

# Build Better Athletes

## Implementation Strategy

### Module 4 – Speed Development

In the speed training world, there are several factors that have to be balanced or else a well-intended training session can end up having no positive training effect.

True speed development training involves...

1 -Absolute all out sprints that do not go beyond seven seconds. The seven seconds includes the buildup part of the sprint. The athletes will likely only be running at full speed for 30 to 40 m which will take about four to five seconds for your best kids. This also means your slower athletes may need to run a shorter distance. Due to their lack of speed they may cross the seven second barrier running the same distance that a faster athlete can handle in six seconds for example.

2 - These training sessions should be on days where you are not also mixing in endurance work. A full speed sprint that goes to 10 or 15 seconds has already crossed into the realm of speed endurance which is an entirely different training stimulus.

3 - The harder the surface, the faster any athlete can run. However, hard surfaces also lead to wear and tear injuries. That is why a track surface is perfect. Running sprints on a granite slab would be optimal for that day but would likely lead to injuries down the road. Whereas, doing speed training in deep grass would dissipate so much of the force the athlete is trying to apply into the ground that it would be a difficult place to train speed. If you have an athlete with a history of stress fractures, shin splints etc speed training in the grass, though not optimal, might be a wise choice to keep them healthy. However, by implementing what we demonstrate in module 9 you will have far fewer athletes in need of such modifications.

4 – Speed training also requires full recovery in between sprints. If you have the athletes doing a set of 10 flying 20 m sprints (meaning they are at, or near, full speed when the 20 m begins) they would need time to fully recover before starting the next one so as to not drift into the endurance training field. A guideline to follow is this, allow the athletes one minute of recovery time for every 10 m you had them run. The distance of a buildup and deceleration should be factored into that time.

5 – If you dive into the wicket training shown in the module videos, it is best for you to have a couple different heights of wickets, probably a 6 inch and a 9 inch, with 8 to 10 of each. You also will want to have at least two "lanes" of wickets due to the variance in speed of your athletes. The faster kids will need wickets spaced further apart than the slower athletes.

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6 – The more speed training sessions athletes participate in throughout a calendar year the greater improvements they will see both in speed and sprinting form. If you are a performance coach you're likely training them year-round anyway. Sports coaches tend to have less contact outside of the season. In that case, the more speed training you can do in the off seasons the more your athletes will benefit.

I would also advocate teaching athletes what to do on their own. Most kids won't do the volume of work a coach wants without the coach there but some certainly will. Because speed work consists of very short sprints with full recovery, it is the type of thing that athletes are more likely to do on their own time.

Speed training requires recovery time so speed training sessions should not ever be held on back to back days. A spacing of Monday-Thursday or Tuesday-Friday is optimal.

7 – speed training sessions appear laughably easy to distance runners and from an endurance standpoint they are. However, these are the days where the athlete's bodies are being asked to give maximum effort so all of the modalities shown in the pre-hab module are crucial on these days. Ending the work out with an ice bath is optimal.

Above all else, keep studying speed development. Overspeed training, running hills and sprints with parachutes attached all have their place but it's important to know the difference between them. Overspeed training IS speed training, just done a little differently. Running hills or with parachutes is creating resistance and building power, just like the weight room builds power. But those should not be considered speed training days.

8 – In speed training sessions, I highly recommend having a cone well beyond the end of the speed zone. Make sure the athletes run all the way past that cone to ensure that they very slowly and gradually decelerate. "Slamming on the brakes" or decelerating from full speed as fast as possible is very hard on the lower legs and feet and can certainly play a role in injuries occurring to those areas.

Good luck and don't hesitate to keep in touch with Coach Banta in the Facebook community, he is the author of [The Sprinters Compendium](#) and knows everything about speed development that you may need.