



# HANDBOOK FOR STUDENTS

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# Introduction

We at Athletics Ireland aim to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Ireland. The Girls Squad was developed to contribute to the health and fitness of young girls, and to promote the growth of athletics in schools, clubs, and communities.

An integral aspect of The Girls Squad will be supporting young girls with their physical, social and psychological wellbeing.

The Girls Squad will encourage inclusion and initiative from all involved and will allow for real life learning to take place through project work and physical challenges. Our activities and challenges ensure the promotion of personal and social development, whilst learning valuable life skills along the way.

Our aim is to educate, empower and encourage young girls to become physically active, and to lead a healthier lifestyle, whilst creating a newfound appreciation for all things athletics! The programme will encourage physical activity in a non-competitive environment and will place an emphasis on participation rather than performance.

The Girls Squad will encourage secondary schools to incorporate athletics into their PE and after-school programmes in a fun and inclusive way, but also encourage students to try athletics outside school with their local athletic clubs.

Athletics Ireland will reward schools for participation, so the more students involved the better!

We hope that you enjoy the programme and have a positive athletics experience and I look forward to working with all schools involved in The Girls Squad over the next number of years !

**Lilly-Ann O'Hora**  
*Women in Sport Officer*

# The Girl Squad

## Programme Introduction

### What is the Girl Squad?

The Girl Squad is a 6 week programme aimed at young girls in Transition Year in school. The aim of the programme is to promote athletics in their school and community through an athletics project.

Athletics has a number of benefits in everyday life, sport and socialisation.

The project has both a physical and educational element to it. The Girls Squad promotes social interaction and inclusion amongst young girls and encourages young girls to become more physically active and adopt healthy lifestyle choices.

### What is the aim of The Girl Squad

- Educate young girls on the importance of being physically active.
- Encourage physical activity in a non-competitive or intimidating environment.
- Enhance the athletic experience of young

girls and to have a newfound appreciation for all things athletics.

- Empower young girls to be more creative and innovative when it comes to being physically active.
- Enable young girls to make decisions for their own health and wellbeing.
- Equip young girls to lead healthier lives.
- Encourage more girls to become involved in their local athletics clubs, or communities!

### Why Participate in The Girl Squad

- Encourages physical activity in a non-competitive or intimidating environment.
- Create a newfound appreciation of all things athletics!
- Promotes personal and social development.
- Learning new life skills.
- Be rewarded for participation.



- Highlights the importance of teamwork.
- Opportunity to develop athletics recreationally and not with a sole focus on performance based sport.

### What does the project involve?

- The project must be supported and supervised by a teacher.
- Project must be designed, developed, and completed by the TY students.
- The girls can create a unique athletics project of their choice.
- The project should have both physical and written elements to it, which should be visually displayed alongside their Girl Squad Constitution.
- The Squad must produce a video, maximum length 3 minutes including aspects of their physical activity challenges and educational project.
- This will be uploaded to AAI upon completion of the 6 week project.

### Project Titles

Each group can select from one of the following project titles.

## PROGRAMME INTRODUCTION

1.

If a group wish to develop their own project title that is aligned with The Girl Squad Vision, then they are free to do so.

### Athletics Event

Design an athletics programme/event to promote athletics within your school/area.

### Components of Fitness

Choose one event from track and field and assess how to develop that specific athletic fitness.

### Girls and Goals

How to keep girls involved in sport and athletics.

### Health

Discuss how sport can support our physical, mental and social health.

### Social Sport

Discuss the benefits of social sport and how to create a suitable environment for all.

### Sports Psychology

How can we use sport to support our mental health.

### The Power of Sport

Highlight the barriers that prevent participation in female sport, and physical activity and how to overcome them.



### The Girls Squad Guidelines

- The Girls Squad is a 6 week athletics and physical activity programme.
- The start date is determined by the class teacher, and logged on the portal.
- It is encouraged that the elements of track and field are explored in some way, such as throwing, running and jumping!
- School equipment can be utilised which should be found in PE departments , along with community resources.
- The Girls Squad meetings must be recorded and supervised by the teacher.
- At least one session or group meeting must take place each week.
- The Girls Squad should ideally take place over 6 continuous weeks.
- The duration of each session or group meeting must be a minimum of 30mins.
- The Girls Squad Challenges, physical and educational sessions must be recorded on 'The Girls Squad Report Card' on the portal.
- Every young girl who wishes to be involved in The Girls Squad should have the opportunity to do so.
- Every girl has something valuable to offer to both the physical, educational, and video element of the project.
- The 3-minute video must show aspects of the physical challenges, educational investigation into athletics and its impact on the girls involved.

### Awarded for participation

On completion of the 6-week programme students will be awarded with The Girl Squads official t-shirts, diary and certificate of merit once all elements of the project have been logged and submitted.

Schools will also be in with the chance to win a tablet for the whole school after submitting their report card and video project online.



# Physical Activity

## Physical Activity Explained

### What is Physical Activity?

Regular physical activity is key to getting and staying healthy. There are many ways to be physically active: walking, cycling, sports and other active forms of recreation (for example, dance, yoga, tai chi). All forms of physical activity can provide health benefits if undertaken regularly and if sufficient duration and intensity. Sedentary behaviour can have a negative influence on our physical activity levels. We must limit long periods of sedentary behaviour by incorporating regular activity breaks.

### Physical Activity Guidelines

These guidelines include recommendations for children and young people .

For children and young people, physical activity includes play, games, sports, transportation, chores, recreation, physical education, or planned exercise, in the context of family, school, and community

activities. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends the following to improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone health, and cardiovascular and metabolic health:

1. Children and youth aged 5-17 should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate - to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.
2. Amounts of physical activity greater than 60 minutes provide additional health benefits.
3. Most of the daily physical activity should be aerobic. Vigorous-intensity activities should be incorporated, including those that strengthen muscle and bone, at least 3 times per week.

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

## 60 MINUTES OF ACTIVITY EVERY DAY:

Most of your 60 minutes can be moderate intensity aerobic activity - anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.

At least 3 days a week, you should step it up to vigorous intensity aerobic activity so that you're breathing fast and your heart is pounding.

## AS PART OF YOUR DAILY 60MINUTES YOU NEED:

### 1. Muscle Strengthening (at least 3 days per week)

Anything that makes your muscles work harder counts - gym work, pilates, climbing.

### 2. Bone Strengthening (at least 3 days per week)

Bones need pressure to get stronger, running, jumping and other weight bearing activities count.

## How to start being physically active :

### - Healthy Ireland recommends

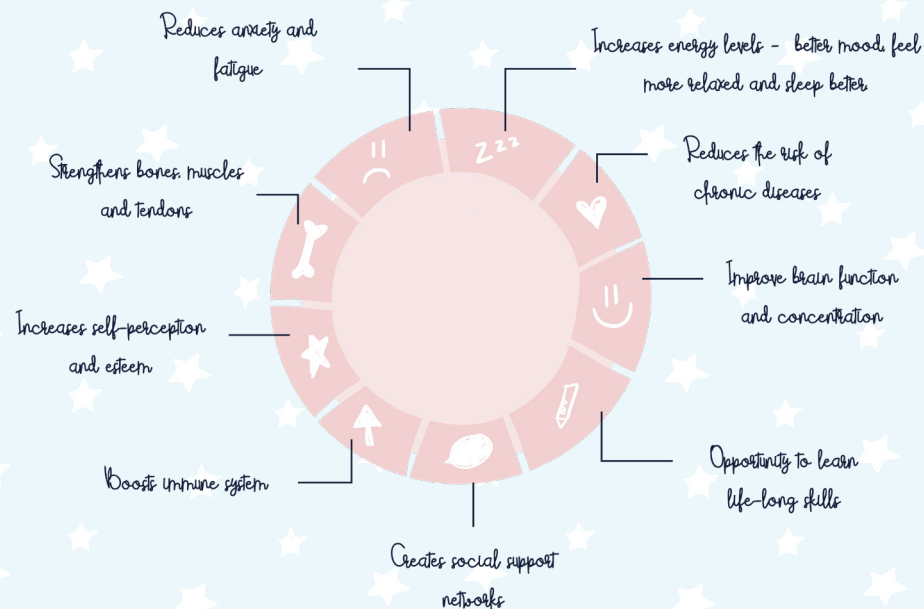
- If you are not currently engaging in physical activity, doing amounts below the recommended levels will bring more benefits than doing none at all!
- Remember, today is another opportunity to get better!
- You must start with small amounts of physical activity and gradually increase duration, frequency and intensity over time.
- The concept of accumulation refers to meeting the goal of 60 minutes per day by performing activities in multiple shorter bouts spread throughout the day (e.g. 2 bouts of 30 minutes), then adding together the time spent during each of these bouts.
- Like many things, friends can make things easier for you. Find someone you know and invite them along!

## Did you know ??

Participation in regular health enhancing physical activity has been found to have positive effects on academic performance, including achievement in math tests and reading, academic grades and perceptual skills.

Taken from : *The Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study 2018 CSPPA 2018*

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BENEFITS



Start where you are.  
Use what you have.  
Do what you can.

—Arthur Ashe

# 10 Reasons

*That influence girls to stick with sport and physical activity.*

1. The physical and mental benefits of being with friends and from challenging ourselves.
2. The positive influence of our coaches, teachers, mentors and club mates.
3. Girls want to have fun and be challenged - we encourage and enjoy healthy competition!
4. The supportive relationships that sport creates, and new social networks and friendships.
5. Girls want to be fit, strong, and athletic. We want to get the most out of ourselves!
6. Competition is good - but girls rate fun and skills as equally as important.
7. Girls motivate girls - we relate and identify with other women who have walked in our shoes and we take inspiration from their journey!
8. Having female coaches as important role models- they positively influence our perception of women.
9. Parental involvement is key - Giving advice, and showing support by volunteering with tasks associated with sport and be a source of motivation when things get hard
10. Finding an activity that you like - doing an activity we like will increase our chances of sticking with it.

# Role Model Insight

*Ciara Neville*

## What or who has shaped your journey?

100% my dream of going to the Olympics has shaped my journey. It's something that I think about nearly every day- if I have a bad training session it's a matter of saying to myself "it's ok Ciara, just reset your mindset and tomorrow will be better" it's essential to have something that you are working towards. Without my coach, Noelle, none of this would be possible and she also shaped my journey as she guides, motivates and encourages me every single day to be better.

## What is the value in having girls to train with?

Without my girl squad I definitely wouldn't be where I am today. They keep me sane during the long winter training block and although training can be very serious, the girls and myself never fail to make each other laugh constantly- they are my rocks. Of course the boys are great craic too, but there's nothing like the laughs us girls get. As well as that they are also vital for my training and sometimes the boys can be ahead of me in reps and I need my girls squad pushing me to my limits.

## Why is it important to you to remain physically active?

Ever since I was small I loved being active and was always in sports gear (I was a major tomboy growing up). And even for me now I



just love being active, I love keeping my body in shape, testing myself seeing how heavy I can lift, how fast I can run and without exercise I would be bored every day!

## Why have you chosen athletics over other sports?

As a kid I played hockey, soccer, football and I did athletics too and at the time I loved them all. I began to realize when I was about 13 that Athletics was my favourite and when I was 14 I decide to quit all the other sports and just focus on Athletics. I loved the team sports but I think my competitive nature took over and I began to realize that I loved how I was responsible for the result in my races. It's an individual sport at the end of the day and I really liked how it was all down to how hard I worked rather than my teams performance in the likes of matches.



### How would you encourage fun in athletics ?

What made athletics fun for you? I think relays really make Athletics fun because you can race with your friends and sometimes against your friends which makes it even more fun! The fact that I had all my friends around me really made it fun for me. We used to compete in relays up until I left secondary school and we won the All Ireland Schools 6 times in a row. We used to race against our friends from other schools too so we all ran as fast as we couldn't because we all wanted to win! I really enjoyed hanging out with my friends in the track environment and getting the bus with all our team mates to competitions was great fun too.

### Why do you run?

I run for the sheer love of the sport. I couldn't imagine myself doing anything else. I love everything about it. Although there is moments when I have a really hard training session and feel like I am going to collapse or when I lose a race and I might feel like I want to give up, it all goes away after a couple of minutes and I'm ready to go again to be better and make sure I don't lose the next time!

### How did you start athletics ?

I started Athletics when I was about 6 because my best friend's mom was the coach and I just

decided to go down with her one day after school to see what it was like. I started off in community games and joined a club and have never looked back since.

### How does athletics make you feel?

The feeling that Athletics brings me is honestly like nothing I have ever felt before. You feel the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. There is no better feeling than winning a really big race, it just feels so great to know that all my hard work has paid off. It makes me feel so grateful that I'm fortunate enough to travel the world doing what I love.

### Sport teaches many important life lessons, what has your sport taught you?

Sport has taught me that hard work and perseverance pays off. You may not be the best at the start but if you stick at it and try your best, after a while you will start seeing results.

### What advice would you give your 16 year old self?

I would 100% tell myself to not lose hope. When I was 15 I broke national records, represented Ireland for the first time and I won a European Gold medal. However, when I was 16 I didn't break any of my personal bests and when I went to the Europeans I didn't even reach the final. I kept asking myself how it could all go wrong in one year. So looking back on that I would definitely tell myself to not get



# Health & Wellness



## Menstruation Cycle (Made Easy)

-Orna Murray,

**M**ost girls get their first period between 10 - 16 years old, but everyone has their own schedule.

A period happens because hormones are changing in your body (hormones are chemical messengers in the body). The main hormones involved in your menstrual cycle are the hormones oestrogen and progesterone.

The menstrual cycle is not the same for every woman. In general, your period occurs every 21 to 35 days and last two to seven days, however this is an approximation.

For the first few years after menstruation begins, long cycles are common. However, your cycles tend to shorten and become more regular as you get older.

It might take up to two years for your period

to become regular because hormonal surges tend to be uneven. At first, it is common to have one period, and then not have another for a few months.

What is normal? Your menstrual cycle might be regular, about the same length every month or irregular. Your period might be light or heavy, long or short, and still be considered normal.

### Why It Matters

*(How the menstrual cycle impacts your body and how you feel)*

- The menstrual cycle has an impact on how you feel mentally and physically, and it can change throughout the month.
- It can influence how you feel waking up in the morning and how much energy you have during the day. Some days you

"Today you are You. that is true. that is true.  
There is no one alive who is Youer than You."  
- Dr. Seuss



might jump out of bed and be ready to take on the world, other days you might need to take it more gently and ease yourself into the day.

- The easiest way to begin to learn about your menstrual cycle is to start tracking it.

### Tracking

- Tracking your cycle is simply a way to get to know your body and to see patterns in your menstrual cycle.
- You can use a calendar or an app (for example - FitrWoman, P-Tracker, Flo, Clue) to track your cycle. The first day of bleeding is called day 1, and you can put a circle on your calendar or log it in your app.
- You can add how you felt, if you noticed anything different in your body or note your energy levels. Some girls can feel a little down or tired before their period, but others notice no difference. That's okay, everyone is different but you should track it all!

### What the Menstrual Cycle does for us?

- Believe it or not your menstrual cycle is doing a lot of amazing things in your body at all times of the month. It is responsible for making you feel energetic, confident and motivated.
- It boosts your immune system (which helps prevent illnesses) and it is important for your bone health.
- Your period is an excellent indicator of your health. When you get your period, it means your body is happy and healthy.

### Learning to work with your Body

- It takes time to learn how your body works and what's normal for you. There are no

short cuts, so be patient and kind to yourself.

- Listen to your body. When you are busy or stressed it is easy to ignore how you are feeling. Slowing down and relaxing can help you tune into how you are feeling.
- If you are uncomfortable talking about your period, don't worry – you will figure it out and begin to become more confident. Try discuss it with someone you trust.

### Working with the Menstrual Cycle

- On the flip side the menstrual cycle can also be challenging, especially when you first start getting them. Often girls can experience symptoms such as mood swings, tummy pain, spots and feeling emotional.
- Physical and emotional symptoms that occur before or during your period are called PMS (premenstrual syndrome). They are caused by a drop in hormone levels right before the period begins. But these symptoms tend to go away after a few days.
- If you experience any of the above, you are not alone as a lot of girls and young women do\*.
- Exercise and physical activity is a great way to release the feel good hormones (serotonin and dopamine) which leave you feeling calm and content.
- Check out the list below and see are you working with these four areas. Often PMS can be reduced by integrating these healthy habits into your life.

*(\*If you're periods are very heavy and last longer than a week, or if your periods suddenly become irregular having been regular, or if you have severe pain during your period it is a good idea to check with a parent/guardian and see your doctor.)*

# PERIOD HACKS

## HACK 1

Most girls start using pads, as they find them the easiest to get used to in the start. Others prefer tampons. Tampons take some getting used to, but they should never feel uncomfortable or sore. If they are uncomfortable take it out and try again.

## HACK 2

Always have tampons and pads in your school bag or training bag just in case your period comes unexpectedly (which it probably will!)

## HACK 3

If your period comes unannounced don't be afraid to ask a friend or trusted teacher for a pad or tampon – every single woman has forgotten at some stage.

## HACK 4

Having a spare change of underwear, training shorts, tracksuit or school bottoms can be a good idea in case you have a leak.

## HACK 5

Leaking is surprisingly common, it happens to all women at some point. If it happens in school the previous point will help you navigate this issue. Don't be afraid to tell a friend.

## HACK 6

If you have any questions, ASK! The only way to find out about these things is to talk to people you trust and if you feel something is wrong no one will know unless you speak up!

## Pelvic Floor Health

- Lorraine Boyce, Down Below Physio



Core strength is vital for great sport or exercise performance. It forms the foundation for all movement, balance, stability and flexibility. And while we tend to factor core strengthening exercises and activities in to our fitness regime, we often forget to think about the bodies biggest unsung hero – the pelvic floor. Almost every exercise or physical activity you do affects or utilises your pelvic floor, so it's important to fully understand it, to enable you to better your sport & physical activity.

Banishing leaks will enable you to focus on your physical activity and allow you to get the most out of yourself. Running, jumping, and throwing can be high impact activities placing a lot of demand on your body. Many active and athletic women (including Olympic athletes), also suffer from urinary incontinence due to the additional pressure placed on the pelvic floor due to the high impact. Running and jumping activities can result in a weakening of the connective tissue that supports the bladder, however these simple steps will support you from any embarrassing mishaps!

### TOP TIPS FOR PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING

It is very difficult to stay disciplined with a programme of Pelvic Floor exercises if you're not sure if you're doing them correctly in the first place. So here are some of my Down Below practical tips:

#### 1. How to squeeze.

Squeeze closed at your back passage as if you are holding in wind and at the front as if you are trying to stop the flow while passing urine. The muscles squeeze closed and lift up inside.

#### 2. It's more subtle than you think!

Exercising these muscles shouldn't show on the outside, nobody should be able to 'see you doing them'. You shouldn't be visibly pulling in your tummy, clenching your buttocks or bracing your breath!

#### 3. Breathe!

Holding your breath means you're more likely to bear down rather than lifting up, so focus on keeping your breathing natural and relaxed in the background.

#### 4. Squeeze on your exhalation!

The natural instinct is to take a big breath in and hold it as we squeeze. But it is better to squeeze as you breathe out. This may seem hard to coordinate at the start but will become easier as you practice it.

#### 5. Having some visual imagery can help you get an effective contraction:

- Imagine you're trying to stop your flow of urine mid pee.

- Imagine you're trying to hold in wind.
- Imagine you have a tampon inside, and you want to lift it up inside you.

#### 6. Keep it simple, don't overthink it!

We often put ourselves off doing them before we ever start because we make it a big, unmanageable task in our minds that we have to make a big commitment to. Start with one set, once a day for one week and get that into routine first, then you can add to it when you have your routine established.

#### 7. Routine is so important!

Link it to the same time every day or link it to something you do every day to help you remember.

#### 8. Use reminders!

If you are struggling, set an alarm on your phone, use post-it's in strategic places, or use an app such as the NHS developed "Squeezy" app!

#### 9. It takes time.

It can take up to three months or more to strengthen any muscle and see really noticeable changes. Even then, don't just stop doing them, that is when you need to maintain the improvement you've gained.

#### 10. Seek advice.

Seek the advice and expertise of a Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist, if you are in any doubt about what you are doing.

THE HARDER YOU WORK FOR SOMETHING  
THE GREATER YOU'LL FEEL  
WHEN YOU ACHIEVE IT



## Life Checklist

(For school, sports, exams and more)

### SLEEP



- The recommended amount of sleep is 8 – 9 hours per night minimum. Getting enough sleep can leave you feeling more positive and energetic.
- **Top Tip:** set a bedtime alarm which goes off half an hour before you want to go to sleep.

### EXERCISE



- The recommended amount of exercise is an hour every day.
- **Top Tip:** If you are finding it difficult to reach the hour, start looking at things you could do to increase it, like walking at lunchtime or joining a sports club.

### NUTRITION



- Make sure you read the nutrition section, keep going back to it as a point of reference.
- **Top Tip:** always get your nutrition information from someone you trust, because there are lots of inaccurate information on social media etc.

### FUN



- It is not always easy being in school, between classes, study and friends there is a lot to balance. When there is a lot happening sometimes you can feel overwhelmed or stressed.
- **Top Tip:** Hang out with your friends and do the things you actually enjoy doing (away from your phones).

Sometimes we don't realise that we are not maintaining the four important pillars of Sleep, Nutrition, Exercise, and Fun. Why not use the planner on the following page to make sure that you're taking the best care of your four most important pillars. We have filled in the first column for you, and there are some more empty planners included at the back of this booklet.

## SAMPLE - LIFE CHECKLIST PLANNER

EVENT	eg. Exam on September 28th				
SLEEP	Make sure to get to bed early this week				
NUTRITION	Make healthy lunches this week				
EXERCISE	Training Tuesday & Thursday				
FUN	Will meet the girls on Sat ♡				

## Nutrition and Hydration

- Katie Kirk, *The Non Diet Sports Nutritionist*,  
800M /1500M International Athlete

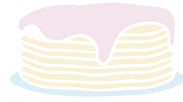
### Diets Don't work

Diets aren't always a "formal" thing. They are ANY rule that we have around food. Dieting and restrictive eating fails us. Not eating what we want can lead to food obsession, poor health, sleep issues, food guilt and increased risk of anxiety.

### The alternative

- Eat what you want
- Have no food rules
- Eat a variety of what makes you feel good
- Take note of foods/drinks that give you energy
- Use your internal cues of hunger and fullness
- Eat regularly

 **WE DON'T  
FAIL AT  
DIETS  
THEY FAIL  
US!** 



### Hunger is good!

Hunger is essential for human existence. It is a cue from our body that we need to and should eat. Dieting culture says hunger is bad and should be controlled and ignored. Regular hunger is a sign your body is functioning well! Eating in response to early hunger signs has many health benefits and is linked to stable weight, mood and a healthy relationship with food. Getting overly hungry can lead to over-eating, feeling out of control around food and feelings of extreme fullness. Which is fine occasionally but doesn't feel good when done regularly.

### Signs of early hunger -

- Thinking about food
- Gentle pangs
- Emptiness feeling
- Salivating

*What are your early hunger signs?*

### Picking Snacks!

Snacks are great! Snacks don't always have to be nutritious, but satisfaction is key. Adding PROTEIN & FAT sources to snacks can make them more satisfying and tastier. e.g. nuts, cheese, meats, egg, avocado, Nutella, hummus, yoghurt. Can you think how you could add some of these to your current snack options to make them more satisfying?

### Breakfast

Eating in the morning can be beneficial for providing energy for the day ahead. It also prevents getting overly hungry for break/lunch and can help with focus & concentration. How can you prioritise time to have breakfast?

## Fluffy Buttermilk Pancakes

### Ingredients

*Enough for 2 people (or keep leftovers for snacks)*

- 150g plain flour
- 160g buttermilk or milk with 1tsp lemon juice
- 2 eggs
- 15g sugar
- pinch salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2tsp bicarbonate of soda

### Method

- Separate eggs adding yolks to a jug and whites to a clean mixing bowl.
- Whisk egg whites using electric mixer until stiff.
- Add all other ingredients to the yolks and mix quickly. Over mixing will make pancakes dry and tough.
- Gently fold through egg whites to form fluffy mixture.
- Heat a non-stick pan over a medium heat. Once warm coat pan with small amount of vegetable oil.

- Pour or spoon batter evenly onto the pan. Do not overcrowd. Flip when you can see lots of bubbles forming on the top. about 2.5mins. Flip and cook for a further minute.
- Keep the stack warm on the lowest setting on the oven while cooking the rest.

### Topping Ideas

- Maple syrup
- Butter
- Berries
- Banana
- Chocolate chips

*Can you think of any others that would be tasty?*

*Make a list of your favourite snacks:*

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**Other quick breakfast ideas**

- Eggs on toast
- Yoghurt, cereal & fruit
- Toast, peanut butter & banana
- Bagel, smashed avocado & bacon
- Cereal, milk & banana
- Porridge, fruit, almond butter & honey
- Cereal bar and smoothie
- Croissant, a yoghurt and strawberries

**“What should I eat for lunch?”**

There is no “should” when it comes to eating. Eat what you want and eat until full & satisfied.

FOOD & EATING DOESNT HAVE TO BE  
PERFECT OR LOOK PRETTY

**LUNCH BOX BUILDER**

Use this lunch builder to get some ideas of lunches that will fill you up and hit the spot.

*If you don't have time to make your own what is there in the school canteen that would be satisfying and tasty?*

**GRAIN / CARBOHYDRATE**

Rice  
Pasta  
Bread  
Wraps  
Noodles  
Cous cous

**PROTEIN**

Chicken  
Mozzarella  
Sliced Turkey  
Smoked Tofu  
Peanut Satay Sauce  
Chickpeas & Hummus

**FAT**

Tahini dressing  
Pesto sauce  
Mayo & cheese  
BBQ mayo  
Peanut butter  
Olive oil dressing & feta cheese

**VEG/FRUIT**

Left-over stir-fried veg  
Cherry tomatoes & spinach  
Lettuce, cucumber & cranberry sauce  
Lettuce, sweetcorn, sliced peppers  
Spring onion, grated carrot, peas  
Leftover spiced roasted vegetables

## The DL on Sports Nutrition

Eating for sport doesn't have to be complicated, restrictive or boring. Sports nutrition is all about eating enough, keeping hydrated and supporting performance. Let's not overcomplicate it!

### The key factors

1. Eating enough
2. Hydrating
3. Recovery foods and meals

### How do I know if I am fuelling properly?

Signs you may not be eating enough energy and/or carbohydrates

- Feeling drained/weak when training/exercising
- Sleeping poorly
- Waking up feeling very hungry
- Loss of period
- Feeling cold (even when temperatures are warm)
- Frequent injuries
- Regular illness
- Tummy/stomach issues e.g. diarrhoea, cramping, constipation

These are serious signs that need to be addressed, if you are struggling with any of the above please seek attention from your doctor.

It can be useful to reflect on personal signs/symptoms of under-fuelling to catch warning signs before it is a serious issue.

### What do I need to do to ensure I am able to recover properly from exercise?

Some practical ideas to ensure you are eating quickly after intense exercise –

- Keep snacks in kit bag
- Prioritize and time meals around training
- Pre-prepare lunches and snacks or buy them before
- Have a plan before you start

*Can you think of any other practical tips for recovery foods/meals?*

### The recovery window

**What is it?** The 30mins - 1hr after intense exercise is the best time to eat to get the most from training and exercising

**Eat** = source of carbohydrate immediately. Meal with carbohydrate and protein OR snack with carbohydrate followed by meal.

**DRINK** = fluid to restore urine to straw/clear colour over 2-4hrs after

**Physical** = sit down, sleep, massage, stretch etc.



## Food & Nutrition Reflection Ideas

1. Can you reflect on how much you have been exposed to dieting and health messages through life/social/media/friends/family. What do you think are the implications of this type of culture for young women?

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*My Top tips that can support recovery:*

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# Understanding You

☆ 'Great things never come from comfort zones' ☆

## What The Health?

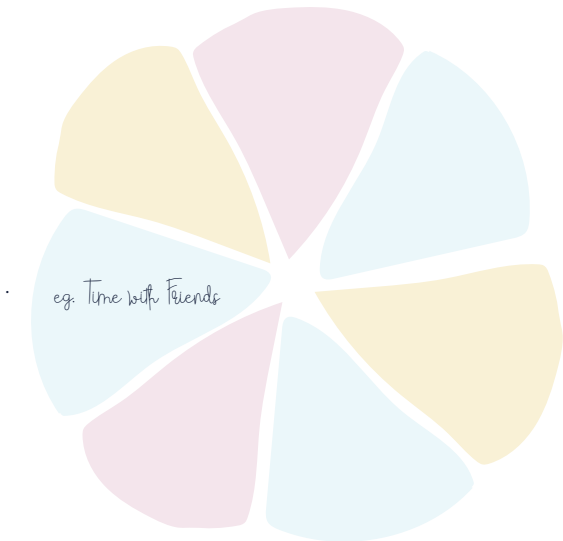
### Some ideas for whole-health

- Alone time, socialising
- Connection with others
- Mental wellness
- Movement
- Exercise
- Being in nature
- Sleeping
- Self-care
- Eating regularly
- Personal development.

Is there anything else that you feel are essential in making you feel whole and well?

"Health" is SO much more than just food and exercise. What else do we need aside from those to feel our best? Nutrition makes a difference but when it takes over and takes up much time and energy it isn't "healthy". Food and nutrition work best when in context, and there is an over-all balance of all other elements of health and well-being!

Fill in the whole-health circle below with the important things that make you feel good.



If you haven't experienced a time where you have felt whole and well is there anything above that you think might help in finding this? Or how can you prioritise achieving this?

2. Do you often eat when feeling extremely hungry or leave long gaps between meals/snacks? What does this feel like? Can you identify what early signs of hunger are for you?

3. Can you think of some snack and lunch ideas that are achievable for you and will support your whole-health and wellbeing?

4. What are your food positive goals to support whole-health and wellbeing?

## Confidence & The Fear of Failure

When it comes to confidence, we often need to unlearn the narrative society has taught us particularly around the fear of failure.

Most of us when we consider doing something new or challenging, we weigh up the risk of failure (this may be an unconscious thought process). If the fear of failure is too great many often choose not to try at all.

Why are we so afraid of failing? What is the worst thing that could happen really? Write it down. Now, look at that fear objectively. Is it worth the risk?

It's like learning to ride a bike. What's the worst thing that could happen? You might be laughed at as you wobble down the road. You might fall off and hurt yourself. These are genuine fears. Yet most of us managed to get up on the saddle and give it our best. We use strategies such as helmets, stabilisers and someone to give us a push to give us the best chance at succeeding.

Wobbling, falling off and going slowly all come before confidence. This is the process of building confidence. Learning from experiences, both good and bad, is where confidence grows.



There is no such thing as failure in real life once you understand that every experience is a learning opportunity. Life is about doing and being. No one is born with confidence, it's a formula (facing your fears + trying + trying again + again = success). We build up confidence as we get good at doing and trying out new things.

*Remember, what is the worst thing that could happen really?*

*Write it down. Now, look at that fear objectively. Is it worth the risk?*

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave person is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." ~ Nelson Mandela

## FEAR FACTS

### Fear Fact # 1

Fear, worry and nerves are a normal response that everyone experiences when trying something new.

### Fear Fact # 2:

We often experience fear, worry and nerves as a knot or pain in the pit of our stomach.

### Fear Fact # 3:

The only way to get rid of fear and build confidence is to **go out and give it a go!**

### Fear Fact # 4:

Even if it might not seem like it, **everyone else experiences fear as well**, (if they are not nervous they have probably done something similar before).

### Fear Fact # 5:

**Pushing through the fear** is actually less frightening than living with feelings of what if's and the limits of not doing new things.

**Journaling Prompt - Take 10 minutes to write down all the things you would do if you knew you could succeed.**



# JOURNAL SPACE

Week Commencing :

I AM GRATEFUL FOR:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

THIS WEEKS MANTRA

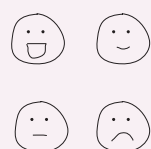
ONE THING I WANT TO ACHIEVE THIS WEEK

HAVE I HAD ENOUGH:

- ☐ Sunshine / Daylight
- ☐ Social Interaction
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Sleep
- ☐ Water
- ☐ Rest / Relaxation Time

NOTES:

MOOD TRACKER



MONDAY



TUESDAY



WEDNESDAY



THURSDAY



FRIDAY



SATURDAY



SUNDAY



HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO FEEL THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Happy
- ☐ Energetic
- ☐ Productive
- ☐ Confident
- ☐ Inspired
- ☐ Grateful

THE FEAR I CONQUERED THIS WEEK

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

ONE THING I AM PROUD OF THIS WEEK

"Come to the edge, he said. They said: We are afraid. Come to the edge, he said. They came. He pushed them and they flew."

~ Guillaume Apollinaire

## Self, Sport and Wellbeing

Sport offers us an opportunity to develop our own sense of self in the world. A space to meet people who support you, who you support and have fun.

Sport does not have to always be a competition.

Sport is for everyone. You get the same rush as everyone else on the start line and get the same physical, emotional and mental benefits.

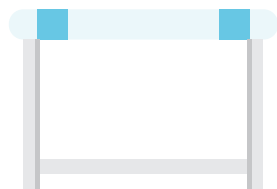
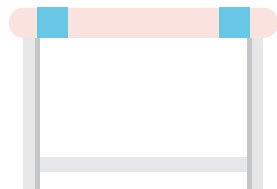
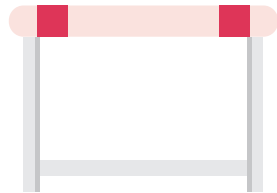
School can be intense at times, but sports and physical activity makes it easier to manage and balance everything out.

## Finding Your\* Balance (your balance is unique to you)\*

Family, friends, relationships, homework, study, exams, sport, training, social media, the list goes on and on. Life happens at a hundred miles an hour (or so it seems). Sometimes it can feel like you are the only person struggling to find the right balance.

There is no 'perfect balance', but being physically active will help you succeed in the other aspects of your life.

Balance is different for everyone. Your body, your moods and your life are constantly changing, so adjusting and adapting is the key to finding your balance.



# PRACTICAL TOOLS

## USE A PLANNER

Get organised and stay organised. Buy a planner and make it personal and bright. Write down all due dates for schoolwork, class tests and exams.

Write down all the other stuff too, like training, matches or races, family occasions and time to chill with your friends.

Knowing in advance what you have going on makes it manageable and ensures you don't forget your training gear, or that you have a class test!

## ORGANISE YOUR WEEK

*"Plan your week, don't let your week plan you"*

It's all about managing your time. Everyone has 1440 minutes each day and it's up to you to decide how to spend them.

Look at your planner and see when you have things due, decide when you will study and see what is realistic in the time-frame.

Being organised means if you have to wait an hour to be collected, you can use this time to get some homework done.

## AVOID PROCRASTINATING

Start homework as soon as it's given. I know homework and studying are not on top of the fun list, but getting them done straight away allows you to do all the other things that you enjoy doing.

Plus, you don't have to waste time thinking about it again once it is done.

*There are no hard and fast rules that work for everyone all of the time, but trying some of the above suggestions will help you find YOUR balance.*

## SAMPLE- WEEKLY PLANNER

DAY	WHAT'S ON?	WHAT DO I NEED?	ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			
SUNDAY			

## DID YOU KNOW ?

1. Putting your phone away an hour before you go to sleep lets your mind relax and will improve your quality of sleep. Sleep is an easy way to beat stress and help you find your chill.

*(Next time you are on a social media binge, or you find yourself with a headache after scrolling for too long. Take a deep breath and put your phone away.)*

2. It's easy to feel stressed and out of balance when you do not move your bodies. The number one best thing you can do when you feel overwhelmed is to move your body. It could be a walk with your dog or meeting your friend for a walk in the park.

3. Journaling, drawing, colouring are fantastic ways to let the mind unwind and you to find that sense of ease and balance. It can also boost creativity, so if you are feeling stuck on something taking a break to do something you enjoy can improve your work!

## Goal Setting

Goal-setting is a part of self-management, and it helps us as individuals to increase our own self-awareness whilst building self-esteem. As we develop and become more independent, our ability to set and work toward goals becomes even more important to our future success.

Goals for students can be related to personal accomplishments, academics, relationships, or post-secondary school plans. All of those goals require work to accomplish, and the more you understand about your personal short-term and long-term goals, the better equipped we will be to set and work toward goals on our own.

## SMART GOALS

S

### SPECIFIC

What exactly do I want to do?

M

### MEASURABLE

How will I track my progress?

A

### ATTAINABLE

Is this realistic for me? Do I have what I need to make it possible?

R

### RELEVANT

Why am I doing this? Does it matter to me?

T

### TIME ORIENTATED

When will I have this completed?

## My Goal

(SPECIFIC)

This is Important  
to Me Because...

(RELEVANT)

Notes Along  
The Way

How will I know  
I reach my goal?

(MEASURABLE)

Possible Obstacles & How  
I'll Tackle Them

(ATTAINABLE)

Target Date  
(TIME ORIENTATED)

Date I Achieved  
My Goal





DREAM IT.  
WISH IT.  
DO IT.

# FAQs

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How many days should I train?

WHO recommends that children and youth aged 5-17 should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity daily. However, one of the biggest mistakes that newbies can make is to do too much too early. Make sure you gradually build up your training and be sure to get plenty of rest and let your body recover. Physical activity does not need to be intense all the time, listen to your body and enjoy what it can do!

### Who should I ask for help?

Don't be afraid to ask your PE teacher for some help or guidance.

If you are interested in taking up athletics or want to learn more about the sport, link up with your local athletics club which you can do so here (<https://www.athleticsireland.ie/find-a-club>)

Contact your local Regional Development Officer (RDO) to find out which club will suit you best (<https://www.athleticsireland.ie/clubs/regional-development-team>).

AAI Coach e-coaching manuals can also provide event specific information, coaching theory together with practical coaching videos (<https://www.athleticsireland.ie/coaching/aai-coach>)

- AAI Coach Hurdles
- AAI Coach Relays
- AAI Coach Injury Prevention

### What's the best way to warm up?

The best way to warm up is to apply the RAMP principle by Ian Jeffries (2007). The purpose of this method is to raise the heart rate, warm up the muscles and tendons and also prepare the body for physical activity.

The warmup should include exercises that replicate the movements of the activity you are going to undertake.

*Take a look at our sample warm up on the next page!*

BELIEVE  
IN THE  
PROCESS



# RAMP WARM UP

8 minutes

FAQs

6.

## 1. RAISE

In a space marked out at 25m x 25m, individuals will be asked to jog, skip in different directions and hit the deck when called.

### Continuous skip and react to calls:

- 1- Touch floor with right hand
- 2- Touch floor with Left Hand
- 3- Jump and touch the sky.

## 2. ACTIVATE

Individuals will do one set of the exercises below.

### Activation Exercises:

1. Squats with hands on shoulders- 8 reps
2. Lunge- 5 each leg
3. Lateral Lunge- 5 each side
4. Squat Jumps- 5 on the spot, stick the landing, reset and repeat

## 3. MOBILISE

Dynamic Stretching of the major muscle's groups for physical activity.

1. Hip Flexors- Hold for 5 seconds, release, switch leg and repeat both sides.
2. Quads- Hold for 5 seconds, release, switch leg and repeat both sides.
3. Hamstring – 5 swings each leg, hold for 3 seconds.
4. Calves- Hold for 5 seconds, release, switch leg and repeat both sides.
5. Active glute stretches- Standing on one leg, lift the opposite leg and allow the foot to rest on knee. Repeat these 3 times on each side.

### Mobilisation:

Leg swings with partner or against wall- 5 each side (Lateral swings and front swings)

## 4. POTENTIATE

2 strides @ 50-60% of max speed over 20m

### How do I start developing my sessions?

It is very important to track the training you undertake. Once your fitness scores have been established, there is now a point from which to work. At any time in the future, it is possible to compare your fitness scores against this initial data. This information then provides an instant comparison for your progress.

### Some tips :

- Gradually increase your training by increasing time, sets, reps or weight of an activity. A rep is the number of times you perform a specific exercise, and a set is the number of cycles of reps that you complete.
- You can also increase the intensity of your training by reducing your rest time between the repetitions.

- Remember, it is essential to progressively increase your training at a steady rate, otherwise you will increase the chance of injury or illness.

### What about rest and recovery?

Recovery is essential to the development of training. The positive adaptations we are looking for from training cannot be fully achieved without adequate recovery.

### There are two types of rest:

Active rest – recovery where the individual has a change of activity usually of a lower intensity.

Passive rest – recovery with no physical activity. Nutrition and sleep play a huge role in passive rest. Regular hydration and immediate post exercise refuelling strategies help athletes get back to pre-exercise status.

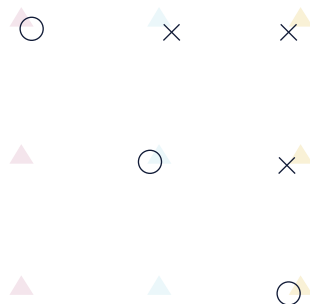
IF YOU GET TIRED,  
LEARN TO REST,  
NOT QUIT

- The bulldogs stand in the middle of the play area.
- All remaining players stand at one end of the area (home).
- The aim of the game is to run from one end of the field of play to the other, without being caught by the bulldogs.
- When a player is caught, they become a bulldog themselves.
- The game ends when everyone is caught.

## SPRINT CHALLENGES

### X'S AND O'S

- Using cones mark out a grid of 3x3 squares to create a board.
- Split the group into teams and using bibs or cones have them run up one by one and place their coloured bib in a square.
- Students must start from at least 20m away from the board.
- Aim is for one team to get three of their bibs in a row.



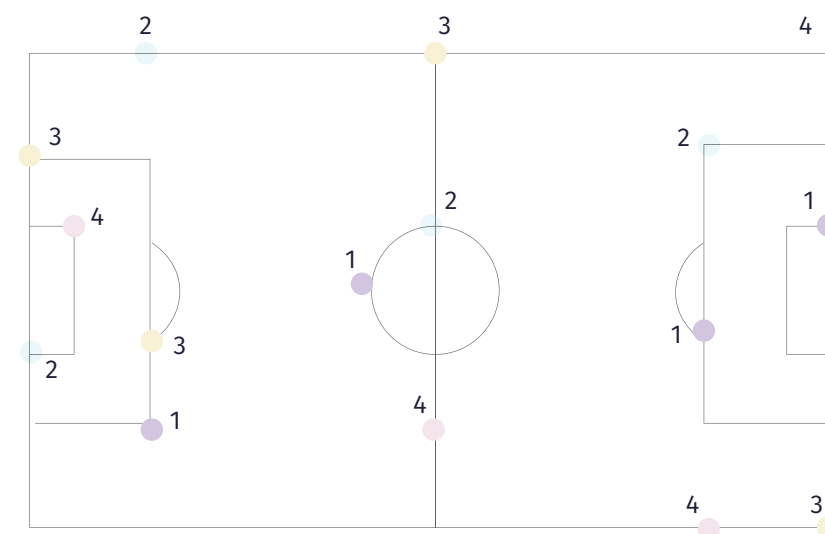
### ENDURANCE ORIENTEERING

- Orienteering is a sport in which the students navigate independently through their school environments. Students must visit a number of control points marked on the ground in the shortest possible time aided only by map. The course, defined by the location of the controls, is not revealed to students until they start.
- The aim of this challenge is to test your team work, and stamina!
- Students will be given a map and will have to start at a fixed point.
- The team with the correct score upon full completion of the map wins.
- Students will follow the ascending numbers marked by cones.
- Teams can walk, jog, or run to each cone.
- Under each cone, there will be a number that must be added to get a total score.
- The below examples are set up on a soccer pitch.

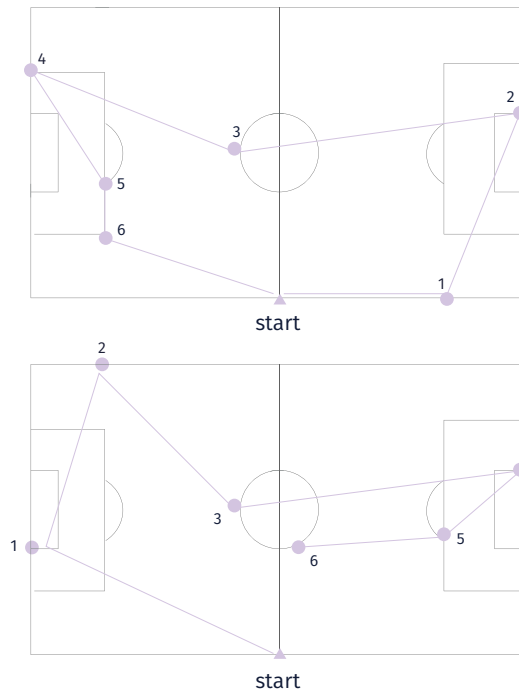
## ENDURANCE CHALLENGES

### 800M

- The 800m is a two lap event on a running track.
- This requires stamina and speed.
- Record your 800m time and compare the following week.
- Test your pace making skills and try with a friend!



Mastermap Set Up



### Scorecard A

$4 + 1 + 1 + 3 + 3 + 1$  to finish

TOTAL = 13

### Scorecard B

$4 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 2$  to finish

TOTAL = 11

### FIND YOUR PARTNER

- Hide different objects underneath the cones that will be widely spread out in a designated area. The objects may include things like numbers, colours or equipment.
- Make sure that each object has a pair, for example that there are 2 identical numbers, colours or equipment hidden – but elsewhere.
- The player who finds a certain object underneath the cone, must find a partner with the same object as his/hers.
- After they find their pair, they both must run quickly to the designated area to finish the race. Whoever is first – wins.

## JUMPING CHALLENGES

Want to test your speed and power? Find a soft surface and draw a line. This will be your take off mark.

### STANDING LONG JUMP

- Stand at the line, bend your knees, and jump as far as you can.
- Repeat 3 times and measure your best!

### RUNNING LONG JUMP

- Run into the take off mark and avoid stepping on the marker
- Measure the distance you have covered between the marker and landing.

## THROWING CHALLENGES

Throwing tests your strength and power!

### SHOT PUTT RELAY

- In teams of four. 1 member steps up to the starting line and, using a one-step pivot technique tosses the shot as far as possible.
- The point at which the shot contacts the ground becomes the “toe board” for the next thrower on the team.
- Challenge your classmates and the team that has moved the shot the farthest is the winner.

### MEDICINE BALL THROW

- With a partner, stand 15m apart.
- Using a chest pass technique, pass the ball to your partner.

## RELAY CHALLENGES

Team work makes the dream work, challenge your classmates to some relay challenges!

### 20M STRIDE/SPRINT DRILL

- Measure 20m with cones.
- Approach the first cone with one partner in front, either jogging or striding. Between the two cones, sprint and pass the baton without dropping the baton.

*Does your class have what it takes to get the baton around 400m?*

### TEAM RELAYS OBSTACLE COURSE

- A relay race is a racing competition where members of a team take turns completing parts of an obstacle course.
- Use any equipment you have to create a tricky course where individuals have to run, jump, hop, crawl, balance, throw and get around the course as quick as possible.

## SIX-WEEK WALK CHALLENGE

The Walk challenge runs for six consecutive weeks over the duration of The Girls Squad.

- Set up a team
- Set up a team with your classmates of between two and four people. Inform your teacher of your team.
- Step Counter
- Please use your own step counter if possible. You can also use a smart watch for example a Fitbit or a free app you can download to your phone and after school.

START DATE:

FINISH DATE:

DAY	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
MON						
TUE						
WED						
THUR						
FRI						
SAT						
SUN						
TOTAL:						



# Available Support

AVAILABLE SUPPORT

8.

## Regional Development Officers

The Development Team is responsible for participation and club development programmes as well as coaching education. The team can assist you in locating your local athletics club, qualified coaches, and coaching courses to support your school and community.

REGION	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Women in Sport Officer	Lilly-Ann O'Hora	085 806 0440	<a href="mailto:lillyannohora@athleticsireland.ie">lillyannohora@athleticsireland.ie</a>
Waterford, Wexford, Tipperary, Laois	Colin Byrne	087 063 2326	<a href="mailto:colinbyrne@athleticsireland.ie">colinbyrne@athleticsireland.ie</a>
Westmeath, Longford, Offaly, Roscommon	Bashir Hussain	086 787 6648	<a href="mailto:bashirhussain@athleticsireland.ie">bashirhussain@athleticsireland.ie</a>
Carlow, Kilkenny	Shane Aston	089 233 6739	<a href="mailto:shaneaston@athleticsireland.ie">shaneaston@athleticsireland.ie</a>
Donegal, Monaghan, Roscommon, Sligo, Leitrim	Dermot McGranaghan	085 871 2397	<a href="mailto:dermotmcgranaghan@athleticsireland.ie">dermotmcgranaghan@athleticsireland.ie</a>
Limerick, Kerry, Cork	Grace Lynch	085 800 6892	<a href="mailto:gracelynch@athleticsireland.ie">gracelynch@athleticsireland.ie</a>
Clare, Galway, Mayo	Conor Wilson	086 032 9578	<a href="mailto:conorwilson@athleticsireland.ie">conorwilson@athleticsireland.ie</a>

Dublin	David Matthews	087 051 6430	<a href="mailto:davidmatthews@athleticsireland.ie">davidmatthews@athleticsireland.ie</a>
Dublin City	Gerard O'Donnell	085 871 3217	<a href="mailto:gerardodonnell@athleticsireland.ie">gerardodonnell@athleticsireland.ie</a>
Dublin City	Colette Quinn	085 871 2817	<a href="mailto:colettequinn@athleticsireland.ie">colettequinn@athleticsireland.ie</a>

## Coach Education

We are fully committed to the education and development of our athletes/coaches through the coaching education pathway. A list of our introductory courses can be found below:

### Athletics Leader-

The course focuses primarily on developing athleticism through games designed to improve agility, balance and co-ordination and is very practical in nature.

### Assistant Coach-

It is an introduction to coaching in three key event areas, Running (Sprints and Endurance), Jumping (Long Jump) and Throwing (Shot Putt).

### Level 1-

This course is focused on the learning to train stage on the LTAD pathway. A multi events approach is the main focus for this course.

For more information, please check out <https://www.athleticsireland.ie/coaching/coach-education/>

### *AAi Coach -*

*Athletics Ireland's interactive coaching resource.*

The purpose of AAi Coach is to provide support to coaches through the provision of event e-coaching manuals. AAi Coach e-coaching manuals provide event specific information, coaching theory together with practical coaching videos.

Check out <https://www.athleticsireland.ie/coaching/aai-coach/> for more 20information

AAi Coach **Injury Prevention Manual** is now available to download

AAi Coach **Relays Manual** is now available to download

AAi Coach **Hurdles Manual** is now available to download.

### *Additional Post Primary Athletics Programmes*

#### **iRunForFun**

iRunForFun is a school based recreational running initiative that aims to increase activity levels of an entire school by encouraging engagement in recreational running in students of all levels of fitness. It also aims to give students an increased awareness of the importance of living an active and healthy lifestyle.

Physical Education teachers will use this six week iRunForFun training programme to encourage students to complete the programme. There are three levels available to participants which cater for beginner, intermediate, and advanced runners.

#### **Fit4Youth**

The Fit4Youth programme is aimed at youths aged 12-19 who would like to get fit in a fun, non-competitive environment.

We hope to instil and foster an awareness of fitness and enjoyment of running over a set period of weeks, with the aim of building up to 5K in a 'Learning to Run' programme that is paced and carefully monitored, while increasing in incremental distances. Helping to foster a positive attitude to health and fitness that will become a life skill.

Fit4Youth Programme Workshops can be run in your school for students and teachers, just contact your local regional development officer to find out more.

"THERE WILL BE OBSTACLES. THERE WILL BE DOUBTERS. THERE WILL BE MISTAKES. BUT WITH HARD WORK, THERE ARE NO LIMITS."

—MICHAEL PHELPS

LIFE CHECKLIST PLANNER

EVENT

SLEEP

NUTRITION

EXERCISE

FUN

LIFE CHECKLIST PLANNER

EVENT

SLEEP

NUTRITION

EXERCISE

FUN

# LIFE CHECKLIST PLANNER

EVENT

SLEEP

NUTRITION

EXERCISE

FUN

4.

# LIFE CHECKLIST PLANNER

EVENT

SLEEP

NUTRITION

EXERCISE

FUN

4.

# LIFE CHECKLIST PLANNER

EVENT

SLEEP

NUTRITION

EXERCISE

FUN

# LIFE CHECKLIST PLANNER

EVENT

SLEEP

NUTRITION

EXERCISE

FUN

# WEEKLY PLANNER

DAY	WHAT'S ON?	WHAT DO I NEED?	ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			
SUNDAY			



# WEEKLY PLANNER

DAY	WHAT'S ON?	WHAT DO I NEED?	ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			
SUNDAY			

# WEEKLY PLANNER

DAY	WHAT'S ON?	WHAT DO I NEED?	ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			
SUNDAY			

My Goal

(SPECIFIC)

How will I know  
I reach my goal?  
(MEASURABLE)

This is Important  
to Me Because...  
(RELEVANT)

Possible Obstacles & How  
I'll Tackle Them  
(ATTAINABLE)

Notes Along  
The Way

Target Date  
(TIME ORIENTATED)

Date I Achieved  
My Goal

My Goal

(SPECIFIC)

How will I know  
I reach my goal?  
(MEASURABLE)

This is Important  
to Me Because...  
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