



USA Karate

American Development Model

Summary Version

**A Long-Term Athlete Development Plan
For the Sport of Karate**

**USA Karate Sports Performance
Coach Chris Stratis, Head Coach for Sports Performance**

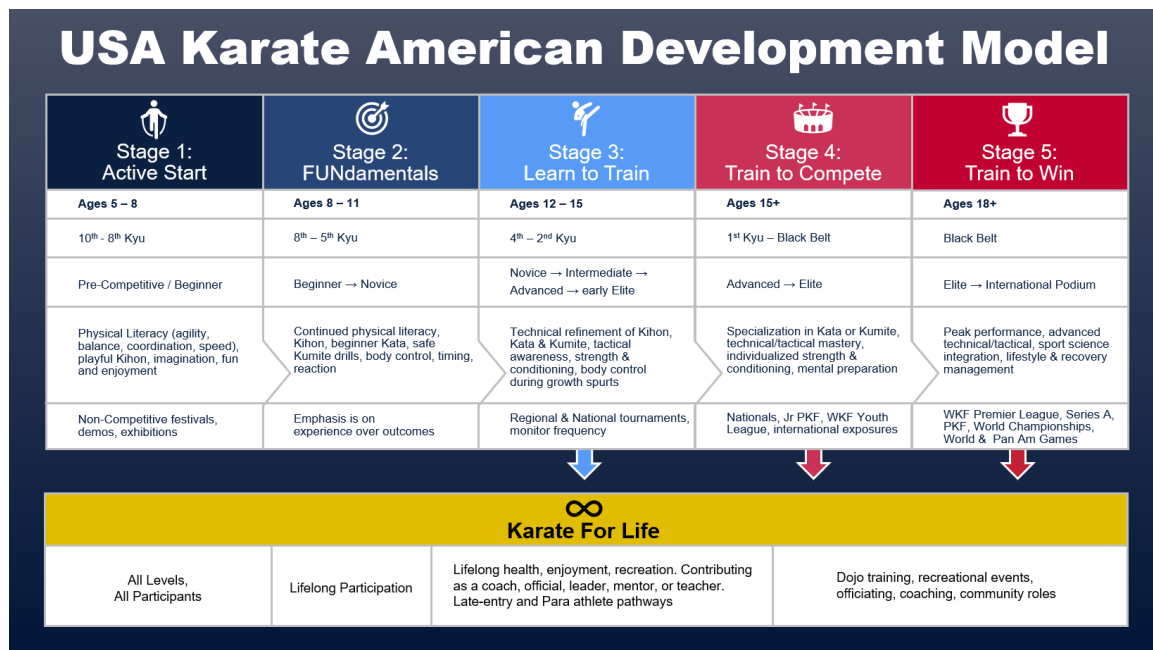


USA Karate American Development Model (ADM)

A Pathway for Every Karate Athlete, at Every Age

The USA Karate American Development Model (ADM) provides a roadmap for athletes, parents, and coaches. It ensures that training and competition are age-appropriate, safe, and designed to support long-term success — whether that means standing on an international podium or enjoying Karate for life.

This model is based on best practices from the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee's (USOPC) **American Development Model (ADM)** and Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD). Its goal is to help every karateka build skills, confidence, and a lifelong connection to the sport.



The Stages of Development

Stage 1: Active Start (Ages 5–8)

- **Focus:** Fun, movement, and basic skills.
- **Karate Play:** Games, kihon basics, and imagination.
- **Competition:** Festivals, demos, no emphasis on brackets or scoring.
- **Parent Tip:** Prioritize enjoyment and variety over early results.



Stage 2: FUNdamentals (Ages 8–11)

- **Focus:** Building foundation skills in kihon, kata, and safe kumite drills.
- **Physical Development:** Strength, speed, agility, and coordination through games and light training.
- **Competition:** First exposure to bracketed novice competitions under modified rules.
- **Parent Tip:** Reinforce effort and learning; avoid pushing ahead for short-term wins.

Stage 3: Learn to Train (Ages 12–15)

- **Focus:** Technical refinement, tactical awareness, and structured conditioning.
- **Physical Development:** Resistance training, plyometrics, speed, and endurance under qualified supervision.
- **Competition:** Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and early Elite divisions. Regular competition, but schedules must avoid over-competition.
- **Parent Tip:** Support balance, recovery, and healthy attitudes toward competition.

Stage 4: Train to Compete (Ages 15+)

- **Focus:** Specialization in kata or kumite, advanced training loads, national and international competition.
- **Physical Development:** Individualized, periodized strength and conditioning aligned with competition calendars.
- **Competition:** Advanced and Elite divisions; Youth League, Pan Ams, WKF events. Strategic prioritization is essential — not every tournament should be a peak.
- **Parent Tip:** Encourage trust in the coaching team, balance in training and life, and perspective on results.

Stage 5: Train to Win (Ages 18+)

- **Focus:** Podium performance at Senior international level.
- **Training:** Highly individualized, multidisciplinary, data-driven.
- **Competition:** WKF Premier League, World Championships, Pan American Games, Olympic Games (when included).
- **Parent/Family Tip:** Support recovery, travel, and long-term health while celebrating achievements.



Karate for Life

Karate doesn't end when competition does. Many athletes continue training for fitness, health, and enjoyment. Others become referees, coaches, or dojo leaders. Some enter the sport for the first time as teens or adults and find a lifelong practice. Para Karate athletes also have a place in this pathway, with adapted opportunities for training and competition.

Karate for Life is the ultimate destination for all USA Karate participants, celebrating health, mastery, and contribution to the community at any age.

Key Principles

- **No Early Specialization:** Young athletes should sample multiple sports to build athletic foundations.
- **Competition as Learning:** Wins and losses are secondary to growth, confidence, and skill.
- **Trust the Process:** Long-term development, not short-term medals, is the key to success.
- **Inclusion for All:** Late-entry athletes and Para Karate athletes are supported at every stage.
- **Lifelong Engagement:** Every athlete has a place in Karate — as a competitor, coach, referee, or lifelong practitioner.

Parent and Coach Roles

- **Coaches:** Create safe, positive environments, teach age-appropriate skills, and emphasize progress over results.
- **Parents:** Support effort and enjoyment, encourage balance, trust the process, and celebrate growth at every stage.