

Orienteering Development Model

A framework of 5 stages supporting a healthy sport experience. Promoting an active, healthy lifestyle through orienteering to reach our full potential.

Stage 5
Inspire, Support, Share
Age: All

5

Stage 4
Participate, Master, Lead
(elite competition)
Age: 15+

Stage 4
Participate, Master, Lead
(specialization)
Age: 15+

4

Stage 3
Collaborate, Elevate, Train
Age: 12+

3

Stage 2
Interact, Develop, Challenge
Age: 6+

2

Stage 1
Experience, Explore, Play
Age: 0+

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Based on [TeamUSA](#)
[American](#)
[Development Model](#)

Introduction: The Orienteering Development Model follows the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee's [TeamUSA American Development Model](#), (ADM) which "help[s] Americans realize their full athletic potential and utilize sport as a path toward an active and healthy lifestyle. The model utilizes long-term athlete development and quality coaching concepts to promote sustained physical activity, athlete safety and age-appropriate development with the aim of creating a positive experience for American athletes across all levels of sport." A key component of this model is the emphasis on play and having fun in the early stages of introduction to sport, in our case, orienteering.

The Development Model consists of 5 Key Principles, 4 Key Outcomes, and 5 Developmental Stages.

Key Principles

The ADM suggests that quality sport experiences should incorporate five key principles to help keep more Americans engaged in sport:

1. Universal access to create opportunity for all athletes
2. Developmentally appropriate activities that emphasize motor and foundational skills
3. Multi-sport participation
4. Fun, engaging and progressively challenging atmosphere
5. Quality coaching at all age levels

Key Outcomes

By creating early positive experiences for all athletes, the ADM will help keep more children engaged in sport longer with four clear outcomes:

1. Grow both the general athlete population and the pool of elite athletes from which future U.S. Olympians and Paralympians are selected
2. Develop fundamental skills that transfer between sports
3. Provide an appropriate avenue to fulfill an individual's athletic potential
4. Create a generation that loves sport and physical activity, and transfers that passion to the next generation

Stages

The ADM is comprised of five stages designed to create a healthy sport experience and support an athlete's advancement based on their physical, mental and emotional level, and potential for growth.

In adapting the ADM for orienteering, we asked a few fundamental questions:

1. How does the ADM relate to how we understand orienteers developing over a lifetime?
2. What are strengths in our community that we want to maintain?
3. What are some habits not aligned with the ADM that we want to redirect towards more effective, inviting practices?

Orienteering USA's (OUSA) Orienteering Development Model has five stages, all centered on the orienteering community. The verbs that describe each stage invite the reader to think of orienteering as an activity with broad applications and possibilities; a traditional event with White through Blue courses is but one path. Each stage builds on the next as a slow, deliberate approach to mastery by emphasizing community engagement and individual growth and reflection. Beginning orienteers discover technical and physical aspects of orienteering through games, fun activities, and play - even as adults. The experience of play and group engagement invites participants to hone their skills and participate in more traditional orienteering formats, but also to explore new ideas and transfer them to further development of the sport. As individuals become more engaged, they become more specialized in their focus and more deeply involved in the community. The overarching goal of this model is to provide a healthy, forward-thinking approach to the progression of orienteering development, both as individuals and as a living community.

OUSA's goal is for anyone interacting with this framework to use it as a guide rather than a rulebook. We believe that the progression of stages defined below and principles of the ODM are a strong, safe approach that anyone can implement. As a community, we will thrive by constantly finding new approaches to implement these principles while keeping orienteering engaging and fun. We hope the community will consider the ideas proposed in this model as a means not only to further develop those in the sport today, but to promote orienteering as a sport for those who will discover it tomorrow.

Stage 1: Experience, Explore, Play

Age: 0 - up

Focus: Safety, Experience, Relationship, Location, Direction

Description: In this stage of development, the focus is on introducing a person to orienteering. The terms experience, explore and play describe the mood of the type of activities that should be offered at this level. **Experience** refers to all the basic aspects of the sport. The goal here is to give a new person a wide variety of simple experiences that make the sport fun, such as punching a control, running through terrain, and searching for things. **Explore** is designed to introduce a person to orienteering opportunities for them to discover capacities that they did not know they had, and to find new areas to explore or re-discover an area with a new perspective. **Play** describes the medium that these activities should be approached from. In play, a person is free to engage at whatever level possible; it naturally invites problem-solving and strategy, imagination and engagement, without over-intellectually processing. Experience, Explore and Play are designed to work together for a fun holistic introduction to orienteering.

# sequence	Area of Development	Areas of Learning
1.1	Individual: Participant	Comfort and familiarity with space, various environments, and relation to self Develop body coordination and spatial awareness Develop gross motor skills Develop senses
1.2	Physical: Discovery	New capacities and abilities New boundaries Through Games and play Nature and natural areas
1.3	Technical: Learning	To use a variety of navigational perspectives Spatial relations in a variety of environments To physically explore a bounded area and discover what is there To run through terrain To move through a variety of environments safely To name features in the environment To describe distance relationships in simple language
1.4	Social: Play	Learning through games and imagination Skill development through group activities

Stage 2: Interact, Develop, Challenge

Age: 6 - up

Focus: A place to build from

Description: In Stage 2, individuals who like orienteering move from experiencing and exploring to participating in regular skill and capacity development, forming a basis for future orienteering training. **Interact** has multiple applications, including interacting with other people in the sport, with a variety of games and exercises, and with maps. Those just experiencing the sport (Stage 1) are testing the waters; in the second phase, they are interacting with orienteering and orienteers in a way that forges a long-lasting connection. Activities and exercises should include a variety of types of interaction to build these connections. **Develop** takes the “explore” in Stage 1 further. In exploring, individuals discover certain capacities to navigate and move through terrain. The “develop” phase transforms nascent abilities into working tools by building understanding of relationships between terrain and map to identify the processes that, when repeated correctly, result in success. **Challenge** builds from explore. In exploring, individuals discover new terrain; in challenge, they test their abilities to navigate in that terrain, such as by running faster through the terrain, trying an off-trail route, and generally pushing perceived limits.

# sequence	Area of Development	Areas of Learning
2.1	Individual: Learner	Continuing to develop fundamental movement skills Hone fine motor skills Practice multiple coordinated movement patterns Associate word concepts with real landmarks Understand orienteering sport vocabulary Push personal limits Practice creative thinking patterns
2.2	Physical: Development	Confidence in moving through terrain Connections with other participants Safe practices for navigation Self awareness Observational skills Physical capacity Mental focus Memory
2.3	Technical: Practice	Reading a variety of types of maps

		Connecting map to terrain and terrain to map Spatial awareness and relationships Staying connected to the map Staying oriented Decision making in a variety of activities Physical pacing
2.4	Social: Challenge	Game-based challenges where kids are able to explore personal limits Challenges based on personal improvement Team-based challenges that promote collaboration

Stage 3: Collaborate, Elevate, Train

Age: 12 - up

Focus: Team Orienteering

Description: In this stage of development, the focus is on expanding the experiences and skills from Stage 2. **Collaborate** develops connections into relationships. This happens through group activities, pushing each other in training, sharing navigational experiences, refining technique as a group, and coming together as a team. **Elevate** builds on Stage 2's challenge, developing commitment to hard training. In the elevate phase, participants build orienteering ability through regular physical training, more challenging technical training, stronger interaction with the community, and self-discipline. **Train** refers to repetition and increased time practicing orienteering. As with anything, it takes a significant amount of time to reach a level of competence and ultimately mastery. Entering Stage 3 orienteers are able to finish an intermediate course. Mature stage 3 orienteers train often enough to be competent and confident in their ability to complete an advanced orienteering course.

# sequence	Area of Development	Areas of Learning
3.1	Individual: Athlete	Push the limits of fundamental movement skills by exploring new environments Challenge fine motor skills by introducing more complex scenarios Recognize and articulate when movement patterns don't feel "right" Practice creative thinking patterns under pressure or with constraints Develop a training plan with a mentor or coach Identify personal strengths and areas to improve, with guidance
3.2	Physical: Stretch	Develop physical endurance capacity Introduce interval training Introduce basics of strength training Practice map-reading while running; explore the interplay of mental and physical performance Research nutrition and health-related habits. Explore a variety of activities to develop physical strength and endurance
3.3	Technical: Train	Identifying route choices and selecting the best route for the individual Reading a variety of types of maps under pressure or with constraints Learning how to transfer skills to a variety of terrain types Develop pre-race and post-race technical and reflection practices Develop situational awareness of when specific skills apply in specific situations Develop fundamental skills to the point where they are automatic (procedural memory)

		Analyze result data, identifying trends in strengths and areas of focus to inform goal-setting and training plan development
3.4	Social: Compete	<p>Participate in a fun, structured and ongoing training program</p> <p>Race in local and regional events</p> <p>Leverage long-distance, mass start events as opportunities to learn</p> <p>Interact with teammates about experiences, goals, and plans</p> <p>Volunteer</p> <p>Participate in endurance race formats other than orienteering</p> <p>Train with teammates and juniors from your region and from around the country</p>

Stage 4: Participate, Master, Lead

Age: 15 - up

Focus: Contributing as a member of the orienteering community

Description: As orienteers attain advanced-level competence, individual goals, abilities and temperaments will lead to specialization. **Participate** builds on collaborative relationships from Stage 3 and reflects different interests, as some broaden their orienteering interests, perhaps through developing skills in different disciplines, or developing expertise in course design, mapping, or putting on events (4a) and others seek a narrow focus of competing at the elite level (4b). **Lead** reflects the opportunity for increased responsibility as experienced orienteers step forward to organize others in their area of specialization. **Master** refers to achieving a skilled level of practice, marked by independence, self-confidence and self-efficacy: a model for others to emulate.

#	Area of Development	Areas of Learning (a) “Participate and Succeed”	Area of Development	Areas of Learning (b) “Excel for High Performance”
4.1	Individual: Community Participant	How to lead others to accomplish a technical task How to coordinate actions to achieve a common goal Lifelong fitness and orienteering skill development	Individual: Elite Athlete	Committed to a long-term training plan Foster positive interactions with teammates Work effectively with a coach Serve as a role model and an ambassador of the sport
4.2	Physical: Expand	Specialization: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaching• Course design• Event management• Publicity• Map-making• Organizing• Governance (club and OUSA committees and boards)	Physical: Excel	Incorporate sport-specific strength and conditioning program into training Incorporate a variety of specific developmental cross-training into training program Increase sport-specific training Increase physical training loads Train in a variety of terrain types Refine biomechanical efficiency Incorporate specific nutrition habits to enhance training Develop clear periodization in training program Develop healthy long term sustainable practices.

4.3	Technical: Holistic Sport	<p>Broad understanding of interrelationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping • Course setting • Event management • Land Permissions • Sport development and progression • Technical Analysis • Rules • Scheduling • Promotion • Communication and media • Community sustainability 	Technical: Master	<p>Terrain-specific preparation for key races</p> <p>Refine subtle navigational skill for maximal efficiency in the specific terrain type</p> <p>Identify a disciplinary specialization (urban vs. forest).</p> <p>Develop race-specific tests to track progress</p> <p>Developing and honing race-specific strategies</p> <p>Develop healthy race and training psychology for long term sustainability</p>
4.4	Social: Fun and Self-Growth	<p>Compete for challenge and fun</p> <p>Model and hold others in the community to a high standard of safe and positive interactions.</p> <p>Be a steward of the environment and an ambassador of the sport</p>	Social: Compete to Win	<p>Support team development</p> <p>Value team success as much as individual performance</p> <p>Push each other to improve</p> <p>Represent the face of the sport with integrity</p>

Stage 5: Inspire, Support, Share

Age: All

Focus: Giving back

Description: For some, orienteering will become a life-long passion worth sharing with others, and they will become the mentors who encourage others to grow. **Inspire** builds on the Lead focus from Stage 4 by encouraging others at all levels to experience, develop, elevate, collaborate, participate, and master. **Support** refers to many modes of giving back, such as coaching, sharing practices, organizing groups of experts, funding, and networking to create opportunities. **Share** involves telling the stories of how orienteering has influenced one's life path.

# sequence	Area of Development	Areas of Learning
5.1	Individual: All levels of participation	Be a resource for the community Support the community from areas of strength Mentor and inspire others Transfer orienteering concepts to other areas of application (and vice versa)
5.2	Physical: Maintain skill level	Adapt specialization to changing abilities, capabilities, technology, and opportunities Serve as a master: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coach• Course designer• Event director• Publicist• Map-maker• Organizer• Committee Chair or Board Member
5.3	Technical: Mentor	Share technical approaches that worked and did not work Guide with questions Help others see interconnectedness of ideas, actions
5.4	Social: Thrive	Continue to participate and compete in orienteering Maintain lifelong connections Continue to build new connections Provide guidance for the continuing evolution of orienteering

