THE FOUNDRY · BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

THE PARENT'S GUIDE TO YOUTH SPEED DEVELOPMENT

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES · 2026–2027 EDITION

Every parent has watched their child run and wondered whether they could be faster. The answer is almost always yes. Speed is not only a gift some children are born with. It is a skill that can be taught, practiced, and measured. This guide explains how speed develops from ages 6 to 16, what builds it, what holds it back, and what to look for in a training program.

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE

Speed is a skill before it is a statistic.
Taught well, it is built for life.
Taught poorly, it is lost to injury and frustration.

IRON SHARPENS IRON · PROVERBS 27:17 · KJV

1. SPEED CAN BE DEVELOPED

Children are not simply "fast" or "slow." How fast a child runs depends on how well they move: how they hold their posture, where their feet strike the ground, how they use their arms, and how much force they can produce. Each of these can be coached.

Childhood is the best time to learn. Movement patterns learned early, good or poor, tend to stay. A child who learns to sprint correctly at eight builds on that foundation for years. A child who never learns often plateaus as a teenager, when correcting habits becomes harder.

2. WHAT SPEED IS MADE OF

Speed is not one quality. It is several, and each is trained differently.

QUALITY	WHAT IT IS	HOW IT SHOWS UP
Acceleration	Reaching speed quickly from a standstill	The first steps of a race, a break on the field
Top-end speed	The fastest an athlete can run once fully accelerated	The middle of a sprint
Mechanics	Posture, arm action, and foot strike	Running smoothly rather than straining
Power	Force produced in a short time	Jumping, bounding, explosive starts
Speed endurance	Holding speed and pace without fading	The end of a race, the late stages of a game

A well-designed program measures each of these separately, so that a family can see exactly where an athlete is improving.

3. WHAT MATTERS AT EACH AGE

AGE	FOCUS	WHAT TO AVOID
6 to 8	Coordination, balance, landing, and the joy of running. Skills are taught through structured games and movement drills.	Long, repetitive drills; adult-style workouts; heavy competition pressure
9 to 12	Sprint technique, acceleration, and basic strength with bodyweight. Many coaches consider these the prime years for learning skill.	Training through pain; specializing in one sport year-round
13 to 16	Top-end speed, power, structured strength, and competition preparation, adjusted to each athlete's growth.	Comparing athletes who are growing at different rates; adding volume too quickly

Athletes of the same age can be years apart in physical development. A good coach trains the athlete in front of them, not the number on their birth certificate.

4. WHAT BUILDS SPEED, AND WHAT DOES NOT

BUILDS SPEED	DOES NOT BUILD SPEED
Short sprints at high quality with full rest between repetitions	Long runs and laps done while tired
Coaching on posture, arm action, and foot strike	Running more without correction
Jumping, skipping, and bounding with good landing technique	Exhausting conditioning used as punishment
Consistent training across a full term	Occasional intense sessions with long gaps
Measuring progress against the athlete's own baseline	Comparing a child to older or more developed peers

Speed is trained when the athlete is fresh. A child who is sprinting while exhausted is practicing running slowly.

5. SLEEP, FOOD, AND WATER

Training creates the demand. Recovery produces the improvement.

- **Sleep** is the most important recovery tool a child has. Pediatric sleep guidelines recommend 9 to 12 hours per night for children ages 6 to 12, and 8 to 10 hours for teenagers ages 13 to 18.
- **Food:** regular meals with protein, fruit, vegetables, and whole grains, and a light snack one to two hours before training. Athletes should not train on an empty stomach.
- **Water** throughout the day, not only during training. A child who is thirsty at practice started the day behind.

6. GROWTH, PAIN, AND REST

- **Growth spurts** can temporarily affect coordination and speed. This is normal, and athletes return to progress as their bodies adjust.
- **Pain is information, not weakness.** Pain that persists, worsens, causes limping, or appears in the same place repeatedly should be checked by a doctor. Children should never be encouraged to train through it.
- **Head injuries:** any child suspected of a concussion should stop activity immediately and return only with clearance from a licensed healthcare provider.
- **Rest:** sports medicine guidance commonly recommends at least one to two days off from organized training each week, and time away from a single sport during the year. Variety builds a more complete athlete and reduces overuse injury.

7. THE PARENT'S ROLE

Parents shape how a child experiences sport more than any coach.

- **Praise effort, discipline, and attitude**, the things an athlete controls, more than times and results.
- **Keep the ride home gentle.** Ask "What did you learn today?" before "How did you do?"
- **Let the coach coach.** Encouragement from the sideline helps; instruction from the sideline confuses.
- **Model the standard:** arriving on time, keeping commitments, and treating others with honor.

Character is trained the same way speed is: through repetition, correction, and consistency.

8. CHOOSING A TRAINING PROGRAM

Before enrolling your child in any program, ask these questions.

QUESTION	WHAT A STRONG ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE
Are all coaches background-checked and CPR certified?	Yes, for every coach, renewed on a schedule
Is there a written curriculum?	A defined term with phases and a consistent session structure
How is progress measured?	The same tests at set points, with written reports to families
How are athletes grouped?	By age and stage of development, not all together
How many athletes are coached at once?	A set capacity, with coaches assigned to small groups
How do coaches communicate with athletes?	Only through official channels, with parents included
What happens if my child is injured or unwell?	A clear emergency plan and a written concussion policy
What does the program teach beyond athletics?	A stated standard of character and conduct

9. ABOUT THE FOUNDRY

The Foundry is a Christ-centered institution for the formation of young athletes, ages 6 to 16. Its first division, Foundry Track & Field, trains athletes in eight-week terms across three development tracks: Foundational (ages 6 to 8), Developmental (ages 9 to 12), and Performance (ages 13 to 16).

- **Measured progress:** every athlete is assessed in Weeks 1, 4, and 8 on five tests: 30m Acceleration, 60m Top-End Speed, Standing Broad Jump, 800m Aerobic Test, and a coach-graded Mechanics Form Score. Families receive written progress reports.

- **Character formation:** effort, discipline, and accountability are coached and rated, and every Saturday the Leadership Circle teaches one trait of character grounded in Scripture.
- **Safeguarding:** background-checked, CPR-certified coaches, capacity limited to 20 athletes per training day, and a designated Safeguarding Officer.

01

Book an evaluation at theaptgym.com/foundry/evaluation.

02

Your athlete completes a short assessment with a guardian present, and receives a recommended track.

03

Choose your training days and enroll for the term.

This guide provides general educational information about youth athletic development. It is not medical advice. Consult your child's doctor before beginning any new physical activity, and about any pain, injury, or health concern.

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