

ATHLETE LOADING

Guidance on how to manage
your training schedule



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INTRODUCTION

There can be substantial demands placed on you as a young athlete, such as, netball, other sports, academic commitments, spending time with friends and family.

Doing too much or too little can have a negative impact on your individual development, enjoyment and longevity in the sport. As a youth athlete it is important to gradually build physical and sport specific load over time. It is important to consider all elements of load when planning your week.

These are guidelines, not rules because there isn't a one-size fits all approach. How your week is structured can be influenced by several factors specific to you. For example:

- Training age
- Physical capabilities (eg. strength, fitness)
- Injury history
- Playing level



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LOAD?

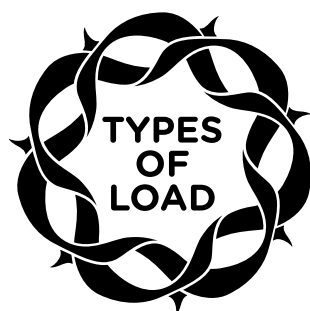
When we talk about load, we are referring to the physical and mental demands placed on you as an athlete. Load can be split into two categories:

PHYSICAL LOAD

Physical Load refers to all activities that place physical strain on you as an athlete.

When planning your training week it is important to consider the frequency, volume (duration) and intensity (how hard it is) of each session.

Regional Netball
Club Netball
International Netball
Match Play
School/University Sport
Other Sports
PE activities
Strength Sessions
Conditioning Sessions
Speed/Agility Sessions



LIFE LOAD

Life Load refers to all the other demands that you might encounter.

It is important to factor this in, particularly during periods of high mental load.

Academic commitments
Work
Travel
Family
Social interactions with friends and peers.

WHY IS MANAGING YOUR LOAD IMPORTANT?

As an athlete, the more time you are available to train without being injured the more opportunities that you will have to develop. This doesn't always mean adding in as much training and match play as possible. It is important to tailor your training to both your age and stage of development.

- **Underloading:** Not doing enough training can leave you under prepared for training and match demands.
- **Overloading:** Completing more training and match play than you are physically ready for can place you at a higher risk of overtraining and injury.

Overtraining can lead to:

- Increased risk of injury and illness. Common examples include bone stress injuries, tendinopathy (Patella Tendon, Achilles) and shin splints etc...
- Burnout
- Lack of enjoyment in your sport
- Persistent fatigue
- Under performance
- Sessions feel harder than they normally do



As a youth athlete it is important to gradually build physical and sport specific load over time. It is important to consider all elements of load when planning your week.



The stronger and fitter you are the more physically prepared you will be to handle higher training loads.

STRUCTURING YOUR TRAINING WEEK

A simple but well thought out weekly training plan can be a very effective tool for managing your load. It is important to consider some key principles when planning your training week.



REST

Rest is crucial for your body to repair, rebuild and adapt from your training.

Continuous training with limited recovery and rest days can lead to overtraining, underperformance and burnout.

TOP TIP

- Aim for a minimum of 1 rest day per week.
- Rest is also an opportunity for a mental break. Try to include activities that help support your wellbeing. For example, hobbies, spending time with friends and family, journalling.



CONSISTENCY

Consistent training can help to prepare you for the demands of your sport.

Fluctuating and/or rapid increases in load can increase your risk for injury.

TOP TIPS

- Avoid sudden changes in training volume, particularly after a period of limited training. Eg. Exam period.
- After a break from training ensure you progressively increase your load and avoid going straight into match play.



TRAINING BLOCK

You may find some weeks to be more demanding than others. For example, a tournament week or exam period.

Try to identify high load weeks that you might need to prepare for. Continuous high loaded weeks can be detrimental to your performance and increase your risk for injury.

TOP TIPS

- Avoid more than 2 high load weeks in a row.
- Include a recovery week within every 5-6 week training block.
- If you experience consistently high-load weeks, consult with your coaches, school teachers, and parents to prioritise which sessions to attend, ensuring a more manageable and balanced training schedule.



TRAVEL

Travel can place additional load demands on you, making fuelling, doing schoolwork and recovery more challenging.

Choosing which club or player pathway programme you will play for should take into account the potential travel implications.

TOP TIPS

- Pre plan your snacks and meals to ensure you have enough fuel to support your training and recovery.
- Consider what the day after a late training session will look like. For example, try to avoid an early start to the day and try to get more than 8 hours sleep.



ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

Being able to stop quickly, jump high, land strong, change direction efficiently and recover quickly are crucial physical skills that support your netball performance.

Just getting older and playing lots of netball does not automatically increase your athletic abilities. It is important to balance how much you play alongside sessions to support your long-term athletic development. For example:

- Strength sessions
- Speed and change of direction as part of your warm-up before training
- Preparation sessions prior to court
- Conditioning sessions
- Injury management exercises

MATURATION

During adolescence you can go through a growth spurt and quick increases in height. This can impact your coordination, running and landing mechanics.

The England Netball Jump High Land Strong programme is a great resource for working on your jumping and landing technique to help regain your coordination and movement control.

ARE YOU FUELLING ENOUGH?

During growth and maturation, energy expenditure and therefore calories needs are higher.

Long term low energy availability has been linked to poor bone health and menstrual dysfunction in female athletes. Irregular periods is one of the symptoms of low energy availability and should be flagged with a GP or a medical professional.

NETBALLHer is a great resource for further information regarding female health.



**ACCESS THE
JUMP HIGH
LAND STRONG
RESOURCES**



**ACCESS
NETBALLHer**



DID YOU KNOW?

Stronger athletes tend to be better prepared to handle higher training loads, learn complex skills, sustain the demands of training and competition whilst reducing potential risk for injury.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN YOUR TRAINING PROGRAMME?

It is important that you take part in a variety of different sessions for a well-balanced approach to your long-term athletic development. Focusing on one specific session may limit your athletic potential.

AN EFFECTIVE TRAINING WEEK SHOULD INCLUDE:

Technical Training: Netball sessions designed to work on your sport specific skills, tactical understanding and prepare you for the physical demands of netball. These sessions can be defined by how hard they are (intensity):

High Intensity: For example Match play, Shuttle conditioning session, small sided possession games (eg. 3v3, 2v2).

Moderate Intensity: For example Team drills/positional drills with longer rest breaks.

Low Intensity: For example Tactical walk throughs, shooting/ball skills.

Strength Sessions: Strength is vital for preparing you for the demands of netball. Focus on moving well with good technique. Start with bodyweight and/or machine based exercises and progress to loaded lifts when appropriate.

Aim for 2 strength sessions per week, which are ideally supervised by an S&C coach to ensure correct technique and progression as required.

Other Sports: Playing multiple sports helps build great athletic foundations. Take the opportunity to play different sports if it fits within your schedule. This should be included within the load guidelines.

Match Play: Opportunity to work on your tactical understanding and try all the things you have learnt in training.

Over 2 matches per week can be very physically demanding and limit your opportunities to complete other elements of your training. Recommend a maximum of 2 matches per week and no more than 1 match in a day (excluding tournaments).

Preparation Sessions: Preparation sessions help to improve your movement qualities and robustness to tolerate your training demands. Examples can include mobility exercises, core strength, balance activities, speed, jump and landing technique.

These can be completed prior to training or on a low intensity training day. The England Netball Jump High Land Strong programme is tailored to be used as part of a warm-up for your court session.

Rest Day: Maximise recovery strategies and opportunities to enjoy hobbies and time away from netball.

Recovery day: Can contain static skills and supporting sessions (for example injury management session, weights, recovery, wellbeing activities).

EXAMPLE OF A NORMAL TRAINING WEEK

As per recommended guidelines listed below.

MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL (INC. PE)	MATCH PLAY	REST
NETBALL TRAINING (+PREP SESSION)	WEIGHTS NETBALL TRAINING (+PREP SESSION)	RECOVERY DAY	NETBALL TRAINING (+PREP SESSION)	WEIGHTS		

EXAMPLE OF A HIGH LOAD WEEK

A training week that exceeds the recommended guidance. For example, more than 3 matches or more than 6 netball contacts in a week. ***Avoid more than 2 high load weeks in a row or more than 4 consecutive days of netball/on feet training.***

MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL (INC. PE)	MATCH PLAY	MATCH PLAY
NETBALL TRAINING (+PREP SESSION)	WEIGHTS NETBALL TRAINING (+PREP SESSION)	MATCH PLAY	WEIGHTS NETBALL TRAINING (+PREP SESSION)	REST		

EXAMPLE OF A RECOVERY WEEK

This includes a reduced volume of training allowing your body time to recover and rebuild. **Aim to include one in every 5-6 week training block.**

MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL (INC. PE)	MATCH PLAY	REST
REST	WEIGHTS NETBALL TRAINING	RECOVERY DAY	WEIGHTS NETBALL TRAINING	WEIGHTS		

PLANNING YOUR WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Below is a schedule template you can use to map out your week.

	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
08:00 - 09:00							
09:00 - 10:00							
10:00 - 11:00							
11:00 - 12:00							
12:00 - 13:00							
13:00 - 14:00							
14:00 - 15:00							
15:00 - 16:00							
16:00 - 17:00							
17:00 - 18:00							
18:00 - 19:00							
19:00 - 20:00							
20:00 - 21:00							
21:00 - 22:00							



Avoid more than 5 netball contacts per week
(Including match play)

No more than 1 match in a day. This includes different sports.

Aim for no more than 4 days in a row on feet

Avoid more than 3 sessions in a day.

Maximum of 2 matches per week.



Aim for 2 strength sessions per week

Include a minimum of 2 preparation sessions as part
of your warm-up for your court sessions.

A minimum of 1 full rest day per week.

1 recovery day per week.

Try include opportunities for hobbies, social interactions
to have a break from netball.

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

“My team and coach are really struggling to get enough players for Sunday’s match. I really don’t want to let them down but I have already played 3 matches this week.”

It can feel very hard to disappoint your netball coaches and teammates. However, it is important that you consider all your load in the week and how it aligns with your individual development.

It can take up to 24-48 hours to recover after high intensity match play so it is important that you and your coach consider how many matches you have in a week and ensure you factor in the appropriate rest.

When you are asked to play, it is important to consider:

YES NO

☐ ☐

Have you played more than 2 matches in any sport this week?

☐ ☐

Have you had more than 5 total netball contacts this week? Eg. 3 training sessions and 2 matches

☐ ☐

Have you had less than 1 rest day this week?

If you ticked Yes to any of the above it would be recommended not to play in that match.



TOP TIP!

By mapping out a training block you can identify where tournaments or important matches are. This allows you to plan your training to effectively prepare for the upcoming demands.



**“I haven’t been able to train for 3 weeks due to exams,
but I have a tournament next week.”**

After an extended period of minimal or no training, it is important to progressively build back into training.

A tournament can have extremely high physical demands, placing you at a higher risk of injury and underperformance by doing too much, too quickly.

**When you are asked to play, it is
important to consider:**

YES NO

☐ ☐

Have you had more than 2 weeks with no netball training?

☐ ☐

Have you had a long period without any match play or high intensity sessions?

☐ ☐

Will the tournament be a big step up in physical and mental load to what you have done recently?

If you ticked Yes to any of the above you and your coach may need to consider whether you should play in the tournament or if you require some modifications to the amount you play.



TOP TIP!

It is important to factor in all elements of load when mapping out your week. This includes different sports, school PE and life load.

**“My knees hurt during and after training,
but that is just my knees!”**

Overuse injuries are very common in netball so if you have persistent pain it is a potential sign that you are doing too much. Although it is normal to feel some soreness after a hard training session, persistent pain should be checked by a physiotherapist/medical practitioner.

Tips for reducing overuse injuries:

- Have a well planned and consistent training schedule.
- Include at least 1 full rest day per week.
- Be consistent with your S+C programme to increase your strength and movement qualities.
- Avoid more than 4 consecutive days of netball or on feet training.

ATHLETE TOP TIPS



BE PROACTIVE

Plan ahead with your schedule. Have early conversations with your coaches, school teachers and parents to help manage your load and ensure that training is right for you.



REST! THE NEXT SESSION IS ONLY AS GOOD AS YOUR RECOVERY

Rest is a crucial part of your programme as it gives your body time to repair and adapt from your training. This helps put you in a better place to train hard and perform well in your next session.



DON'T NEGLECT YOUR ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

Being strong and moving well is crucial for preparing you for the physical demands of netball and reducing your potential risk for injury.



BE CONSISTENT

Be consistent with your off-court behaviours to ensure you are in the best place to train and play.

- Under fuelling can contribute to low energy and fatigue. Ensure you eat regularly and consistently to provide enough fuel to support all your training and recovery.
- If travelling long distances to and from training, take pre-made snacks and meals so that you can fuel and refuel around training to help support your recovery and muscle repair.
- Dehydration contributes to muscle fatigue. Sip fluids little and often throughout the day. Always take a bottle of water to training.
- Sleep is crucial for recovery. Aim for a minimum of 8-10 hours quality sleep every night.



BE PREPARED

Warm-ups are an excellent opportunity to work on your movement skills whilst preparing you for your session. England Netball Jump High Land Strong programme is a great resource to work on your jump and landing skills as part of your warm-up.



LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

If you are feeling physically or mentally fatigued, it is important to listen to how you are feeling and take a step back when needed. If you are experiencing this regularly, speak to a physio/medical practitioner about how you can manage your physical and mental load.



BALANCED APPROACH

The primary objective is to have fun and enjoy what you do! Having a balanced approach is important for your longevity in the sport!