly encouragement tickets or similar recognition of effort, if the Centre chooses.

A registration number will be provided, however uniforms are optional.

The Tiny Tots age group will only take part in activities at their respective Centre. They cannot participate in any Centre Carnivals or Multi-Event (what's a Multi-Event carnival?), Regional or State events, Carnivals or.

Centres are to support this policy wholeheartedly as it is in the best interests of the children and their future athletic development. The prospect of having more events available and more competitions to go to as an older athlete in future years is stressed as it provides incentive to return to Little Athletics in subsequent years.

Tiny Tots Program at your Centre

There is no one correct way to organise and administer a Tiny Tots program. Likewise, there is no specific area required to run a Tiny Tots program. The Centre program must however reflect the Tiny Tots Policy and strategies outlined by LAQ and LAA.

This handbook will highlight some ways in which you might like to construct and conduct a fundamental movement skills program for the Tiny Tots age group. Using one or a combination of ideas from this handbook and the resources made available on the LAQ website, a successful Tiny Tots program for your Centre can be created.

Examples and ideas for activities for the Tiny Tots age group can be found in, but not limited to, the Little Athletics Queensland Games Manual, ASAP Manual or the Australian Sports Commission's Play Athletics manual. Should the FAST Manual be added to this?

A coach or parent can use this handbook and ingenuity to successfully create a basic fundamental movement skills program for the Tiny Tots age group. This will increase the number of games played at their local Centre and widen the scope of interest to create a happy, constructive environment for younger children to participate in.

Role of the Tiny Tots Coordinator

The role of the Tiny Tots Coordinator at Centre is to plan and provide appropriate fun activities for three and four year old children according to the Little Athletics Queensland (LAQ) Tiny Tots policy.

Attributes of a Tiny Tots Coordinator

Working with a group of children can often be a daunting experience. With a bit of preparation anyone can do it. There is no need to have completed a specific course to be a coordinator, however, the following courses may give you confidence to start work with a group of Tiny Tots:

- Introduction to Teaching Little Athletics Skills Course offered by Little Athletics Queensland
- Level 1 Community Athletics Coach offered by Queensland Athletics or
- Level 1 Community Coach course offered by the Australian Sports Commission

If you do not want to complete a formal course, the following hints and tips may be of assistance when working with groups of Tiny Tots.

Managing Groups of Children

To maintain control of groups of young athletes:

- Be prepared
- Be creative
- Be positive in your body language and verbal interactions
- Ensure that you have and maintain their attention
- Use short and clear language
- Get the group involved in answers and demonstrations
- Be creative
- HAVE FUN!!!

Try to avoid:

- Talking for too long
- Talking above the level of the athletes
- Making participants wait too long between turns
- Programming activities that are too easy or too hard
- Allowing activities to last for too long.

Coaching Children

When coaching children, remember:

- Children's sport should be fun!
- Children need lots of opportunities for unstructured play, a broad range of activities and the opportunity for creativity
- Early sports specialisation is not recommended for young children
- The social aspects of sport are highly valued by children
- The focus is on skill development and individual improvement, not winning
- To give all children time and attention, not just the most talented

What is Play Training?

Play Training is a game or series of games. Play Training is designed to provide groups of children with activities geared to their interests and concentration span. Children participate in athletics primarily to enjoy a social situation and mix with friends. Games are spontaneous, free form activities designed to give confidence to the participants. New games can be thought of on the spot and can be developed around the relevance of athletics. An example of creating a one hour program can be found on the following pages.

All of the following resources can be found and assessed for free in the coaching section of the Little Athletics Queensland website: <http://www.laq.org.au>

The LAQ Games Manual

The games in this manual are designed around the four basic movement functions: Running, Walking, Throwing, and Jumping. An activity which uses one or more of these functions can improve a child's physical development and help their athletic performance. Games offer FUN with a measure of fitness and anyone can participate regardless of age or ability and without the discipline of serious training.

What is ASAP?

The Athletics Skills Award Program (ASAP) is a skills based certificate system which provides opportunities for participants to develop their abilities in a wide range of general skills as well as athletics events. ASAP aims to:

- To encourage the development of athletic skills
- To provide a guide as to how skills may be developed
- To provide a focus on skill development in Little Athletics

The program will provide young athletes with a sound base across the entire range of Track and Field events on which to build more advanced skills. It offers Centres a more structured approach to teaching skills to younger athletes and ultimately, discourages early specialisation.

ASAP can be conducted for any age group, however, the younger age groups who are just beginning to develop their skills and abilities would benefit the most. FUNdamentally an ASAP session is a FUN coaching session.

The Play Athletics Manual

This is a manual designed by the Australian Sports Commission for the Active After Schools Care program. It outlines a basic eight week fundamental skills program using the Playing for Life philosophy.

Playing for Life is an approach to coaching that uses games rather than drills to introduce the skills and tactics of the particular sport or structured physical activity being delivered. Each session is designed purposefully, so that the games progressively introduce and develop the particular skill that is the focus of the session.

FAST Manual

This is a manual designed by the Australian Sports Commission for the Active After Schools Care program. It outlines a basic eight week fundamental skills program using the Playing for Life philosophy.

FAST is a Fundamental Athletics Skills Training session designed to be run for a one-hour duration utilising games and skill development activities to teach the basic, fundamental movement patterns of the events experienced in a Little Athletics competition.

For further information, contact the Development staff through the LAQ office.

Play Training Program Sample

In the following page, and details below are an overview of how to set up an area and activities for a group of Tiny Tots is shown. Family involvement is encouraged so even Mum and Dad can join in.

Ideally you would have four people set up one area each and have the children rotate through each area every 15 minutes. If this is unattainable then have two people set up two areas and have the children rotate through each area every 15 minutes.

Set up of an area before play is recommended, otherwise the children will get restless while you are setting up. In between setting up of areas / activities is an ideal opportunity for children to get a drink and go to the toilet.

The activities listed are only examples. If you can think of other activities you have used or the children like, feel free to swap activities as required.

Two examples of a layout for a session are outlined on the following pages. Each example should take 60 - 75 minutes to complete (including drink or rest breaks). They all contain a running, jumping, throwing, and other / games component. Each component consists of up to three separate activities.

Equipment required for activities listed in the following pages include:

- Markers
- Skipping ropes
- Hoops
- Bean Bags / tennis balls
- Relay batons (optional)
- Micro (15cm) hurdles
- Balloons

Sample 1	
<p style="text-align: center;">Running Area (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow The Leader <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change every 30 seconds, all have turn • Behind the Back Relay • Do the Square 	<p style="text-align: center;">Throwing Area (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climb the Ladder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One hand underarm - One hand overarm - Two handed chest pass <p><i>If time permits repeat from seated, kneeling, standing position</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Jumping Area (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jump Relay (5 metres) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two feet - Left foot - Right foot • Standing High Jump (Scissors) over line <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walk over - Jump over - Jump over with small walk up - Jump over with small run up <p><i>Attempt this activity from both sides (i.e. both legs)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Games / Other Area (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hurdles - running over obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skipping ropes - Markers - Micro Hurdles
Sample 2	
<p style="text-align: center;">Running Area (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here, There, Everywhere • Ball in Hoop Relay • Up and Back relay 	<p style="text-align: center;">Throwing Area (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minefield <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two handed chest pass - One hand underarm - One hand overarm <p><i>If time permits repeat from seated, kneeling, standing position</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Jumping Area (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toe Taps (Two feet & One foot) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No obstacles - Over skipping ropes - Over markers <p><i>Variation for this is to clap hands above head while in air</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wigwams and Indians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skipping - Two feet jumping - Running 	<p style="text-align: center;">Games / Other Area (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balloon Games (relay - 5m) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Between the knees - Hold above head - Behind back - Between legs - one hand in front, one behind • Relays (with balloons) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over heads - Through legs - Under and overs <p><i>Attempt relays from seated and standing positions</i></p>

Running Activities

- **Follow the Leader**

Children line up in allocated lines. Focus should be on the back of the child in front. The leading child chooses when to change direction, speed, or action. The rest of the line follows what the leader does. Alternate leaders every 30 seconds so as to allow all of the children have a turn leading the group.

- **Behind the Back Relay**

Place markers 5-10m apart. Divide group into equal teams with half of the team at one end. On start command, runners from each group run towards their team mates at the other end holding their object (ball, relay baton) behind their backs. When they get to the other end, they take the object from behind their back and pass it to the next person in line.

- **Do the Square**

In turn, complete a square (5-10m side) doing the following:

Marker 1 to 2: Walking

Marker 2 to 3: Walking on toes Marker 3 to 4: Running

Marker 4 to 1: Jogging backwards

- **Here, There, Everywhere**

The children begin with random movement in designated play area. The parent/coach intermittently calls:

“HERE”: everyone runs towards the coach

“THERE”: meaning towards a specific location (in the direction the parent/coach is pointing)

“EVERYWHERE”: meaning run in any direction, except towards the parent/coach

- **Ball in Hoop Relay**

Children take it in turns running out and back to alternately pick up and drop off a bean bag / ball from their hoops which are set 5-10 metres away.

- **Up and Back relay**

Children are paired off and take turns in running up and back as many times as possible in a set time (e.g. 30 seconds). Partner keeps tally and then swap to attempt to beat previous best score.

Throwing Activities

- **Climb the Ladder**

Construct a ladder; beginning one metre in front of each group by placing hoops in line, flat on the ground. On command, the first player attempts to toss the ball/bean bag underarm and land it on the full, on its edge, in the first hoop. If they are successful, they move their marker up next to the second hoop in line. When it is time for their next turn, they attempt to land the ball/bean bag in the second hoop, and so on until they have reached the last hoop (top of the ladder). Should their ball/bean bag at any time miss the hoop they are aiming for, they must continue to attempt to land their ball/bean bag in that hoop, with each successive turn, until it is achieved. Players must hit the targets in order (i.e. first hoop, then second hoop, then third etc.).

- **Minefield**

Players line up in pairs or groups of no more than four behind ground markers. Scatter numerous hoops (mines) in front of the players. Place special targets just beyond the ‘minefield’. Players attempt to throw for maximum distance and accuracy to score points. Scores are as follows:

Hit mine = no point

Land in minefield = 1 point Over minefield = 2 points Hit Target = 3 points

Jumping Activities

- **Jump Relay**

Divide group into even teams. Set markers approximately 5-10 metres apart and have half of the team at one marker and the other half at the other end. As per a relay race, on the start command the children jump to their team mate, tag and join the end of the line. Once tagged the next child continues the relay. Play for predetermined time or number of changes.

- **Standing High Jump**

As the name suggests it is essentially high jump - without the mats or bar. Have the children stand side on to a line. Have them step over the line with the closest leg going over the line first. Attempt a number of times increase difficulty by jumping in the same manner (i.e. leg closest to the line first) then with small run up. Attempt with both legs by changing the way the children stand against the line.

- **Toe Taps**

Create a play area of about 10m in length. Divide the group into fairly even lines (e.g. four). On start command, the first child in each line (i.e. four children), start walking forward. When a whistle is blown they perform a jump. Upon landing they have to touch their toes with their hands, get up, and run to the other side.

- **Wigwams and Indians**

This is a game for any even number of competitors. The players are arranged in teams of two, either Indians or Wigwams and positioned in two large circles (approximately 20m - 30m in diameter). The 'Indians' sit with crossed arms and crossed legs, facing the centre of the circle. The 'Wigwams' stand behind the Indians with arms crossed and legs spread wide. The caller of the game can call either Indians or Wigwams. If Indian is called the Indians crawls between the Wigwams legs and skips around the outside of the circle in an anti-clock wise direction. An Indian on returning to the Wigwam crawls though the legs and sits up straight as in the starting position.

The first Indian back is the winner. A Wigwam called will skip in the same direction and on returning to their Indian stand up straight. The first Wigwam to stand up straight behind the Indian is the winner.

Games / Other Activities

- **Hurdles**

Set up a grid of obstacles to run over. There should be two (or more) lines of obstacles with three to four obstacles in each line. There should be four to five walking paces in between each obstacle. The obstacles should increase in height. For example the first line is skipping ropes, second line is markers, third line small (15cm) hurdles. Spend a predetermined amount of time on each series of obstacles, with adequate drink stoppages in between if required.

- **Balloon Games**

Divide the group into even teams and supply one balloon for each team. Set up playing area as for a shuttle relay with markers 5-10 metres apart and have half of the team at one end, with the other half at the other. On start command the teams run to other end to pass balloon to team mate. Variations of this could include, hold balloon between the knees, hold above head, behind back or between legs - one hand in front, one behind. Play for a predetermined amount of time or exchanges.

- **Balloon Relays**

1. Divide the group into even teams and supply one balloon for each team. All members stand in a line and have the balloon passed over their heads to the end. The last child then runs to the front and passes over their heads. Play for a predetermined amount of time, distance travelled, or exchanges.
2. Set up and play as above, however instead of passing overhead, pass between legs down the line.
3. Set up and play as per number 1, however instead of passing overhead, pass over head, then through legs, over and under down the line.