

# Sport Specialization vs. Sampling for youth athletes



**Sport Specialization is intensive year-round training in a single sport at the exclusion of other sports.**

**Sports Sampling or sport diversification is participation in a variety of physical activities or multisport.**

**Youth is defined as 6-18 years of age. Early Adolescence 10-13, middle adolescence 14-17, late adolescence 18-24 years old.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVIB>

or

Search YouTube: Multi Sport Youth Athletes and Sport Specialization (32min Video)

**Myth1: Youth need to specialize in a sport to play in college or pro's**

**FACTS:**

- 88% of college athletes sport sampled as youth
- Only 17% of D1 Athletes specialized by 12 y/o
- 88% of 2018 NFL Draft picks were multi-sport athletes in High School
- 2017 study found Olympic / World Champion medalists had greater participation in alternative sports versus non-medalists

**Myth2: Children need to play their sport year round to avoid deconditioning or injury**

**FACTS:**

- Early sports specialization is one of the strongest predictors of injury in children.
- 70-93% more likely to sustain injury
- Correlation found early specialization in MLB players with Shoulder injuries and fewer games played
- Athletes 7-18 y/o that specialize have a 2.25 times greater odds developing overuse injuries

**Myth3: Those who spend their time learning 1 sport are more likely to lead an active life**

**FACTS:**

- Specializing early in life are typically the first to quit their sport and have higher inactivity rate as adults
- 70-80% attrition rate by 15 y/o
- Sport sampling is associated with improved neuromuscular control
- Athletes who socializ early reported clinically higher levels of burnout

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## Recommendations



### GUIDANCE

<b>RECOVERY</b>  TAKING 1 MONTH OFF FROM A SPORT AT LEAST 3 TIMES PER YEAR ALLOWS FOR PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY	<b>PRIMARY FOCUS</b>  LEARN LIFELONG PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SKILLS AND HAVE FUN
<b>INJURY PREVENTION</b>  HAVING AT LEAST 1 - 2 DAYS OFF PER WEEK FROM A SPORT CAN DECREASE THE CHANCE FOR INJURIES	<b>PLAY A VARIETY OF SPORTS</b>  PARTICIPATING IN MULTIPLE SPORTS DECREASES THE CHANCE OF INJURIES, STRESS AND BURNOUT
<b>EARLY DIVERSIFICATION &amp; LATER SPECIALIZATION</b> PROVIDES A GREATER CHANCE OF LIFETIME SPORTS INVOLVEMENT, LIFETIME PHYSICAL FITNESS AND POSSIBLY ELITE PARTICIPATION	

**SPECIALIZATION**  
DELAYING SPECIALIZING IN A SINGLE SPORT UNTIL LATE ADOLESCENCE MAY LEAD TO A HIGHER CHANCE OF ACCOMPLISHING ATHLETIC GOALS

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