

# How to Build Your Physical Ability

An Elevation Guide from [www.ElevatingAthletes.net](http://www.ElevatingAthletes.net)

Every athlete would like to have great physical ability. Some are born with it. Some develop it. The best any of us can do is get the most of our own natural ability. And no matter what we start with, we can always get a little better. Here are five ways to build your physical ability.

## 1. Build Your Health

It is sad and surprising how many naturally great athletes waste their gifts with bad health habits. The best thing you can do for yourself as an athlete is to take care of your basic health needs every day. This means drinking enough water, eating right, getting plenty of sleep, and practicing good hygiene. This also means avoiding any substances or risk behaviors which could damage your health.

When you take care of your health in this way, your overall energy rises and you are better able to fight off colds and viruses. If illness or injury does come your way, you will be able to bounce back more quickly. The bottom line is, building your health puts you in position to play. You will be able to practice harder and play better, while your opponents are losing energy.

## 2. Build Your Stamina

Today's athletes are bigger, stronger, and in many instances more skilled than ever before. But coaches are concerned about the growing number of athletes who have low stamina. Stamina is the ability to engage in intense physical activity for extended periods of time. Stamina is essential for athletic performance because it allows us to execute during crunch time. While tired athletes are losing it mentally, physically, and emotionally, the athletes with stamina are winning the contest.

## 3. Build Your Strength

Strength training is now routine for just about every serious athlete over age 14. Strength is essential for athletic success, and strength training can be a very good idea for most athletes. But strength training must be done in the right way for your body and your sport. Proper supervision and coaching are essential. Steroids and other damaging methods of gaining size and strength are out of the question. Seek advice from your coach about the right way to do strength training for you and your sport.

## 4. Build Your Agility

Agility is the ability to move quickly and explosively. Some trainers break it down into speed, quickness, jumping, and vision. Speed training is aimed at improving your sprint speed over long or short distances (depending on your sport). Quickness training is about quick feet (e.g. in soccer), quick hands (e.g. in baseball), or both (e.g. in tennis or basketball). Jump training is about jumping high and jumping quick (e.g. for basketball or volleyball). Vision training, one of the newer sciences, is about

*"If you don't do what's best for your body, you're the one who comes up on the short end." - Julius Erving, Basketball Hall of Famer*

training the eyes to work quickly in coordination with the hands and feet.

You can build your agility in a number of ways. One good approach is to play a lot of different sports. Intense workouts which use all of your physical abilities will help your overall athleticism including agility. If you are more serious about it, you could seek out an agility trainer. A good trainer will be able to evaluate your abilities and needs in terms of speed, quickness, jumping, and (in some cases) vision. Whatever you do, it is important to coordinate your agility training with whatever you are doing to build your health, stamina, and strength. Keep your trainer informed about your overall workout plan.

## 5. Build Your Skill

On top of your health, stamina, strength, and agility, it is obviously important to build your sport-specific skill. Here again, proper coaching is the key. There are correct ways in wrong ways to try to build skill. Countless athletes waste their time working very hard on the wrong things in the wrong way. They end up frustrated with little or no payback on their work.

The key to skill building is to work hard *and* smart. Work closely with a smart coach who knows the correct mechanics and training routines for the skills you are trying to develop. Use focused, intensive practice sessions to working on specific skills. And remember that form and frequency matter. If time is an issue, practice frequently for shorter periods of time rather than infrequently for longer periods of time. And check back with your coach to make sure your form remains correct.

### Elevation (For reflection and discussion)

1. Did you know there is an epidemic of obesity among children in the United States? Why do you think this is happening?
2. Think about Dr. J's quote above. Are you doing what's best for your body in terms of nutrition, hydration, and sleep??
3. Are you getting the right balance between stamina training, strength training, agility training, and skill training? Do you need to make any adjustments?
4. How can you and your teammates work together to build your physical ability?