SEQUENTIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

As a skill is learned and eventually mastered, how the skill is performed undergoes dramatic changes. The beginner is jerky and awkward while the "old pro" is smooth and fluid. While the beginner must devote every ounce of concentration to the task at hand the old pro can perform the skill and carry on a conversation at the same time! As each individual progresses from a beginner to an "old pro" they pass thorough several stages of skill acquisition.

The Cognitive Stage (Verbal)
The first stage of learning consists of the learner virtually talking himself/herself through the skill. Often learners will actually talk themselves through the skill speaking out loud. For example the beginning golfer will say "keep your head down, knees bent......". This stage is characterized by movements which are slow, deliberate and quite often mistimed.

The Associative Stage
In the second stage, individual elements of the skill come together to comprise more fluid sub units.

The Autonomous Stage (Automatic)
The final stage of learning is the "automatic" stage, when the skill is performed with little or no thought on the part of the performer. The movement is fast and smooth. The performer is also able to think of other things while performing the skill (strategy, next move, etc.).
SEQUENTIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT II

The development of motor skill is an individual matter and wide variation occurs among children of similar age. However there is a common pattern which typifies developmental growth in children.

Development in general proceeds from head to foot (cephalocaudally). Coordination and body management generally begins in the upper body before it is observed in the lower body. Children can generally throw before they can kick.

Development occurs from the inside out (proximodistally). Children can usually control their arms (to reach) before they can control their hands (to grasp).

Development proceeds from general to specific. Gross motor skills involving larger limbs and body parts (torso, arms and legs) are developed before fine motor skills (hands).