



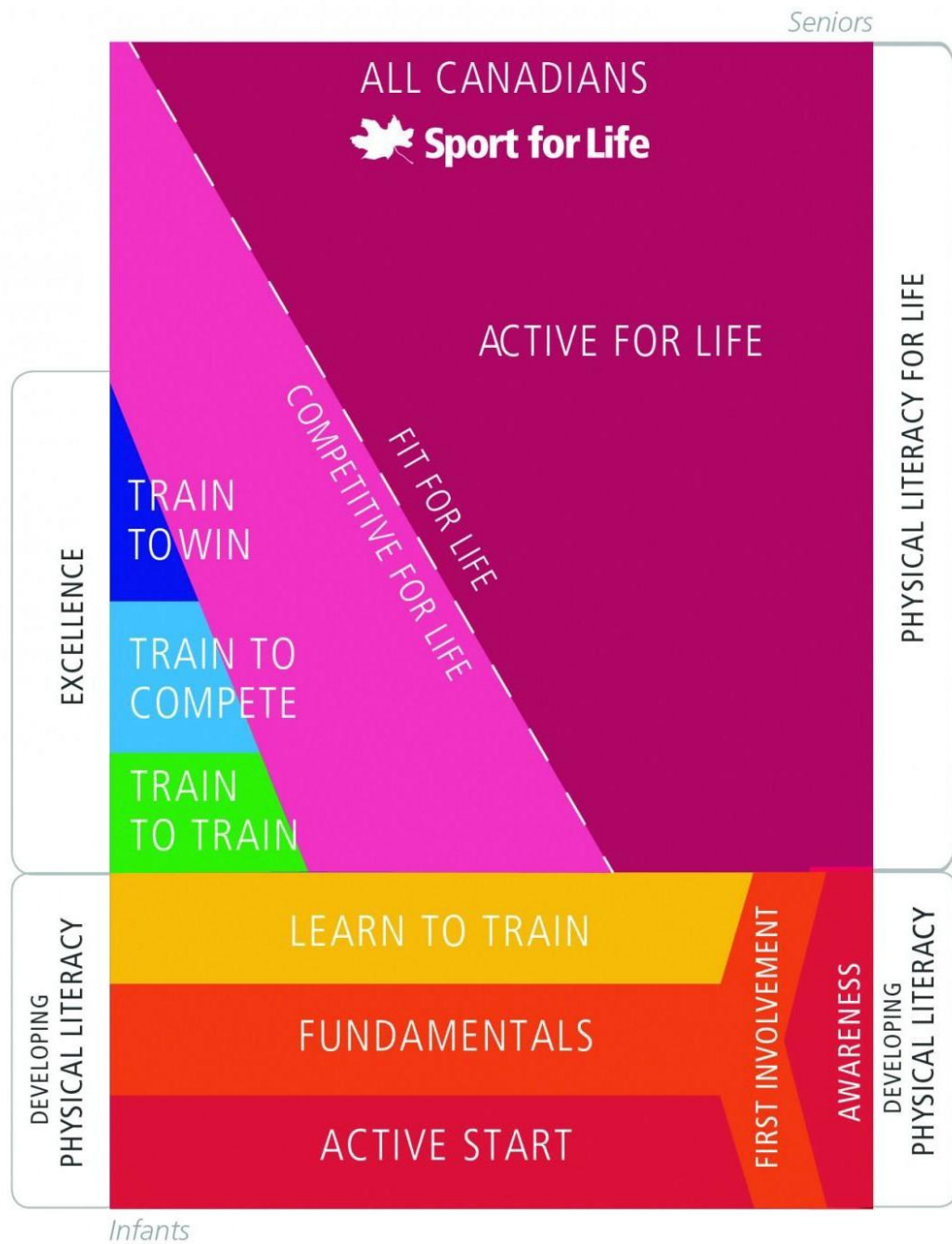
PERFORMANCE PATHWAYS FOR ATHLETES WITH LOW VISION

Sport and recreation provide meaningful opportunities for people who are visually impaired to be active, build fundamental movement skills, and connect with others in the community.

This document outlines the performance pathways available across different sports, outlining the opportunities for individuals with vision impairments to get involved and progress at all levels.

Guided by the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model, individuals can choose to stay active recreationally or develop to high-performance goals, such as the Paralympics. Regardless of the path, the goal is to remain staying active for life.

OVERVIEW- Long-Term Development in Sport & Activity



(Sport for Life, 2023)

Evolution of Inclusion: Sport for Life strives to advance inclusion by ensuring that underserved populations of girls and women, individuals with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, newcomers to Canada, the LGBTQI2S community, aging adults, and those living in poverty and isolated communities have access to barrier-free and quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

Performance Pathways for Visually Impaired Athletes

Background:

A performance pathway describes the various levels of competition and opportunities that can progress over time through the training, coaching, and determination of an athlete. Listed below are the performance pathways of sports that have been adapted for visually impaired athletes beginning at the fundamental level through to the international level.

Different Levels in Sport:

- **Beginner Level:** Learn and practice the fundamental movement skills of a new sport through a fun, informal, and games-based competition. At this level athletes will learn the basic tactics and strategies of a sport and develop both confidence and competence within that sport.
- **Intermediate/Competitive Level:** Athletes become proficient in the technical strategies, tactics, and skills required to compete in a sport at a provincial or national level. At this level athletes are specialized within the sport and focus on game strategies and tactics, as well as overall nutrition, strength, and fitness.
- **International Competitions:** Athletes are highly specialized within a sport and compete at the highest level of competition.

Sight Classifications:

Sight classifications are used to identify the level of vision of an athlete. The most common categories of sight classifications are known as B1, B2, and B3, where:

- B1 – No light perception in either eye up to light perception, but inability to recognize the shape of a hand at any distance in any direction.
- B2 – From ability to recognize the shape of a hand up to visual acuity of 2/60 and/or visual field of less than 5 degrees.
- B3 – From visual acuity above 2/60 up to visual acuity of 6/60 and/or visual field of more than 5 degrees and less than 20 degrees.

However, each sport has their own categories for sight classifications, therefore both the letter and number may vary. For example, in swimming the sight categories are known as S11, S12, and S13.



GOALBALL

Beginner Level: ASRAB Youth Programs

- Learn the fundamental skills of goalball, get active, and have FUN!

- **Sight Classifications:**

*Goalball can also be played by people with no visual impairments at the beginner level as all players wear eyeshades.

Intermediate/Competitive Level:

- Both junior and senior athletes can train to compete at a regional, provincial, and national level.

International Competitions:

1. **Parapan American Games:** Compete at an international level in the Parapan American Games, which includes North, South, and Central America, as well as the Caribbean.
<https://www.paralympic.org/americas-paralympic-committee/goalball>
2. **IBSA World Championships and Games:** Compete as a goalball athlete in the International Blind Sports Association World Championship.
<https://goalball.sport/>
3. **Paralympics:** Compete on a world stage at the Paralympic Games held every four years.
<https://www.paralympic.org/goalball/about>

- **Sight Classifications for Goalball:**

B1 – No light perception in either eye up to light perception, but inability to recognize the shape of a hand at any distance in any direction.

B2 – From ability to recognize the shape of a hand up to visual acuity of 2/60 and/or visual field of less than 5 degrees.

B3 – From visual acuity above 2/60 up to visual acuity of 6/60 and/or visual field of more than 5 degrees and less than 20 degrees.

* All athletes competing at a national/international level must be sight classified



Goalball Athletes & Stories:

<https://ottawasportspages.ca/2024/08/28/fifth-paralympics-anything-but-old-fiddle-to-goalball-captain-amy-burk/>

<https://paralympic.ca/athlete/whitney-bogart/>

MARTIAL ARTS

Beginner Level: ASRAB Youth and Adult Programs

- Learn the fundamental skills of martial arts, get active, and have FUN!
- ASRAB Programs:
 - Self defense
 - Tai Chi
 - Judo
 - Kick Boxing
 - Taekwondo

Intermediate/Competitive Level:

- Athletes can train to compete at a regional, provincial, and national level in:
 - Judo

International Competitions:

1. **Parapan American Games:** Compete at an international level in the Parapan American Games, which includes North, South, and Central America, as well as the Caribbean.
2. **IBSA World Championships and Games:** Compete as a judo athlete in the International Blind Sports Association World Championship.
3. **Paralympics:** Compete on a world stage at the Paralympic Games held every four years.
<https://www.paralympic.org/judo>

- **Sight Classifications:**

J1 – An athlete's vision impairment must result in a visual acuity of less than or equal to LogMAR 2.6 in binocular vision (IBSA Judo, 2023).

J2 – The athlete's visual acuity must be within a range between LogMAR 1.3 and 2.5 with binocular vision, or with a binocular visual field of 60 degrees or less in diameter (IBSA Judo, 2023).

Martial Arts Athletes & Stories

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-66815767>

<https://www.cbc.ca/sports/paralympics/summer/para-judo/paralympics-judo-gagne-rules-1.7313281>

ATHLETICS (TRACK & FIELD)

Beginner Level: ASRAB youth and adult programs

- Athletics 'Try-It' Events
- Walking club

Intermediate/Competitive Level: Track and field athletes can compete at ASAA (Alberta School's Athletic Association)

- 100m race
- 200m race
- Shotput
- Para Cross-country



International Competitions:

1. IBSA (International Blind Sports Federation) World Games

Events:

- Track- Sprint (100m, 200m, 400m), Middle Distance (800m, 1500m), Long Distance (5000m, 10,000m).
- Field Events: Long jump, high jump, triple jump, discus, shot put, and javelin.

2. Paralympics

Events:

- Track- Sprint (100m, 200m, 400m), Middle Distance (800m, 1500m), Long Distance (5000m), and Relay.
- Field Events: Long jump, discus, shot put, javelin, and club throw.

- **Sight Classifications:**

T/F11- No vision, athlete competes with guide.

T/F12- Very limited vision, athlete has the choice to compete with or without a guide.

T/F13- Limited vision, athlete competed unguided.

Athletics Athletes & Stories

<https://ottawasportspages.ca/2025/06/11/high-achievers-jules-leger-visually-impaired-athletes-earn-7-medals-2-team-titles-at-ofsaa-track-and-field-championships/>

<https://paralympic.ca/news/bianca-borgella-emerges-a-new-star-in-canadian-para-athletics/>

<https://www.teamusa.com/news/2023/july/10/lex-gillette-has-vision-for-paris-and-beyond>

HOCKEY

Beginner Level: Youth and All Ages Programs

- ASRAB Hosts weekly Blind Hockey practices/games as well as an annual Alberta Blind Hockey Challenge
- Canadian Blind Hockey hosts youth programs and camps in Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer
<https://canadianblindhockey.com/children-and-youth-programs/>
<https://canadianblindhockey.com/news/upcoming-cbh-intl-events-for-2024-2025-season/>

Intermediate/Competitive Level:

- Seeing Ice Dogs- Calgary Blind Hockey Team
- Canines- Camrose Blind Hockey Team
- Bullseye- Central Alberta Blind Hockey Team
- See Hawks- Edmonton Blind Hockey Team

International Competitions:

- Canadian National Blind Hockey Team (International Blind Ice Hockey Federation- IBIHf)

- **Sight Classifications:**

B1 – No light perception in either eye up to light perception, but inability to recognize the shape of a hand at any distance in any direction.

B2 – From ability to recognize the shape of a hand up to visual acuity of 2/60 and/or visual field of less than 5 degrees.

B3 – From visual acuity above 2/60 up to visual acuity of 6/60 and/or visual field of more than 5 degrees and less than 20 degrees.

Hockey Athletes & Stories

<https://www.thesudburystar.com/sports/sudburys-amanda-provan-caps-stellar-season-with-blind-hockey-title>

<https://whdh.com/regional/maine/17-year-old-blind-hockey-player-from-maine-breaking-barriers-on-the-ice/>

<https://6abc.com/post/philadelphia-blind-hockey-founder-kelsey-mcguire-making-sport-more-accessible-everyone/16051793/>

SOCCER/FOOTBALL 5-A-SIDE

Beginner Level: ASRAB Youth and All Ages Programs

- ASRAB soccer programs occur outdoors in the spring and summer.

International Competitions:

1. **Paralympics:** Compete on a world stage at the Paralympic Games held every four years.
2. **IBSA (International Blind Sports Federation) World Games**



- **Sight Classifications:**

B1 – No light perception in either eye up to light perception, but inability to recognize the shape of a hand at any distance in any direction.

****Only visually impaired athletes that fall within the sight classification of B1 can compete in football 5-a-side at the Paralympic Games (Canadian Paralympic Committee, 2023).**

Football Athletes & Stories

<https://www.premierleague.com/news/4146985>

<https://paralympic.ca/athlete/matt-gilbert/>

SWIMMING

Beginner Level: Youth and Adult Programs

- ASRAB offers youth swimming programs as well as adult aquacise programs in the spring and summer.

International Competitions:

1. Paralympics:

-Freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, individual medley, and relay.

2. Parapan American Games: Compete at an international level in the Parapan American Games, which includes North, South, and Central America, as well as the Caribbean.

Events: 50-400m freestyle, 50-100m butterfly, medley (relay) 150-200m (butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle).

- **Sight Classifications:**

S11- Very little or no vision at all, athletes are required blackout goggles and use of tappers to indicate where the wall is

S12- Some vision, can make out shapes.

S13-More vision than S11 and S12, however less than 20 degrees of vision.

Swimming Athletes/Stories

<https://www.nhl.com/islanders/news/anastasia-pagonis-thrives-and-inspires-in-paralympic-journey>

<https://paralympic.ca/athlete/nicholas-bennett/>

DRAGON BOAT RACING

Beginner Level: Dragon Boat Race Program

- ASRAB competes every August in the Calgary and Lethbridge Dragon Boat Festival. The program includes 5-7 weeks of practice and the Dragon Boat Festival weekend competition.

Intermediate/Competitive Level:

- Dragon Boat Canada Para Team
- The 16th IDBF World Dragon Boat Racing 2023 Championships were held in Pattaya

International Competitions:

- **Paralympics:** Compete in Para Rowing (1000m).
 - Men's & women's single skulls
 - Mixed double skulls, coaxed fours
- **Sight Classifications:**
 - S11- Very little or no vision at all.
 - S12- Some vision, can make out shapes.
 - S13- More vision than S11 and S12, however less than 20 degrees of vision.

Dragon Boat/Para Rowing Athletes & Stories

<https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/visually-impaired-team-race-in-dragon-boat-festival-1.920276>

<https://paralympic.ca/team-canada/victoria-nolan#:~:text=Multi%20%2Dtalented%20Victoria%20Nolan%20is,member%20of%20Canada's%20Para%20rowing>



SKIING

Beginner Level:

- ASRAB offers Nordic skiing winter programs.

International Competitions:

- **Paralympics:**
 - Para-Alpine: downhill, super-g, slalom, giant slalom, and super combined
 - Para-Nordic: cross country and biathlon.

- **Sight Classifications:**

B1 – No light perception in either eye up to light perception, but inability to recognize the shape of a hand at any distance in any direction.

B2 – From ability to recognize the shape of a hand up to visual acuity of 2/60 and/or visual field of less than 5 degrees.

B3 – From visual acuity above 2/60 up to visual acuity of 6/60 and/or visual field of more than 5 degrees and less than 20 degrees.

Skiing Athletes & Stories

<https://paralympic.ca/team-canada/mac-marcoux>

<https://triblive.com/local/regional/a-freeing-experience-guides-help-visually-impaired-skiers-take-to-seven-springs-slopes/>

<https://paralympic.ca/athlete/kalle-eriksson/>

PARA CYCLING

Beginner Level:

- ASRAB offers both youth and adult programs for tandem cycling.

International Competitions:

1. **Paralympics** – 2025 world championships will be held in Rio de Janeiro
2. **Parapan American Games:** Compete at an international level in the Parapan American Games, which includes North, South, and Central America, as well as the Caribbean.
Events: Road cycling 7-10 km, and track cycling 200m-4km.

- **Sight Classifications:**

Athletes with visual impairments compete on a tandem bike with a sighted cyclist in front called a “pilot” (International Paralympic Committee, n.d.).



Tandem Cycling Athletes & Stories

<https://www.fox17online.com/news/local-news/grand-rapids/association-for-the-blind-and-visually-impaired-receives-15k-tandem-bike>

<https://paralympic.ca/athlete/daniel-chalifour/>

PARA ROCK CLIMBING

Beginner Level:

- ASRAB offers a program of indoor rock climbing

International Competitions:

- **Paralympics (2028)** – Athletes will scale a 15m wall while routes will feature different holds and angles, challenging climbers to strategize and adapt based on terrain

- **Sight Classifications:**

B1 (Visually Impaired: Completely or almost completely blind *must wear blindfold during competition regardless of sight)

B2 (Visually Impaired: Moderately blind)

B3 (Visually Impaired: Legally blind with corrective measures)



Rock Climbing Athletes & Stories

<https://paralympic.ca/news/para-climbers-excited-about-paralympic-games-inclusion/>

<https://climbingcanada.ca/para-national-team-program/>