

# EARLY SPECIALIZATION in SPORTS: PROs & CONs



Youth sports specialization is increasingly common. Parents and coaches hope that early specialization will guarantee accolades and open doors to other, exclusive opportunities.

But there are risks with early specialization. A growing body of evidence is proving that the benefits of sports sampling for young children outweigh those of specialization.

## PROs of Specialization

- Current age success
- Young peak performance
- Elite training and competition opportunities

## CONs of Specialization

- More frequent and more serious injury
- Burnout and dropout
- Inflated expectations and disappointment

## A SPORTS SAMPLING Approach

A multi-sport approach gives young athletes substantial benefits in most situations, including:

### Having more fun!

Kids are more likely to find a sport they actually enjoy when they sample different activities, which in turn increases the likelihood that they'll play sports longer throughout their lives and stay in the game.

### Accelerated cognitive development

Kids enjoy an increased transfer of skills to other sports which translates to better pattern recognition and decision making as they mature.

### Better social-emotional resilience

Kids who sample different sports enjoy greater confidence, motivation, and self-direction.

**7 OUT OF 10 OLYMPIC ATHLETES** surveyed by the United States Olympic Committee said they grew up as **MULTI-SPORTS** athletes.

Aspen Institute's Project Play

## The BOTTOM LINE

Trying different sports as a youth athlete not only enhances a young person's personal development and physical fitness, but results in more—and better—athletes.